



KEY
TEACHINGS
OF THE
CATHOLIC
CHURCH



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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 person desires to know and love God and wants God to know and love them.

How did God tell us?

First of all, God tells us this through all he has created. Creation reflects God's goodness and beauty and tells us about him. Second, God came to us and told us 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 know God and all that he has revealed, and to respond to him 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.

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.

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.

What is biblical inspiration?

Biblical inspiration is a term that describes the Holy Spirit guiding the human authors 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.

What is the Covenant?

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

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.

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 in Jesus Christ. The four Gospels occupy a central place in Sacred Scripture because Jesus Christ is their center.

THE HOLY TRINITY

Who is the Mystery of the Holy Trinity?

The Holy Trinity is the mystery of One God in Three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and 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.

DIVINE WORK OF CREATION

What is the divine work of creation?

Creation is the work of God bringing into existence everything and everyone, visible and invisible, 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 human person is uniquely created in the image and likeness of God. Human dignity is fulfilled in the vocation to a life of happiness with God.

What is the soul?

The soul is the spiritual part of a person which never dies. The soul is the innermost being, that which bears the imprint of the image of God.

What is the intellect?

The intellect is an essential power of the soul. It is the power to know God, yourself, 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 power to recognize God as part of our lives and to choose between good and evil.

What is Original Sin?

Original Sin is the sin of Adam and Eve by which they chose evil over obedience to God. As a result of Original Sin, death, sin, and suffering entered into the world.

JESUS CHRIST

What is the Annunciation?

The Annunciation is the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that God chose her to be 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 Incarnation is the event in which the Son of God truly became human while remaining truly God.

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 does it mean that Jesus is the Messiah?

The word *messiah* is a Hebrew term meaning “anointed one.” Jesus Christ is the Anointed One whom God promised to save people.

What is Salvation?

The word *salvation* comes from a Latin word meaning “to save.” Salvation is the saving of humanity from sin and death through Jesus Christ. Salvation comes from Christ through the Church.

What is the Resurrection?

The Resurrection is the historical event 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 in Heaven.

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 MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

What is the Church?

The word *church* means “convocation,” or 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.

What is the central work of the Church?

The central work of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to invite all people to come to know, believe in, and to live in communion with Jesus.

What is the Body of Christ?

The Body of Christ is an image for the Church 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 role in the work of the Church.

Who are the People of God?

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

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 unity of all the faithful, those living on Earth, those in Purgatory, and those in Heaven with God.

What are the Marks of the Church?

The Marks of the Church are the four essential characteristics of the Church, 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 the twelve men chosen and sent by Jesus to preach the Gospel and to make disciples of all people.

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 clergy?

The clergy 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 make up the clergy.

What is the consecrated life?

The consecrated life is a state of life for those baptized who promise to live the Gospel through their vows 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.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

What is Mary's role in God's plan?

Mary has a unique role in God's plan of Salvation. She is 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. 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, and throughout her life.

What is the perpetual virginity of Mary?

The perpetual virginity of Mary is the fact that Mary remained always a virgin. She was a virgin before the conception of Jesus, during his birth, and remained a virgin 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. She hears our prayers and intercedes for us with her Son.

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 life everlasting.

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—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.

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. In the liturgy the mystery of Salvation in Christ is made present by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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. They 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 the Eucharist. These three Sacraments are the foundation of every Christian life.

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.

What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Confirmation strengthens the graces of Baptism and celebrates the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation also imprints an 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.

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. Regular participation in the Mass and receiving Holy Communion is vital to the Christian life.

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

What is the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation?

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation 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 the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick?

The 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.

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 mission on certain members of the Church to serve in building 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.

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 lifegiving 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.

THE MORAL LIFE

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 God by cooperating with the grace of the Holy Spirit and living the Gospel. We respond using our well-formed consciences and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Sacred Scripture and the Sacraments nourish us to reject sin and accept God's will.

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. They are 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. The Beatitudes guide us in living as disciples of Christ by keeping our life focused and centered on God.

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. They 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?

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

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 as the source of holiness.

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.

THE VIRTUES

What are virtues?

The virtues are spiritual powers, habits, or behaviors that help us do what is good.

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 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.

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 with God's Law; our conscience moves us to do good and avoid evil.

A well-formed conscience is truthful. It makes judgments according to reason that reflect God's will. Everyone is responsible for forming his or her own conscience. You must find ways to inform your conscience by learning God's Laws and the teachings of the Church. It is helpful to make a daily examination of conscience to reflect on how you have lived according to God's will.

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 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.

What is sin?

Sin is freely and knowingly doing or saying that which is against the will of God. Sin sets itself against God's Law and turns our hearts away from his love.

What is mortal sin?

A mortal sin 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. When we repeatedly commit sins, even venial ones, we develop vices, or immoral habits. Some of these vices are Capital Sins such as envy or anger.

What is scandal?

Scandal is an attitude, action, or omission of your own that causes another person to sin. If the wrong they commit is gravely sinful because of your action or omission, then you have committed a grave sin too. You have tempted another to sin rather than setting a good example.

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. Praying the Lord's Prayer brings us closer to God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. It helps us to become like Jesus and to place our trust in the Father.

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 devotions?

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