

NICENE CREED SEMINAR

August 27, 2025

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**ON THE NICENE-CONSTANTINOPLE CREED OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AT
ST. THERESA'S CHURCH. NUNGAMBAKKAM, 27TH AUGUST 2025 [10 – 16 HRS]**

1. SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

2. What are the Fundamental-EXISTENTIAL Questions raised by normal humans?
3. How does **PHILOSOPHY** answer those Questions?
4. How does **SCIENCE** answer those questions?
5. Can Science answer these Questions?
6. How does the **BIBLE/RELIGIONS** answer those Questions?
7. Define Religion, its elements, Functions and/or Purposes. HOW WILL YOU EXPLAIN CHRISTIAN RELIGION TO A NON-BELIEVER?
8. How many **Types** of Religions are there?
9. WHY AT ALL SHOULD WE BELIEVE [PROFESS A CREED] IN SOMETHING? IN SOME IDEA? / VALUE? IN SOMEONE?
10. WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS BELIEF [CREED]? WHAT BENEFITS CAN WE ACQUIRE?
11. CAN YOU EXPLAIN OR DEFINE BELIEF / FAITH & ITS ASPECTS?

B) Some Terms to become Familiar with:

Revelation [= Scripture & Tradition – (THE Themes in the Bible)] & what is Faith?

Dogma(s); Doctrine; → *Creed; Profession; Confession (not the Sacrament)*; Church; Magisterium; Theology;

2. PRELIMINARY IMPERATIVES

1. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship is not possible on Man's Terms; **our own convenient philosophy, ideology, psychology, theology, spirituality. (Matt. 7:21-27; Jn. 15:14)**
 2. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship as a Christian is not possible without **acknowledging & abhorring our own SINFULNESS, & the Absolute necessity of Jesus and Him alone to cleanse us of this aberration (Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 13:8).**
 3. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship is not possible without **BELIEVING TOTALLY that He did take away our sins and that WE CAN BE HOLY and SINLESS & CHRIST-LIKE**
 4. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship is not possible without a **CONSTANT STRIVING** for holiness of life (=Expunging SIN – Heb. 12:1-2) or living HIS Teachings is **EMINENTLY POSSIBLE – [SEE No. 6 BELOW].**
 5. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship is **NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT REALIZING THE HIDEOUSNESS OF SIN [HOW ABHORRENT AND OFFENSIVE IS SIN IN GOD'S EYE] AND THE HEIGHTS OF THE LORD'S SUBLIME PURITY [See Ezek.] LOVE & MERCY.**
- God turned away from Jesus (Mt. 27: 45, 46) because of the Horror of the Sins that covered Jesus – to gaze reproachfully on Humanity?
6. A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship **[FOR R.C.S]** is **NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE HOLY MOTHER CHURCH'S MEDIATION & RESPECT FOR ALL HER TRADITIONS & TEACHINGS**
[= SCRIPTURE-LITURGY-SACRAMENTS-MORAL-DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTIONS & THE WISDOM OF HER SAINTS THROUGHOUT THE AGES!]
 7. **FINALLY - A God \leftrightarrow Man relationship is NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT A DEEP THIRST, DESIRE FOR THE DIVINE & WILLINGNESS TO UNDERTAKE THE ARDUOUS JOURNEYS – THERE IS NO CHEAP SALVATION OR SANCTIFICATION**

3. PRACTICE OF & PROGRESS IN CATHOLIC-CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

INTRODUCTION: *1 Sam 2: 26; Lk. 2: 52; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4: 13-15; Col. 1: 10, 28; 2: 19; 1 Pet. 2:2ff; 2 Pet. 3:18* – all these biblical verses exhort us to “Grow” in Holiness/ in Love of God/ in Stature of Christ/ - all can be summed up thus: **TO GROW SPIRITUALLY**. Any Christian who does not set to grow in holiness, “**ONE DAY AT A TIME**”, day by day is sure to regress and fall to the depths of ungodliness & unholiness according to the wisdom of the saints of our church. *This chapter will deal with this progress in Spiritual life; the Steps & Stages of growth, with particular emphasis on prayer and asceticism.* [See also: *Exod. 19:6; Lev. 11:44, 19:2; 20: 7, 26; Matt. 5:48; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:16-17; Heb. 12:14*]

(A) PRACTICAL STEPS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH [= GROWTH IN THE LOVE FOR CHRIST/GOD = GROWTH IN HOLINESS = LIFE OF PERFECTION = GROWTH IN THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT]

We ought to beg and beseech him in his mercy that our love may be genuine, unmarred by any too human inclination. From Adam down to the present time all generations have passed away; but those who were perfected in love by God's grace have a place among the saints who will be revealed when the kingdom of Christ comes to us.

- 1) A **Deep Desire For The Divine** (Parable of Seeds & Sower Matt, 13) – This is an Absolute Must (Ps. 42:1-3; Ps. 63: 1ff; Mt. 6:21; Lk. 7:47ff); **WITHOUT THIS ‘DESIRE’ (not just wishful thinking), THERE IS NO SPIRITUAL LIFE OR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AT ALL – 1ST GRATITUDE ORGAN TRANSPLANT – DONOR & RECIEVER = LIFE GIVER] – PRAY TO GET THE DESIRE LIKE A MAN IN THE DESERT THIRSTING FOR WATER! LOOK UP TO HIM ALONE FOR OUR PROGRESS IN HOLINESS.**
- 2) An **Unswerving Resolve/Decision To Start The Journey & Stay On Course** (Wis. 1:1; Sir. 2: 1... Jer. 29: 13ff; Mt. 7:13; 10:22; Lk. 6: 38; 9: 57; 14: 28 ff & 22: 31) = **Plan – Prepare – Structure your life. EG. SPORTSPERSONS, ACHIEVERS – VISION & MISSION STATEMENT**
- 3) A **Brutal/Cruel Frankness In Self Analysis/Examen** (Jer. 17: 9 -10; Mk. 7:21ff; Ps.19:12) – Eg. **MY Self Experiences**
- 4) **Frequent/Regular Confession (5 R's & Capital Sins + Decalogue) + Reverence For The Eucharist** (Jn. 6: 52ff; 1 Cor. 11: 27ff; Prov. 28:13; Sir. 4:26; 5: 4ff)
EG: BRASS VESSELS POLISH; SPORTSPERSONS & CORPORATES WORK ON WEAKNESSES

- 5) Systematic & Sustained Scripture & Spiritual Reading + Quality Personal Prayer (SEE BELOW) (Ps. 119:105; Is. 55:10-11; Jn. 10:35; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Tob. 4:18); // **EG. TOP ACHIEVERS – 1 BOOK / WEEK!!!**
- 6) Consciously Eschew (Avoid) Vice & Embrace (Adhere to) Virtue (Dan. 4:27; Jam. 4:7ff; **Rom. 12: 21) + Phil. 4: 8-9; DO THE OPPOSITE GOOD [SAINA NEHWAL, SACHIN TENDULKAR]**
- 7) Persevere in The Practice of Virtue Always Matt. 10:22; Lk. 21: 19; Gal. 6: 9). **EG. SPORTSPERSONS AND CORPORATE HONCHOS & ACHIEVERS**
- 8) Undertake Daily Mortification–Asceticism A Must (Lk. 9: 23; Phil. 1: 29; Acts 14: 22-23; Rom. 8:17) **EG. SPORTSPERSONS AND CORPORATE HONCHOS/ACHIEVERS**
- 9) Have a Constant Awareness of Jesus' Presence & Power = EJACULATORY PRAYER (Is. 30: 21, 40; 29ff; 42: 16; Matt. 28:20; **Phil. 4:4ff**; 1 Thess. 5:16ff) & (Jn. 16:33; Lk. 1:38; Mt. 19: 26; I Thess. 5: 16, 24) + Jesus Prayer

[See LG Ch. III Universal call to Holiness in the Church.]

(B) PRAYER (CCC: PART IV = 2558 - 2865)

INTRODUCTION: PRAYER IS AN ACT OF VIRTUE WHICH

CONSISTS IN ASKING PROPER GIFTS OR GRACES FROM GOD.

IN A MORE GENERAL SENSE IT IS

THE APPLICATION OF THE MIND TO DIVINE THINGS, NOT MERELY TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF THEM BUT TO MAKE USE OF SUCH KNOWLEDGE AS A MEANS OF UNION WITH GOD.

THIS MAY BE DONE BY ACTS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING, BUT PETITION ↔ INTERCESSION IS THE PRINCIPAL ACT OF PRAYER.

The words used to express Prayer in Scripture are:

to call up (Genesis 4:26);

to intercede (Job 22:10);

to mediate (Isaiah 53:10);

to consult (1 Samuel 28:6);

to beseech (Exodus 32:11); and commonly,

to cry out to. (Many Psalms)

The Church Fathers *speak of it*

as communing and conversing with God (Gregory of Nyssa,);

talking with God (Chrysostom).

Prayer: the EXPRESSION of our desires to God (for ourselves or others) & **ULTIMATELY EXPRESS OUR DESIRE FOR GOD HIMSELF.**

[PRAYER is NOT INTENDED TO INSTRUCT OR DIRECT GOD WHAT TO DO,] BUT,

TO APPEAL to His goodness for the things we need; and the appeal is necessary, not because He is ignorant of our needs or sentiments, but

TO GIVE DEFINITE FORM to our desires, to concentrate our whole attention on what we have to recommend to Him,

TO help us APPRECIATE our close personal relation with Him;

TO ACKNOWLEDGE God's power and goodness, & our own NEEDINESS AND DEPENDENCE on Him.

Prayer: an act of virtue in religion implying the deepest reverence for God and habituating us to look to Him for everything, not merely because the thing asked be good in itself, or advantageous to us, but chiefly because we wish it as a gift of God, and not otherwise, no matter how good or desirable it may seem to us.

Prayer: PRESUPPOSES FAITH IN GOD/CHRIST and HOPE in His goodness. But God, to whom we pray, moves us to prayer (Phil. 2:12-13). Our knowledge of God by the light of natural reason also inspires us to look to Him for help, but such prayer lacks supernatural inspiration, and though it may avail to keep us from losing our natural knowledge of God and trust in Him, or, to some extent, from offending Him, **it cannot dispose us to receive His graces.** [??] Prayers need not be external or vocal; internal or mental is sufficient.

A) OBJECTS OF PRAYER – WHAT TO PRAY FOR (AND FOR WHOM?)

Grace is required to dispose us to pray [!!!], but also to aid us in **determining what to pray for**. In this "the Spirit helps our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asks for us with unspeakable groanings" ([Romans 8:26](#)).

For certain objects we are always sure we should pray:

1) for our salvation & sanctification and the means to attain salvation (= holiness)

2) resistance to temptation = to turn away from memories and imaginations – of seven capital sins – & turn towards the cross & to the practice of the opposite virtues & cardinal virtues (See 'A' Above)

3) for the constant practice of virtue & final perseverance

4) for the needed light and guidance of the spirit – in every situation

5) to know the special means that will most help us in any particular need.

6) for others especially detractors, enemies, real & imagined AND ESPECIALLY FOR PUBLICLY KNOWN SINNERS, CRUEL TYRANTS, PERSECUTORS AND TORMENTORS – for God to bless them all

7) FOR THE WORLD TO BE EVANGELIZED

8) for all those under your care/ & those who care for you, superiors, colleagues,

9) family, friends, loved ones, benefactors, beneficiaries, those in dire straits or in need, those who commend themselves to my prayers. [See also (h) below]

NOTE: So that there may be no possibility of misjudgment on our part in such an essential obligation, **Christ has taught us what we should ask for in prayer and also in what order we should ask it in the Pater Noster:**¹

¹From [Lord's Prayer](#) (CCC: 2759 – 2865), it appears that above all we are to pray for the Following:

(I) **SPIRITUAL OBJECT** *Sof our prayer* (i) God may be glorified, and that for this purpose (ii) men may be worthy (Holy) citizens of His kingdom, (iii) living in conformity with His will. This conformity is implied in every prayer: we should ask for nothing unless it be strictly in accordance with Divine Providence in our regard; *for (CONT'D at bottom of next page)*
(II) **TEMPORAL OBJECTS**, (iv) our daily bread, and all that it implies, health, strength, and other worldly or temporal goods, *not material or corporal only*, but also mental and moral, that every accomplishment that may be a means of serving God and our fellow- men. (v) *for forgiveness our own sins & a forgiving heart*. (vi) for the evils which we should pray to escape, the penalty of our sins, the dangers of temptation, and (vii) every manner of physical or spiritual affliction, so as not to impede us in God's service.

B) CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

***There are certain conditions on which the efficacy of prayer depends.

(1) Its object must be WORTHY OF GOD and good for the one who prays, spiritually or temporally. This condition is always necessary in the prayer of one who is ready to do God's will, ready to accept any spiritual favour God may be pleased to grant, and desirous of temporal ones only in so far as they may help to serve God.

(2) FAITH IS NEEDED, not only the general belief that God is capable of answering prayer as also *the implicit trust in god's fidelity to his promise to hear a prayer* in some particular instance. This trust *implies a special act of faith and hope* that if our request be for our good, God will grant it, or something else equivalent or better, which in His Wisdom He deems best for us.

(3) To be efficacious prayer SHOULD BE HUMBLE. To ask as if one had a binding claim on God's goodness, or entitlement to obtain some favours, would not be prayer but demand (Sir., 35: 21) **[NO NAME & CLAIM!]**.

(4) Try to BE SURE THAT OUR CONSCIENCE IS GOOD, and that there is no defect in our conduct inconsistent with prayer; (James 5: 16)

(5) SINCERITY IS ANOTHER NECESSARY QUALITY of prayer. *It would be idle to ask favours without doing all that may be in our power to obtain it; to beg for it without really wishing for it; or, at the same time that one prays, to do anything inconsistent with the prayer.*

(6) EARNESTNESS OR FERVOUR is another essential quality, not lukewarm or half-hearted petitions. To be resigned to God's will in prayer does not imply that one should be indifferent in the sense that one does not care whether one be heard or not,

7) TRUE RESIGNATION to GOD'S WILL *is possible only after we have desired and earnestly expressed our desire in prayer for such things as seem needful to do God's will & grow in holiness.* This earnestness makes the persevering prayer (Luke 11:5-8; Luke 18:2-5) ultimately obtain the precious GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE.

C. SPIRITUAL LIFE BUSTERS / DESTROYERS / CHALLENGES:

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS → SPIRITUALITY BUSTERS = ATTITUDES, APPROACHES AND ACCEPTANCE (OF) WORLDLY/ INTERNET WISDOM DETRIMENTAL TO REAL PROGRESS IN CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL LIFE:

1. I am only Human. God Understands me. He knows my weakness. **He knows my Heart – Presumed to be made of Gold!** (Sir. 2: 1-6; 12-14; Heb. 10: 38-39); Lk. 23: 42-43)
2. **Jesus Loves me as I am. I am made that way. (My genes, DNA etc)** (Mt. 18:3ff). **(Don't be too hard on yourself)**
3. **All are sinners; who doesn't commit sins ... Everyone is allowed one weakness. (Matt. 5:48)**
4. **My sins are SMALL, only (names a few venial sins) ... Nothing much; whatever my sins God Will Forgive me.** (Ps. 89: 30-34; 99: 8; Sir. 5: 4-7)
5. **Presume on God's Mercy** (Sir. 5: 4-7); **& on own Will-Power** (1 Cor. 10:12). Always Harping on God's Love & Mercy **ad Nauseum, WITHOUT GOD'S EQUAL DESIRE FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY**
6. **I don't feel that I have sinned; I don't feel guilty. I have no sin to confess (1 Jn. 1:8-10);**
7. **Basically, all are good, just a few dark spots/ weaknesses/ shortcomings/ compulsions. Nothing serious** ... (Jer. 17: 9-10; Ps. 14: 1-3; Ps. 53: 1-3)
8. **God is with me; I am blessed (with ...); I am a good/nice guy; I feel good; I don't wish harm to anyone; I have no enemies ... I DON'T NEED TO CHANGE.**
9. **I make/live by my own rules (Philosophy; Ideology; Theology-Spirituality)** – (Prov. 3: 5-7; 14:12; 16:1, 2, 5, 9; 24: 17-18)
10. **I pray a lot (name all sorts of devotion/pious practices); watch only Madha TV and Listen to devotional hymns/songs.** (Mt. 7:21 ff) **/// = A selfish, me-first/only life**
11. **Matt. 25:31-46 – that's how I will be judged; If I do such “works” God pleased with me. No need to worry about other things –**
12. **Whenever / Wherever a good work is done Jesus is present there!!! – [Yeah! But how does it save or sanctify you? Is it biblical / traditional/ magisterial teaching?]**

13. **Jesus came to give life ... in abundance** (Jn. 10:10); → **Become set in our own pious and “holy” ways – Don’t Like to Change OUR UNHOLY Practices and Habits**
14. **He has taken away all sin – don’t be neurotic about sin – be Jolly (Jaally)**
15. **Because he did that ... Therefore, I did this** ... Devil made me do it; God tempted me (Jam. 1; 13ff). Just – Righteous – Anger! (Jam. 1: 20, 26)
16. **Blame – system, world, sinful structures parents**, siblings, caretakers, priests/nuns.
17. **When Misfortune strikes; Why me???** – I am deeply “hurt” / wounded.
18. **My prayers never answered**; (Jam. 1: 5; 4: 2b-4); **Petulance or Anger against God over misfortune** / *bereavement* / Therefore: offended, petulant.
19. **I will TRY = A LIE; Either decide to do it or don’t**; “Lord, Give me the Grace to ... = a prayer of folly. (Mt. 6: 21, 24). → No real desire to change.
20. **I cannot, I will not, it is too difficult (But Not Impossible)** ... → **NO REAL DESIRE TO CHANGE.**
21. **Unforgiveness / Bitterness / Enmity and Grudge / wishing ill on others.**

Words of St. Francis of Paola. (1 Jn. 2:11):

From Breviary/ Office for 2nd April; Proper of Saints: Put aside your hatred and animosity. Take pains to refrain from sharp words. If they escape your lips, do not be ashamed to let your lips produce the remedy, since they have caused the wounds. Pardon one another so that later on you will not remember the injury. **The recollection of an injury is itself wrong. It adds to our anger, nurtures our sin and hates what is good. It is a rusty arrow and poison for the soul. It puts all virtue to flight. It is like a worm in the mind: it confuses our speech and tears to shreds our petitions to God. It is foreign to charity: it remains planted in the soul like a nail. It is wickedness that never sleeps, sin that never fails. It is indeed a daily death.**

22. **Attachments to Worldly pleasures and pursuits; achievements, acquisitions, accolades and appreciation.** (Jam. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15)

23. Jesus Yes! Church No! Church is Rotten; 1 Cor. 12: 27; Col. 1: 17-18; Eph. 5: 22-23;

24. Faith is a gift – I didn’t receive it. They have received it! (Rom. 10:6-8)

25. Obsessed with OR Even Dabbling in Yoga; Neglect Personal Prayers; For Health reasons, makes ME FEEL GOOD /HEALTHY – Heavily Based / Influenced by Hindu “Spirituality / Philosophy”. (Jam. 4:4)

26. Help them to be a good Hindu / Muslim / Buddhist / Atheist [Words of a Missionary priest]. A true Catholic Spirituality BURNS with Missionary Zeal

27. All religions are equal – No! No! No! RELIGIONS GOALS MAYBE SOMEWHAT SIMILAR! – THAT TOO MOSTLY ONLY IN THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY AS SUCH. They are not equal / identical.

* Don't say so / okay even to avoid a bruising discussion or dissension or discord.

28. NEGLECT OF SACRAMENTS [ESPECIALLY RECONCILIATION] & IMPROPER UNDERTANDING AND ATTITUDE TO THE EUCHARIST.

29. OVER INDULGENCE AND ATTRACTION TO “ECUMENICAL” & / or / “INTER-RELIGIOUS” STUDY, DIALOGUE, AND UNDISCERNED ACTIVITIES THAT LEAD AWAY FROM Christ.

30. DABBING IN ‘N’ NUMBER OF NEW AGE PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES IN ORDER TO “FEEL GOOD” – PURSUIT OF “FEEL GOOD” BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS. ANY AND EVERYTHING FOR HEALTH & WELL BEING & FEEL GOOD [SEE ALSO 25 ABOVE]

31. Jn. 10: 10 – “He came so that we can have life in abundance”. So must always be “JAAALLLY”. Will also quote St. Irenaeus "The glory of God is man fully alive!

But the quote continues (which is conveniently brushed under the carpet “and the life of man consists in beholding God.” This quote emphasizes that a life lived in accordance with God's will, a life of faith and virtue, is a life that reflects God's glory. It suggests that true human fulfillment is found in our relationship with God. – In the New Age jargon “Fully Alive” means, “Entertainment” – “Activity-Amusements” – at will.

32. Become obsessed with a cause and neglect soul, greenpeace, eco-warrior, spca. Think god will be happy with us since we are engaged in “something good”!

33. Catholic makes me feel dreary – no “feel good factor”. Hence no participating in “religion” [= no confession/striving against sin.

34. FROM ADOLPHE TANQUEREY = SPIRITUAL BUSTERS & REMEDIES WITH REFERENCE TO TEMPTATIONS (SOME OVERLAP)

Attitudes (To Fight Temptations)

- God alone Suffices (Rom 8:31-32)

- World=Ephemeral (Jam 4:14) (1 Jn 2:17)
- World= Pathetic, Pitiable, Wounded (Rev. 3: 17)
- World not MORE POWERFUL than God; So, No Terror, Seduction can Defeat us (Jn.16:33).
- World, when engaging with it, Be cautious, wary & be with Jesus (1 Jn. 2:15; Jam. 4:4)
- **Beware of Unholy Fancy Doctrines or Trends – SEE ABOVE** (1 Thess 5: 21, Is 5:20, Eph 4:14-16, 2 Tim 4:3-4)
- **DISTRUST SELF & ABILITIES** Prov. 28: 26/ No Presumption/ Full TRUST in GOD-CHILD-LIKE (1 Cor 10:12)
- Our Home = Heaven
- No Compromise with world
- Never Despair (Matt. 10:24-33)
- Nothing impossible for God (Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26)
- Fear God = Fear to Sin (Sir. 1: 11ff)
- Love God = Obey Him (Jn. 14)

Actions (To Fight Temptations)

- Flee from Sin (Sir 21:3)
- No Loose Talk (Mt 12:36)
- **No Fancy Philosophies/Practices** (2 Cor 6:14??)
- No Seek Accolades/ Appreciation/ Acceptance (Litany of Humility)
- Forestall = No Anxiety & Excessive Worry - Avoid
- **Shun Idleness/Indolence/ Keep gainfully busy**
- Avoid too much of secular Entertainment (Serials/ YouTube)
 - Fight-Deliberate Venial Sin. AVOID - MIGHTLY - RESIST (Heb. 12:4)
 RESIST = Promptly + Energetically + Perseveringly + Humbly
 = Attraction to Pleasure - TURN AWAY
 = Aversion to WOG/DUTY - TURN BACK
- Mortifications - A Must
- No Conform to World/ Try to please World & People
- Self-Abnegation = Refer all to God - Praise the Lord
- Deprive Self of Legitimate Pleasures

THE APOSTLES CREED – SCRIPTURE PROOFS

The Apostles Creed	Scripture Proofs
I believe in God the Father almighty,	Isa 63:16 , Mat 6:9, Mat 23:9, Luk 11:2
The creator of heaven and earth.	Psa 89:11-13 , Gen 2:4 , Exo 31:17 , Act 4:24, 14:15, Eph 3:9
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.	Psa 2:7 , Joh 1:1-4, 14, 3:16, 16:28, Act 13:33, Heb 5:5 , 1John 4:9
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.	Isa 7:14 , Mat 1:20-23, Luk 1:30-35 , Joh 1:14, Gal 4:4 , 1Jo 4:2
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.	Isa 53:4-5 , Joh 19:18, Acts 4:10 , 27 , 1Ti 6:13 ,
He descended to hell.	Psa 16:10 , Act 2:24, 27, 13:33-37, Eph 4:8-10 , 1Pe 3:19
On the third day he rose again.	Mat 27:40, 67, Mark 8:31 , 10:36 , Joh 20:19-20, 25-29, Act 2:32, 3:15, 4:33, 1Co 15:12-22 , Gal 1:1
He ascended into heaven	Luk 24:51 , Act 1:9-11, Eph 4:8-10 , Heb 4:14 , 9:24
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.	Psa 110:1 , Mark 16:19 , Act 2:33, 5:31, 7:55-56, Heb 12:2 , Heb 8:1 , 1Pe 3:21-22
Whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.	Joh 5:22-23, Act 10:42, Rom 14:10 , 2Co 5:10 , 2Ti 4:1 , 1Pe 4:4-5
I believe in the Holy Spirit,	Eze 39:29 , Joh 14:26, Act 2:17, 13:2, 1Co 2:10-11 , 12:13 , Heb 3:7-9
The holy catholic Church,	Act 9:31, 1Co 1:1-2 , 2Co 1:1 , 1Ti 3:15 , Heb 12:22-25 , 1Pe 1:1
The communion of saints,	Act 2:42, Rom 12:4-13 , 15:26-27 , 1Co 1:9 , 2Co 8:3-4 , Phi 2:1-4 , 1Jo 1:3
The forgiveness of sins,	Neh 9:17 , Mark 11:26 , Mat 6:12-15; Luk 6:37-38 Col 1:13-14 , 2:13-14 , Eph 1:7
The resurrection of the body,	Ecc 12:7 , Mat 22:31-32, Mark 12:18-27 ; Luk 20:27-37 , Rom 8:23 , 1Co 15:38-56 , 2Co 4:14 ,
And the life everlasting. Amen	Dan 12:2 , Mat 25:31-33, Luk 16:22-23 , Joh 5:28-29, Rom 6:22-23 , Gal 6:7-8 , Tit 3:5-7

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CHRISTIAN HISTORY: Why should we care about the early councils today—or even recite a creed? Aren't the gospel accounts in the New Testament enough for today's church?

PRESENT DAY ACCUSATIONS / HUBRIS:

- 1. Doctrine is a Distortion of Christianity! [Jesus – Yes! Church / Religion – No!]**
- 2. RELIGION / CHURCH IS More about Control Than Conviction / Consolation!**
- 3. Many church leaders: Christianity is not “a system of doctrine” but a “way of discipleship.”**
- 4. Doctrine is rigid, black and white while discipleship is flexible and gray.**

Doctrine demarcates boundaries and puts up walls barring outsiders, while discipleship means following Jesus into dialogue with the world and welcoming those whose views and values differ from ours.

- 5. Religion is about “feeling good” and “experience” – Not about, doctrine, rules and regulations. [every other sphere of life – strictly by rules]**

SITUATION THEN (1700 Years ago):

Illiterate, but intelligent & fervent [Cause & Effect; 3 Dimensions; Time & Space] & were SOAKED IN RELIGION – BIBLE AS WE HAVE IT NOW ONLY IN 395 AD!

[“No one believes anything unless one first thought it believable....

Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe;

But everyone who believes thinks, thinks in believing and believes in thinking.” - St. Augustine]

JESUS CHRIST IS BAAAAD NEWS MAAN!!! – WE NEED TO THINK HARD ABOUT HIM &

**LET'S NOT FORGET, CREED WAS SETTLED [381] BEFORE CANON OF
SCRIPTURE WAS [395 → 405]!!!**

**1. From the beginning, how to understand the various parts of the
Scripture in relation one to another was an enormous challenge for
Christians**

E.g. Jesus as an itinerant preacher, Rabbi of the NT or the Cosmic Christ of Col. 1: 15ff.

How do you say that God is one when you've got two identifiable realities God the Father and God the Son—and claim they're God? That's the problem. And it's not an easy problem to solve.

[Lets not forget, scripture is notoriously easy to be misunderstood and misinterpreted.]

2. How to preserve what they had received?

What they "Believed in = what they received! **With a rider that they must propagate it & that too without error (Matt. 28:19-20)!**

3. How to propagate what they had received, without error?

4. Creeds Are the Form of Teaching in an Illiterate Society

Creeds emerged in an illiterate society.

Historians estimate that at the beginning of Christianity, ninety percent of the population was illiterate.

Primary form of learning and communication is the spoken word, not the written text, a message or teaching must be *memorable*.

But what ancient teachers could do to check for understanding is ask students to *memorize* and *recite* teachings.

They are Nuggets of Gold – culled from the Scriptures & Tradition and presented as 1 golden necklace / jewel of great price / value

5. Creeds Arose out of Baptismal Preparation

Creeds developed out of the Rite of Initiation or [Baptism](#).

Severe Baptismal Preparation: **A few years of lectures [intense] to catechumens that expounded a creed-like formula.**

This was memorized and recited during the ceremony in response to an interrogation by the minister before the congregation.

The purpose of the interrogation & recitation of the baptismal creed was twofold:

First, for the candidate to properly confess the faith.

Second, for the congregation to verify that the candidate shared their faith.

6. Conversion to Christianity in the early centuries entailed a radical change of life and made one liable to persecution.

Often converts had to leave their career behind or radically alter their lifestyle.

Moreover, Christians were seen as politically seditious for worshipping a person crucified by the Roman Empire and for not worshipping the gods of Rome, including the Caesar.

While we often think of baptism as symbolic of spiritual life and death, in the early days of Christianity when Rome persecuted Christians, it was literally a matter of life and death.

Baptism, in short, was risky and life-changing, thus Christians wanted to ensure that candidates were fully aware of the significance of their choice.

We might view this rigorous process of preparing candidates as rigid or inhospitable. But in context, it appears responsible and pastorally sensitive, protecting people from a decision that could seriously disrupt and threaten their lives.

7. Creeds Curtail Confusion and Courts Communion

Perhaps the **most obvious function of a creed is to unify Christians and reduce confusion.**

A major emphasis of Jesus' and the Apostles' ministry is the oneness of the Church. Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one (John 17.21).

St. Luke observes that the post-Pentecost Church “had everything in common” (Acts 2:44).

St. Paul speaks of the Church as the “body of Christ” and variously enjoins his readers to be united (1 [Corinthians 12:12-28](#); [Ephesians 4:3-6](#)).

8. A major obstacle to this unity was the presence of false teachers and flawed gospels.

Jesus himself warned about this threat ([Matthew 24:24](#)), and

St. Paul is regularly concerned with false teachers ([Acts 20:29-31](#)) and false gospels (see [Galatians 1:6-9](#); [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)). In one famous passage, St. Paul describes the factionalism of the Church in Corinth, see 1 Corinthians 1:11-13

The rise of new leaders and teachers only increased after the apostles died. The growing pluralism of the Church was exacerbated by the proliferation of writings that circulated throughout the churches. How were early Christians to know which literature and which teachers were authentic and which ones were false?

Early Church Fathers like St. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130-200 AD) appeal to the “Rule of Faith”—a creed-like outline of the Church’s faith. He invoked it as the standard for right interpretation and identification of Scripture. These creedal summaries became very important for refuting false teachings and for determining the canon of Scripture.

This is why we recite the Creed after the readings and homily at Mass—to unite us in our understanding of Scripture and to prevent us from following false teachings.

We find St. Irenaeus prefacing his rehearsal of the Rule of Faith by highlighting its unifying function:

“The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith ... ”

9. Confession Is Crucial for Christianity

Why Christians formulated was for evangelization, education, and empowerment.

Christianity is a religion of the Word of God made flesh. It is the Word of God that creates the world, constitutes Israel, conceives Jesus Christ, and calls forth the Church.

The reason why doctrinal confession is so central to Christianity is because God's presence among us is as Word (John 1:1).

To be faithful to the Word, we must place a premium on our words, ensuring that they echo the Word that sounded in the beginning and dwelt among us.

Not only did Jesus come to the world as the Word, but he promised to give his followers the words to speak on his behalf when the world rejects their message (Luke 21:15).

At the very beginnings of the Church in Acts, in a number of instances Christians were called upon to a public profession of their faith. (Martyrdom of St. Stephen; before the council of Jewish leaders, he gave a statement of his beliefs; see 1 Pet. 3: 15).

Those who become Christian show their commitment and their honor for Christ, his apostles, and the martyrs by preserving the words they spoke, by making their own the apostolic profession of faith. Indeed, it is through words that the faith is faithfully passed down. For example, (Rom. 6: 17) speaks of believing the "pattern of doctrine" for salvation. St. Paul twice exhorts St. Timothy to hold fast to the "pattern of sound words" he was taught (2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 4:3).

10. Creeds, then, also remind us that our faith is a gift. They teach us that our faith is to be received, not revised. We cannot improve upon what God has said; we can only profess his Word to others. Creeds also situate us among the choir of confessors, prompting us to honor the martyrs and our spiritual ancestors by making the same profession.

11 The Creed presumes that there is a narrative framework to human history.

In other words, the Creed assumes that there is a plot to life, and that we are here for a reason." The Creed is God's story in miniature form or

as one theologian stated, “What the Scriptures say at length, the Creed says briefly”

The Creed affirms the truth from creation to Christ’s birth, death and resurrection, to the sending of the Holy Spirit, to the acts of the Church and finally the second coming of Christ

[SEE E.O.S. DIAGRAM, BIBLICAL EVIDENCE & EXPLANATION].

IT is a weekly reminder that our lives are part of a much larger cosmic drama. We are participants in the greatest story the world has ever known.

12. So why repeatedly say, “I believe” every week?

[The Creed doesn’t change and the likelihood that we have changed our mind concerning the Creed, week after month after year is slim.]

Christ reveals through his Church that there are two aspects of belief.

First, belief is something intellectual. It is “a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed” (CCC 150). In other words, we agree with all that the Church officially teaches.

Secondly, and what will prove to be more life transforming is “a personal adherence... to God.”

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger taught how the word “amen” can be understood as meaning to take one’s stand on something else.

When we recite the Creed, we are stating that we intellectually believe something the Church has taught us. Beyond this, it involves both reason and will by acknowledging both what the Church has taught concerning salvation history and the act of personally entrusting our life to God. [Accepting a Concept-Content; & The Content-Concept itself]

In short, by reciting the Creed, we are affirming in the statements that we make that we are totally entrusting our lives to Christ.

For example, when we say, “I believe in one God...” we are making a personal statement and not simply a theological declaration. We do believe that God exists, but we are also saying that our entire life is entrusted to God who created us and has a plan for our lives.

13. Finally, creeds remind us that the integrity of our faith is measured not on the strength of INNER FEELING OR ITS CONTEMPORARY / RELATIVE USEFULNESS, but on its correspondence to what has been revealed. We confess our faith using formula in order to discipline our speech & Behaviour so that it is faithful to the Word.

[14. CREEDS ARE A WAY OF COMING TO “KNOW” CHRIST, IN ORDER TO “LOVE” HIM AND “SERVE” HIM – THEY SUPPLEMENT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES – THEY CAN BECOME EXCELLENT SOURCES OF MEDITATION AND PRAYER]

LESSON 1: AT CREATION, GOD=VISIBLE & AFTER FALL = GOD VEILED

↓
(I) GOD REVEALS HIS-SELF (IN SCRIPTURE & TRADITION)
(IN LIFE HISTORY OF ISRAEL)

↓
(II) MAN RESPONDS IN FAITH [2 ASPECTS OF FAITH]

↙
ASPECT 1

FAITH - WHICH WE BELIEVE

= **CONTENTS** OF FAITH (NOUN)
= **CREED** [= **DOGMA**] = **Experience**
= GIVEN ONCE FOR ALL
(FOR **PROFESSION/CONFESSION**)

↘
ASPECT 2

FAITH - BY WHICH WE COME TO BELIEVE

= **ACT OF ACCEPTING** THE CONTENTS OF
FAITH [= **CREED/DOGMA**] (VERB)
= **SEEKS UNDERSTANDING** = **Expression**
= DEVELOPS DAY BY DAY [**DOCTRINES**]
(SEE STAGES OF FAITH BELOW)

(III) 3-STAGES OF FAITH

1. **FIDUCIARY**—ORDINARY FAITH (6 Philosophical Attributes)
 2. **SALVIFIC/CHRISTIAN** FAITH
 3. **CHARISMATIC** FAITH
-

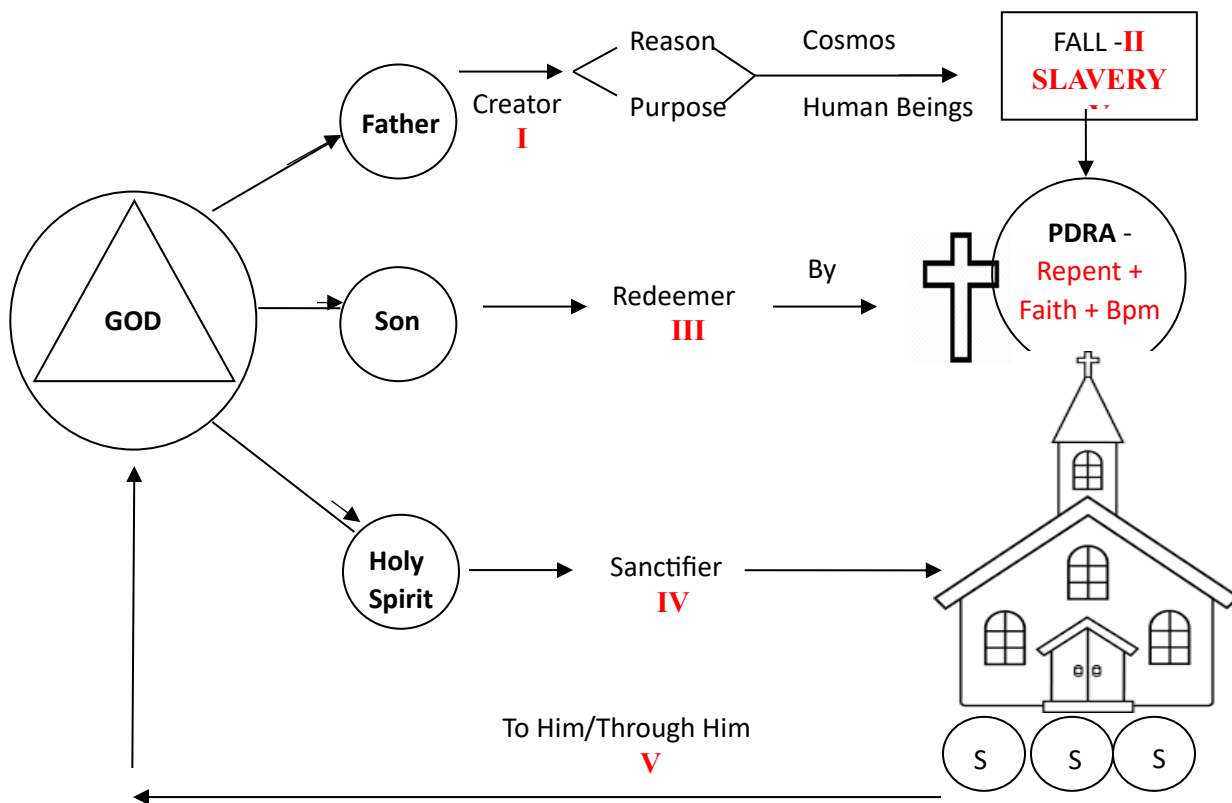
(IV) (DOF) = DEPOSIT OF THE CONTENTS OF FAITH = IN CHURCH

- **DUTY/FUNCTION OF CHURCH** [= **BOC (Body of Christ)** & **POG (People of God)**] =
GUARD + GUIDE + DISSEMINATE DOF [Based on Scripture & Tradition]
= **MAGISTERIUM** (TO TEACH CHRISTIAN THINKING & LIVING & WORSHIP TO RC
CHRISTIANS)
- **THEOLOGY'S** FUNCTION-TASK = **CONTEXTUALLY DEEPEN, WIDEN THE
UNDERSTANDING & LIVING OF DOF = UNDER MAGISTERIUM**

LESSON 2: CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW- WELTSCHAAUNG; EOS;

1. **The Content of our Faith**: This is known as the **Economy of Salvation (EOS)** (as seen in the flow chart) The Economy of God or the “Economy of Salvation” refers to the way God “manages” His household, the world, His plan unfolding FOR HUMANS, throughout the centuries.

Refer CCC: 236, 258, 1066, 1076, 1093



SSS = Sacred Scripture + Sanctifying Sacraments + Society of Saints

The above diagram illustrates how this plan unfolds itself in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the mission of the Son and the Spirit, which is continued in the mission of the Church. **(The three S's stand for Sacred Scripture, Sanctifying Sacraments and Sacred Society = Church = Body of Christ = People of God)**

The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine persons who are not three separate entities but one God IN 3 PERSONS. Thus, the Church **CONFESSES / PROFESSES**, following the New Testament **CREED**, "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". (Ref. Eph. 4:2-6)

BIBLICAL GUIDE TO ECONOMY OF SALVATION

I. CREATION: Gen. 1: 26-28, 31 // 2:7, 18, 20-25, **31**

II. FALL: Gen. 3:1-6:7// Rom 3:9-23// Jer. 17:9-10.

III. REDEMPTION: Jn 3:16//Mt 19:26//1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18//Col. 2:13-15// Eph 2:4-10// Acts 4:12 // 1Tim2:4-5 // Jn 15:5// Mt 19:26

IV. SALVATION – NOW: Rom 6:3-11// Mt 16:16// Jn 3:17-18 (Faith + Repent + Bpm)

V. SANCTIFICATION – [BACK TO GOD = 8 STEPS]: Jn 16:13// Jn 14:16-20// 1Jn 2:27// Col 1:18// Eph 5:23-27// Acts 20:26

VI. SANCTIFICATION – SACRAMENTS INDISPENSIBLE

1. **Baptism:** Every Gospel Contains it (& Jn 3:17-10):
2. **Confirmation:** Is 11:2-3// Gal 5:22-23// Acts 8:14-17, 19:2-5:
3. **Eucharist:** Every Gospel talks about it specially Jn 6:22-69:
4. **Penance:** Jn 20:23// Mt: 16:19:
5. **Priesthood:** Jer. 3:15, Hebrews, Luke 22: 19; Jn. 20:21-23
6. **Marriage:** Gen1&2 (Var. Verses); Tobit 8:4-9// Mt 19:1-12/// Mal 2:16 //Eph 5:21-6:4// Col 3:18-14:
7. **Anointing of the Sick:** James 5:14-17

*The diagram above is a **pictorial representation of the Creed.**

1) Who the Father is and what he has done for us [and what he is doing for us now]; **Seen in CCC Part -I, Section II, Chapter I, 1 Article, 7 paragraphs**

2) Who the Son is and what he has done for us [and what He is doing for us now]; **Seen in CCC Part -I, Section II, Chapter II, 6 Articles, 2-3 paragraphs/Article**

3) Who the holy Spirit is and what he has done for us and is still doing for us now [= Through the Church] **Seen in CCC Part -I, Section II, Chapter III, 5 Articles, Various paragraphs**

*The diagram above is a **pictorial representation of the Bible at the same time.**

The **entire Bible** very beautifully endorses God's love & plan of salvation. Starting with the 1st two chapters of **Genesis** which reveal **God's work of love as Creator of the cosmos & of humankind with a reason and purpose**; in **Gen. 3** we read about the **Fall of Man and God's merciful promise of redemption** – and a man chosen in **Gen. 12**: Abraham through whom he works out His plan of salvation.

In **Exodus-Pentateuch-Kings**, we see the beginnings, covenant-establishment and growth of a nation through which God wishes to work salvation His salvation to all the Nations

The **Book of the Prophets** deals with God's continuous encouragement & warnings through the prophets to live by the covenant, both through exhortation-warnings as well as through promises of the Messiah.

The NT ushers in man's Redemption through the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension (PDRA) of **Jesus Christ, Son of God and Redeemer**. All the four **Gospels** are theological-narratives of the Christ Event.

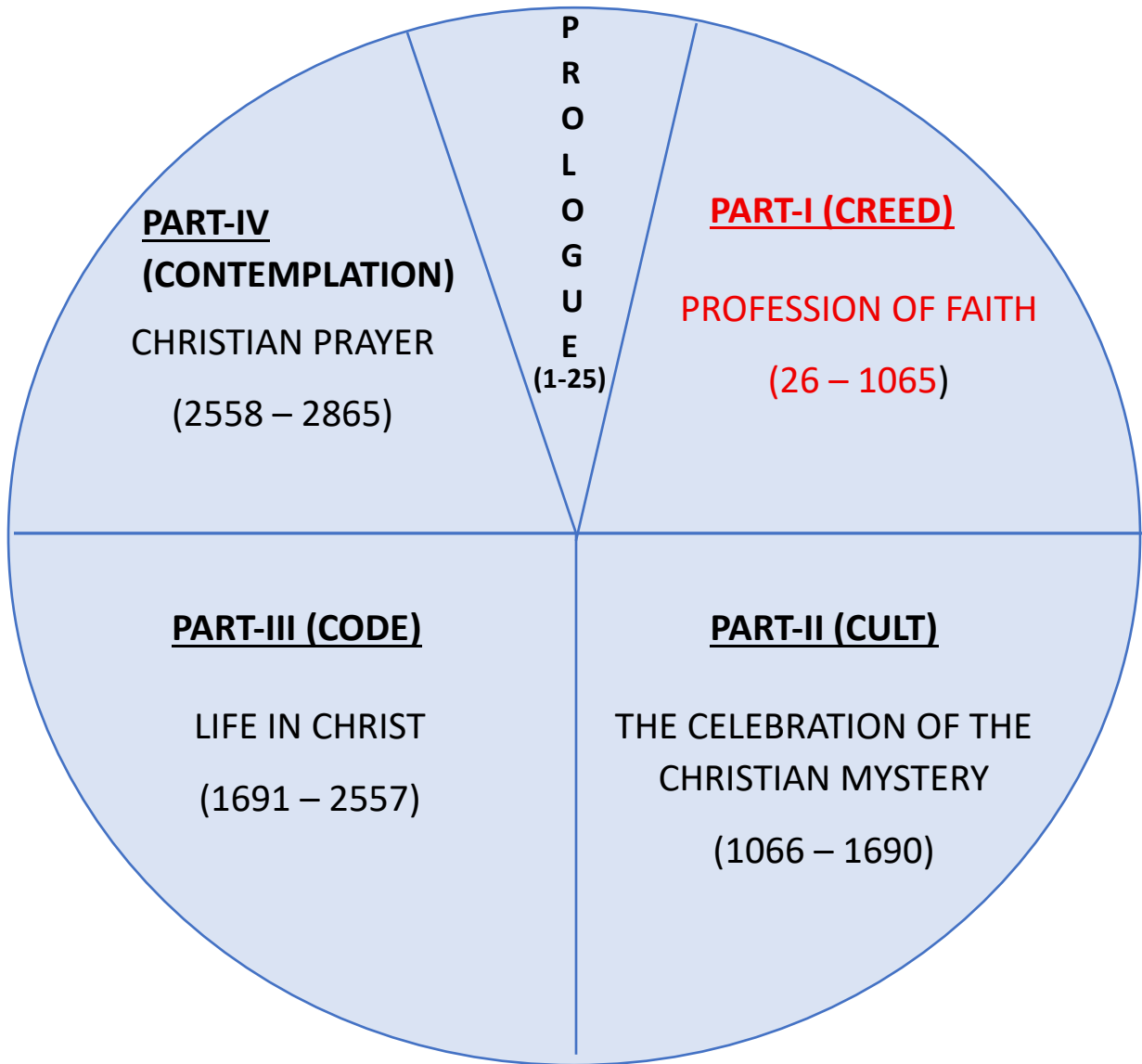
The Acts describe the birth and growth of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the **work of the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier-Paraclete & Guide**.

The various Epistles which follow are very significant in the growth of the Church as all have been written to correct errors, to set right prevailing misdemeanours among church members, to edify and encourage the fledgling Church, and to circulate-disseminate church doctrines fundamental to the Faith. They also address personal-relational-social issues in the light of the faith, resolve disputes within the church by its leaders through a church council and thereby set precedents for the Church down the ages.

Finally, in the **Book of Revelation**, we are given an encouraging glimpse of the New Jerusalem, the City of God, from whence we came and to which we hope to return, by obeying Jesus and following in His footsteps.

This schema covers the 3 Essential Elements of every Religion: Creed + Cult Code + Contemplation (= Prayer/Mystical Aspect) OR Doctrine + Discipline + Devotion (Public) + Devotion (Personal)

THE C.C.C-OVERALL STRUCTURE



NOTE: STRUCTURE OF THE CCC:

**FOUR PARTS OF CCC → 2 SECTIONS EACH → CHAPTERS IN EACH SECTION [NUMBER VARIES]
→ ARTICLE(S) [NUMBER VARIES] → PARAGRAPHS*** → SUB-SECTIONS###**

***** IN SOME ARTICLES ONLY /// SUB-SECTIONS### WITHIN ARTICLES AND PARAGRAPHS**

CCC – PART I – PROFESSION OF FAITH (CREED)

SECTION I (26 – 184)

= I BELIEVE – WE BELIEVE

CH. I – MANS CAPACITY FOR GOD (26/27 – 49)

*The Desire for God * Ways of Coming to Know God *Knowledge of GOD According to the Church * How can We Speak about God

CH. II – GOD COMES TO MEET MAN (50/51 – 141)

Articles 1-3: *Revelation of God * Transmission of Div. Revelation * Tradition & Scripture

CH. III – MAN's RESPONSE TO GOD (142/43 – 183)

Article 1 & 2: * I Believe (Obedience of Faith & Character of Faith) & *We Believe

SECTION II (185 – 1065)

= THE PROFESSION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

- THE CREEDS COMPARED (185 – 197)

CH. I – I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER (198 – 421)

1 Article – 7 Paragraphs

CH. II – I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST (422 – 682)

6 Articles – Var. No of paragraphs for each Article

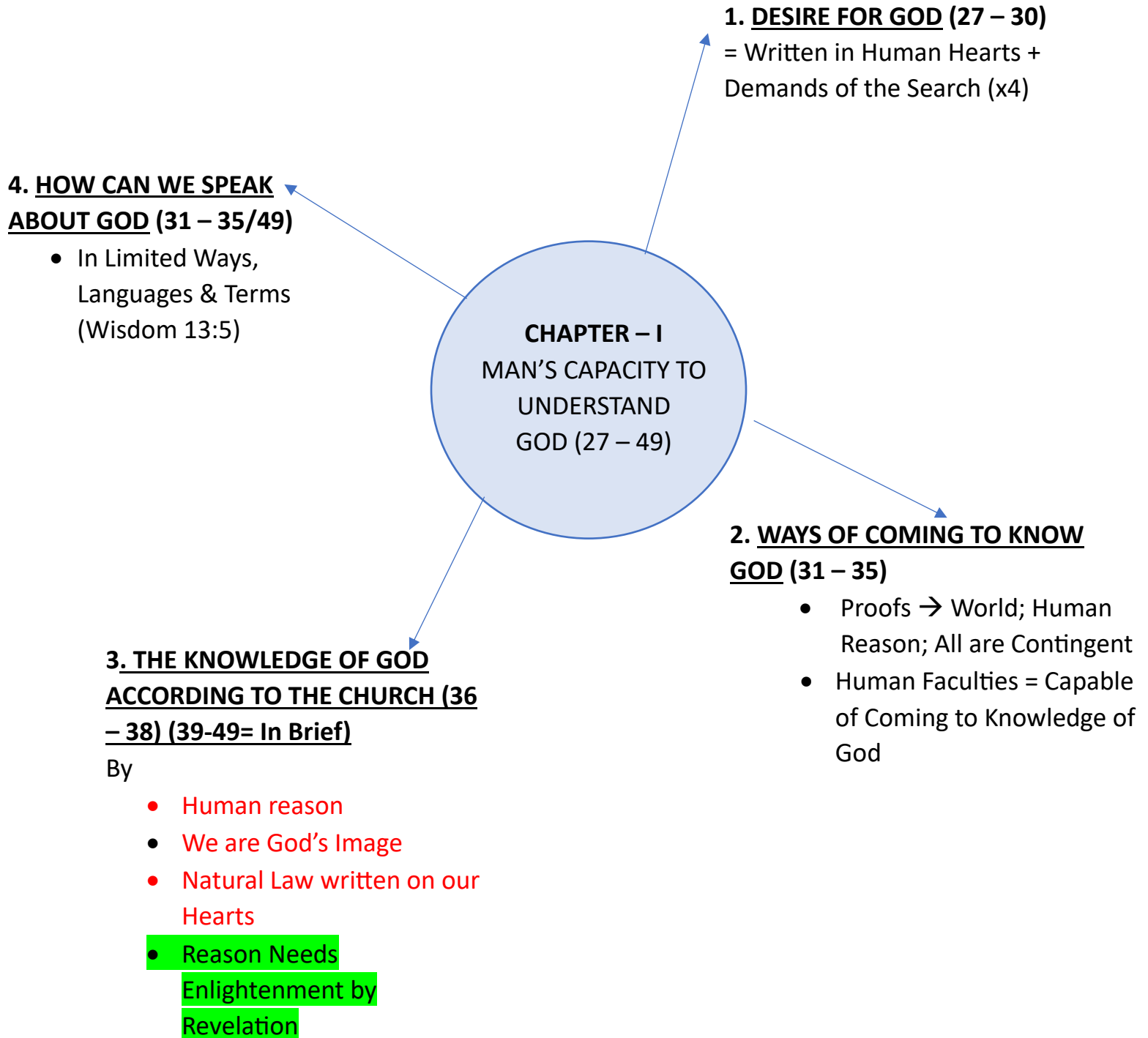
CH. III – I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (683 – 1065)

5 Articles – Var. No of paragraphs for each Article

CCC – PART I, SECTION – I, CH – I (27 – 49)

INTRODUCTION: 26

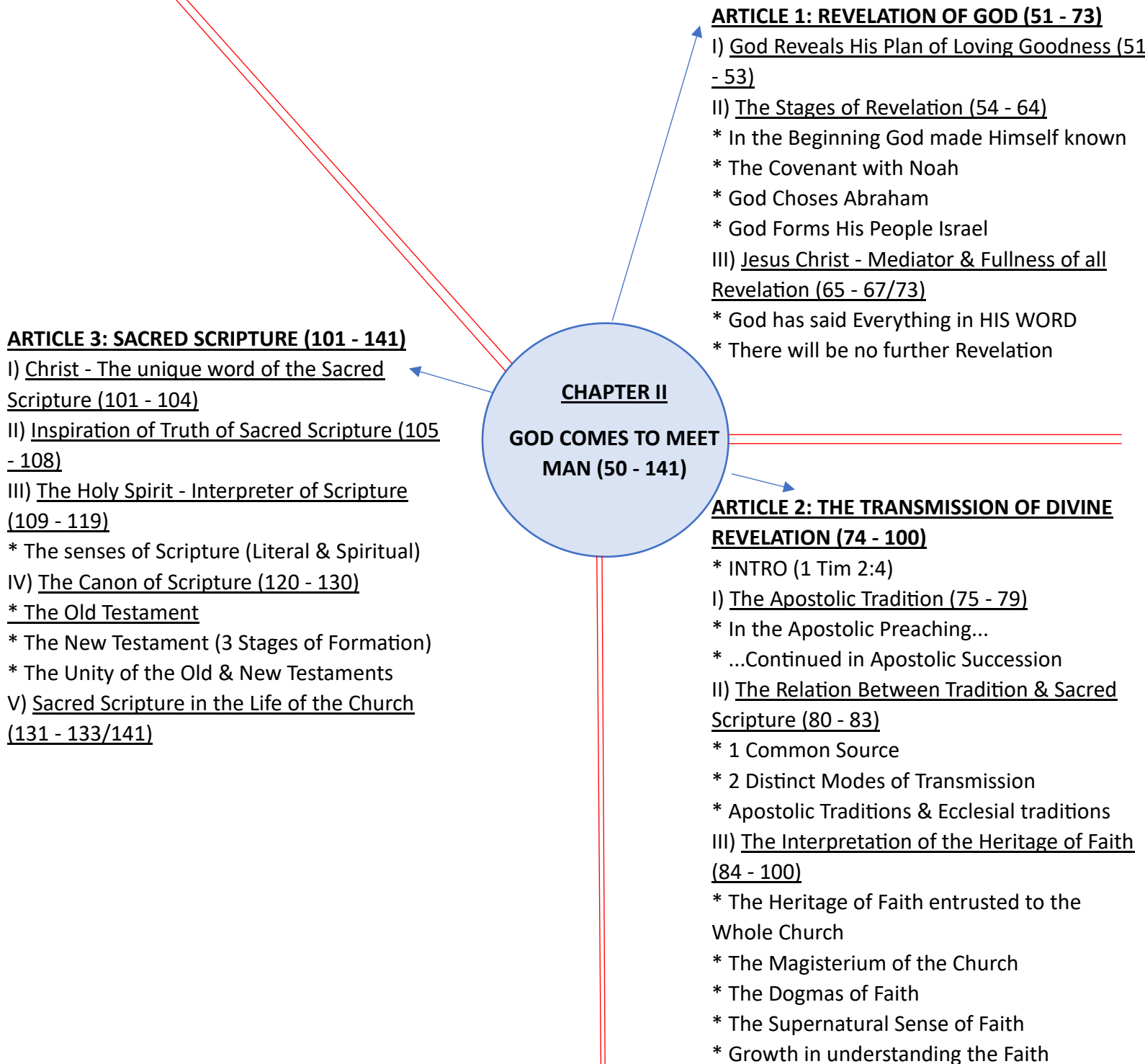
Search/Revelation/Response



CCC- PART I- SECTION I- CHAPTER- II

GOD COMES TO MEET MAN (50 - 141)

An order of knowledge, which man cannot arrive at by his own powers: the Order of Divine Revelation.



CCC - PART I, SECTION I, CHAPTER III

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD (142 - 184)

INTRO 142 & 143:

- * **God Reveals**, Addresses, Moves, Invites and Receives Man into His company,
- * **Man Submits** Intellect & Will to God, Assents to God, in obedience of Faith

ARTICLE 1: I BELIEVE (144 - 165)

1. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH (144 - 149)

- * Abraham the Father of all who Believe
- * Mary - Blessed is She who Believed

2. I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED (150 - 152)

- * To Believe in God alone * To Believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God * To Believe in the Holy Spirit

3) THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH (153 - 165)

- * Faith is a Grace
- * Faith is a Human Act * Faith & Understanding [= Faith is Certain + Faith seeks Understanding + Faith & Science] * The Freedom of Faith * The Necessity of Faith * Perseverance in Faith * Faith - Beginning of Eternal Life

CHAPTER – III MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD (144 - 184)

ARTICLE 2: WE BELIEVE (166 - 184)

- * INTRO 166 - 167: Individual & Communitarian Faith = Received/ Transmitted/ Mutually Enriched
- I) LORD LOOK UPON THE FAITH OF YOUR CHURCH (168 - 169)
- II) THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH (170 - 171)
- III) ONLY ONE FAITH (172 - 175/184)

(APOSTLES & NICENE CREED COMPARED)

THE CREDO

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,
our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sits at
the right hand of God the Father
almighty, from thence He shall come
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 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.

PART ONE: THE PROFESSION OF FAITH; SECTION TWO I. THE CREEDS
[INTRO]

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 [CHAPTERS]: "the first part [CHAPTER] speaks of the first divine Person and the **wonderful work of creation**; the next [CHAPTER] speaks of the second divine Person and **the mystery of his redemption of men**; the final part [CHAPTER] 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 Damasi¹¹ 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

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.

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 [ESSENCE MAKES A THING WHAT IT IS = WOODEN CHAIR; SUBSTANCE = THAT OUT OF WHICH SOMETHING IS MADE = WOOD]

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."⁸ 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.

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' glorification⁷⁰ 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**

[PRAYER] 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.*

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 **[SOVERIGN – NOT ANSWERABLE TO ANYONE]**

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?*

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).

And 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 rest¹⁸⁵ 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" (1 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.

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 [even cockroaches, mosquitos, rats, snakes, scorpions ... other venomous creepy-crawly creatures ... ??? !!!], 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 – [butterfly effect?!]. 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 creatures²⁰⁹ 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.*

→ → → 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 himself**",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 earth²⁴⁸ 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 CONCUISCENCE²⁵⁴ 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.*

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 action²⁹⁹ 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).

PART – I; SECTION – 2 OF THE CCC.

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).

ARTICLE 2: "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.

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

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

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

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" (1 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 Laodicaea 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.

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[OF HER OWN FREE WILL?].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 God¹⁶⁷ 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.

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 faith¹⁷⁴ 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".¹⁹⁸ 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 Law²¹⁰ 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 dignitas²¹⁵ (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 innocents²¹⁷ 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 sinners²³⁰ - 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 T

HE SPIRIT WHOM JESUS POSSESSED IN FULLNESS FROM HIS CONCEPTION COMES TO "REST ON HIM" [= A WITNESS/CONFIRMATION] TO ISRAEL.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 fulfils 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 kingdom".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 apostles²⁸⁹ 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.*

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 Gospels³¹⁶ and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption.

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 sinners³¹⁸--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 death³⁶¹ 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 promises³⁷⁵ 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.

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 REDEPTIVE 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".⁴³⁰ 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",⁴⁴³ 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".⁴⁴⁴

614 THIS SACRIFICE OF CHRIST IS UNIQUE; IT COMPLETES AND SURPASSES ALL OTHER SACRIFICES.⁴⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁴⁶

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 REDEMPITIVE 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" (1 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" (1 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" (1 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).

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 REST⁴⁶² AFTER THE FULFILMENT⁴⁶³ 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 killed⁴⁶⁷ 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 CHRIST'S DEATH HIS SOUL WAS SEPARATED FROM HIS FLESH, HIS ONE PERSON IS NOT ITSELF DIVIDED INTO TWO PERSONS; FOR THE HUMAN BODY AND SOUL OF CHRIST HAVE EXISTED IN THE SAME WAY FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS EARTHLY EXISTENCE, IN THE DIVINE PERSON OF THE WORD; AND IN DEATH, ALTHOUGH SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER, BOTH REMAINED WITH ONE AND THE SAME PERSON OF THE WORD.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).

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

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

638 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":⁶³⁰

"IT IS PRECISELY THESE HOLY SOULS, WHO AWAITED THEIR SAVIOUR IN ABRAHAM'S BOSOM, WHOM CHRIST THE LORD DELIVERED WHEN HE DESCENDED INTO HELL."⁶³¹

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.⁶³²

634 "THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED EVEN TO THE DEAD."⁶³³ 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."⁶³⁴ 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."⁶³⁵

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."⁶³⁶

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.

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.⁵⁰²

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.⁵⁰³

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".⁶¹¹

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!⁶¹²

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."⁶¹³

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".⁸¹⁵

ST. PAUL INSISTS ON THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S POWER⁸¹⁶ 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.⁸¹⁸

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."⁸¹⁷ "WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN."⁸¹⁸

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."⁸¹⁹

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."⁸²⁰

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 IN 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.⁵⁸¹

THE PHRASE "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES"⁵⁸² 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."⁵⁸³

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.'"⁵⁸⁴ 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.⁵⁸⁵

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."⁶⁵⁷

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."⁶⁵⁸

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"⁶⁵⁹ AND THEIR LIVES ARE SWEEPED 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."⁶⁶⁰

IN BRIEF

656 *Faith in the Resurrection has as its object an event which as 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).*

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 [NO ASCENDING CHRISTLOGY HERE]

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

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 Israel⁵⁶¹ 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 Church⁵⁶³ 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 earth⁵⁷⁴ 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

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

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.

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.

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

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 epiclesis.

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.

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

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 prayer^{[114](#)} 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

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 [ALL BAPTISMAL EFFECTS]

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.)

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

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.ⁿ¹⁸⁵

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: *mysterium* and *sacramentum*.

In later usage the term *sacramentum* emphasizes the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation which was indicated by the term *mysterium*.

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.

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).

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) 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 schism^{[270](#)} - 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

§26 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 [*Christifidelis laici*]

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 REFORMULATED 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).

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 must 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 Chnst'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 Neighbouring, 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 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.*

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).

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).

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.)

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

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).

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

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 DEFINITELY 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 kernel What 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[Jn. 6: 54]

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

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 tomorrow⁵⁸⁷

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

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

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 PURIFICATION⁵⁹² OR IMMEDIATELY,⁵⁹³-OR IMMEDIATE AND EVERLASTING DAMNATION. ⁵⁹⁴

AT THE EVENING OF LIFE, WE SHALL BE JUDGED ON OUR LOVE. ⁵⁹⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Apostles' Creed [c. 200 AD; 215 AD by Hippolytus]

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come 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 life everlasting.

Amen.

The (Original) Nicene Creed of 325

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages.
Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made,
of one essence with the Father by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven,
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.
And He was crucified for us under Pontus Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.
And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;
and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose
Kingdom shall have no end.
And in the Holy Spirit.
But as for those who say,
There was when He was not, and,
before being born He was not,
and that He came into existence out of nothing,
or who assert that the Son of God is from a different hypostasis or substance,
or is created, or is subject to alteration or change –
these the Catholic Church anathematizes.

**Following the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, the Creed
was further supplemented with the following:**

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,

Who proceeds from the Father;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets.

In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Nicene-Constantinople Creed (325 → 381 AD)

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

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

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

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

Amen.

X. Indulgences

1471 The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance.

What is an indulgence?

"An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints."⁸¹

"An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin."⁸² Indulgences may be applied to the living or the dead.

The punishments of sin

1472 To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the "eternal punishment" of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the "temporal punishment" of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.⁸³

1473 The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the "old man" and to put on the "new man."⁸⁴

In the Communion of Saints

1474 The Christian who seeks to purify himself of his sin and to become holy with the help of God's grace is not alone. "The life of each of God's children is joined in Christ and through Christ in a wonderful way to the life of all the other Christian brethren in the supernatural unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, as in a single mystical person."⁸⁵

1475 In the communion of saints, "a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things."⁸⁶ In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others. Thus recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin.

1476 We also call these spiritual goods of the communion of saints the Church's treasury, which is "not the sum total of the material goods which have accumulated during the course of the centuries. On the contrary the 'treasury of the Church' is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy."⁸⁷

1477 "This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body."⁸⁸

Obtaining indulgence from God through the Church

1478 An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of

these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity.⁸⁹

1479 Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.

CHAPTER FOUR

OTHER LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

Article 1

SACRAMENTALS

1667 "Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy."¹⁷¹

The characteristics of sacramentals

1668 Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops' pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls Baptism).

1669 Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a "blessing," and to bless.¹⁷² Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).¹⁷³

1670 Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and

dispose us to cooperate with it. "For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God."¹⁷⁴

Various forms of sacramentals

1671 Among sacramentals blessings (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father "with every spiritual blessing."¹⁷⁵ This is why the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.

1672 Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use. Among those blessings which are intended for persons - not to be confused with sacramental ordination - are the blessing of the abbot or abbess of a monastery, the consecration of virgins, the rite of religious profession and the blessing of certain ministries of the Church (readers, acolytes, catechists, etc.). the dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels, and vestments, bells, etc., can be mentioned as examples of blessings that concern objects.

1673 When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism. Jesus performed exorcisms and from him the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing.¹⁷⁶ In a simple form, exorcism is performed at the celebration of Baptism. the solemn exorcism, called "a major exorcism," can be performed only by a priest and with the permission of the bishop. the priest must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church. Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church. Illness, especially psychological illness, is a very different matter; treating this is the concern of medical science. Therefore, before an exorcism is performed, it is important to ascertain that one is dealing with the presence of the Evil One, and not an illness.¹⁷⁷

Popular piety

1674 Besides sacramental liturgy and sacramentals, catechesis must take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful. the religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals,^{[178](#)} etc.

1675 These expressions of piety extend the liturgical life of the Church, but do not replace it. They "should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them."^{[179](#)}

1676 Pastoral discernment is needed to sustain and support popular piety and, if necessary, to purify and correct the religious sense which underlies these devotions so that the faithful may advance in knowledge of the mystery of Christ.^{[180](#)} Their exercise is subject to the care and judgment of the bishops and to the general norms of the Church.

At its core the piety of the people is a storehouse of values that offers answers of Christian wisdom to the great questions of life. the Catholic wisdom of the people is capable of fashioning a vital synthesis.... It creatively combines the divine and the human, Christ and Mary, spirit and body, communion and institution, person and community, faith and homeland, intelligence and emotion. This wisdom is a Christian humanism that radically affirms the dignity of every person as a child of God, establishes a basic fraternity, teaches people to encounter nature and understand work, provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life. For the people this wisdom is also a principle of discernment and an evangelical instinct through which they spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the Church and when it is emptied of its content and stifled by other interests.^{[181](#)}