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Introduction

This *Participant's Book* is part of the ON THE JOURNEY series of books intended to be used for the Order of Christian Initiation. This particular book, unlike the others in this series, is supplied as shrink-wrapped handouts that are designed to be masters for photocopying. These masters can, therefore, be used to create handouts for each RCIA session. This entire book is also provided on a CD to allow for printing copies for RCIA participants or to make new masters.

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STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Since it is part of ACM's approach not to spell out a specific order of catechesis, which is properly the responsibility of parish catechetical staff, most of the material included in this *Participant's Book* is presented in alphabetical order by title. To assist catechists in selecting appropriate handouts, the book provides both sectional Tables of Contents and Indexes of Citations from Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

Main Sections: Part I (Doctrines) is made up of scores of handouts providing comprehensive coverage of the Deposit of Faith. Part II (Special Topics) includes many handouts on specific liturgical subjects and other Catholic practices that are suitable for use during appropriate parts of the liturgical year, or as questions arise. Part III (Psalms and Canticles) and Part IV (Litanies and Other Prayers) can be photocopied and handed out to participants for use during liturgies and prayer services. All are formatted for responsorial use. Part V (Saints) offers brief biographies of saints and other holy men and women that can be given out on or around their respective feast days, or to reinforce a specific teaching. Part VI (Conversion Stories) can be distributed as needed to provide written testimonies of others' journey to the Catholic faith. Finally, Part VII (Small Group Discussion Questions) provides the application questions printed with the sixty lesson plans of the ON THE JOURNEY series companion *Catechist's Manual*. This last section is given in this book simply to allow for copying (or downloading and modifying), thereby facilitating handing out the questions to groups, rather than verbally stating them, retyping them, or asking participants to write them down.

Table of Contents and Indexes: The first page in each part of the *Participant's Book* lists material in its section alphabetically by title, except for Part III (Psalms and Canticles), which lists Psalms in numerical order, followed by Canticles in order by their title. The Table of Contents for Part I (Doctrines) and Part II (Special Topics) is combined and is extensively cross-referenced, so that all related handouts can easily be located. This is intended to assist catechists in determining which handouts are appropriate with a given teaching. This Table of Contents, therefore, serves also as a subject index. The Index of Citations to Sacred Scripture lists

all biblical quotations and citations from the handouts in Parts I (Doctrines) and II (Special Topics). This Index is ordered alphabetically by title of the books of the Bible, and each citation is accompanied by the handout title(s) related to the biblical passage. Asterisked titles are from Part II (Special Topics) handouts. The Index of Citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists the citations that are found at the end of each of the handouts in Parts I (Doctrines) and II (Special Topics). This Index is ordered numerically by CCC paragraph number, and each numerical citation is accompanied by the handout title(s) related to the CCC paragraph(s). Asterisked titles are from Part II (Special Topics) handouts.

USING THE HANDOUTS EFFECTIVELY

The large number of topics covered by these handouts may seem daunting. As with all the handouts provided in the *Participant's Book*, an RCIA leader can opt to use as many or as few as he or she deems prudent, a decision that can and must be made at the parish level for the participants in each given year. At a given parish, some handouts that do not seem useful for one group of participants may prove to be highly applicable to participants in another year. The larger point is that the handouts provided here are designed to be used when, as, and if needed. Therefore, the intent of the *Participant's Book's* large size is to provide a thorough spread of material from which an RCIA leader may select what is most suitable for those whom God has guided to the parish's front door.

Copies of the handouts in the *Participant's Book* would typically be given to all the people in the RCIA process (participants, sponsors, and team members) in a *gradual* way. Only those handouts intended for that session's teaching should be made available. One possible method of doing this is as follows: the first time a person comes to RCIA, he or she receives an empty binder of suitable size (a two-inch binder is likely to work the best). Handouts chosen for each session are added to the binder every week. This is most easily done by copying sets of the handouts desired for that session, three-hole-punching them, and placing them out collated on a table to be taken as people come in for the session. A few extra sets could be made in case an unexpected inquirer shows up. At the end of the evening, sets left over can then be paper-clipped together and put out the next week for those who have missed that session. The handouts could also simply be mailed to those not present. As RCIA leaders become familiar with these handouts, other creative ways of using and distributing them will no doubt develop.

DETERMINING WHAT TO HAND OUT WHEN

It is for good reason that ACM does not present the handouts in this book (or the lesson plans in the ON THE JOURNEY series companion *Catechist's Manual*) in a specific order or pre-set curriculum. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states:

Indeed, "it can happen that in the present situation of catechesis reasons of method or pedagogy may suggest the communication of the riches of the content of catechesis should be organized in one way rather than in another." It is possible to begin with God so as to arrive at Christ, and vice versa. Equally, it is possible to start with man and come to God, and conversely. The selection of a particular order for presenting the message is conditioned by circumstances, and by the faith level of those to be catechized (GDC 118; material in quotations is from *Catechesii Tradendae* 31).

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the method of determining the order of catechesis for a given set of participants must take into account liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral considerations at a given parish in a given year. This crucial issue, and others associated with ensuring that catechesis is systematic and organic, are discussed in detail in the introductory sections of the companion to this book: the *RCIA Catechist's Manual*.



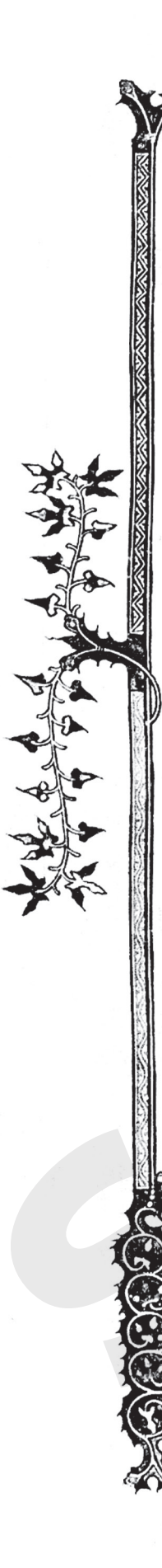
PART I

Doctrines Table of Contents

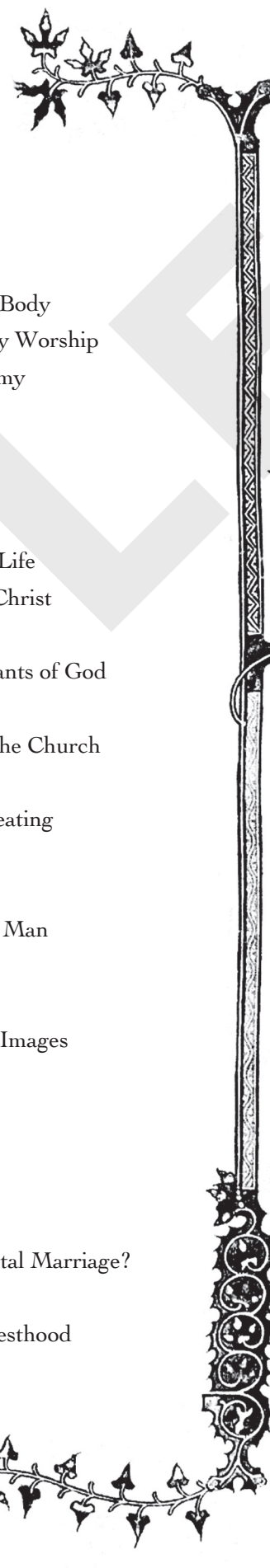


Angels	Disciple of Christ
Anointing of the Sick	Divine Revelation
Aspects of Prayer	Does God Exist?
Attributes of God	Errors of Modern Culture
Baptism	Eucharist
Battle of Prayer	Evangelization
Beatitudes	Five Doctrines on Mary
Beauty	Forgiveness
Blessed Trinity	Four Last Things
Can the Bible be Taken Literally?	Gifts of the Holy Spirit
Catholic Family	God the Creator
Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom	God the Father
Chastity and Modesty	God's Justice, God's Love
Christian Meaning of Freedom	God's Law
Christian Meaning of Suffering	God's Plan of Salvation
Christian Meditation	Good Works
Church is Apostolic	Grace
Communion of Saints	Grace and Conversion
Confession to a Human Being	Heights of Prayer, Contemplation
Confirmation	Holiness and Joy
Consecrated Life	Holy Orders
Continual Conversion and Penance	Holy Spirit
Conversion to Jesus Christ	Honoring our Parents
Covenants of God with Us	In Persona Christi
Deposit of Faith	Incarnation
Deuterocanonical Books	Indulgences
Did Jesus Always Know He Was God?	Infallibility
Did Jesus Have to Suffer and Die?	Infant Baptism
Dignity and Vocation of Women	Introduction to Prayer
	Jesus: Our Exemplar in Prayer
	Jesus, the Unexpected Messiah





Jesus: The Way, Truth, and Life
Justification
Kingdom of God
Light and Fire
Light of Conscience
Liturgy: An Introduction
Made in His Image
Magisterium
Male and Female He Made Them
Marriage, Sexuality, Contraception
Martyrdom
Mary, the New Eve
Matrimony
Miracles: Proof of Christ's Claims
Mother of God and Our Mother
Mystery of Evil
Mystical Body of Christ
Natural Law
New Heavens and the New Earth
Once Saved, Always Saved?
One, Holy, Catholic . . .
Original Sin
Paschal Mystery
People of God
Praying to Mary
Precepts of the Church
Priesthood of the Faithful
Profanity
Providence
Purgatory
Real Presence
Reconciliation
Reservation of the Blessed
Sacrament



Responding to the
Great Mysteries
Resurrection
Resurrection of the Body
Sabbath and Sunday Worship
Sacramental Economy
Sacramental Living
Sacraments
Sacred Scripture
Sacred Tradition
Sanctity of Human Life
Second Coming of Christ
Separated Brethren
Servant of the Servants of God
Seven Deadly Sins
Social Teaching of the Church
Spirit and Matter
Stealing, Lying, Cheating
Temptation
Touch of Jesus
True God and True Man
Types of Prayer
Typology
Veneration of Holy Images
Viaticum
Virtue of Charity
Virtue of Faith
Virtue of Hope
Virtuous Living
What is a Sacramental Marriage?
What is Sin?
Women and the Priesthood
Works of Mercy

The Catholic Family

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ~ Ephesians 3:14-19

IN THE LATTER PART of the twentieth century, a breakdown in the family occurred that had not previously been experienced. Divorce rates, which had been roughly stable except for a brief period after World War II, began rising and are more than twice as high as forty years ago. Many millions of children are victimized by the break-up of their parents' marriages, and themselves grow up wary of committed relationships. Each new break with the law of God has brought additional havoc to the family. Not only divorce, but also contraception, cohabitation, and abortion have devastated marriage and the family. A huge variety of social pathologies exist that seem to rise as the number of intact, stable, two-parent homes falls. And, although children may manage to develop into healthy, happy adulthood, more who might have done so, do not. Yet there is a better way to create a home and raise children, to avoid these tragedies and rebuild the foundation of human society.

What a Catholic Family Looks Like

In God's plan, the family is a community, founded

upon the marital consent of the spouses, and the children they bring into the world or adopt. Marriage exists for the good of the spouses and for the procreation and education of the children with which God blesses them. The education and nurturing of their children is the right, responsibility, and privilege of parents. With this wonderful privilege comes accountability to God for its responsible fulfillment.



Let the little children to come unto me, late 19th century print

“In God’s plan, the family is a community, founded upon the marital consent of the spouses, and the children they bring into the world or adopt.”

The Catholic family, where the parents have the awesome responsibility for sharing the first words and examples of faith in the family members, is called a “domestic church.” The apostles speak of the nature of the relationship that should animate the members of this domestic church. Husbands and wives are to be “*subject to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (Eph 5:21). Wives are to “*be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning ... but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.... Likewise you hus-*

bands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Pt 3:1-4, 7). Wives are expected to be “well attested for her good deeds, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way” (1 Tm 5:9-10). Fathers are reminded not to “provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4) “lest they become discouraged” (Col 3:21), while children are instructed to “obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph 6:1) and to “make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God” (1 Tm 5:4).

The ideal and goal that is described in Scripture is one of family harmony and gentleness, mutual self-giving out of love of God, parents devoted to their children and children obedient to their parents, a warm welcome to the home for others, and service to those most in need in the community.

The relationship between husband and wife in a Catholic marriage is given supernatural life by the graces of the sacrament of Matrimony. Their love and respect is mutual, and they give themselves unreservedly to each other in a bond so strong that it enables weak human creatures to sustain the relationship despite all hardships. The children that come forth from their mutual self-giving are welcomed as gifts from the Creator.

As a communion of persons, the Catholic family reflects the union of the Holy Trinity, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and seeks to follow the

example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. The practice of prayer, reception of the sacraments, mutual and repeated forgiveness, gratitude and respect, and the cultivation of holiness, gives the family its strength. As a whole and through each of its members, the family experiences the joy of honest work, the unity that attends upon prayer and familial worship of God, and the bonding and support that results from the love of parents for their children, and of children for their parents

and for their brothers and sisters. The truly Catholic family can and should have an impact on the society in which it exists: its example of stability, proper exercise of authority, and harmonious relationships are transferable to society at large to bolster the foundations upon which freedom, security, and fraternity can flourish in the world community. Society can learn from the family how to care for the young, the sick and the handicapped, the old and the impoverished. Finally, the Catholic family has an evangelizing and missionary purpose. The children are taught by example and word the truths and virtues that will be carried forward into the generations to follow, to pass on the faith in Jesus Christ that they themselves received, and to help bring the world to that faith.

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Raising Catholic Children

Before God, before themselves, and before society, a husband and wife as parents in a family have awesome and indispensable responsibilities. First, they must know that they live not *with* but *for* each other; for happiness here and hereafter. They are

“Parents are to nurture and form their children’s will and conscience, gently and steadily showing them how to turn away from sin and choose the good.”



responsible for living in such a way as to assure that they will be forever together in Heaven. They have a reciprocal responsibility for each other's sanctity and salvation. To fulfill this obligation of mutual love and to provide the proper environment for wholesome Catholic living, parents establish a home characterized by respect, tenderness, fidelity, forgiveness, and self-sacrificing service. In this Catholic home, virtue can grow, for it is fostered by self-denial, solicitude, and just judgment as well as by a spirit of faith through which the things of God are given priority over the lesser things of daily concern.

Children encounter God's love first through the love their parents show them and each other. Parents also need to begin, very early, to tell and teach their children the story of God's overflowing love for all human beings, God's care for each of us, and our eternal destiny to live within the divine family of the Trinity.

The whole paradigm for Catholic family life should be one of forming disciples. Parents, as Catholic adults, must not only constantly strive to form their consciences more perfectly, but also help their children to form their consciences so that they might make correct choices when faced with decisions in their lives. Parents can follow the pattern laid out for them by Holy Mother Church towards her children — that is, all Catholics. In answering the question, "How does the Church parent us?," Catholic parents can develop principles and expectations for how they ought to bring their children up in holiness as well.

Unlike the attitudes common in our society that children's wills either need no formation at all or are to be broken in order for them to behave, a Catholic understanding of the human will is that our wills have already been weakened and wounded by sin, but that we still reflect the image and likeness of God. Parents are to nurture and form their children's will and conscience, gently and steadily showing them how to turn away from sin and choose the good in any situation while always respecting their great dignity as human beings. Just as the Lord does for each of us, parents also should reach down to their children's level of understanding and ability, meeting their needs so



“Children must be taught how to respect the presence of God.”

must seek God's grace, and that God has given them a free will so that they can freely choose the good, but that their free will can lead them to bad as well as to good choices. They need to learn that they can repent of wrongdoing and that God's forgiveness is, like Daddy's, always extended to a son or daughter who sincerely repents of sin and wants to become better. They need to learn that we are perfected within our communities — that no one can live outside God's family and be all they were meant to be, and that salvation comes from love of neighbor as well as love of God. They need to learn that God gave us his Church to help us to attain salvation, and that Heaven is not a place “in the clouds” where we all “get angel wings,” but is our true home where we can be enveloped in the wondrous family life of God. All this they need to understand, in an age-appropriate way, by the time they attain the age of reason and discretion (about six to eight years old), and repeatedly taught, with more depth, as they mature.

Although by Baptism God is present in the child, the child is not at first aware of God; it is the parents' responsibility to accomplish this. Baptism instills the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. These virtues make it possible for parents to nurture their children's understanding of their wonderful, unique, and irreplaceable place in God's plan of salvation; their belief in the marvelous truths about God and themselves; their own hope for salvation; and their ability to love others because they see Jesus in each of them. In doing so, parents should not merely be telling “Bible stories” to their children, but communicating their own joyous acceptance of God's Revelation and its meaning to them, so that their children make this the center of their own lives.

There are four important elements of religious ed-

they learn trust and love. From this place, parents can slowly and patiently build in their children a desire and firm capacity for holiness that will stay with them through their whole life.

To this end, children need to learn, very early in life, that human nature is prone to sin, and that each of us needs the salvation that Jesus earned for us on the cross. They need to learn that they

education for children that ideally should begin during their preschool years. First, *children must learn to pray*. Through their own prayer life, parents teach the place of prayer in their children's lives. Children join parents in prayer when rising, before meals, and before going to sleep. Even small children can memorize the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary. In addition, children can understand the concept of personal, spontaneous prayer much better than most adults think, for wonder at the unseen world is at its peak in young children. Children have no problem believing in Santa Claus and in writing letters to let him know what they desire, and parents can capitalize on the same impulse to turn their children's minds toward the most wondrous mysteries of all.

To promote the sense of holiness in the home, the Catholic family can set up, with the help and suggestions of the children, a sacred space or corner with a crucifix, a Bible, possibly a picture or statue of Jesus, Mary, or a saint, and, if desirable, votive lights. This sacred space reminds all in the household of God's presence in the family and in their individual lives. Other ways to sanctify the home include crucifixes in the bedrooms, religious art, and holy-water fonts, creating an environment that promotes prayer and the frequent remembrance of God.

A Catholic calendar allows the family to be aware of approaching feasts. Children's imagination and creativity can be drawn upon to prepare for feasts such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Advent wreaths and Advent calendars heighten the awareness of all family members to the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem. Children can be taught very early to pray more, practice voluntary penances, and give alms during Lent. Even Halloween — which in reality commemorates the Feast of All Saints ("All Hallows") — and Thanksgiving lend themselves to the creating of God-centered family traditions. Children can be encouraged to create and care for an outdoor shrine to the Blessed Virgin or a special saint. Family outings can include pilgrimages to churches and shrines.



“The Catholic family shows us the priesthood of the laity in a domestic church.”

Second, *children must learn to worship in community* — that is, to participate in liturgy. While Mass may be difficult for infants and toddlers, parents should bring children to Mass from infancy. Going to Mass on Sundays, holy days, and other occasions should be made a matter of utmost importance and anticipation; cleanliness and proper dress for all should be emphasized. Children must be taught how to respect the presence of God in church and what is expected

of them, regardless of unacceptable behavior around them. Even the youngest can appreciate that something very special is happening during the consecration, and can be kept occupied with age-appropriate picture books of the Mass, Bible stories, and lives of the saints. Children should be taught specifically the meaning and importance of the liturgy; that our bodies as well as our hearts, minds, and souls need to worship God; and that worship is a community, not a solo, action.

They need to experience the world as it really is, not just the material world we can see, hear, and touch, but also the transcendent reality of God for which all human hearts are made. Liturgy points to and actually makes us present at the Heavenly worship and is a foretaste of that worship; it is an encounter with the living God.

Third, *children must learn Catholic attitudes* as a foundation for later instruction in virtue and doctrine. Among these attitudes are the following:

- 1) **A sense of the sacred** — that some events (such as Mass), objects (such as the Bible, crucifixes, vestments), and people (such as priests) are set apart for holy use.
- 2) **A sense of family** — that their family is a special collection of people, that their parish is an extended family, that every human is a brother or sister and that some need special help. Pope John Paul II reminded us that “God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family” (meeting with Latin American bishops, Pueblo, Mexico, 1979) — not *like* a family, but truly a family, so that we should see our human fami-

lies as a foretaste of the family for which we are made, God's divine family.

- 3) **A sense of the good** — that God created the world and all that is in it, and pronounced it good; that God created human beings to know, love, and do good; that in becoming human, Jesus elevated humanity with him; that there is a right way to appreciate and use all the wonderful things of the world; and that we must offer praise, thanksgiving, and gratitude for all that comes from God.
- 4) **A love of truth** — that God, who is Truth, created an objective truth that can be known and understood, and that truth should be searched out and held fast; that a fulfilling life comes from knowledge of and assent to the truth, for God gave it to us because, as a loving father and mother know and provide for their children's needs, he in his superabundant love knows that this is what we need.
- 5) **A sense of service**, selflessness, and blessing, which flows from the theological virtue of charity; that in following Jesus we selflessly devote our lives to serving others and become a blessing to them, and thereby become what we were created to be.
- 6) **A sense of hope** — that in the midst of suffering, immorality, and social breakdown, we can trust in God and his promises and face our future with confidence.

Fourth, parents need to *help their children to learn to avoid and resist sin*. By the age of discretion, children should already have begun their lifelong effort to cooperate with God's grace in mastering their will. This is most fully accomplished through the sacramental life — the regular reception of the Lord in the Eucharist and in his forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Instruction in virtue must be accompanied by appropriate discipline, which itself is a manifestation of divine love, for *"the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives"* (Heb 12:6). Parental neglect in this area is especially grave, as our Lord says: *"whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea"* (Mt 18:5-6).

As children approach adulthood, parents must work to ensure that family piety and devotions are transformed into genuine, deep faith, for otherwise as the children move into the larger society as teens and adults, their rootless faith will wither. Parents need especially to guard their children from the mod-

ern dismantling of faith. For today's society, "belief" is a purely secular concept and lacks any relevance to God's Revelation or objective truth. In addition, modern culture places a great premium on belief of any kind, without regard to the content of what's believed. God's Revelation in its awesome wholeness needs to be preserved and transmitted to children so that they can receive what is rightfully theirs as adopted children of God.

The important thing in the family is to place priority on almighty God. In our thoughts, our words, our deeds and aspirations, he is paramount: "seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Everything then falls into proper perspective, providing guidance and support in the solution to the inevitable difficulties that accompany life in our sin-laden world. Establishment of God as an integral part of family life helps parents choose the proper kind of schooling for their children and to give judicious advice when they confront the choice of a career and way of life. For "what does [God] desire? Godly offspring" (Mal 2:15) who will respond to God's call in their lives.

The Catholic family shows us, as is evident nowhere else, the priesthood of the laity in a domestic church. It shows us the mystery of Holy Mother Church forever united to her Head, Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Family. The beauty, splendor, and love of the Trinity is manifest in the earthly Catholic family, which can, with the Psalmist, rejoice: *"Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!"* (Ps 128).

(CCC 1652-1653, 1656-1657, 2201-2208, 2214-2217, 2219, 2221-2230, 2232-2233, 2685, 2691)



The Eucharist

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." ~ John 6:53-56

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, chapter six contains one of the most explicit teachings on the Eucharist made by Jesus. The chapter begins with a miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, a prefigurement of the Eucharist (see Jn 6:1-14). Immediately following the miracle, because of their lack of understanding, the people intend to make Jesus king. For this reason, Jesus withdraws to the hills (see Jn 6:15). Noticing that he has gone away, the people begin seeking Jesus in Capernaum (see Jn 6:24). When they find him, Jesus teaches them the meaning of the miracle. He says, "[T]he will of my Father [is] that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (Jn 6:40), because he is the "true bread from Heaven" (Jn 6:32) which "gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33). Not only must they believe in him, but also they must eat and drink his Flesh and Blood:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat

the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (see beginning verses). Those who heard the teaching said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to [that is, believe and follow] it?" (Jn 6:60).

"After this [teaching] many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (Jn 6:66), but the Twelve remained (see Jn 6:67-69). At the Last Supper, Jesus gave the Twelve the power to change bread and wine into his Body and Blood (see Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-23; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26). Ever since the Last Supper, Christians truly eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist completes Christian initiation, because it is the most intimate union with Christ. Although Jesus is present in the other sacraments, Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist, that is, he is present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the

Eucharistic species (the consecrated bread and wine). For this reason, the Eucharist is called the Real Presence. Also, for this reason, the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life, a participation in the life in Heaven given to those who believe in him while he is still on earth. In other words, every aspect of the Christian faith leads toward and flows from this sacrament, which is nothing other than Jesus himself. In his love, God also gave to us the Third Commandment, “Remember to keep holy the sabbath day.” This commandment, which in Pope John Paul II’s words is “a defining and indelible expression of our relationship with God” (*On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy* 13), is transferred in the New Covenant from the sabbath (the seventh day, or Saturday), to the Lord’s Day (Sunday) because Sunday was the day when Jesus rose from the dead. We therefore recall God’s saving works by honoring the “new day of creation,” the weekly Easter. Participation in Sunday Mass is obligatory — a participation which is necessary for the People of God to live as God created them and to praise him rightly as he deserves to be praised. Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, this required Sunday participation has also become the first precept of the Church, “You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor”¹ (CCC 2042) (see handout on The Sabbath and Sunday Worship).

Names for the Eucharist

The sacrament of the Eucharist is known by several different names, each revealing some aspect of the

sacrament. The name “Eucharist” is drawn from the Greek word *eucharistein*, meaning “to give thanks.” This word is found in two of the Last Supper accounts, the Gospel of Luke and St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, a related Greek word *eulogein*, meaning “to bless or praise,” is used. Since the Eucharist is celebrated as a community, the celebration is sometimes referred to as the “Eucharistic Assembly.”

The name “Lord’s Supper” references both the Last Supper and the Heavenly Banquet. During the Last Supper, Jesus first instituted both Holy Orders and the Holy Eucharist when he took, broke, and blessed the bread and wine and instructed the apostles to do this in memory of him (see Lk 22:19-20). The Heavenly Banquet anticipates “*the marriage supper of the Lamb*” (Rv 19:9), when the entire family of God will all be present in glory.

The name “Breaking of the Bread” points to the fact that the Eucharist is prefigured by the Jewish Passover meal that also had a “Breaking of the Bread.” When Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, it was not until he broke the bread that “*their eyes were opened and they recognized him*” (Lk

24:31). This name was also used by the first Christians (see Acts 2:46; Acts 20:7, 11).

The names “Holy and Divine Liturgy” or “Most Blessed Sacrament” state the truth that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. It is the sacrament to which all other sacraments lead, because Jesus is really present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.



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***“Christians truly eat
the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood
in the Eucharist.”***

¹ Cf. Codex Iuris Canonici, cann. 1246-1248; Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium, can. 880 § 3, 881 §§ 1,2,4

The name "Sacrifice of the Mass" emphasizes that in the Eucharistic celebration, Jesus' sacrifice of his Body made "once for all" (Heb 10:10) time and all people is truly present. In other words, when we participate in the Eucharist, we join Jesus at the cross. Scripture also uses the names "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Ps 50:14; Ps 116:17), "spiritual sacrifice" (1 Pt 2:5).

The name "Holy Communion" tells the reality that in the Eucharist, we unite ourselves with Christ and his Body (the Church) whose members are in Heaven, Purgatory, and on earth.

Last, the most common name "Holy Mass" or "Mass" comes from the ancient Latin closing words of the priest: *Ita, missa est* ("go, you are sent"). We hear in English, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord," and these words send the faithful into the world to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ and to take the charity which comes from our communion with Christ to the world (see Mt 28:18-20).

The Eucharistic Celebration

The celebration of the Eucharist was made possible by Jesus himself when he instituted Holy Orders and Holy Communion at the Last Supper. Particularly, through the institution of Holy Orders, every priest acts *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ"; see handout on *In Persona Christi*), and so Jesus and his Paschal mystery are made present every time Mass is celebrated.

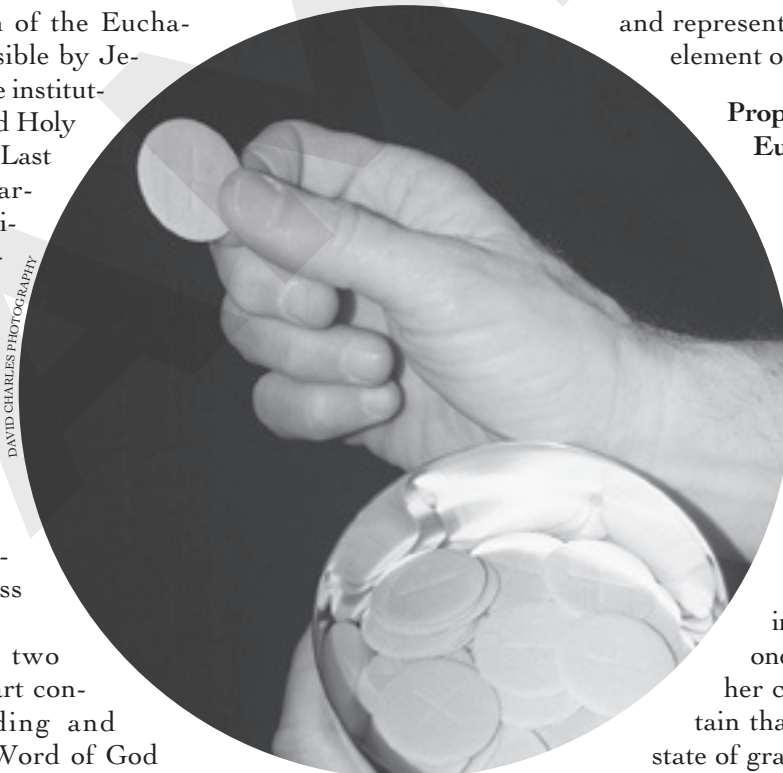
The Mass has two parts. The first part consists in the reading and preaching of the Word of God and the second in the celebrating of the Eucharist. After the preaching, the faith-

"Calling down the Holy Spirit . . . transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ by means of the same words spoken at the Last Supper."

ful are invited to present their needs to God in prayer. Next, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Presentation of the Gifts. The gifts are bread and wine because they are ancient symbols of God's creation which call to mind many Old Testament images, among which is the offering of the priest-king Melchizedek (see Gn 14:18-20). They are brought forward, sometimes in procession by the faithful as a sign of thanksgiving to God for the goodness manifested to them in the abundance of his creation. After receiving these gifts, the priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer by offering these gifts in the name of all those gathered and the whole Church to God the Father. Then, by calling down the Holy Spirit, he transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ by means of the same words spoken at the Last Supper: "Take this all of you and eat it; this is my body given up for you. Take this cup and drink from it; this is my blood shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins; do this in memory of me." These words are referred to as the words of consecration and represent the most important element of the Mass.

Proper Reception of the Eucharist

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27), which is known as a sin of sacrilege. In order to receive Jesus in the Eucharist in a "worthy manner," one must examine his or her conscience to be certain that he or she is in the state of grace, that is, free from all deadly sin. Those who are aware of deadly sin in their own lives must first re-



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ceive absolution in the sacrament of Reconciliation. For those who come to Mass with venial (lesser) sins, a proper disposition of contrition and the faithful praying of the Introductory prayers (penitential) are all that is required to be properly prepared. One also prepares to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus by observing the one-hour fast before Communion, spending time in prayer immediately before Holy Communion, and through a daily life of prayer and Christian witness. Thus freed from all sin and strengthened by prayer, the faithful may receive the Eucharist. They are

obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, but they can receive whenever they participate in the Mass. The Body and Blood of Jesus may be received either on the hand (making a “throne” for the Lord) or the tongue. Some prior act of reverence — genuflecting, bowing, or making the Sign of the Cross — must also be done, keeping in mind the appropriate etiquette (not “lording it over others” or prolonging the Communion line disruptively). In the United States, a simple bow of the head prior to receiving the host and the chalice is recommended as the norm for all the faithful (see Phil 2:10). Most importantly, these signs of reverence should reflect an interior disposition of gratitude and adoration for Jesus who has humbled himself to become bread for us to eat.

This coming up to Holy Communion and the subsequent “Amen” is the “altar call” for the believing Catholic. In this “altar call,” it is Jesus himself (acting in the person of the priest) who gives his very Body and Blood to be taken inside each one who receives him following their affirmation of faith: Amen (“I believe”).



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

“The consecrated bread and wine are our spiritual food.”

given of all sin. This release from sin enkindles in us charity and a greater love for God, strengthening our spiritual life so that we practice virtues and give Christian witness. In turn, we become even more like Christ and find it more difficult to sin in the future. This cycle of spiritual growth is continuously repeated as the image of Christ is made more visible in the heart of every Christian who properly receives Jesus in this sacrament.

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17), that is, when we receive Holy Communion, we are not only intimately united with Christ, but also with his Body, the Church, the family of God. In other words, in the Eucharist, we are more intimately united to each other. Furthermore, since we are all united with Christ, we share in his mission together. In Christ, we are to go out to all the nations and teach them all that Jesus commanded (Mt 28:18-20) so that they might also be united to the family of God in Baptism and eventually feast at the heavenly marriage supper of Christ and his Church.

(CCC 1322-1405, 1533, 2042, 2835-2837)

Grace of the Eucharist

The principal effect of the Eucharist is an intimate union with Christ. Jesus says, *“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him”* (Jn 6:56). By receiving Holy Communion, the Christian is physically joined to Jesus — a union in which the believer becomes ever more like him. Thus this union preserves, increases, and renews the grace received in Baptism. The consecrated bread and wine are our spiritual food.

Christians cannot be intimately united with Christ, who was without sin, without themselves being for-

PART II

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Apparitions	Our Lady of Guadalupe
Canon Law	Parts of the Mass, The
Canonization of Saints	Sacramentals
Catholic Funeral, The	San Damiano Cross, The
Chrism Mass, The	Sign of the Cross, The
Creed	Solemnity of All Saints - November 1
Daily Examination of Conscience	Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord
Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus	Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - August 15
Examination of Conscience Before the Sacrament of Reconciliation	Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God - January 1
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History of the Mass	Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord - December 25
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Liturgical Vocabulary List	Titles, Terms, Ministries
Liturgical Year, The: An Annual Cycle of the Mysteries of Christ, Mary, and the Saints	Well-Known Catholic Prayers
Liturgy of the Hours, The	What is a Rite?
Lord's Prayer, The	

AMEN

*For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory for ever. Amen. ~ Romans 11:36*

THE WORD “AMEN” is such a universal feature of Christian prayer that we often don’t think any more about it than we do about the period at the end of a sentence. However, knowing its meaning can enrich our prayer.

“Amen” is derived from a Hebrew root that also provided the Hebrew word for “believe.” In both Hebrew and English, belief in someone indicates that the person is solid, trustworthy, and faithful. “Amen” has this same sense, and can “express both God’s faithfulness towards us and our trust in him” (CCC 1062).

Because of its breadth of meaning, “amen” is used in several ways in the Old and New Testament. The prophet Isaiah’s phrase translated as “*God of truth*” (Is 65:16) is “God of Amen.” On several occasions, the Israelites used “amen” to indicate their acceptance of something. For example, in the book of Deuteronomy the people were instructed to say “amen” following a series of curses connected with the breaking of the moral law (see Dt 27:15-26). “Amen” is also used following prayers of praise to God. For example, when David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the people concluded the hymn of thanksgiving sung by the Levites with “Amen” (see 1 Chr 16:36). Following the return of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity and the restoration of the Temple, the people gathered to hear the first five books of the Scripture read to them, and before the scribe Ezra began to read, he blessed the Lord, and everyone answered “Amen” (see Neh 8:6). Several of the Psalms end with “Amen” (see Ps 41:13; Ps 72:19; Ps 89:52; Ps 106:48), following an expression of praise of God.

In the New Testament, the majority of the letters contain “amen,” some more than once, usually following an expression of praise to God or a blessing by the author. In the book of Revelation, Jesus himself is, as God is in Isaiah, “*the Amen, the faithful and true*

witness, the beginning of God’s creation” (Rv 3:14). “Amen” is also a response to praise of God in the book of Revelation (see Rv 5:14; Rv 7:12; Rv 19:4), and “Amen” ends both the Gospel of Mark (see Mk 16:20) and the book of Revelation (see Rv 22:21).

The most original use of “amen” was by Jesus himself. He repeatedly opened a teaching with the phrase “Amen, I say to you” (see, for example, Mt 5:18; Mt 18:3; Mk 3:28; Mk 9:1; Lk 18:29; Lk 21:32).

In the Gospel of John, the word is often doubled (see, for example, Jn 5:19; Jn 6:53; Jn 8:58). (In some translations of the Gospels, “amen” is rendered by “truly.”) Jesus tells us that his statements are worthy of our complete trust, for “all the promises of God find their Yes in him”¹ (CCC 1065).

In ending the Creed at Mass with “Amen,” we return to the initial “I believe,” ratifying everything we have just prayed. The Great Amen concludes the most solemn part of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer:

“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” (CCC 1065).

Because Jesus is the seal and guarantee of the love of his Heavenly Father, we in turn offer our Amen through him. The Great Amen at Mass was in use by at least 155 AD, since it is found in St. Justin Martyr’s description of the Mass (see CCC 1345). This “Amen” is, like those of the assembly in the Old Testament, a Yes to all that has come before. When we receive the Eucharist, we also say “Amen,” saying, as St. Augustine explains, “yes, it is true!”² (CCC 1396). The Church concludes all its prayers with “Amen,” an affirmation, a Yes, a “so be it!” to what we have just prayed, and a sign of participation by all those assembled. In praying “Amen,” we entrust ourselves “completely to him who is the ‘Amen’ of infinite love and perfect faithfulness” (CCC 1064).

(CCC 1061-1065, 1345, 1348, 1396, 2856)

*“Jesus tells us that his
statements are worthy of our
complete trust.”*

¹ 2 Corinthians 1:20

² St. Augustine, Sermo 272 from J.P. Migne, ed., Patrologia Latina 38, 1247 (Paris: 1841-1855)

SOLEMNITY OF EASTER

Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. ~ 1 Peter 1:8

EASTER, the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead, is the highest feast and greatest of solemnities in the Church. It ushers in its most extended season of rejoicing, the fifty-day period from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. All Sundays are feasts because Jesus' Resurrection, the "great feast," occurred on a Sunday. It is the Passover of Christ (see CCC 1168), and is always celebrated very near the date of the Jewish Passover, although the method of calculation is not exactly the same and, of course, Easter must always fall on a Sunday. (The method of calculation also differs between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, a problem that it can be hoped will be resolved soon.)

Of all days, Easter is the day of which the Psalmist sings: "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:24). We shout for joy, for our Savior has risen; he has conquered death, and he dwells in glory. Truly he is great, he is "the Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:32). He possesses "the throne of his father David, and he [reigns] over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his Kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:32-33). "The Lord has risen indeed" (Lk 24:34).

Christ was born, suffered, died, and rose from the dead; these are historical events. The Resurrection of Jesus was a real event, one that is at the very core of the mystery of faith "that transcends and surpasses history" (CCC 647). His Resurrection confirms his divinity and our expectation of rising with him. This is the significance of Easter for the Church and all its faithful members.

The triumphant Exsultet in the Church's Easter proclamation is sung at the Easter Vigil Mass. From the moment that the Exsultet is begun, the liturgy of Easter resounds with joy, jubilation, and shouts of "Alleluia!" The joy of Easter bursts like a long-awaited flood upon the Christian soul. One is



Mary Magdalene witnesses the risen Lord, by Domenico Mastroianni, 1876-1962

struck by the splendor of the Exsultet and the daring of its words: "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" (*The Roman Missal*, Mass of Easter Vigil, Easter Proclamation). This "happy fault" (*felix culpa* in Latin) is a bold declaration, a cry of hope and optimism confirming that the power of God is so incredible that he can turn sin into a means for his own glory and our good.

The Church seems unable to restrain its joy at the Resurrection: "Rejoice, O earth," it sings, "in shining splendor, radiant in the brightness of your King! Christ has conquered! Glory fills you! Darkness

vanishes forever!" It continues: "The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride" (*The Roman Missal*, Mass of Easter Vigil, Easter Proclamation).

A 2nd- or 3rd-century Christian writer sang thus: "O spiritual feast! O divine Passover!... O festival of the whole cosmos! O joy of the universe, its honor, its banquet and delight!... Heaven's gates have opened; God has appeared as a human being and human beings have risen as God... O divine Passover, to us you have spiritually united the God whom the Heavens cannot contain" (*Ancient Paschal homily* 62).

A Father of the Church, St. Gregory Nazianzen, carried away by the glory of Easter, cried out: "O great and holy Easter, I speak of you as of a living being" (*Oratio XLV*). Easter is the glorious feast of faith. The Risen Jesus says to each of us, as he said to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn 11:25-26). Blessed will be we who can reply, inspired by God's goodness and grace, "Yes, Risen Lord, I believe." This

belief will merit an eternal Easter.

(CCC 647, 655, 1168-1170)

"The joy of Easter bursts like a long-awaited flood upon the Christian soul."



PART III

Psalms and Canticles

The Psalms and Canticles in this section have been formatted as handouts for use by participants in Liturgies of the Word that can begin a catechetical session (see RCIA 81-89). When necessary, Psalms have been shortened to fit onto a single page. This ensures that the Liturgy of the Word is balanced in length among the first reading, Psalm or Canticle, and Gospel reading. The verses used in these shortened Psalms, and in the Canticles, are shown in the tables of contents below.

For each Psalm and Canticle, both a musical refrain and a refrain suitable for spoken response have been provided (in many cases, the musical refrain is also suitable as a spoken refrain). For the convenience of the catechist an Index of Sources for Sung Psalm and Canticle Refrains is provided, listing the widely-available hymn books from which the sung refrains have been selected.

In the following table of contents are listed the Psalms and Canticles suggested for use with each of the lesson plans in the companion *Catechist's Manual* in the ON THE JOURNEY series. Also included in this list are Psalms suggested for seasonal Liturgies of the Word that may, at the catechist's discretion, replace the Liturgy of the Word suggested for the lesson scheduled at that time. Seasonal Liturgies of the Word may also be used for special events for candidates, such as retreats, holy hours, and the like that are not devoted to any single lesson.

Following the table is a list of the additional Psalms and Canticles that have been included in this section to provide the catechist alternatives to those suggested. When necessary, these also have been shortened to fit each Psalm or Canticle onto a single page.





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The Virtue of Faith
The Communion of Saints
Ordinary Time: Solemnity of All Saints (seasonal)
The Blessed Virgin Mary
The Incarnation
The Paschal Mystery

Psalm 22B

Sung Response: My God, my God, O why have you abandoned me?

—or—

Spoken Response: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?



Jesus is condemned by the crowd to crucifixion, by Domenico Mastroianni, 1876-1962



Jesus falls, by Domenico Mastroianni, 1876-1962



Crucifixion, by Gustave Doré, 1855-1885

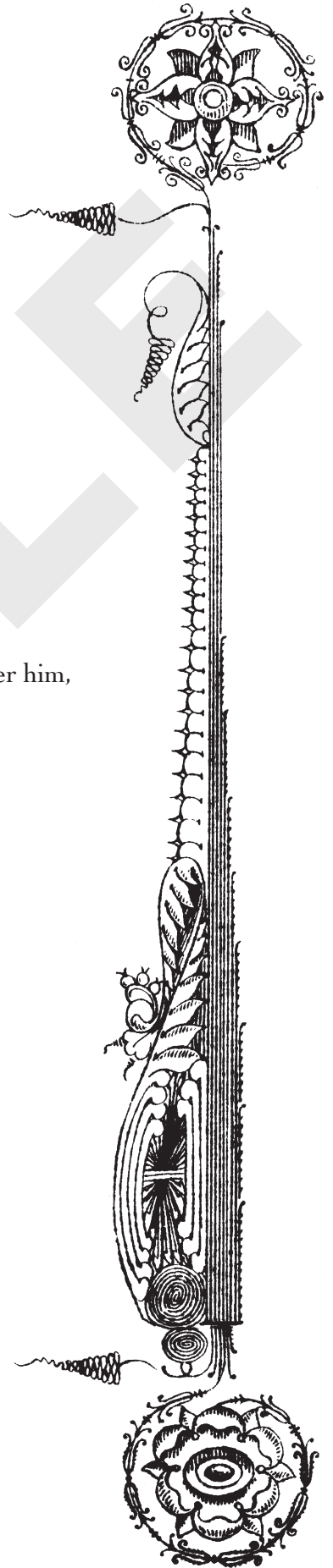
O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.
But I am a worm, and no man;
scorned by men, and despised by the people.

All who see me mock at me,
they make mouths at me, they wag their heads;
“He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him,
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast;
my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

Yea, dogs are round about me;
a company of evildoers encircle me;
they have pierced my hands and feet —
I can count all my bones —
They stare and gloat over me;
they divide my garments among them,
and for my raiment they cast lots.

But thou, O Lord, be not far off!
O thou my help, hasten to my aid!
For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted;
and he has not hid his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.




Psalm 63

Sung Response: My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord, thirsting for you, my God.
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord, thirsting for you, my God,
thirsting for you, my God.

—or—

Spoken Response: My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

 God, thou art my God,
I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee;
my flesh faints for thee,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.

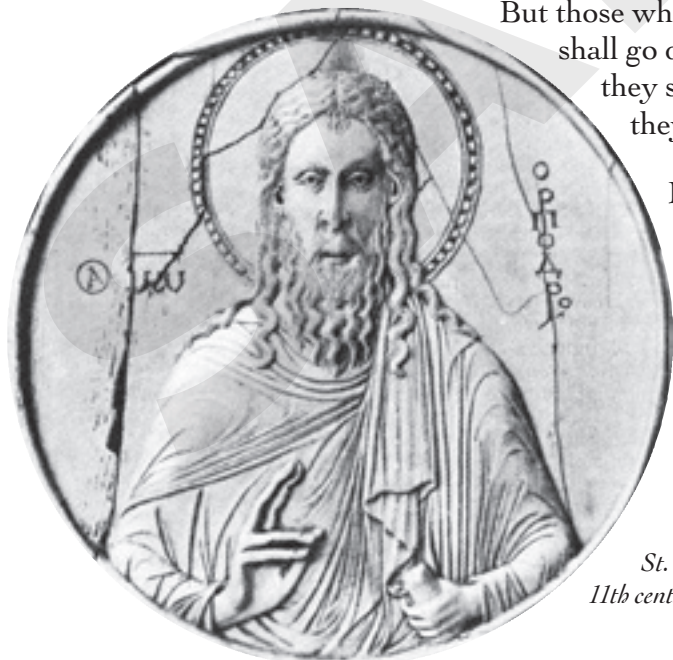
So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
beholding thy power and glory.
Because thy steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise thee.

So I will bless thee as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.
My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,
when I think of thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the watches of the night.

For thou hast been my help,
and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to thee;
thy right hand upholds me.

But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.

But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall glory;
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.



*St. John the Apostle,
11th century pierced ivory panel*





PART IV

Litanies and Other Prayers

This section contains a small selection of prayers that are particularly suitable for use in a catechumenal setting. All are formatted for responsorial use as handouts. There are many others that could have been chosen, but those included here are given simply to provide RCIA leaders with a few other options besides the Psalms and Canticles for group prayer, retreats, and other opportunities to engage RCIA participants in the rich traditions of prayer in the Church.

Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Litany for Holy Communion

Litany of the Holy Spirit

Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

Litany of the Sacred Heart

Litany of the Saints

Litany of Saint Joseph

Angelus

Regina Coeli

Chaplet of the Divine Mercy

Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary

Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary

Pentecost Sequence

Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction



Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Leader: Lord, have mercy on us.

All: Christ, have mercy on us.

Leader: Lord, have mercy on us.

Leader:

Christ hear us.

God the Father of Heaven...

God the Son, Redeemer of the world...

God the Holy Spirit...

Holy Trinity, one God...

All:

Christ, graciously hear us.

Have mercy on us.

Have mercy on us.

Have mercy on us.

Have mercy on us.

Holy Mary...

Mystical rose...

Holy Mother of God...

Holy Virgin of virgins...

Mother of Christ...

Mother of the Church...

Mother of Divine grace...

Mother most pure...

Mother most chaste...

Mother most undefiled...

Mother most amiable...

Mother most admirable...

Mother of good counsel...

Mother of our Savior...

Virgin most prudent...

Virgin most renowned...

Virgin most powerful...

Virgin most merciful...

Virgin most faithful...

Mirror of justice...

Seat of wisdom...

Cause of our joy...

Spiritual vessel...

Pray for us.

Vessel of honor...

Tower of David...

Tower of ivory...

House of gold...

Ark of the Covenant...

Gate of Heaven...

Morning star...

Health of the sick...

Refuge of sinners...

Comforter of the afflicted...

Help of Christians...

Queen of angels...

Queen of patriarchs...

Queen of prophets...

Queen of apostles...

Queen of martyrs...

Queen of confessors...

Queen of virgins...

Queen of all saints...

Queen conceived without original sin...

Queen assumed into Heaven...

Queen of the Most Holy Rosary...

Queen of Peace...

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... Have mercy on us.

Pray for us O holy Mother of God...

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Grant we beg you, O Lord God, that we your servants may enjoy lasting health of mind and body, and by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, be delivered from present sorrow and enter into the joy of eternal happiness, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy

The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy is said on regular rosary beads and prayed as follows, either individually or in a group.

Our Father

Leader: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Response: Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Hail Mary (x3)

Leader: Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Apostle's Creed

Together: I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty. He will come again 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.



On Large Bead before Each Decade

Leader: Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,

Response: In atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

Once on Each of the Ten Small Beads

Leader: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion,

Response: Have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Concluding Doxology

(after five decades repeat three times)

Together: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.



PART V

Lives of Saints

This section contains seventy-five lives of saints, blessed, and venerables. They are written specifically with RCIA participants in mind — explaining certain things in greater depth, and drawing out certain themes having to do with conversion, dealing with sin, deepening one's prayer and devotional life, handling adversities, and other aspects of holy lives that would be particularly edifying or helpful to those considering becoming Catholic.

The selection of these particular saints and other holy men and women is not intended to suggest that others are less applicable to a catechumenal situation. Instead, the intention is to present a suitable cross-section of our elder brothers and sisters in the faith, so that participants can gain a feel for the universal Church and the blessed variety of divine callings and heroic human responses.

These stories focus less upon the actions or deeds of a given person, and more upon the ways God called each of them, and the difficulty and beauty of each one's struggle to attain genuine sanctity. The stories can be given out on or near a feast day or as a means of giving emphasis to a certain teaching. Of course, as with the rest of this *Participant's Book*, RCIA leaders may opt to use these handouts weekly, less frequently, or not at all. This section is supported by several indexes that list the saints in alphabetical order, by feast day, by various biographical categories, and by century of death.

Declaration:

In accordance with the decree of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that in speaking of events, prodigies, and revelations in this work, we wish to accord them no other authority or belief than that which is usually given to narratives resting on merely human evidence and we in no way presume to pronounce on their authenticity or supernatural character, or to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, to which we unreservedly submit.



St. Charles Lwanga and Companions

BIRTH DATE UNKNOWN; DIED 1886 OR 1887

MARTYRS

FEAST DAY: JUNE 3

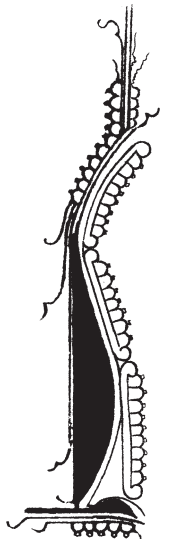
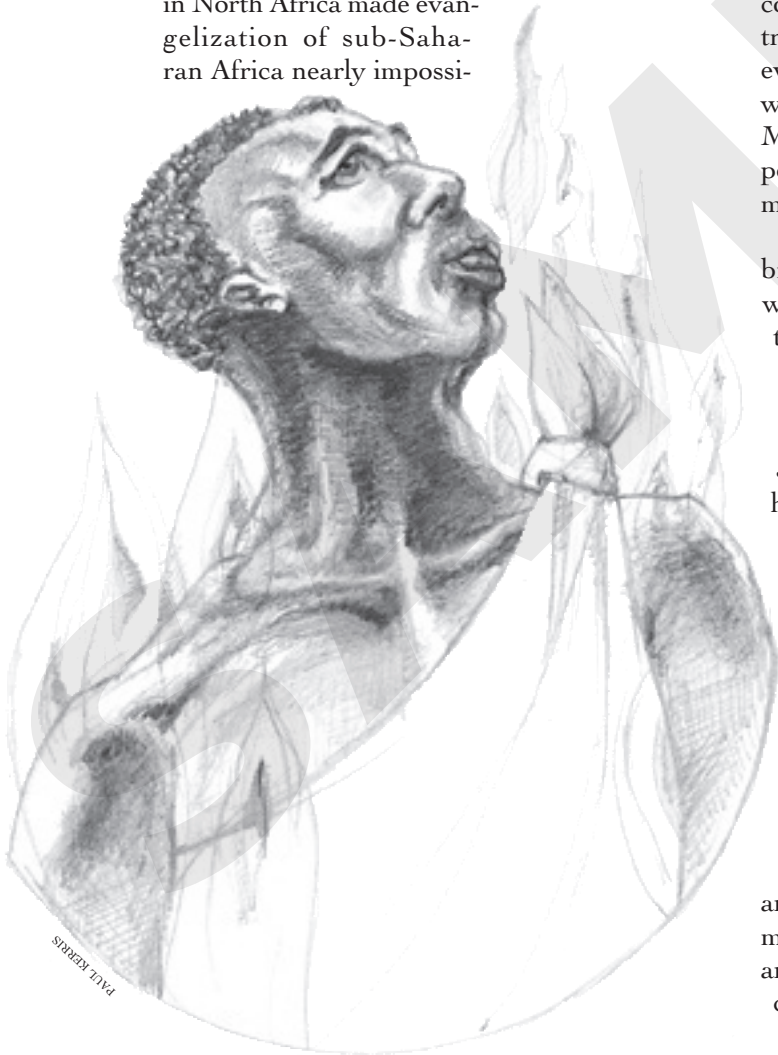
THE GOSPEL has been brought to Africa from the very first days of the Church. An Ethiopian traveling in Judea is described as having been baptized in the Acts of the Apostles (see Acts 8:26-38), and North Africa was Christian until it was overwhelmed by Islam in the seventh century. From then until the invention of oceangoing ships, the presence of Islam in North Africa made evangelization of sub-Saharan Africa nearly impossi-

ble, although efforts were briefly successful. Evangelization up to the mid-nineteenth century also was largely a failure due to the scandal of Christians engaged in the slave trade and the equally scandalous administration of lands colonized by European nations.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Catholic and Anglican missionaries began to evangelize Buganda, part of modern Uganda in eastern Africa. Its king expelled the missionaries in 1882, but in 1885 his son and successor Mwanga invited them back. They happily discovered that their original converts were living truly Christian lives and were reaching out to evangelize everyone around them. Christianity was thus spreading rapidly. This produced in Mwanga and his closest advisors a panic that his power, which had been total, might be undermined by a group that seemed not to fear him.

Mwanga's first victims were an Anglican bishop and six other Anglican missionaries whom he murdered because they sought entry to his kingdom. Twenty-six-year-old Joseph Mkasa, Mwanga's majordomo and a Catholic, sought unsuccessfully to prevent the murders, at which point Mwanga concluded that Joseph himself was a threat, especially since he was a leading catechist and had taken on the role of protecting the king's pages who had become Christian, hiding or sending away those whom the king wanted in order to use them sexually. Mwanga ordered Joseph to be burned alive, but the assigned executioner instead beheaded him and then burned the body. Joseph's last message to the king was one of both forgiveness and a call to repentance from his debauched way of life.

Charles Lwanga succeeded to Joseph's post and role as protector of the pages. A catechumen himself, he also catechized the pages. He and other catechumens, likely soon to face execution themselves, were baptized by the White





Fathers — and then freely went back to their positions at court. Some months after the execution of Joseph, the king called for one of his pages and discovered that all of the Christian ones were missing. When he discovered that they had been receiving instruction in the faith from the page Denis Ssebuggwawo, he sent for Denis and murdered him by a thrust of his spear. Nevertheless, the Christian pages did not flee — they did not want to be seen as disloyal to their monarch.

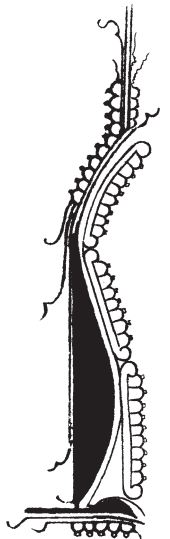
The king having shut everyone in his compound, Charles quickly baptized five of the pages he had been instructing, including the youngest, thirteen-year-old Kizito. All the pages were summoned and the Christians were ordered to identify themselves. Led by Charles, fifteen boys and young men (some Catholic, some Anglican) obeyed the order, not quaking with fear but filled with joy. One of the king's own bodyguards then made themselves part of the group. When asked if they intended to adhere to their faith, they all said they would, until death. The king then sentenced them to die and sent them out, together with other prisoners also scheduled for execution. A Catholic missionary priest who witnessed the group as it was led to the place of execution some miles away saw that they showed courage, happiness, and

resignation to what they faced, even the youngest of them. Along the way several members of the group were martyred, including some who joined the original group as it was taken to the place of execution.

The rest were bound and imprisoned for a week, during which some non-Christian prisoners, amazingly, began instruction as well. Most of the martyrs were first wrapped in a reed mat, then placed on a burning pyre. The mat's purpose was to lengthen the time the victim would suffer before dying. Among the martyrs was one youngster whose own father was the chief executioner. He had his son killed by a blow so that he would not suffer burning to death. As the martyrs died, they called on Jesus' name. With his last breath, Charles evangelized an executioner who subsequently became a catechumen.

“The Christians were ordered to identify themselves. Led by Charles, fifteen boys and young men (some Catholic, some Anglican) obeyed the order, not quaking with fear but filled with joy.”

Altogether, twenty-two Catholic martyrs who died on May 26 and June 3, 1886 and on January 27, 1887, became the protomartyrs of Uganda. The Ugandan martyrs showed exceptional fortitude and loyalty to their Christian beliefs. *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control”* (2 Tm 1:7). The heroic witness of these martyrs is one of the reasons why sub-Saharan Africa has nearly one hundred twenty million Catholics today. Saints change the world.





St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus (St. Thérèse of Lisieux)



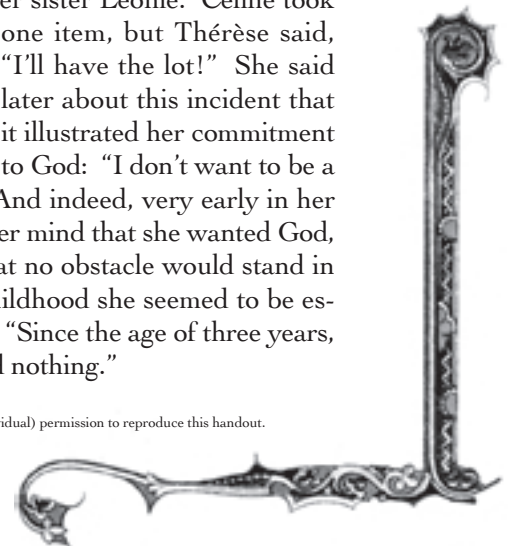
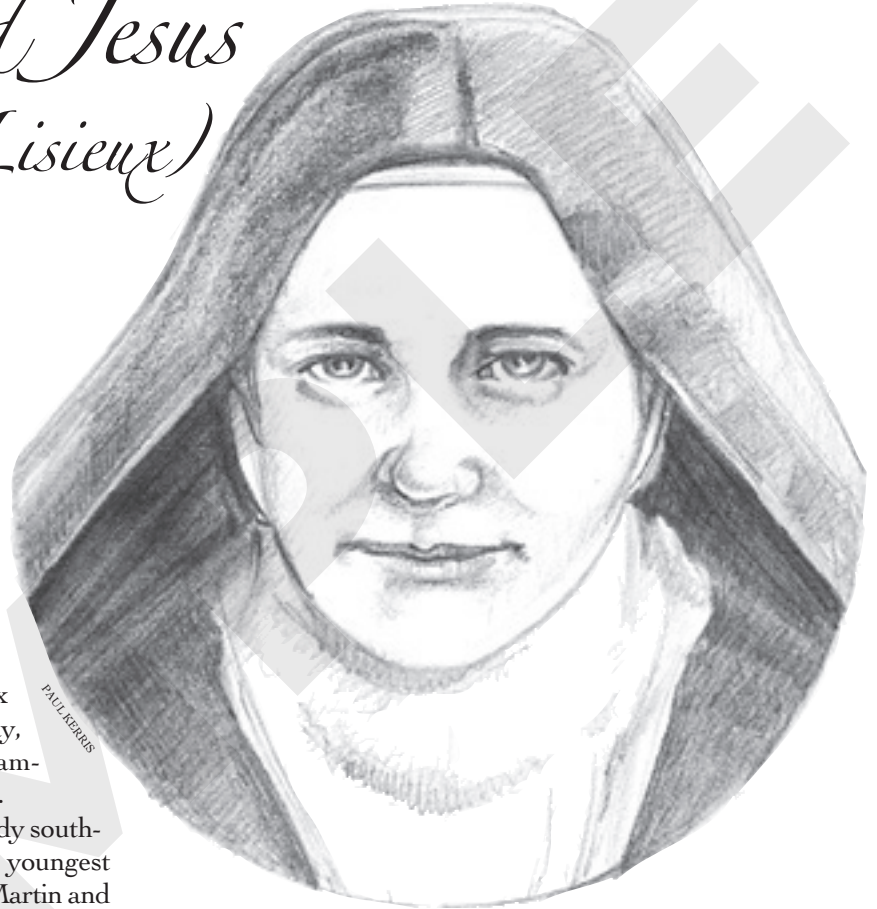
BORN 1873; DIED 1897
VIRGIN, RELIGIOUS, AND DOCTOR
OF THE CHURCH
FEAST DAY: OCTOBER 1

ONCE when Jesus' disciples asked him who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus replied: *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven"* (Mt 18:3-4). St. Thérèse of Lisieux exemplified this in an extraordinary way, and in so doing has become an unexampled spiritual teacher to all Christians.

Born at Alençon, a town in Normandy southwest of Paris, France, Thérèse was the youngest of nine children of watchmaker Louis Martin and lacemaker Zélie Guérin, deeply Catholic parents who created a family known for its holiness and their intense love for one another (both of her parents and several of her sisters may be declared saints by the Catholic Church in the future). They taught their surviving five daughters to love God with simple and heartfelt devotion. Thérèse nearly died twice in her first three months of life, and her family sent her to live in a more rural environment, which had a wonderful effect upon her health although it was also her first of many experiences of loss. At fifteen months, she was returned to her family, full of life and joy. The spoiled favorite of her entire extended family, she was intelligent, impressionable, lively, and beau-

"I don't want to be a saint by halves."

tiful, with a sparkling personality. She was also vain, stubborn, strong-willed, and given to tantrums. When little, she and her next-older sister Céline were once offered some outgrown playthings by their older sister Léonie. Céline took one item, but Thérèse said, "I'll have the lot!" She said later about this incident that it illustrated her commitment to God: "I don't want to be a saint by halves." And indeed, very early in her life, she made up her mind that she wanted God, God alone, and that no obstacle would stand in her way. From childhood she seemed to be established in grace: "Since the age of three years, I have refused God nothing."



Thérèse was not even five when her mother died. This loss resulted in the family's move north to Lisieux so that the Guérins could help raising the children. Thérèse's personality changed overnight. She became listless, and for ten years she was shy, quiet, oversensitive, teary, and a loner except within the family. She drew close to her father, himself by temperament a loner. She was enrolled at a Benedictine school at eight but, although an excellent student and already better educated than her classmates, she avoided everyone. She later called the five years she spent there as the saddest of her life. Subsequently, her education was entrusted to a private tutor.

Thérèse's sister Pauline, who had become her second mother, entered the Carmelite convent of Lisieux when Thérèse was nine, driving her further inside herself. Several weeks later, she began having constant headaches, and the following Easter, she fell ill. After seven weeks, her older sister Marie knelt before a statue of the Blessed Mother in Thérèse's sickroom and frantically begged the Blessed Mother to save her littlest sister. Thérèse joined her sister in prayer, saw a vision of the Blessed Mother whose smile was breathtakingly radiant, and immediately began recuperating.

Following her ecstatic First Communion at age eleven (then the usual age), Thérèse's spiritual life underwent two changes. First, instead

of merely accepting suffering, she now began to desire it. Second, she began to suffer from self-doubt and scruples (an exaggerated sense of sinfulness), which lasted in its most serious form for a year but continued to be a problem for the rest of her life. Sanctity became a struggle. However, she had already begun her detachment from earthly things, reminding herself that "life is your barque and not your home." This detachment was strengthened when Marie followed Pauline into the Carmelite convent when Thérèse was thirteen. On Christmas Eve shortly before her fourteenth birthday, she experienced a conversion and felt that the helpless newborn Jesus had restored her childhood strength that she had before her mother's death. One consequence was the blossoming of an ardent charity. Hearing about a unrepentant condemned man, she decided to pray for him, and later read of his remorse just before his head was put in the noose. This greatly strengthened her desire to save souls.

Several months after Thérèse's fourteenth birthday, she told her father that she felt called to enter the Carmelite convent at Lisieux. Her youth and a general rule of the order that no more than two members of a family be allowed in the same convent were barriers that she could not surmount for many months. The priest responsible for the convent, however, allowed her to appeal to her bishop, and Thérèse, who put her hair up to make herself seem older,



Little Flower, by Timothy Schmalz

she now began to desire it. Second, she began to suffer from self-doubt and scruples (an exaggerated sense of sinfulness), which lasted in its most serious form for a year but continued to be a problem for the rest of her life. Sanctity became a struggle. However, she had already begun her detachment from earthly things, reminding herself that "life is your barque and not your home." This detachment was strengthened when Marie followed Pauline into the Carmelite convent when Thérèse was thirteen. On Christmas Eve shortly before her fourteenth birthday, she experienced a conversion and felt that the helpless newborn Jesus had restored her childhood strength that she had before her mother's death. One consequence was the blossoming of an ardent charity. Hearing about a unrepentant condemned man, she decided to pray for him, and later read of his remorse just before his head was put in the noose. This greatly strengthened her desire to save souls.

at least did not receive from him an immediate response. While she waited for his answer, her father took her and Céline on a group pilgrimage to Rome. Her stubborn determination led her to disobey the order to pilgrims not to speak to the Pope during their audience (he had by then become very tired in his old age), and as she knelt for his blessing, she tearfully pleaded for permission to enter the convent. Pope Leo XIII instructed her to obey her bishop, and added, "You will enter if God wills it." The day before her fifteenth birthday, she received the bishop's permission, and three months later she entered the convent, joining her two sisters and twenty-four other nuns and taking as her name in religion Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.

Thérèse lived the remaining nine and a half years of her life as a Carmelite nun. Although she adapted to convent life as though she had been born to it, she experienced severe treatment from her first prioress and the usual difficulties of living in a small community. It was in this environment that she perfected her "little way," which she developed after reflecting: "The good God would not inspire unattainable desires. I may then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness. I cannot make myself greater; I must bear with myself just as I am with all my imperfections. But I want to seek a way to Heaven, a new way, very short, very straight, a little path.... I am too little to go up the steep steps of perfection." This perfection she found in doing the everyday duties and tasks of her life with great love. She lived the austere Carmelite rule exactly. She was socia-

ble even when she didn't want to be, and was especially kind and charitable to the nuns she didn't want to be near. She bore in silence the cold winters. She was distracted by the clacking rosary of another nun until she decided to listen to it as music and then offer this music to God. She withdrew from close contact with her big sisters. Still highly sensitive, she was often hurt, and silently offered these hurts to Jesus for the conversion of sinners, for priests, and for the missions. She constantly sought to efface herself and told none of the other nuns of her "little way," yet, by example alone, she reformed and restored her community to a stricter observance of the rule.

At twenty, Thérèse was appointed assistant mistress of novices. She had a dream of undertaking missionary work and even yearned for martyrdom, but when invited to a Carmelite convent

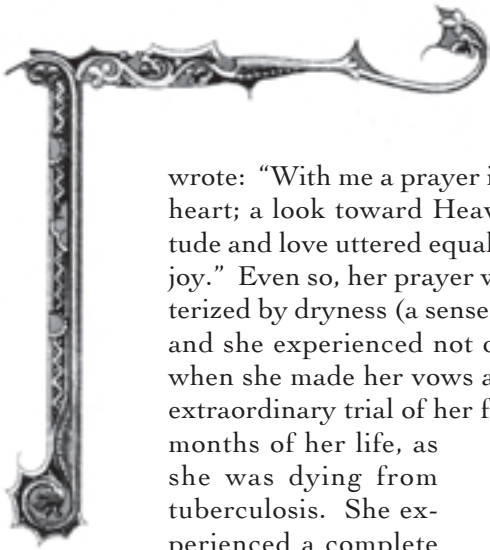
in Hanoi, French Indochina (modern Vietnam), she had already fallen ill with tuberculosis. By then, however, she had discovered her true vocation: "O Jesus, my Love, my vocation, at last I have found it. MY VOCATION IS LOVE!" This had followed some months after the only mystical experience of her life, when she had offered herself as a "holocaust of love." In this act of perfect love, she completely abandoned herself to God's infinite mercy, in utterly simple and radically humble self-surrender.

Thérèse read Scripture deeply and loved liturgical prayer, but simple, spontaneous prayer was an important element in her relationship with God. She



PHOTO COURTESY
OF OFFICE CENTRAL DE LISIEUX

St. Thérèse as a teenager before entering the Carmelite convent



wrote: "With me a prayer is a lifting up of the heart; a look toward Heaven; a cry of gratitude and love uttered equally in sorrow and in joy." Even so, her prayer was usually characterized by dryness (a sense of God's absence), and she experienced not only severe doubts when she made her vows at seventeen but an extraordinary trial of her faith also in the last months of her life, as she was dying from tuberculosis. She experienced a complete spiritual darkness and feared that she had lived for nothing and thrown away her life on a delusion. She clung desperately to faith, revealing to her sisters only a cheerful face and silly jokes even in the last stages of her illness, when she was constantly vomiting, suffering from gangrene and bedsores, and gasping for breath. In fact, throughout her life, her pursuit of sanctity never quenched her joy or sense of fun.

Thérèse's spiritual masterpiece, *Story of a Soul*, exists because she was a wonderful storyteller and because her sister Pauline as prioress

instructed her, in obedience, to set down the story of her childhood. This was followed by the story of her life in the convent, written at the instruction of Pauline's successor shortly before Thérèse's death. *Story of a Soul* gave Thérèse's "little way" to the world.

Thérèse did not believe in mediocrity. Once she determined to be a saint, to love God with all she had, she held nothing back. But she also knew "that to do good without God's help is as impossible as to make the sun shine at night." She had such absolute confidence in God's love for her that she accepted being a child in his arms, loving him totally in return. She has

become known as the "Little Flower," because she saw herself as just a tiny flower in God's garden. She wrote, "He willed to create great souls comparable to lilies and roses, but he has created smaller ones and these must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God's glances when he looks down at his feet. Perfection consists in doing his will, in being what he wills us to be."

"She constantly sought to efface herself and told none of the other nuns of her 'little way,' yet, by example alone, she reformed and restored her community."



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- 31 — St. Ignatius of Loyola

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- 11 — St. Clare of Assisi
- 20 — St. Bernard of Clairvaux
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PART VI

Conversion Stories

This section contains twenty-one conversion stories by individuals who have entered the Catholic Church as adults in recent years. The intention of providing these stories is to give RCIA participants a clearer picture of how God's grace often works in people's lives when he calls them to the Catholic Church. Each is written to place emphasis on both the "how" and the "why" of a person's choice to follow Jesus' call to enter into the arms of Holy Mother Church.

The stories can be handed out at regular intervals throughout the RCIA process, or used to highlight specific issues, or even given privately to certain participants with whom there is a similarity in the details of a given story. The stories were chosen for the variety of responses of these individuals to God's call.

- A Future and a Hope**, by Joe Allison
- Going Through the Door**, by Anonymous
- Not Obligated, but Freely Choosing**, by Anonymous
- From Bible Anarchy to the Joy of Apostolic Authority**, by Doug Beasley
- Waiting for the Invitation**, by Paul Bennett
- In Mary's Womb**, by Andrea Bolster
- Come Home, for to This You Were Born**, by Dana Brault
- God Will Reveal His Plan to Us**, by Anne Brauner
- Little Mary and My Trinity of Friends**, by Shari Deeb
- God Cares Specifically About Me**, by Julie Eddy
- Many Apostles Bring Me to the Church**, by Jim Ensley
- Finding the Desire of My Heart**, by Fr. Ed Fride
- Seeing the Love of God**, by Anne Foy
- Mary By My Side**, by James M. Herbert
- Happily Ever After**, by Heather Keimig
- Lost and Then Found**, by Stephanie Nemecek
- Finding the Truth, Finding My God**, by Eric Pavlat
- Beacon of the Catholic Faith**, by Debbie Plescia
- A Gentle, Guiding Hand**, by Brenda Randall
- Joy, Freedom, and Ecstasy**, by Steve Ray
- Accepting Jesus as God and Lord**, by Jim Safford
- Ready to Accept Christ into My Life**, by Randy Shaw
- Starving for the Eucharist**, by Martha Tonn
- My Friend is Jesus**, by Steve Westmoreland
- Have Mercy on Me, Lord**, by Belinda Wickham

From "Bible Only" Anarchy to the Adventure of Apostolic Authority

DOUG BEASLEY

"A man cannot expect any adventure in the land of anarchy. But a man can expect any number of adventures if he goes traveling in the land of authority." ~ G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy

On the Road to Azusa Street

MY FAMILY IS FIFTH-GENERATION METHODIST, with roots in East Texas. I was born in 1939, the year of *Gone With the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and Hitler's invasion of Poland. The winds of World War II, socioeconomic changes, and a struggle within the church over "speaking in tongues" forced us to find another road. There is a yellow brick road of Pentecostalism that runs from Topeka, Kansas through my hometown of Houston and on to Los Angeles. In 1946, we moved to Los Angeles, birthplace of organized Pentecostalism at the Azusa Street Mission of 1906.

My uncle gave me my first Bible for my sixth birthday, and I soon began to read the Bible "on my own." The Holy Spirit led me to these words of



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

Peter: *"You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts 8:21-23). Little did I know that this call to conversion came from the first Pope, the Pastor of Pastors. The Holy Spirit used the "keys of Peter" to bring me to Christ as Savior. At ten, I received Jesus as Lord. I felt the Lord calling me to follow in the path of my uncle and become a pastor. I spent much of my time in study and prayer. In 1960, I graduated from L.I.F.E. Bible College. I was immediately ordained in the Pentecostal church.

In the 1950s, God had given to Pentecostals a great visitation of the Holy Spirit known as the "Latter Rain." The Holy Spirit was calling the Pentecostals back to their Catholic roots of apostolic authority, prophetic gifts, and "sing-

ing" the liturgy in the Spirit. Organized Pentecostalism rejected the "Latter Rain" but, thanks to Dr. David Du Plessis, an Assemblies of God minister known in charismatic circles as "Mr. Pentecost," who had a personal audience with Pope John XXIII, the "rain" began to fall in the Catholic Church. "Latter rain" was given a theological face-lift and a new name: the Charismatic Renewal.

Unfortunately, I witnessed the sad spectacle of a divided Pentecostalism. I was deeply confused by Pentecostals who

could not agree on the interpretation of a given text in the Bible and split into hundreds of groups. The Charismatics taught that speaking in tongues is one of the many gifts of the Spirit, but not the initial evidence of the Spirit-filled life as taught by Pentecostals. Without Holy

"Without Holy Mother Church and the Pastor of pastors, we Pentecostals did not know where to take theological controversy, except to the Bible verse which agreed with our experience, and this only made matters worse."

Mother Church and the Pastor of pastors, we Pentecostals did not know where to take theological controversy, except to the Bible verse which agreed with our experience, and this only made matters worse.

Tim Staples, an Assemblies of God pastor who converted to the Catholic Church, showed me how we Pentecostals hop, skip, and jump all over the Bible looking for our "proof texts." For example, I have preached on the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Matthew 18:10-14 but stopped short of apostolic authority taught in Matthew 18:15-17: *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church"* (Mt 18:15-17).

Knowing that Pentecostalism came out of Methodism, and



longing for unity in the Body of Christ, I became a United Methodist pastor in 1975. I was serving the largest church of my denomination in the Southwest Texas Conference when my wife dropped the bomb: she wanted out of my life. The chill of death could not have been colder. After twenty years of marriage, three wonderful children, and ten years of being counseled by a “Bible-only” marriage counselor, we were divorced in 1982.

My life after divorce looked like the devastation of a Hiroshima. Divorce was a thief that stole my wife and a robber that left me a lame pastor. The “Eleventh Commandment” for Protestant pastors is “Thou shalt be married.” Yet as my world fell apart, my faith increased. Again the Holy Spirit led me to the Bible: *“Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome”* (Acts 23:11).

What the devil calls the end, God calls “a bend in the road.”

On the Road to Rome

“I am out to build a church that will be a road back to Rome” (John Wesley, *Journal*).

I made my last pastoral call in San Antonio just as the sun was setting. I stood in that parking lot and watched the sun go down on my ministry. I had never felt so alone. I was entering a dark night of the soul. Out of nowhere, a woman approached me and started to talk about that beautiful Texas sunset. Small talk soon became a serious conversation about the Lord. The woman said, “There is hope for you in the Catholic Church.” She left me with some prayer cards and the promise that she would call me at my new place to see how I was doing. No bishop and no fellow pastor called me — but she did. Unfortunately, I would not be ready for the Catholic Church without another crisis in my vocation.

In 1983, God led me to start a radio ministry in Canton, Ohio, the first home of Mother Angelica, founder of EWTN, a Catholic radio-television network. It seemed that everywhere I turned, I met Catholics who encouraged me to study the faith. One of my listeners even gave me the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I bought a short-wave radio and began listening to all of the great teaching on this network.

Ever since seminary, I would periodically attend Mass. On one particular Saturday evening, I entered a Catholic church where the celebrant was Fr. Doug Lorig of St. Anne’s, Gilbert, Arizona, a convert from the Episcopal Church. As Fr. Doug celebrated Mass, his radiant witness of hope gave me much-needed spiritual direction. He gave me a crucifix and two books, *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn and *Surprised by Truth*,

edited by Patrick Madrid. A few days after reading these books, I sat next to a faithful Catholic on a plane going to Canton who witnessed to me about the need for “ongoing” apostolic authority in Bible study. My mind returned to Matthew 18:15-17.

I began to see a beautiful tapestry that only God can weave. Canton is ninety minutes from the Franciscan University in Steubenville, home of Dr. Scott Hahn. I had to meet the man whom his wife Kimberly called “Luther in reverse.”

I called Scott and told him of my desire to become Catholic. He told me that I was not alone and that many Protestant pastors were coming home to Rome. I soon was welcomed into an RCIA program to study the faith, under apostolic authority. I was a lame man who received the grace of God at work

in faithful Catholics who carried me to *“that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.... [Then] Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk’”* (Acts 3:2, 6).

The well-prepared lessons and the inspiring testimonies of changed lives made the doctrine I was learning come alive. The “Latter Rain” began to fall upon my “dry bones.” I felt that I was at home. I experienced the faith

of “apostolic authority,” the hope of “prophetic gifts,” the joy of “singing in the Spirit,” and the love of faithful Catholics. At the Easter Vigil of 1998, the same Apostle Peter who had called me to convert when I was six years old in 1945, took me by the hand into the waters of Holy Baptism and raised me up on my feet: *“[I]mmediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God”* (Acts 3:7-8). I had been to literally thousands of miracle meetings and healing services in Pentecostal churches, but none like this one. The Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus became *“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”* (Gn 2:23). Someday the Church without divisions, as the new Israel, will be able to look upon Jesus, the Greater Son of David (see Mt 12:42), and shout with joy unspeakable: *“Behold, we are your bone and flesh”* (2 Sm 5:1).

Even five years later, I continue to walk to the Table of the Lord for my ongoing bone transplant. Some day, I hope to stand with the whole family of God before the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah, the Root of David (see Rv 5:5), and sing a new song, saying,

“Worthy art thou ... for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom [us] for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made [us] a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rv 5:9-10).

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In Mary's Womb

ANDREA BOLSTER

Let it be to me according to your word. ~ Luke 1:38

FELT LIKE A KID, dragging my heels, as my heart was being tugged onward by God's hand. I didn't want to go, and it hurt. I had already learned the importance of obedience. Just as Jesus *"learned obedience through what he suffered"* (Heb 5:8), I had learned that, even though God's ways were not always my ways, his ways are always best. But as I sought God daily through prayer and Scripture reading, I found myself less and less able to pray. I was holding back, even though God was calling me to go to RCIA.

At the time, my husband was a graduate student studying theology at the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. I had been exposed to enough of what he was learning to know that this would be a place where my questions about Catholicism would be answered. But I wasn't sure that I even wanted them answered. What if I found them to be true? Then what?

I knew my resistance was distancing me from God. I told myself, and everyone else, that I was going to RCIA in order to learn, not necessarily to become Catholic. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."* I knew that God was capable of leading me places that I would have never dreamed of myself.

My RCIA experience turned out to be a wonderful one. I was surprised to find out how the teachings based on Tradition were rooted in Scripture. It was also a relief to find out that many of my fears about the Catholic Church were



Magnificat, by James Tissot, 1856-1902

"One day while I was praying in the chapel, I felt the presence of Jesus with me as I brought to him my concerns and desires for my unborn child."

based on misunderstandings or misconceptions. When I married a Catholic I knew that I could never become a Catholic simply for his sake. Nor did he want me to do so for any other reason than a desire to do God's will. I knew that, in order for me to become Catholic, God would have to make his will very clear to me and that I would have to be able to explain it and fully believe it in order to embrace it. As I began to learn more about the Catholic faith, I found myself explaining and defending it to my friends and family. This I never dreamed would happen. My marriage was also richly blessed as a result of my openness to learn about the Catholic faith. What had once led to pain and defensiveness on both sides could now be discussed in a more reasonable manner. My husband attended RCIA with me. He never once told me of his desire for me to become Catholic, although I sensed an increase in his prayer life. He gave me all the space I needed to explore, question, and doubt. Consequently, I found it easier to approach him with my thoughts. This often led to long hours of discussion. During the RCIA process I found out that I was pregnant. My husband and I were thrilled with the news. I remembered reflecting upon my sister-in-law's pregnancy, six years earlier, and recalled the insights I had received about Heaven at that time. My family had gathered to celebrate Christmas and my younger sister played carols on her flute. My brother commented that the baby, still in his mother's womb, could

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probably hear the music. I thought at the time that, just as the baby could hear music from our world while still in the womb, in a spiritual sense we can glimpse the worship of God in Heaven while yet in this world.

At about this time, one of the RCIA sessions closed, as it normally did, with a popular song of praise. Later that evening, while I was reading the Bible, I recognized that the words of the song that we had sung were taken directly out of Scripture. I was familiar with the songs and Psalms that we regularly sang or chanted, but the words of this particular song came from the book of Revelation: *“Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen”* (Rv 7:12). I kept reading and found the passage where the saints in Heaven sang, *“Holy, holy, holy”* (Rv 4:8) and realized that when Catholics sang these praises at Mass they were imitating the vision of Heaven that St. John described in the book of Revelation. *“This is what we will be doing in Heaven,”* I realized. I brought my discovery to my husband’s attention and he explained that Catholic worship is more than just an imitation, but an actual participation in the Heavenly worship of God. Just as my unborn baby hears the sound from a world that he has never experienced, God invites me, through the Mass, to glimpse a world that I have not yet experienced.

As my pregnancy continued, I began reading a book that a friend had given me describing the development of a child within the womb. I began to pray specifically for each member of my baby’s tiny body as God shaped him inside of me. As this miracle took place within me, sometimes I felt like a mere spectator, but I also sensed that God had invited me to participate in this miracle in a special way. It seemed that God was doing all the work, caring for this child that I had never even seen. I continued to pray and wondered sometimes if my baby did not perhaps know his Creator more intimately than he knew me. It seemed that this could be the case and, though I longed to hold my child, I found myself praying with deep desire that the intimate relationship that they now shared would continue throughout his life.

Our RCIA director had scheduled an extra weekend session, as she often did when she wanted to give us more time to discuss important topics. Though I was coming to enjoy the sessions more and more, I found myself uncomfortable as the “Mary” weekend approached. Though I certainly had nothing against Mary, I felt that too many Catholics went overboard in their devotion to her. I felt that the love Catholics have for Mary should be reserved for God alone. I didn’t understand what role Mary had in my life, since Jesus alone had died for my sins. However, during our discussions about Mary in RCIA, we learned that true devotion to Mary should always lead us closer to her Son, Jesus. This gave me a sense of peace about the Catholic Church, but I had known Jesus for many years and did not understand how Mary could help me know him better.

My sponsor suggested that I try spending some of my prayer time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and though I did not really understand how that could make a difference, I figured that it couldn’t hurt. One day while I was praying in the chapel, I felt the presence of Jesus with me as I brought to him my concerns and desires for my unborn child. As I prayed that my child would know him as I did, he made it clear to me that his mother had been praying the same for me all along, with that same sense of longing that I experienced for my own child. All of a sudden I understood that Mary loved me

with the same motherly love that I as a mother was giving to my child. It was as if I had been in her womb all my life, being formed by her Heavenly Father, but had never recognized the special role she was playing in my spiritual development.

Through these revelations, and many others, I felt that God was leading me to join the Catholic Church. Though most of the intellectual difficulties were overcome, the emotional struggle I experienced caused me to hesitate. My family had been very supportive, but my greatest difficulty was the separation I felt when I contemplated becoming a Catholic. However, I knew that I had to be obedient to God’s call, and respond as my newfound spiritual mother had done when she had said, *“Let it be to me according to your word”* (Lk 1:38).



“Just as the baby could hear music from our world while still in the womb, in a spiritual sense we can glimpse the worship of God in Heaven while yet in this world.”





PART VII

Small Group Discussion Questions

The purpose of this part of the *Participant's Book* is to provide a practical means to use the application questions offered at the end of each of the sixty lesson plans in the ON THE JOURNEY series companion *Catechist's Manual*. A catechist or RCIA director may opt simply to copy these pages a number of times and slice up the copies to give each small group a set of questions.

However, many parishes will decide to combine certain lesson plans or expand sections of other lesson plans into entire teachings. In these cases, the sixty categories of these questions are not the desired breakdown. As well, some parishes will decide not to use all of the questions suggested for a given session, or may like to add questions more suitable to a given set of participants. For all of these reasons, these questions are offered in this book to be copied as needed, and in electronic form to be altered as desired.

Angels — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How have angels worked to carry out God's plan of salvation?
2. How do we know that angels exist? Why are they Christ's angels?
3. We are each given our own Guardian angel to watch over us and guide us. How can we co-operate with our Guardian angels to help us follow the way of Christ?
4. Angels always see the face of God. How can this help us to overcome the temptations of the Devil?

Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the Christian view of suffering differ from that of our culture?
2. How does Christ's suffering and death take our sin and illness and use it as a means of our own redemption?
3. Jesus healed the body and the soul. How is this healing manifested in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?
4. How does Christ make sense of suffering? How can suffering help us in our calling to holiness?

Baptism — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is Baptism called a sacrament of initiation?
2. If Baptism gives us new life, why does the celebration of the sacrament immerse us in water to symbolize burial in Christ's death?
3. When we are baptized, we receive sanctifying grace; the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How can these help us to live a Christian life?
4. How can the Church help us to unfold our baptismal graces?
5. If all sins are forgiven at Baptism, why do we need to go to the sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?

The Battle of Prayer — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is prayer a struggle? What can we do to overcome the difficulties of prayer?
2. Why is it important that we pray? Is it possible that God will answer your prayer with a "no"?
3. Which attitudes to prayer may discourage us from praying?
4. What effect will it have if your prayer is filled with petitions but lacks adoration and thanksgiving?
5. What do we need to pray, besides our own efforts, and why?

The Blessed Trinity — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How do we know that there are three Persons in one God?
2. How is the Blessed Trinity the central mystery of Christianity?
3. How does God's nature (a community of Persons whose life is love) determine what he does?
4. The inner life of God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is characterized by mutual love. How can we reflect this in our own Christian life, and relationships?

The Blessed Virgin Mary — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do Catholics honor Mary? Why is she considered the Mother of the Church?
2. Why is Mary's Assumption into Heaven a source of hope for Christians?
3. Does it detract from God's power that he often relies on a free response in faith from human beings? What does it show us about God's respect for his creation and the importance of our faith response?
4. What privileges did God give to Mary to prepare her for her role in salvation?
5. Jesus gave Mary to us as our Mother. How can Mary's example and her faith, help us in our own daily lives?
6. What does the role of Mary in God's plan of salvation say about the dignity of women?

Cardinal Virtues and the Virtues of Chastity and Humility – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Jesus is our model for the virtuous life. Discuss how Jesus exhibits the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.
2. What are some ways that society encourages a lack of temperance, specifically a lack of chastity?
3. What outside influences in my life challenge my own exercise of virtue?
4. How might I seek to grow in virtue?

The Church – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is the Church both human and divine? Why is a Church necessary at all?
2. Why is a hierarchy necessary for the Church? How is the Church hierarchy different from a secular organization?
3. What did Jesus intend to teach when he washed the feet of his apostles at the Last Supper?
4. Does the infallibility of the Pope mean that he is perfect?
5. In what way do we need the sacramental ministry of the Church?
6. How can the Precepts of the Church help our growth in holiness?
7. How can the laity, as the Body of Christ, the Church, bring the Gospel to the world?

The Communion of Saints – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the Communion of Saints help us to see that love is eternal?
2. Can our understanding of the Communion of Saints help us remain united to our departed loved ones?
3. In what ways might the Communion of Saints help in your efforts to be holy and reach Heaven?
4. How can communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints help us to grow in union with God?
5. How can the exchange of spiritual goods help those in Purgatory and, at the same time, help us to grow in holiness?

Confirmation – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important to see the link between Baptism and Confirmation?
2. Why do we receive the special strength of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation?
3. Which gifts of the Holy Spirit would particularly help us to be a witness to Christ in our present world?
4. Do you find it a challenge to witness to Christ in your family, among your friends, and in the workplace?
5. What people in your life could really use your witness of Christ?

Creation – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you find God's glory in creation? What are his greatest creations?
2. God created us "good." What significance does this have for our lives? How can we participate in God's creative work?
3. What does it mean to be a "steward" of the created world, and how should this affect our behavior?
4. Do you believe that other creatures have the same rights and dignity as human beings? What is the significant difference between God's creation of us compared to his creation of everything else?
5. God holds us in existence. What should be our response to this?
6. What are the consequences of being given free will by God?

The Dignity of the Human Person – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does it matter that we are made in the image and likeness of God? How are we different from other creatures?
2. Why do we have reason and free will?
3. In which ways do we see the dignity of the human person being abused in our society?
4. If Christ is the image of the invisible God, and we are made in the image of God, how does Christ help us to see our true selves?
5. Is Jesus asking too much in commanding us to be perfect as his Father is perfect?

Divine Revelation — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is God's purpose in revealing himself to us?
2. How has God's revelation been revealed from the time of Abraham and Moses?
3. Where can we find sacred revelation?
4. What in the life of Jesus tells you that God loves and cares for you? Why is Jesus the fullness of revelation?
5. How might we come to believe that God has truly revealed himself to us?

Ecumenism and Other Religions — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Must a person belong to a church to be saved?
2. If salvation is attainable outside the Catholic Church, why does it matter whether or not anyone becomes a Catholic?
3. Why do the divisions between Christians hinder the witness we give to the world about Jesus Christ?
4. How can it help ecumenical discussion and dialogue with other religions if Christians know their own faith well?
5. How can we contribute to the restoration of unity in the Church?

The Eucharist (Lesson 1 of 2) — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is Jesus present in the Eucharist? By what power is Jesus' Real Presence made possible?
2. How is the Eucharist essential to the Father's plan to give us the gift of hope?
3. How does the Eucharist show the love of the Father and of Christ?
4. Why is the Eucharist more than a mental recollection of Christ's Passover? How does this bear on the way we attend Mass?
5. How can we prepare to receive so great a gift?

The Eucharist (Lesson 2 of 2) — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does the Church teach that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and our faith?
2. How is the Eucharist the "sacrificial memorial" of Christ? How is the Eucharist a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet?
3. What does it mean to say that the Eucharist should be received worthily by the faithful?
4. How can we participate fully in the Mass?
5. The word "Mass" is derived from the closing words "*Itte, missa est*" ("go, you are sent"). What are we sent to do?

The Existence of God — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the natural way of coming to know God? Why do people not believe in God?
2. Do you think it matters whether a person believes in God? How might belief in God affect our view of sin, of cheating, divorce, euthanasia, abortion?
3. How do we know that God is love?
4. Human beings yearn for happiness. How is this linked to the existence of God?
5. We believe in God who is truth, beauty, and goodness. What impact does this have on our lives?
6. Why do possessions, fame, and power used for self not bring true happiness and leave us desiring and seeking more?

The First Three Commandments — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How do the Commandments show that God is a loving Father who has our best interests at heart?
2. Which things in our society challenge the first three Commandments?
3. What is the natural law? Why do we have the Commandments if we have the natural law?
4. How is our moral life dependent on the First Commandment?
5. In which ways can I keep the Lord's Day holy?

The Four Last Things — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What happens when we die, and why can Jesus help us to find an answer?
2. Why do many find it difficult to see death as a beginning? What does it mean to be risen with Christ?
3. What does “the reality of judgment calls all to faith and conversion” mean?
4. What is Hell?
5. If we want eternal life, why do we always need to be ready?

The Four Marks of the Church — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean when we say the Church is apostolic?
2. How can a mark of the Church be holiness when there are scandals and failures in the Church?
3. How can the Church be one if there are so many different denominations?
4. Why is the Church catholic because she is universal?
5. If the fullness of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, do you have to be a Catholic to be saved?

Freedom in Christ — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do we not always do what is right?
2. What does the Church mean when it says that “true freedom is having the power to overcome the reign of sin in ourselves”?
3. How is obedience to God true freedom? Could there be bad motivations for keeping God’s law?
4. How do I react to Jesus’ answer to the rich man to give his wealth to the poor and to follow him?

God the Father — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How do we become children of God?
2. The father-image can be a flawed one in today’s society. How can we overcome this to show the perfection of God the Father, whom we are called to imitate?
3. Jesus said that only the Son knows the Father unless the Son chooses to reveal him. What is necessary then for a relationship with the Father?
4. Why is faith necessary for living as adopted children of God?

Grace — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Do I have to accept God’s grace?
2. How is grace linked to becoming children of God?
3. What does it mean to say that all sacraments confer gifts specific to the purpose of each?
4. Why is sanctifying (or sacramental) grace not something to which we have an automatic right?
5. If grace is a free gift from God, and we cannot earn it, why then do we increase in grace by doing good works?
6. How would we know that grace is active in our lives?

Holy Orders — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is the priesthood essential to our relationship with Christ?
2. There are three degrees of Holy Orders. What does this mean?
3. Why do those in Holy Orders need our prayers?
4. In what way is the presence of a priest at one’s deathbed important?
5. What does it mean to say that the priest acts in the person of Christ (in persona Christi) in his sacramental ministry?
6. Why is it helpful to know that the minister’s sins or errors cannot impede the validity and fruitfulness of the sacraments, because the true minister is Christ?

The Holy Spirit — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is the Holy Spirit God's gift to us?
2. In which ways is the Holy Spirit the soul of the Christian life?
3. How do we come to know the Holy Spirit who is dwelling and acting in the Church?
4. How should the fact that we are temples of the Holy Spirit affect the way we live our lives?
5. How might the Holy Spirit work in and through us when our faith is challenged?

The Incarnation — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is the Incarnation one of the two basic mysteries of Christianity?
2. How does the Incarnation make it possible for us to be perfect like the Father is perfect?
3. What does it mean when we say that our faith is incarnational? How can we live the Incarnation in our own lives?
4. When people ask us what we believe, what do we mean when we say that we believe in a Person, not merely a set of tenets?
5. How does the fact that Jesus is human and divine help us in our difficulties and suffering?
6. Jesus loved us with a human heart. How should we respond to this great love?

Introduction to Prayer — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. When I pray, what do I say to God? What might I do to improve my relationship to God in prayer?
2. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian prayer?
3. How is it different to know about someone and to know someone personally? Do I pray to God as an acquaintance or as a close friend?
4. Why do we need faith, hope, and love to pray?
5. What places are suitable for prayer? How can we “pray always” when we lead such busy lives?

Justification and Merit — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. If the grace of justification flows from, and is merited by, the Passion of Christ, why do we need to be baptized to be justified?
2. Why does justification require co-operation between God's grace and our freedom?
3. Why does justification require continual conversion to God? Why is faith apart from works dead?
4. Why is the *service* of and *witness* to faith necessary for salvation? How do my good works fit into the idea that grace is a free gift from God?

The Kingdom of God — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why must repentance and conversion come before entering the Kingdom of God?
2. Why are good deeds such an essential part of accepting Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom?
3. In what way has the Kingdom of God already begun? What does it mean to say that the Kingdom is in the world but not of this world?
4. What is the link between the Kingdom of God and the poor?
5. Why are sinners invited to the Kingdom of God? Why hasn't Christ's Kingdom reached its fulfillment?
6. Why are Christians called to build up the Kingdom of God?

The Last Seven Sacraments — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How will honoring your father and mother color your other relationships in life?
2. If man is body and soul, what life does the Fifth Commandment protect?
3. What did Pope John Paul II mean when he warned that we are moving into a “culture of death”?
4. Why can we say that the Sixth Commandment is not a prohibition but a guide to dealing with our sexuality?
5. What do we mean when we say that truthfulness does not mean communicating everything to everyone?
6. How is Christian purity affected by the social climate?
7. Why are perjury, plagiarism, and cheating sins against the Seventh and Eighth Commandments?

Liturgical Prayer – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean when we say “we pray what we believe”?
2. Why is personal prayer a preparation for liturgical prayer with others?
3. Why would you say that liturgical prayer is at the heart of Catholic life?
4. Why is the church, the house of God, the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community?
5. Why is the public prayer of the Church so powerful?
6. What does it mean when the Church says that in the liturgical prayer of the Church, the whole Mystical Body of Christ is present?

Liturgy – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the liturgy help us to stay formed in our Christian vocation?
2. How does the Church’s liturgical prayer unite us with one another?
3. How can Christ continue his work of redemption in the liturgy?
4. In what way is the mystery of the Christ’s life unfolded in the Liturgical Year?
5. How can the celebration of the liturgy sanctify time?
6. Why is the liturgy more than merely a “gathering of people”? Why are we not free to change the liturgy at will?

The Lord’s Prayer – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How can the Lord’s Prayer help us to come to know and accept the will of God?
2. In the Lord’s Prayer, are we asking only for material sustenance?
3. Have I ever held a grudge? How did it affect my life? How does the Lord’s Prayer address this?
4. How do the seven petitions and their order show us the right order of life and prayer?
5. How is the Lord’s Prayer a summary of the whole Gospel?

The Mass – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is the Mass a celebration of the Paschal mystery of Christ?
2. How is the Mass a sacrifice that re-presents the one single sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?
3. Jesus is present in many ways in the Mass. What does it mean to say that Jesus is uniquely present in the Eucharist?
4. How is the Mass a foretaste of Heaven?
5. How should we prepare for Holy Communion?
6. Why is the Mass different from other ways of offering praise to God?
7. What are specific ways to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the Holy Mass?

Matrimony – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does marriage in God’s plan differ from how marriage is understood in our culture?
2. How does the mutual love of the spouses reflect the inner life of the Trinity?
3. Why does a married couple need the grace of the sacrament of Matrimony to help them in their marriage?
4. What does it mean to be called to be “at the service of life” in Matrimony?
5. Is a Catholic marriage just for the procreation of children?
6. What does it mean when the Church teaches that sexuality concerns the innermost being of the human person?
7. How is marriage “for the good of the spouses”?

Mercy and Justice – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does God allow drastically unjust things to happen to people?
2. What is the connection between justice and the dignity of the human person?
3. How are works of mercy both temporal and eternal?
4. What is the link between charity and mercy?
5. Do I like God’s mercy but not his justice? What is the difference between mercy and leniency?
6. How can we know that God is merciful?
7. How can Christians contribute to a just society?

The Mystical Body of Christ — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How can our Lord's use of the image of the vine and branches help you to better understand the mystery of his relationship to the Church?
2. Why is this relationship also seen in terms of Jesus the Bridegroom and the Church his spouse?
3. What does it mean to say that there is unity in diversity among the members of the Church?
4. How is the Church the Body of Christ?
5. How does sin damage the Body of Christ and forgiveness restore the Body?
6. How can we contribute to the increase, growth, and development of the Church by leading a moral and holy life?

Natural Law — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why could it be more difficult in today's culture to understand the precepts of the natural law?
2. Why is unrestrained liberty different from freedom?
3. How can you form your conscience to help you discern what is right and what is wrong?
4. Pope Paul VI said that many today have lost the sense of sin. What do you think this means?

Original Sin and the Mystery of Iniquity — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why did the sin of our first parents affect us as well?
2. Do I personally sense that there is something "broken" in my nature, or that I want to do good but end up sinning?
3. What are the results of original sin rupturing the initial harmony between man and woman?
4. How can we say that God is good when there is so much evil and suffering in the world, where the innocent suffer?
5. What would we lose if God eliminated all evil? How is our freedom put to the test?
6. If Baptism renews us, why do we still have a wounded nature, inclined to sin?

The Paschal Mystery — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Was it necessary for Jesus actually to die? Couldn't God forgive our sins some other way?
2. What does it mean when St. Paul says that without the Resurrection, our faith is in vain?
3. What does Jesus' Ascension with his glorified body mean to me in understanding what Heaven will be like?
4. How can we participate in the Paschal mystery through the sacraments and in our daily lives?

The Priesthood of the Faithful and Evangelization — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think God works through human beings instead of doing all things by himself?
2. In which ways are the faithful equipped to bring the Gospel to the world?
3. How are the faithful in the front line of the Church's life?
4. Is it possible for the faithful to consecrate the world itself to God?
5. Why do parents have a special part to play in the mission of the faithful?
6. Why does the work of evangelization require both word and deed?

Providence — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What do the Scriptures tell us about God's providence?
2. What does Jesus teach us about providence?
3. Why is prayer a part of God's providential work?
4. How does awareness of God's providence increase our trust?
5. How can there be free will and divine providence?
6. How do we acknowledge God's providence when we say the Lord's Prayer?

Reconciliation — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why did Christ institute the sacrament of Reconciliation when our sins are forgiven at Baptism?
2. Why do we need to be reconciled with the Church?
3. Why do Catholics confess their sins to a priest instead of speaking directly to God?
4. How does the confession of our daily faults (venial sins) help us to grow in the spiritual life?
5. How can prayer, fasting, and almsgiving help us ward off sin and grow in holiness?
6. How can the sacrament of Reconciliation be an encounter with Jesus?
7. How does our penance express an interior conversion?

The Sacramental Economy — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is the sacramental economy a work of the Holy Trinity?
2. Why does God use material things to accomplish spiritual purposes?
3. Why are the sacraments necessary for salvation?
4. Can we view the Church as a man-made institution only, or is it more than that?
5. How are the sacraments, sacraments of Christ?
6. Why do the sacraments require us to have faith?
7. How does the Holy Spirit work in the Church's liturgy?
8. What is the place of signs and symbols in the sacramental economy?

Sacramental Living — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How can we say that the Holy Eucharist is the place we meet Christ?
2. Why is the ministry of the priest essential for us to lead a sacramental life?
3. In what ways can frequently receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation help us to lead a sacramental life?
4. What would leading a sacramental life require of a married couple?
5. How does the sacramental life of a Catholic build up our families and our society?
6. What reasons do you see that so many souls fail to understand the supreme importance of God?

Sacred Scripture — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is the Bible the story of salvation? How are the two testaments related to each other?
2. How is God the author of Sacred Scripture?
3. Why can't we pick and choose what pleases us in the Bible and ignore the rest?
4. In what ways can I give good example by showing respect for the Holy Book?
5. Why do we need the Church, if the Bible contains all that is needed for our salvation?
6. What does the statement: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Jesus Christ," mean?
7. How can the Church say that the Bible is free from error, but that this does not mean that we can read everything in the Bible as literally true? How are we to interpret the Scriptures?
8. Why is the New Testament best understood in the light of the Old Testament?
9. Why should reading and studying the Bible always be rooted in prayer and meditation?

Sacred Tradition — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is a Church necessary? Isn't Jesus himself all I need, for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?
2. Why isn't my own interpretation of Sacred Scripture just as good as the next person's?
3. How are Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition related to each other?
4. Why is the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Church essential for the communication of God's revelation?
5. How does the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Church inspire us to have faith in the Church's teaching?
6. What does it mean to say that the Magisterium is the servant of Revelation?
7. Which comes first: Tradition, Magisterium, or the Bible?
8. Why do we say that Tradition is the living transmission of the Word of God?
9. How can the living transmission of Tradition be called divine revelation?

Salvation and Redemption — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. When did God first promise salvation? What evidence is there that the world even needs saving?
2. Does my redemption rest solely on the actions of Jesus? How did Christ “become sin” for us?
3. If we are all reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, why do we need to respond and follow the way of Jesus to be saved?
4. Why is Jesus’ total sacrifice a divine love story? How are we to participate in the sacrifice of Christ?

The Second Coming of Christ — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why has Christ’s Kingdom not yet reached its fulfillment?
2. How can I prepare for Jesus’ second coming?
3. How can fear of the final judgment orientate my life?
4. In what ways can I change my prayer life to try to live so that I am prepared for judgment?
5. What are the signs that will come before the return of Christ?
6. Should those who live in God’s friendship be exempted from the suffering of the end of the world?
7. What kind of idea do I have of God’s promised re-creation of Heaven and earth?
8. What does it mean to say that we shall be judged on our love?

Social Teachings of the Church — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why should I regard my fellow citizen as my equal?
2. What do we mean when we say we are social beings? What responsibility do we have to participate in public life?
3. Why did God not distribute our talents and gifts equally?
4. Why should I work for the common good? Why are love of God and love of neighbor essential to attain eternal life?

The Son of God — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How did Jesus, as a man, show us that he was also divine?
2. Why should God have become man? Why are Christ’s divine and human natures both essential for understanding his Paschal mystery and his gift of redemption?
3. Could the Father have accomplished our redemption without sending his Son? Why did he do what he did?
4. In what way did Jesus teach us he was the Son of God when he taught us the Lord’s Prayer?
5. Like Peter, what do we need to recognize Jesus as the Son of God?
6. How did Jesus show that had power and authority beyond what is attributable to ordinary human beings?
7. How does Christian prayer profess the Lordship of Christ?
8. What would it mean in your life to more fully try to imitate the Son?

The Story of the People of God — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is God’s part in his covenants with us?
2. What has been the part of his people in each of his covenants? What is our part in the New Covenant?
3. Why are Christians seen as the pilgrim people of God?

Temptation and Sin — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why are we prone to sin? What does it mean to say we are in the midst of a spiritual battle?
2. How does sin reproduce itself? How can we avoid the ways that lead to sin?
3. Why does modern society find it hard to settle on a common understanding of what is right and what is wrong?
4. Can you think of examples of where contemporary society has become blind to sin?

Traditions of Prayer — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What do you think it means to be a prayerful person?
2. When during my day am I least aware of the presence of God in my life?
3. Jesus is the way of our prayer. How does Mary show us this way when we pray the Rosary?
4. How can prayer and devotion to the saints help us to grow in union with God?
5. Why is fostering a relationship with the Holy Spirit vital for meditation in our prayer life?
6. What usefulness could a weekly hour of Eucharistic adoration serve in my life?

The Two Great Commandments (The New Law) — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is my understanding of the Ten Commandments in light of the New Law?
2. Why is the New Law called the Law of Love?
3. Does the Law of Love mean I can make up my own rules for my moral life?
4. How can I help others to live this law?
5. How did Jesus bring the law of the Old Testament to fulfillment?
6. What does Jesus mean when he says he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?
7. What is the connection between the New Law, grace, charity, and the sacraments?

The Universal Call to Holiness — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is holiness? What is necessary to attain holiness? How does the Church help us to become holy?
2. Holiness is the wellspring of freedom, peace, and a deep inner joy. How is this contrary to the popular perception of holiness?
3. Why does our call to holiness also require us to ask God for mercy and forgiveness?
4. Holiness comes by way of the Cross. What does this mean in practice?
5. What ways would the world be worse without the Church?

The Virtue of Faith — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the virtue of faith? Why is faith not a blind leap, as many suppose?
2. Why doesn't God just show himself directly and obviously to us so that we could more easily believe in him?
3. How is faith the beginning of human salvation? What do we mean by the response of faith?
4. How can the Deposit of Faith be a sure foundation for our personal faith?
5. How can suffering and trials test our faith?
6. If faith is a personal act, how can we say that a person does not believe alone?
7. Why does the modern culture often seem closed to the possibility of faith in God?

The Virtue of Hope — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does our understanding of God's love inspire us to hope? How are despair and presumption sins against hope?
2. What would life be like if we did not have hope of Heaven, or of anything beyond death?
3. How would you say the quotation: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight" (Prv 3:5) sums up the virtue of hope?
4. Why is wishing for things different from the theological virtue of hope?
5. How can hope help us to cope with our trials, difficulties, and sufferings?

The Virtue of Love — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is Jesus our model who helps us understand the qualities of true Christian charity?
2. What does the Church mean when she teaches us to hate the sin, but love the sinner?
3. What are some of the biggest challenges that I face when trying to live a Christian life of charity?
4. How do I show love to people I don't like, people who don't like me, or people who have hurt me? Is it enough to just pray for someone I don't like or even detest?
5. What is the difference between God's divine love and our human love? Is loving in a divine way possible for a human?
6. Why is love the greatest of the theological virtues? Why is love the measure by which we will be judged?
7. Why is it necessary to speak about the Holy Spirit when speaking about charity?

Vocations: God's Call – Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the difference between a vocation and a job? Why do we need to discern our vocation?
2. How does a good marriage and devout family life contribute to the origin and nurturing of other kinds of vocations?
3. Why is it so important to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life?
4. Vocation is the way we are called to holiness. Why is effort and sacrifice a part of all vocations?
5. If God allows us to choose freely the path we are to follow, where can we find help to make such an important decision?

SAMPLE