

KEY  
TEACHINGS  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC  
CHURCH



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# KEY TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## *The Mystery of God*

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### DIVINE REVELATION

#### **Who am I?**

Every human person has been created by God to live in friendship with him both here on earth and forever in heaven.

#### **How do we know this about ourselves?**

We know this because every human person desires to know and love God as well as desires that God know and love them. We also know this because God told us this about ourselves and about him.

#### **How did God tell us?**

First of all God tells us this through creation, which is the work of God; creation reflects the goodness and beauty of the Creator and tells us about God the Creator. Secondly, God came to us and told us, or revealed this about himself. He revealed this most fully by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, who became one of us and lived among us.

#### **What is faith?**

Faith is a supernatural gift from God that enables us to come to know God and all that he has revealed, and to respond to God with our whole heart and mind.

#### **What is a mystery of faith?**

The word *mystery* describes the fact that we can never fully comprehend or fully grasp God and his loving plan for us. We only know who God is and his plan for us through Divine Revelation.

## **What is Divine Revelation?**

Divine Revelation is God's free gift of making himself known to us and giving himself to us by gradually communicating in deeds and words his own mystery and his divine plan for humanity. God reveals himself so that we can live in communion with him and with one another forever.

## **What is Sacred Tradition?**

The word *tradition* comes from a Latin word meaning "to pass on." Sacred Tradition is the passing on of Divine Revelation by the Church through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## **What is the deposit of faith?**

The deposit of faith is the source of faith that we draw from in order to pass on God's Revelation. The deposit of faith is the unity of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition handed on by the Church from the time | of the Apostles.

## **What is the Magisterium?**

The Magisterium is the teaching authority and teaching office of the Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has the responsibility to authentically and accurately interpret the Word of God, both in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition. She does this to assure that her understanding of Revelation is faithful to the teaching of the Apostles.

## **What is a dogma of faith?**

A dogma of faith is a truth taught by the Church as revealed by God and to which we are called to give our assent of mind and heart.

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# **SACRED SCRIPTURE**

## **What is Sacred Scripture?**

The words *sacred scripture* come from two Latin words meaning "holy writings." Sacred Scripture is the collection of all the writings God has inspired authors to write in his name.

## **What is the Bible?**

The word *bible* comes from a Greek word meaning "book." The Bible is the collection of the forty-six books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament named by the Church as all the writings God has inspired human authors to write in his name.

## **What is the canon of Scripture?**

The word *canon* comes from a Greek word meaning "measuring rod," or standard by which something is judged. The canon of Scripture is the list of books that the Catholic Church has identified and teaches to be the inspired Word of God.

## **What is biblical inspiration?**

Biblical inspiration is a term that describes the Holy Spirit guiding the human writers of Sacred Scripture so that they faithfully and accurately communicate the Word of God.

## **What is the Old Testament?**

The Old Testament is the first main part of the Bible. It is the forty-six books inspired by the Holy Spirit, written before the birth of Jesus and centered on the Covenant between God and his people, Israel, and the promise of the Messiah or Savior. The Old Testament is divided into the Torah/Pentateuch, historical books, wisdom literature, and writings of the prophets.

## **What is the Torah?**

The Torah is the Law of God that was revealed to Moses. The written Torah is found in the first five books of the Old Testament, which are called the "Torah" and the "Pentateuch."

## **What is the Pentateuch?**

The word *pentateuch* means "five containers." The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Old Testament, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

## **What is the Covenant?**

The Covenant is the solemn agreement of fidelity that God and the people of God freely entered into. It was renewed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the new and everlasting Covenant.

## **What are the historical books of the Old Testament?**

The historical books tell about the fidelity and infidelity of God's people to the Covenant and about the consequences of those choices.

## **What are the Wisdom writings of the Old Testament?**

The Wisdom writings are the seven books of the Old Testament that contain inspired practical advice and common-sense guidelines for living the Covenant and the Law of God. They are the Book of Job, Book of Psalms, Book of Ecclesiastes, Book of Wisdom, Book of Proverbs, Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and Song of Songs.

## **What are the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament?**

The word prophet comes from a Greek word meaning "those who speak before others." The biblical prophets were those people God has chosen to speak in his name. The writings of the prophets are the eighteen books of the Old Testament that contain the message of the prophets to God's people. They remind God's people of God's unending fidelity to them and of their responsibility to be faithful to the Covenant.

## **What is the New Testament?**

The New Testament is the second main part of the Bible. It is the twenty-seven books inspired by the Holy Spirit and written in apostolic times that center on Jesus Christ and his saving work among us. The main parts of the New Testament are the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the twenty-one New Testament epistles, or letters, and the Book of Revelation.

## **What are the Gospels?**

The word *gospel* comes from a Greek word meaning “good news.” The Gospel is the Good News of God’s loving plan of Salvation, revealed in the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. The Gospels are the four written accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The four Gospels occupy a central place in Sacred Scripture because Jesus Christ is their center.

## **What is an epistle?**

The word *epistle* comes from a Greek word meaning “message or letter.” Epistles are a longer, more formal type of letter. Some of the letters in the New Testament are epistles.

## **What are the Pauline epistles and letters?**

The Pauline epistles and letters are the thirteen letters in the New Testament attributed to Saint Paul the Apostle.

## **What are the Catholic Letters?**

The Catholic Letters are the seven New Testament letters that bear the names of the Apostles John, Peter, Jude, and James, and which were written to the universal Church rather than to a particular Church community

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# **THE HOLY TRINITY**

## **Who is the Mystery of the Holy Trinity?**

The Holy Trinity is the mystery of one God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. It is the central mystery of the Christian faith.

## **Who is God the Father?**

God the Father is the first Person of the Holy Trinity.

## **Who is God the Son?**

God the Son is Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is the only begotten Son of the Father who took on flesh and became one of us without giving up his divinity.

## **Who is God the Holy Spirit?**

God the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and Son. He is the Advocate, or Paraclete, sent to us by the Father in the name of his Son, Jesus.

## **What are the divine missions, or the works of God?**

The divine missions are the particular works of God attributed to each of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The work of creation is attributed to the Father, the work of Salvation is attributed to the Son, and the work of sanctification, or our holiness, is attributed to the Holy Spirit.

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## **DIVINE WORK OF CREATION**

### **What is the divine work of creation?**

Creation is the work of God bringing into existence everything and everyone, seen and unseen, out of love and without any help.

### **Who are angels?**

Angels are spiritual creatures who do not have bodies as humans do. Angels give glory to God without ceasing and sometimes serve God by bringing his message to people.

### **Who is the human person?**

“The dignity of the human person is in their creation in the image and likeness of God.” (See Genesis 1:27.) This dignity is fulfilled in the vocation to a life of happiness with God.

### **What is the soul?**

Our soul is the spiritual part of who we are. It is immortal; it never dies. Our soul is our innermost being, that which bears the imprint of the image of God.

### **What is the intellect?**

Our intellect is an essential power of our soul. It is the power to know God, ourselves, and others; it is the power to understand the order of things established by God.

### **What is free will?**

Free will is an essential quality of the soul. It is the God-given ability and power to recognize him as part of our lives and to choose to center our lives around him as well as to choose between good and evil. By free will, the human person is capable of directing himself toward his true good, namely, life in communion with God.

### **What is Original Sin?**

Original sin is the sin of Adam and Eve by which they choose evil over obedience to God and by doing so lost the state of original holiness for themselves for all their descendants. As a result of original sin, death, sin, and suffering entered the world.

### **What is the Annunciation?**

The Annunciation is the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she was chosen by God to become the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **What is the Incarnation?**

The word *incarnation* comes from a Latin word meaning “take on flesh.” The term Incarnation is the fact that the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, truly became human while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man.

### **What is the Paschal Mystery?**

The Paschal Mystery is the saving events of the Passion, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension of Jesus Christ; the passing over of Jesus from death into a new and glorious life; the name we give to God’s plan of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

### **What is Salvation?**

The word *salvation* comes from a Latin word meaning “to save.” Salvation is the saving, or deliverance, of humanity from the power of sin and death through Jesus Christ “who died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). All Salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church, which is his Body.

### **What is the Resurrection?**

The Resurrection is the historical fact of Jesus being raised from the dead to a new glorified life after his death on the cross and burial in the tomb.

### **What is the Ascension**

The Ascension is the return of the Risen Christ in glory to his Father, to the world of the divine.

### **What is the Second Coming of Christ?**

The Second Coming of Christ is the return of Christ in glory at the end of time to judge the living and the dead; the fulfillment of God’s plan in Christ.

### **What does it mean that Jesus is Lord?**

The word *lord* means “master, ruler, a person of authority” and is used in the Old Testament to name God. The designation, or title, “Jesus, the Lord” expresses that Jesus is truly God.

## **What does it mean that Jesus is the Messiah?**

The word *messiah* is a Hebrew term meaning “anointed one.” Jesus Christ is the Anointed One, the Messiah, who God promised to send to save people. Jesus is the Savior of the world.

## *The Mystery of the Church*

### **What is the Church?**

The word *church* means “convocation, those called together.” The Church is the sacrament of Salvation—the sign and instrument of our reconciliation and communion with God the Holy Trinity and with one another. The Church is the Body of Christ, the people God the Father has called together in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **What is the central work of the Church?**

The central work of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel, or Good News, of Jesus Christ and to invite all people to come to know and believe in him and to live in communion with him. We call this work of the Church “evangelization,” a word that comes from a Greek word that means “to tell good news.”

### **What is the Body of Christ?**

The Body of Christ is an image for the Church used by Saint Paul the Apostle that teaches that all the members of the Church are one in Christ, who is the Head of the Church, and that all members have a unique and vital work in the Church.

### **Who are the People of God?**

The new People of God are those the Father has chosen and gathered in Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the Church. All people are invited to belong to the People of God and to live as one family of God.

### **What is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?**

The Temple of the Holy Spirit is a New Testament image used to describe the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church and within the hearts of the faithful.

### **What is the Communion of Saints?**

The Communion of Saints is the communion of holy things and holy people that make up the Church. It is the communion, or unity, of all the faithful, those living on earth, those being purified after death, and those enjoying life everlasting and eternal happiness with God, the angels, and Mary and all the saints.

## **What are the Marks of the Church?**

The Marks of the Church are the four attributes and essential characteristics of the Church and her mission, namely, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

## **Who are the Apostles?**

The word *apostle* comes from a Greek word meaning “to send away.” The Apostles were those disciples chosen and sent by Jesus to preach the Gospel and to make disciples of all people.

## **Who are the “Twelve”?**

The “Twelve” is the term that identifies the Apostles chosen by Jesus before his death and Resurrection. “The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him” (Matthew 10:2–4). The Apostles Matthias and Paul were chosen after Jesus’ Ascension.

## **What is Pentecost?**

Pentecost is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church as promised by Jesus; it marks the beginning of the work of the Church.

## **Who are the ordained ministers of the Church?**

The ordained ministers of the Church are those baptized men who are consecrated in the Sacrament of Holy Orders to serve the whole Church. Bishops, priests, and deacons are the ordained ministers of the Church and make up the clergy.

## **How do the pope and other bishops guide the Church in her work?**

Christ, the Head of the Church, governs the Church through the pope and the college of bishops in communion with him. The pope is the bishop of Rome and the successor of Saint Peter the Apostle. The pope, the Vicar of Christ, is the visible foundation of the unity of the whole Church. The other bishops are the successors of the other Apostles and are the visible foundation of their own particular Churches. The Holy Spirit guides the pope alone, and the college of bishops working together with the pope, to teach the faith and moral doctrine without error. This grace of the Holy Spirit is called *infallibility*.

## **What is the consecrated life?**

The consecrated life is a state of life for those baptized who promise or vow to live the Gospel by means of professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in a way of life approved by the Church. The consecrated life is also known as the religious life.

## **Who are the laity?**

The laity (or laypeople) are all the baptized who have not received the Sacrament of Holy Orders nor have promised or vowed to live the consecrated life. They are called to be witnesses to Christ at the very heart of the human community.

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## **THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

### **What is Mary's role in God's loving plan for humanity?**

Mary has a unique role in God's plan of Salvation for humanity. For this reason she was full of grace from the first moment of her conception, or existence. God chose Mary to be the mother of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is truly God and truly man. Mary is the Mother of God, the Mother of Christ, and the Mother of the Church. She is the greatest saint of the Church.

### **What is the Immaculate Conception?**

The Immaculate Conception is the unique grace given to Mary that totally preserved her from the stain of all sin from the very first moment of her existence, or conception, in her mother's womb and throughout her life.

### **What is the perpetual virginity of Mary?**

The perpetual virginity of Mary is a term that described the fact that Mary was always a virgin. She was virgin before the conception of Jesus, during his birth, and remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus her whole life.

### **What is the Assumption of Mary?**

At the end of her life on earth, the Blessed Virgin Mary was taken body and soul into heaven, where she shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection. Mary, the Mother of the Church, hears our prayers and intercedes for us with her Son. She is an image of the heavenly glory in which we all hope to share when Christ, her Son, comes again in glory.

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## **LIFE EVERLASTING**

### **What is eternal life?**

Eternal life is life after death. At death the soul is separated from the body. In the Apostles' Creed we profess faith in "the life everlasting." In the Nicene Creed we profess faith in "the life of the world to come."

### **What is the particular judgment?**

The particular judgment is the assignment given to our souls at the moment of our death to our final destiny based on what we have done in our lives.

**What is the Last Judgment?**

The Last Judgment is the judgment at which all the humans will appear in their own bodies and give an account of their deeds. At the Last Judgment Christ will show his identity with the least of his brothers and sisters.

**What is the beatific vision?**

The beatific vision is seeing God face-to-face in heavenly glory.

**What is heaven?**

Heaven is eternal life and communion with the Holy Trinity. It is the supreme state of happiness of living with God forever for which he created us.

**What is the Kingdom of God?**

The Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven, is the image used by Jesus to describe all people and creation living in communion with God. The Kingdom of God will be fully realized when Christ comes again in glory at the end of time.

**What is purgatory?**

Purgatory is the opportunity after death to purify and strengthen our love for God before we enter heaven.

**What is hell?**

Hell is the immediate and everlasting separation from God and the saints.

## *Celebration of the Christian life and Mystery*

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**LITURGY AND WORSHIP****What is worship?**

Worship is the adoration and honor given to God. The Church worships God publicly in the celebration of the liturgy. The liturgy is the Church's worship of God. It is the work of the whole Christ, Head and Body. In the liturgy the mystery of Salvation in Christ is made present by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**What is the liturgical year?**

The liturgical year is the cycle of seasons and great feasts that make up the Church year of worship. The main seasons of the Church year are Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time.

### **What are the sacraments?**

The sacraments are seven signs of God's love and the main liturgical actions of the Church through which the faithful are made sharers in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The sacraments are effective signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is shared with us.

### **What are the Sacraments of Christian Initiation?**

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. These three sacraments are the foundation of every Christian life. "Baptism is the beginning of new life in Christ; Confirmation is its strengthening; the Eucharist nourishes the faithful for their transformation into Christ."

### **What is the Sacrament of Baptism?**

Through Baptism we are reborn into new life in Christ. We are joined to Jesus Christ, become members of the Church, and are reborn as God's children. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and original sin and our personal sins are forgiven. Baptism marks us indelibly and forever as belonging to Christ. Because of this, Baptism can be received only once.

### **What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?**

Confirmation strengthens the graces of Baptism and celebrates the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation also imprints a spiritual or indelible character on the soul and can be received only once.

### **What is the Sacrament of the Eucharist?**

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. In the Eucharist the faithful join with Christ to give thanksgiving, honor, and glory to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of the priest, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

### **What is the obligation of the faithful to participate in the Eucharist?**

The faithful have the obligation to participate in the Eucharist on Sundays and holy days of obligation. Sunday is the Lord's Day. Sunday, the day of the Lord's Resurrection, is "the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year." Regular participation in the Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion is vital to the Christian life. In the Eucharist we receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

### **What is the Blessed Sacrament?**

The Blessed Sacrament is another name for the Eucharist. The term is often used to identify the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle.

### **What is the Mass?**

The Mass is the main celebration of the Church at which we gather to listen to the Word of God (Liturgy of the Word) and through which we are made sharers in the saving death and Resurrection of Christ and give praise and glory to the Father (Liturgy of the Eucharist).

### **What are the Sacraments of Healing?**

Penance and Anointing of the Sick are the two Sacraments of Healing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ the Physician's work of Salvation and healing of the members of the Church is continued.

### **What is the Sacrament of Penance, or Reconciliation?**

The Sacrament of Penance is one of the two Sacraments of Healing through which we receive God's forgiveness for the sins we have committed after Baptism.

### **What is confession?**

Confession is the telling of sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Penance. This act of the penitent is an essential element of the Sacrament of Penance. Confession is also another name for the Sacrament of Penance.

### **What is the seal of confession?**

The seal of confession is the obligation of the priest to never reveal to anyone what a penitent has confessed to him.

### **What is contrition?**

Contrition is sorrow for sins that includes the desire and commitment to make reparation for the harm caused by our sin and the purpose of amendment not to sin again. Contrition is an essential element of the Sacrament of Penance.

### **What is a penance?**

A penance is a prayer or act of kindness that shows we are truly sorry for our sins and that helps us repair the damage caused by our sin. Accepting and doing our penance is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance.

### **What is absolution?**

Absolution is the forgiveness of sins by God through the ministry of the priest.

### **What is the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick?**

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is one of the two Sacraments of Healing. The grace of this sacrament strengthens our faith and trust in God when we are seriously ill, weakened by old age, or dying. The faithful may receive this sacrament each time they are seriously ill or an illness gets worse.

**What is Viaticum?**

Viaticum is the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, received as food and strength for a dying person's journey from life on earth through death to eternal life.

**What are the Sacraments at the Service of Communion?**

Holy Orders and Matrimony are the two Sacraments at the Service of Communion. These sacraments bestow a particular work, or mission, on certain members of the Church to serve to build up the People of God.

**What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders?**

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is one of the two Sacraments at the Service of Communion. It is the sacrament in which baptized men are consecrated as bishops, priests, or deacons to serve the whole Church in the name and person of Christ.

**Who is a bishop?**

A bishop is a priest who receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. He is a successor of the Apostles and shepherds a particular church entrusted to him by means of teaching, leading divine worship, and governing the Church as Jesus did.

**Who is a priest?**

A priest is a baptized man who has received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Priests are coworkers with their bishops, who have the ministry of "authentically teaching the faith, celebrating divine worship, above all the Eucharist, and guiding their Churches as true pastors."

**Who is a deacon?**

A deacon is ordained to assist bishops and priests. He is not ordained to the priesthood but to a ministry of service to the Church.

**What is the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

The Sacrament of Matrimony is one of the two Sacraments at the Service of Communion. In the Sacrament of Matrimony a baptized man and a baptized woman dedicate their lives to the Church and to one another in a lifelong bond of faithful life-giving love. In this sacrament they receive the grace to be a living sign of Christ's love for the Church.

**What are the sacramentals of the Church?**

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church. They include blessings, prayers, and certain objects that prepare us to participate in the sacraments and make us aware of and help us respond to God's loving presence in our lives.

### **Why was the human person created?**

The human person was created to give honor and glory to God and to live a life of beatitude with God here on earth and forever in heaven.

### **What is the Christian moral life?**

The baptized have new life in Christ in the Holy Spirit. They respond to the “desire for happiness that God has placed in every human heart” by cooperating with the grace of the Holy Spirit and living the Gospel. “The moral life is a spiritual worship that finds its nourishment in the liturgy and celebration of the sacraments.”

### **What is the way to happiness revealed by Jesus Christ?**

Jesus taught that the Great Commandment of loving God above all else and our neighbor as ourselves is the path to happiness. It is the summary and heart of the Commandments and all of God’s law.

### **What are the Ten Commandments?**

The Ten Commandments are the laws of the Covenant that God revealed to Moses and the Israelites on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are also known as the Decalogue, or “Ten Words.” They are the “privileged expression of the natural law,” which is written on the hearts of all people.

### **What are the Beatitudes?**

The Beatitudes are the teachings of Jesus that summarize the path to true happiness, the Kingdom of God, which is living in communion and friendship with God, and with Mary and all the saints. The Beatitudes guide us in living as disciples of Christ by keeping our life focused and centered on God.

### **What is the New Commandment?**

The New Commandment is the commandment of love that Jesus gave his disciples. Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should also love one another” (John 13:34).

### **What are the Works of Mercy?**

The word *mercy* comes from a Hebrew word pointing to God’s unconditional love and kindness at work in the world. Human works of mercy are acts of loving kindness by which we reach out to people in their corporal and spiritual needs.

## **What are the Precepts of the Church?**

Precepts of the Church are specific responsibilities that concern the moral and Christian life united with the liturgy and nourished by it.

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## **HOLINESS OF LIFE AND GRACE**

### **What is holiness?**

Holiness is the state of living in communion with God. It designates both the presence of God, the Holy One, with us and our faithfulness to him. It is the characteristic of a person who is in right relationship with God, with people, and with creation.

### **What is grace?**

Grace is the gift of God sharing his life and love with us. Categories of grace are sanctifying grace, actual grace, charisms, and sacramental graces.

### **What is sanctifying grace?**

The word *sanctifying* comes from a Latin word meaning “to make holy.” Sanctifying grace is a gratuitous gift of God, given by the Holy Spirit, as a remedy for sin and the source of holiness.

### **What is actual grace?**

Actual graces are the God-given divine helps empowering us to live as his adopted daughters and sons.

### **What are charisms?**

Charisms are gifts or graces freely given to individual Christians by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of building up the Church.

### **What are sacramental graces?**

Sacramental graces are the graces of each of the sacraments that help us live out our Christian vocation.

### **What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are graces that strengthen us to live our Baptism, our new life in Christ. They are wisdom, understanding, right judgment (or counsel), courage (or fortitude), knowledge, reverence (or piety), wonder and awe (or fear of the Lord).

### **What are the Fruits of the Holy Spirit?**

The twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit are visible signs and effects of the Holy Spirit at work in our life. They are charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

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## THE VIRTUES

### **What are virtues?**

The virtues are spiritual powers or habits or behaviors that help us do what is good. The Catholic Church speaks of theological virtues, moral virtues, and cardinal virtues.

### **What are the theological virtues?**

The theological virtues are the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity (love). These virtues are “gifts from God infused into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of attaining eternal life” (CCC 1813).

### **What are the moral virtues?**

The moral virtues are “firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life” (CCC 1804).

### **What are the cardinal virtues?**

The cardinal virtues are the four moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are called the cardinal virtues because all of the moral virtues are related to and grouped around them.

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## MORAL EVIL AND SIN

### **What is moral evil?**

Moral evil is the harm we willingly inflict on one another and on God’s good creation.

### **What is conscience?**

The word *conscience* comes from a Latin word meaning “to be conscious of guilt.” Conscience is that part of every human person that helps us judge whether a moral act is in accordance or not in accordance with God’s law; our conscience moves us to do good and avoid evil.

### **What is temptation?**

Temptation is everything, either within us or outside us, that tries to move us from doing something good that we know we can and should do and to do or say something we know is contrary to the will of God. Temptation is whatever tries to move us away from living a holy life.

## **What is sin?**

Sin is freely and knowingly doing or saying what we know is against the will of God and the Law of God. Sin sets itself against God's love and turns our hearts away from his love. The Church speaks of mortal sin, venial sin, and capital sins.

## **What is mortal sin?**

A mortal sin is a serious, deliberate failure in our love and respect for God, our neighbor, creation, and ourselves. It is knowingly and willingly choosing to do something that is gravely contrary to the Law of God. The effect of mortal sin is the loss of sanctifying grace and, if unrepented, mortal sin brings eternal death.

## **What are venial sins?**

Venial sins are sins that are less serious than a mortal sin. They weaken our love for God and for one another and diminish our holiness.

## **What are capital sins?**

Capital sins are sins that are at the root of other sins. The seven capital sins are false pride, avarice, envy, anger, gluttony, lust, and sloth.

# *Christian Prayer*

## **What is prayer?**

Prayer is conversation with God. It is talking and listening to him, raising our minds and hearts to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What is the prayer of all Christians?

## **The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, is the prayer**

of all Christians. It is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples and gave to the Church. The Lord's Prayer is "a summary of the whole Gospel." Praying the Lord's Prayer "brings us into communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ" and develops "in us the will to become like [Jesus] and to place our trust in the Father as he did."

## **What are the traditional expressions of prayer?**

The traditional expressions of prayer are vocal prayer, the prayer of meditation, and the prayer of contemplation.

## **What is vocal prayer?**

Vocal prayer is spoken prayer; prayer using words said aloud or in the quiet of one's heart.

## **What is the prayer of meditation?**

Meditation is a form of prayer in which we use our minds, hearts, imaginations, emotions, and desires to understand and follow what the Lord is asking us to do.

**What is the prayer of contemplation?**

Contemplation is a form of prayer that is simply being with God.

What are the traditional forms of prayer?

**The traditional forms of prayer are the prayer**

of adoration and blessing, the prayer of thanksgiving, the prayer of praise, the prayer of petition, and the prayer of intercession.

**What are devotions?**

Devotions are part of the prayer life of the Church and of the baptized.

They are acts of communal or individual prayer that surround and arise out of the celebration of the liturgy.