

CATECHISM *of the* CATHOLIC CHURCH

SECOND EDITION

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promulgated by Pope John Paul II*

contains glossary and analytical index



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CHAPTER TWO
GOD COMES TO MEET MAN

50 By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on
the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge,
which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order
of divine Revelation.¹ Through an utterly free decision, God has
revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by reveal-
ing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all
eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed
this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and
the Holy Spirit. 1066

ARTICLE 1
THE REVELATION OF GOD

I. GOD REVEALS HIS "PLAN OF LOVING GOODNESS"

51 "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal
himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was
that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the
Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in
the divine nature."² 2823 1996

52 God, who "dwells in unapproachable light," wants to
communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in
order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son.³ By
revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding
to him, and of knowing him, and of loving him far beyond their
own natural capacity.

53 The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously
"by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each
other"⁴ and shed light on each other. It involves a specific divine
pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He pre-
pares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that
is to culminate in the person and mission of the Incarnate Word,
Jesus Christ. 1953 1950

1 Cf. *DsI Filius*: DS 3015.

2 DV 2, cf. *Eph* 1:9; 2:18; 2 *Pet* 1:4.

3 1 *Tm* 6:16; cf. *Eph* 1:4-5.

4 DV 2.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: "The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure."⁵

II. THE STAGES OF REVELATION

In the beginning God makes himself known

- 54 "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning."⁶ He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.

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55 This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. 397, 410 "After the fall, [God] buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing."⁷

- Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death. . . .
761 Again and again you offered a covenant to man.

The Covenant with Noah

- 56 After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity part by part. The covenant with Noah after the flood gives expression to the principle of the divine economy toward the "nations," in other words, toward men grouped "in their lands, each with [his] own language, by their families, in their nations."⁹

- 57 This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social, and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity,¹⁰ united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own

5 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 20, 2. PG 7/1, 944; cf. 3, 17, 1; 4, 12, 4; 4, 21, 3.

6 DV 3; cf. *Jn* 1:3; *Rom* 1:19-20.

7 DV 3; cf. *Gen* 3:15; *Rom* 2:6-7.

8 *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 118.

9 *Gen* 10:5; cf. 9:9-10, 16; 10:20-31.

10 Cf. *Acts* 17:26-27.

unity as at Babel.¹¹ But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism.¹²

- 58 The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel.¹³ The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchizedek – a figure of Christ – and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job."¹⁴ Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."¹⁵

God chooses Abraham

- 59 In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred, and his father's house,¹⁶ and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations."¹⁷ "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."¹⁸

- 60 The people descended from Abraham would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church.¹⁸ They would be the root onto which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe.¹⁹

- 61 The patriarchs, prophets, and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honored as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.

God forms his people Israel

- 62 After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living

11 Cf. *Wis* 10:5; *Gen* 11:4-6.

12 Cf. *Rom* 1:18-25.

13 Cf. *Gen* 9:16; *Lk* 21:24; DV 3.

14 Cf. *Gen* 14:18; *Heb* 7:3; *Ezek* 14:14.

15 *Jn* 11:52.

16 *Gen* 12:1.

17 *Gen* 17:5; 12:3 (LXX); cf. *Gal* 3:8.

18 Cf. *Rom* 11:28; *Jn* 11:52; 10:16.

19 Cf. *Rom* 11:17-18, 24.

and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Savior.²⁰

204, 2801 63 Israel is the priestly people of God, "called by the name of the LORD" and "the first to hear the word of God,"²¹ the people of "elder brethren" in the faith of Abraham.

64 Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts.²² The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations.²³ Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith, and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary.²⁴

III. CHRIST JESUS – "MEDIATOR AND FULLNESS OF ALL REVELATION"²⁵

God has said everything in his Word

65 "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son."²⁶ Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on *Hebrews* 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.²⁷

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²⁰ Cf. DV 3.

²¹ *Deut* 28:10; *Roman Missal*, Good Friday, General Intercession VI; see also Ex 19:6.

²² Cf. *Isa* 2:2-4; *Jer* 31:31-34; *Heb* 10:16.

²³ Cf. *Ezek* 36; *Isa* 49:5-6; 53:11.

²⁴ Cf. *Zeph* 2:3; *Lk* 1:38.

²⁵ DV 2.

²⁶ *Heb* 1:1-2.

²⁷ St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 2, 22, 3-5, in *The Collected Works*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 179-180; LH, OR Advent, wk 2, Mon.

There will be no further Revelation

66 "The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁸ Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

67 Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such "revelations."

IN BRIEF

68 By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, super-abundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.

69 God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words.

70 Beyond the witness to himself that God gives in created things, he manifested himself to our first parents, spoke to them and, after the fall, promised them salvation (cf. *Gen* 3:15) and offered them his covenant.

71 God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf. *Gen* 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts.

72 God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses.

²⁸ DV 4; cf. 1 *Tim* 6:14; *Titus* 2:13.

Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.

- 73 God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.

ARTICLE 2 THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

- 74 God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth":²⁹ that is, of Christ Jesus.³⁰ Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth:

God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations.³¹

I. THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

- 75 "Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline."³²

In the apostolic preaching . . .

- 76 In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:

— orally "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received — whether from the

lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit."³³

— in writing "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing."³⁴

. . . continued in apostolic succession

- 77 "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'"³⁵ Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time."³⁶

78 This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes."³⁷ "The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and her prayer."³⁸

79 The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church: "God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the Spouse of his beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church — and through her in the world — leads believers to the full truth, and makes the Word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness."³⁹

29 1 Tim 2:4
30 Cf. Jn 14:6.
31 DV 7, cf. 2 Cor 1:20; 3:16-4:6.
32 DV 7, cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15.

33 DV 7.
34 DV 7.
35 DV 7 § 2; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 1; PG 7, 848; Harvey, 2, 9.
36 DV 8 § 1.
37 DV 8 § 1.
38 DV 8 § 3.
39 DV 8 § 3, cf. Col 3:16.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITION AND SACRED SCRIPTURE

One common source . . .

80 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal."⁴⁰ Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age."⁴¹

. . . two distinct modes of transmission

81 "*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."⁴²

113 "And [Holy] *Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching."⁴³

82 As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."⁴⁴

Apostolic Tradition and ecclesial traditions

83 The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.

1202, 2041 Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and

40 DV 9.
41 Mt 28:20.

42 DV 9.

43 DV 9.

44 DV 9.

times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's magisterium.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HERITAGE OF FAITH

The heritage of faith entrusted to the whole of the Church

84 The apostles entrusted the "Sacred deposit" of the faith (the *depositum fidei*),⁴⁵ contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. "By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practicing, and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful."⁴⁶

The Magisterium of the Church

85 "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ."⁴⁷ This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

86 "Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith."⁴⁸

87 Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me,"⁴⁹ the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.

45 DV 10 § 1c-f; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12-14 (Vulg.).

46 DV 10 § 1; cf. Acts 2:42 (Ck.); Pius XII, apostolic constitution, *Manifestissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950: AAS 42 (1950), 756, taken along with the words of St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 66, 8: CSEL 3, 2, 733: "The Church is the people united to its Priests, the flock adhering to its Shepherd."

47 DV 10 § 2.

48 DV 10 § 2.

49 Lk 10:16; cf. Lg 20.

The dogmas of the faith

- 888-892, 888 The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.
- 89 There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.⁵⁰
- 90 The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ.⁵¹ "In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith."⁵²

The supernatural sense of faith

- 91 All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them⁵³ and guides them into all truth.⁵⁴
- 92 "The whole body of the faithful . . . cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful,' they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals."⁵⁵
- 93 "By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*), . . . receives . . . the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. . . . The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life."⁵⁶

50 Cf. *Jn* 8:31-32.
 51 Cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3016; *nexus mysteriorum*; LG 25.
 52 UR 11.
 53 Cf. *1 Jn* 2:20, 27.
 54 Cf. *Jn* 16:13.
 55 LG 12; cf. St. Augustine, *De prizel. sanct.* 14, 27; PL 44, 980.
 56 LG 12; cf. *Jude* 3.

Growth in understanding the faith

- 94 Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church:
- "through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts";⁵⁷ it is in particular "theological research [which] deepens knowledge of revealed truth."⁵⁸
- "from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience,"⁵⁹ the sacred Scriptures "grow with the one who reads them."⁶⁰
- "from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth."⁶¹
- 95 "It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."⁶²

IN BRIEF

- 96 What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.
- 97 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God" (DV 10), in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.
- 98 "The Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes" (DV 8 §1).

57 DV 8 § 2; cf. *Lk* 2:19, 51.
 58 GS 62 § 7; cf. GS 44 § 2; DV 23, 24; UR 4.
 59 DV 8 § 2.
 60 St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ez.* 1, 7, 8; PL 76, 843 D.
 61 DV 8 § 2.
 62 DV 10 § 3.

99 Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply, and to live more fully from the gift of divine Revelation.

100 The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.

ARTICLE 3 SACRED SCRIPTURE

I. CHRIST – THE UNIQUE WORD OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

101 In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: "Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men."⁶³

102 Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely.⁶⁴

You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers, since he who was in the beginning God with God has no need of separate syllables; for he is not subject to time.⁶⁵

103 For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body.⁶⁶

104 In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God."⁶⁷ "In the sacred books,

the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them."⁶⁸

II. INSPIRATION AND TRUTH OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

105 God is the author of Sacred Scripture. "The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁹

"For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself."⁷⁰

106 God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. "To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more."⁷¹

107 The inspired books teach the truth. "Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures."⁷²

108 Still, the Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living."⁷³ If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures."⁷⁴

68 DV 21.

69 DV 11.

70 DV 11; cf. Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 3:15-16.

71 DV 11.

72 DV 11.

73 St. Bernard, *S. missus est hom.*, 4, 11; PL 183, 86.

74 Cf. Lk 24:45.

63 DV 13.

64 Cf. Heb 1:1-3.

65 St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 103, 4, 1; PL 37, 1378; cf. Ps 104; Jn 1:1.

66 Cf. DV 21.

67 1 Thess 2:13; cf. DV 24.

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himself completely.⁶⁴

102 Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks

only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses

himself completely.⁶⁴

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III. THE HOLY SPIRIT, INTERPRETER OF SCRIPTURE

109 In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.⁷⁵

110 In order to discover *the sacred authors' intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. "For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression."⁷⁶

111 But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written."⁷⁷

The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it:⁷⁸

112 1. *Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture."* Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.⁷⁹

The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.⁸⁰

113 2. *Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church."* According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her

75 Cf. DV 12 § 1.

76 DV 12 § 2.

77 DV 12 § 3.

78 Cf. DV 12 § 4.

79 Cf. *Lk 24:25-27*, 44-46.

80 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in Ps 21*, 11; cf. *Ps 22*:15.

the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church"⁸¹).

114 3. *Be attentive to the analogy of faith.*⁸² By "analogy of faith" we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

The senses of Scripture

115 According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

116 The *literal sense* is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: "All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal."⁸³ 110-114

117 The *spiritual sense*. Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs. 1101

1. The *allegorical sense*. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism.⁸⁴

2. The *moral sense*. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction."⁸⁵

3. The *anagogical sense* (Greek: *anagoge*, "leading"). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.⁸⁶

118 A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses: The Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith; The Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny.⁸⁷

119 "It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church 94

81 Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* 5, 5; PG 12, 454D.

82 Cf. *Rom* 12:6.

83 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh I*, 1, 10, ad 1.

84 Cf. *1 Cor* 10:2.

85 *1 Cor* 10:11; cf. *Heb* 3:4:11.

86 Cf. *Rom* 21:1-22:5.

87 *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagoga*. Augustine of Dacia, *Rotulus pignilliaris*, I, ed. A. Walz: Angelicum 6 (1929) 256.

to form a firmer judgment. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God."⁸⁸

113 But I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me.⁸⁹

IV. THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

120 It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.⁹⁰
1117 This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.⁹¹

The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

The New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude, and Revelation (the Apocalypse).

The Old Testament

121 The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value,⁹² for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.

122 Indeed, "the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men."⁹³ Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional,⁹⁴ the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's

88 DV 12 §3.

89 St. Augustine, *Contra epistolam Manichaei*, 5, 6: PL 42, 176.

90 Cf. DV 8 §3.

91 Cf. DS 179; 1334-1336; 1501-1504.

92 Cf. DV 14.

saving love: these writings "are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way."⁹⁵ 2568

123 Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God. The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism).

The New Testament

124 "The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament"⁹⁶ which hand on the ultimate truth of God's Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son: his acts, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church's beginnings under the Spirit's guidance.⁹⁷

125 The Gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures "because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior."⁹⁸ 515

126 We can distinguish three stages in the formation of the Gospels:

1. *The life and teaching of Jesus:* The Church holds firmly that the four Gospels, "whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up."⁹⁹

2. *The oral tradition.* "For, after the ascension of the Lord, the apostles handed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but with that fuller understanding which they, instructed by the glorious events of Christ and enlightened by the Spirit of truth, now enjoyed."¹⁰⁰ 76

3. *The written Gospels.* "The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form; others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches, while sustaining the

93 DV 15.

94 DV 15.

95 DV 15.

96 DV 17; cf. Rom 1:16.

97 Cf. DV 20.

98 DV 18.

99 DV 19; cf. Acts 1:1-2.

100 DV 19.

form of preaching, but always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus."¹⁰¹

1154 127 The fourfold Gospel holds a unique place in the Church, as is evident both in the veneration which the liturgy accords it and in the surpassing attraction it has exercised on the saints at all times:

There is no doctrine which could be better, more precious and more splendid than the text of the Gospel. Behold and retain what our Lord and Master, Christ, has taught by his words and accomplished by his deeds.¹⁰²

2705 But above all it's the Gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer; my poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there, hidden and enthralling meanings.¹⁰³

The unity of the Old and New Testaments

128 The Church, as early as apostolic times,¹⁰⁴ and then constantly in her Tradition, has illuminated the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.

129 Christians therefore read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord himself.¹⁰⁵ Besides, the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old. Early Christian catechesis made constant use of the Old Testament.¹⁰⁶ As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.¹⁰⁷

130 Typology indicates the dynamic movement toward the fulfillment of the divine plan when "God [will] be everything to everyone."¹⁰⁸ Nor do the calling of the patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt, for example, lose their own value in God's plan, from the mere fact that they were intermediate stages.

101 DV 19.
102 St. Caesaria the Younger to St. Richildis and St. Radegunde, *SCt* 345, 480.
103 St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *ms. autob.* A 83v.
104 Cf. 1 Cor 10:6, 11; Heb 10:1; 1 Pet 3:21.
105 Cf. Mk 12:29-31.
106 Cf. 1 Cor 5:6-8; 10:1-11.
107 Cf. St. Augustine, *Quest. in Hept.* 2, 73; PL 34, 623; cf. DV 16.
108 1 Cor 15:28.

V. SACRED SCRIPTURE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

131 "And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life."¹⁰⁹ Hence "access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful."¹¹⁰

132 "Therefore, the 'study of the sacred page' should be the very soul of sacred theology. The ministry of the Word, too — pastoral preaching, catechesis, and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should hold pride of place — is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture."¹¹¹

133 The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,' by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'"¹¹²

IN BRIEF

134 All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ, "because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ" (Hugh of St. Victor, *De arca Noe* 2, 8; PL 176, 642; cf. *ibid.* 2, 9; PL 176, 642-643).

135 "The Sacred Scriptures contain the Word of God and, because they are inspired they are truly the Word of God" (DV 24).

136 God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors; he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth (cf. DV 11).

137 Interpretation of the inspired Scripture must be attentive above all to what God wants to reveal through the sacred authors for our salvation. What comes from the

109 DV 21.
110 DV 22.
111 DV 24.
112 DV 25; cf. *Phil* 3:8 and St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii* prol.; PL 24, 17b.

Spirit is not fully "understood except by the Spirit's action" (cf. Origen, *Hom. in Ex.* 4, 5: PG 12, 320).

138 The Church accepts and venerates as inspired the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New.

139 The four Gospels occupy a central place because Christ Jesus is their center.

140 The unity of the two Testaments proceeds from the unity of God's plan and his Revelation. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfills the Old; the two shed light on each other; both are true Word of God.

141 "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord" (*DV* 21): "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (*Ps* 119:105; cf. *Isa* 50:4).

CHAPTER THREE MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD

142 *By his Revelation*, "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company."¹ The adequate response to this invitation is faith.

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143 *By faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God.² With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, "the obedience of faith."³

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ARTICLE 1

I BELIEVE

I. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

144 To obey (from the Latin *ob-audire*, to "hear or listen to") in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture: The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

Abraham – "father of all who believe"

145 The *Letter to the Hebrews*, in its great eulogy of the faith of Israel's ancestors, lays special emphasis on Abraham's faith: "By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go."⁴ By faith, he lived as a stranger and pilgrim in the promised land.⁵ By faith, Sarah was given to conceive the son of the promise. And by faith Abraham offered his only son in sacrifice.⁶

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146 Abraham thus fulfills the definition of faith in *Hebrews* 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."⁷ "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to

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¹ *DV* 2; cf. *Col* 1:15; *1 Tim* 1:17; *Ex* 33:11; *In* 15:14-15; *Bar* 3:38 (Vulg.).

² Cf. *DV* 5.

³ Cf. *Rom* 1:5; 16:26.

⁴ *Heb* 11:8; cf. *Gen* 12:1-4.

⁵ Cf. *Gen* 23:4.

⁶ Cf. *Heb* 11:17.

him as righteousness.⁸ Because he was "strong in his faith," Abraham became the "father of all who believe."⁹

147 The Old Testament is rich in witnesses to this faith. The 839 *Letter to the Hebrews* proclaims its eulogy of the exemplary faith of the ancestors who "received divine approval."¹⁰ Yet "God had foreseen something better for us": the grace of believing in his Son Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."¹¹

Mary – "Blessed is she who believed"

148 The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that "with God nothing will be impossible" and so giving her assent: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."¹² Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."¹³ It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.¹⁴

149 Throughout her life and until her last ordeal¹⁵ when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God's word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

II. "I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED"¹⁶

To believe in God alone

150 Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to

7 Heb 11:1.
8 Rom 4:3; cf. Gen 15:6.
9 Rom 4:11, 18; 4:20; cf. Gen 15:5.
10 Heb 11:2, 39.
11 Heb 11:40; 12:2.
12 Lk 1:37-38; cf. Gen 18:14.
13 Lk 1:45.
14 Cf. Lk 1:48.
15 Cf. Lk 2:35.
16 2 Tim 1:12.

believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature.¹⁷

To believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

151 For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son," in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him.¹⁸ The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me."¹⁹ We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known."²⁰ Because he "has seen the Father," Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him.²¹

To believe in the Holy Spirit

152 One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit,"²² who "searches everything, even the depths of God. . . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God."²³ Only God knows God completely: we believe in the Holy Spirit because he is God.

*The Church never ceases to proclaim her faith in one only God: 232
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

Faith is a grace

153 When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood," but from "my Father who is in heaven."²⁴ *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.* "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God

17 Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Ps 40:5; 146:3-4.
18 Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7.
19 Jn 14:1.
20 Jn 1:18.
21 Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27.
22 1 Cor 12:3.
23 1 Cor 2:10-11.
24 Mt 16:17; cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25.

1814 to move and assist him, he must have the interior helps of the Holy
 1996 Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the
 2606 eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the
 truth."²⁵

Faith is a human act

154 Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps
 1749 of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to "yield by faith the full submission of . . . intellect and will to God who reveals,"²⁶ and to share in an interior communion with him.

155 In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace."²⁷

Faith and understanding

156 What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe "because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived."²⁸ So "that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit."²⁹ Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability "are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all"; they are "motives of credibility" (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind."³⁰

25 DV 5; cf. DS 377; 3010.

26 *Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008.

27 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh II-II, 2, 9*; cf. *Dei Filius* 3: DS 3010.

28 *Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008.

29 *Dei Filius* 3: DS 3009.

30 *Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008-10; cf. Mk 16:20; Heb 2:4.

157 Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but "the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives."³¹ "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."³²

158 "Faith seeks understanding"³³ it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens "the eyes of your hearts"³⁴ to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God's plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery. "The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood."³⁵ In the words of St. Augustine, "I believe, 2518 in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe."³⁶

159 *Faith and science*: "Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth."³⁷ "Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are."³⁸

31 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh II-II, 171, 5, obi.* 3.

32 John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (London: Longman, 1878), 239.

33 St. Anselm, *Prosl. prooemii*: PL 153, 225A.

34 *Eph* 1:18.

35 DV 5.

36 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 43, 7, 9: PL 38, 257-258.

37 *Dei Filius* 4: DS 3017.

38 GS 36 § 1.

The freedom of faith

160 To be human, "man's response to God by faith must be free, and . . . therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act."³⁹
 1738, 2106 "God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced . . . This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus."⁴⁰ Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. "For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom . . . grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself."⁴¹

The necessity of faith

161 Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation.⁴² "Since
 432, 1257 'without faith it is impossible to please [God]' and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life 'but he who endures to the end.'"⁴³

Perseverance in faith

162 Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith."⁴⁴
 2089 To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith;⁴⁵ it must be "working through charity,"⁴⁶ abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.⁴⁶
 1037, 2016,
 2573, 2849

39 *DH* 10; cf. *CIC*, can. 748 § 2.
 40 *DH* 11.
 41 *DH* 11; cf. *Jn* 18:37; 12:32.
 42 *Cf.* *Mk* 16:16; *Jn* 3:36; 6:40 et al.
 43 *Dcf.* *Filius* 3; *DS* 5012; cf. *Mt* 10:22; 24:13 and *Heb* 11:6; Council of Trent: *DS* 1532.
 44 *1 Tim* 1:18-19.
 45 *Cf.* *Mk* 9:24; *Lk* 17:5; 22:32.
 46 *Gal* 5:6; *Rom* 15:13; cf. *Jas* 2:14-26.

Faith – the beginning of eternal life

163 Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God "face to face," "as he is."⁴⁷ So faith is already the beginning of eternal life: 1088

When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy.⁴⁸

164 Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight";⁴⁹ we perceive God as "in a mirror, dimly" and only "in part."⁵⁰ Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it. 2846 309 1502, 1006

165 It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope . . . believed against hope";⁵¹ to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith," walked into the "night of faith";⁵² in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."⁵³ 2719

ARTICLE 2 WE BELIEVE

166 Faith is a personal act – the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given

47 *1 Cor* 13:12; *1 Jn* 3:2.
 48 St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15, 36; PG 32, 132; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 4, 1.
 49 *2 Cor* 5:7.
 50 *1 Cor* 13:12.
 51 *Rom* 4:18.
 52 *Lc* 58; John Paul II, *Ram* 18.
 53 *Heb* 12:1-2.

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

1124 "I believe" (Apostles' Creed) is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during Baptism. "We believe" (*Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*) is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. "I believe" is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both "I believe" and "We believe."

I. "LORD, LOOK UPON THE FAITH OF YOUR CHURCH"

168 It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes, and sustains my faith. Everywhere, it is the Church that first confesses the Lord: "Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you," as we sing in the hymn "*Te Deum*," with her and in her, we are won over and brought to confess: "I believe," "We believe." It is through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by Baptism. In the *Rituale Romanum*, the minister of Baptism asks the catechumen: "What do you ask of God's Church?" And the answer is: "Faith." "What does faith offer you?" "Eternal life."⁵⁴

169 Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother: "We believe the Church as the mother of our new birth, and not *in* the Church as if she were the author of our salvation."⁵⁵ Because she is our mother, she is also our teacher in the faith.

II. THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

170 We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. "The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities [which they express]."⁵⁶ All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the

54 *Roman Ritual*, Rite of baptism of adults.

55 Faustus of Riez, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1, 2: PL 62, 11.

56 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STa II-II*, 1, 2, *ad* 2.

faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more.

171 The Church, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth," faithfully guards "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." She guards the memory of Christ's words; it is she who from generation to generation hands on the apostles' confession of faith.⁵⁷ As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith.

III. ONLY ONE FAITH

172 Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples, and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God and Father.⁵⁸ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, a witness of this faith, declared:

173 "Indeed, the Church, though scattered throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, having received the faith from the apostles and their disciples . . . guards [this preaching and faith] with care, as dwelling in but a single house, and similarly believes as if having but one soul and a single heart, and preaches, teaches, and hands on this faith with a unanimous voice, as if possessing only one mouth."⁵⁹

174 "For though languages differ throughout the world, the content of the Tradition is one and the same. The Churches established in Germany have no other faith or Tradition, nor do those of the Iberians, nor those of the Celts, nor those of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, nor those established at the center of the world. . . ."⁶⁰ The Church's message "is true and solid, in which one and the same way of salvation appears throughout the whole world."⁶¹

175 "We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed."⁶²

57 1 Tim 3:15; Jude 3.

58 Cf. Eph 4:4-6.

59 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 1, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 549-552.

60 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 1, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 552-553.

61 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 20, 1: PG 7/2, 1177.

IN BRIEF

- 176 Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.
- 177 "To believe" has thus a twofold reference: to the person and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.
- 178 We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- 179 Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit.
- 180 "Believing" is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.
- 181 "Believing" is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother" (St. Cyprian, *De unit.* 6: PL 4, 519).
- 182 We believe all "that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed" (Paul VI, *CFC*, § 20).
- 183 Faith is necessary for salvation. The Lord himself affirms: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (*Mk* 16:16).
- 184 "Faith is a foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Comp. theol.* 1, 2).
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62 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966.

THE CREDO

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God
eternally begotten of the
Father,
God from God, Light from
Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in
Being with the Father.
Through him all things were
made.
For us men and for our
salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he was born of the Virgin
Mary,
and became man.

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 into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right
hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge
the living and the dead.

For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered, died, and was
buried.

On the third day he rose again
in fulfillment of the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right
hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have
no end.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the
Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son
he is worshiped and
glorified.
He has spoken through the
Prophets.
We believe in one holy
catholic and apostolic
Church.
We acknowledge one
baptism for the forgiveness
of sins.
We look for the resurrection
of the dead,
and the life of the world to
come. Amen.