

Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Truths of Our Faith

Prologue

Why are we here? (1-3)

- To know, love, and serve God, that we might be happy with him forever in heaven.

Handing on the Faith (4-10)

- Catechesis: an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine . . . with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.

Structure of the Catechism (13-17)

- Part One: *The profession of faith*
 - God gives himself to us / we respond by faith (Section One)
 - Our profession of faith in one God: the almighty Father, the Creator; his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (Section Two)
- Part Two: *The sacraments of faith*
 - Liturgy (Section One)
 - The Seven Sacraments (Section Two)
- Part Three: *The life of faith*
 - Life in the Spirit (Section One)
 - Morality, virtues, sin, social justice, the Church
 - The Ten Commandments (Section Two)
- Part Four: *Prayer in the life of faith*
 - The meaning and importance of prayer in the life of believers (Section One)
 - The Lord's Prayer (Section Two)

Practical directions for using the Catechism (18-22)

- Paragraph numbers
- References
- Abbreviations

Above All – Charity (25)

- “All the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.”

Part One: The Profession of Faith

“I Believe” – Our Capacity for God / Our Desire for God

- Our desire for God is written in our hearts (26-30)
 - We are religious beings created by God and for God
 - “When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete” (St. Augustine)

Ways of coming to know God (31-35)

- Through God’s work of creation and the voice of conscience

Difficulties in coming to know God

- Disordered appetites; the consequences of original sin
- We can easily persuade ourselves that what we don’t want to be true is false or at least doubtful

Divine Revelation (50-73)

- God provides the answer that we ask concerning the meaning and purpose of life
- God reveals himself and gives himself to us
- God reveals himself to us gradually over time
 - Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, the prophets and finally and fully through his Son, Jesus Christian
 - There will be no further Revelation after Jesus

Apostolic Tradition (74-79)

- Apostolic preaching
 - Orally
 - In writing

The Relationship Between Tradition and Sacred Scripture (80-83)

- Sacred Scripture is the Word of God put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit
- Sacred Tradition is the Word of God in its entirety, which has been entrusted to the apostles and their successors by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit
 - Church traditions (small “t”): various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional traditions that can be retained, modified or abandoned under the guidance of the Church’s magisterium

The Magisterium of the Church (85-100)

- The living, teaching office of the Church's
- Not superior to the Word of God, but its servant
- It can teach only what has been handed on to it
 - "It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls (95, 100)

Sacred Scripture – the written Word of God (101-108)

- God is the author of Sacred Scripture; he inspired the human authors of the sacred books
 - "We must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures" (107b)
 - The Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living" (108a)

Interpretation of Sacred Scripture (109-119)

- Attention to the time and culture in which it was written, the literary genres in use at the time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current (110)
- "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written" (111b)
- Three criteria for interpreting Scripture (112-114)
 - Be especially attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture
 - Read the Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church
 - Be attentive to the analogy of the faith
- The two senses of Scripture (115-119)
 - The literal sense
 - The spiritual sense
 - The allegorical sense
 - The moral sense
 - The anagogical sense

The Canon of Scripture (120-141)

- Where did the Bible come from?
- The Church decided which books are to be included in the canon of Scripture (120)
 - 46 books for the Old Testament
 - 27 books for the New Testament

The Old Testament (121-123)

- An indispensable part of Sacred Scripture
- The Old Covenant was never revoked
- A storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers

The New Testament (124-127)

- In a wonderful way the NT hands on the power of God for our salvation and is the ultimate truth of God's Revelation
- The central object of the NT is Jesus Christ
- The Gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures
- We can distinguish three stages of the formation of the Gospels
 - The life and teachings of Jesus
 - The oral tradition
 - The written Gospels
- The early Church in the Acts of the Apostles
- The Epistles
- Revelation

The Unity of the Old and New (128-130)

- The NT lies hidden in the Old and the OT is revealed in the New
- The role of typology toward the fulfillment of the Divine plan

Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church (131-133)

- The Church “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,’ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ’” (133)

The Obedience of Faith (142-149)

- “To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself” (144)
- Abraham is a model of faithful obedience (145)
 - The “father of all who believe” (146)
- Our Blessed Mother is the perfect model (148-149)
 - “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word”

I Know Whom I have Believed (150-152)

- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (The Trinity)
 - . . . faith is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed (150)

The Characteristics of faith (153-165)

- Faith is a grace (gift)
 - Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him (153)
- Faith is a human act
 - “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.’” (155)
- Faith and understanding (156-159)
 - Why we believe these revealed truths: “. . . we believe ‘because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived’” (156)
- The freedom of faith (160)
 - “. . . nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will”
- The necessity of faith (161)
 - “. . . without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life . . .”
- Perseverance in faith (162)
 - “To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God . . . “

- Faith – the beginning of eternal life (163-165)
 - “Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below” (163)

We Believe (166-167)

- “The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith” (166b)

The Faith of the Church (168-169)

- “Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother” (169)

The Language of Faith (170-171)

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

Only One Faith (172-175)

- “Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God and Father” (172)

The Creeds (185-197)

- “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” (186b)
- “The Apostles’ Creed is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles’ faith” (194a)
- “The Nicene Creed is often more explicit and more detailed” (196)

Article 1 “I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH”

I Believe in God (198-231)

- “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’ (201)
- “We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal, infinite 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” (202b)
- “I Am who I Am” (268) (Exodus 3:13-15)
- God alone IS
 - “God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without origin and without end” (213b)
- God is truth – “God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive” (215)
- God is love – “God’s very being is love” (221)
- The implications of faith in one God (222-227)
 - It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty
 - It means living in thanksgiving
 - It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men
 - It means making good use of created things
 - It means trusting God in every circumstance, even in adversity

The Father (232-267)

- “Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their names, for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity” (233)
- “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’” (234a)
- “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, 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” (239)

- “The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the ‘consubstantial Trinity’. The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: ‘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’” (253)
- “The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. 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’” (260)

The Almighty (268-278)

- “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” (268)
- “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” (272)
- “Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God” (274)

The Creator (279-324 (301))

- “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” “of all things visible and invisible” (279)
- “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: ‘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” (282)
- “The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason, even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error” (286)

- “Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place” (289)
- “Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity” (292)
- “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” (294)
- “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, and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection” (298)
- “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” (299)