Kerygma Catechesis - General Outline of Lessons

Kerygma 1: **“God loves you and has an amazing plan for your life….”**

- ☐ Faith & Revelation – Lesson 1
- ☐ The Church & Grace – Lesson 2
- ☐ God the Father – Lesson 3

Kerygma 2: **“but… sin has messed up this plan….”**

- ☐ Commandments 1-3 – Lesson 14
- ☐ Commandments 4-5 – Lesson 15
- ☐ Commandments 6-7 – Lesson 16
- ☐ Commandments 8-10 – Lesson 17
- ☐ The Last Things – Lesson 20 – Mortal vs. Venial Sin – St. Ignatius clip

Kerygma 3: **“Jesus came to do something about this...”**

- ☐ Jesus Christ – Lesson 4
- ☐ Angels & Saints – Lesson 18 – Fr. Lampert Interview
- ☐ Sacramentals and Rituals – Lesson 19

Kerygma 4: **“It’s going to require something of you...”**

- ☐ The Holy Spirit – Lesson 5 - Fearless Documentary
- ☐ Baptism – Lesson 7 -- Charisms 101
- ☐ Confirmation – Lesson 8 – Complete Charism Chart

Kerygma 5: **“Grafted to the vine….”**

- ☐ Prayer – Lesson 6 – Equipped Prayer Book, Discerning Hearts App.
- ☐ Holy Eucharist – Lesson 9 – FORMED Presence – Fr. Lampert example of Divine Life in a Soul: glow in the dark objects vs. “glow in the dark souls”
- ☐ Confession – Lesson 10 – Hypothetical scenarios mortal vs. venial sin
- ☐ Anointing of the Sick – Lesson 11
- ☐ Vocations: Marriage – Lesson 12 – FORMED “Beloved”
- ☐ Vocations: Priesthood – Lesson 13 – Fishers of Men, Religious Life – For Love Alone

1 Corinthians 2

> “ When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn’t use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God’s secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And **my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit**. **I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God. ”**

BIG PICTURE:

THE KERYGMA

GOD'S CALCULUS: "I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES."

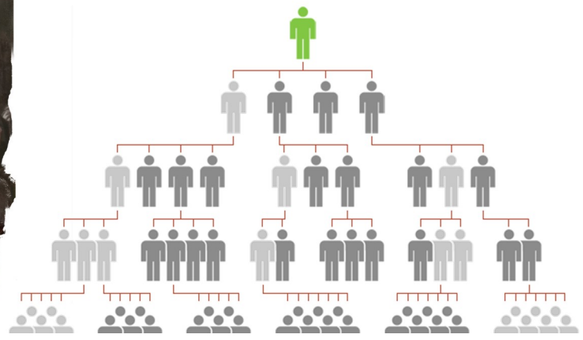
JOHN 15:5

1
GOD LOVES YOU AND HAS AN AMAZING PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE...

'FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, SAYS THE LORD, 'PLANS FOR WELFARE AND NOT FOR WOE, PLANS TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE.'
- JER. 29:11

2
BUT... SIN HAS MESSED UP THIS PLAN ...

- DON'T BLAME GOD FOR _____, BLAME HIS ENEMY (SATAN IS A LIAR, DECEIVER AND A DESTROYER JN 8:44)
- PROBLEM OF EVIL: Q: "HOW CAN I BELIEVE IN GOD WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH SUFFERING?"
- ONE OF THE GREAT TRAGEDIES IN LIFE:
SO FEW BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS REALIZE WHAT THEY CARRY. THEY HAVE BEEN EQUIPPED AT BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION... SENT... BUT THE GIFTS OF GOD REMAIN DORMANT, THUS: SICKNESS, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, LONELINESS, DIVISION AMONG PEOPLE, OPPRESSION, FEAR, INSECURITY, DISORIENTATION, DEATH...



3
JESUS CAME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT...

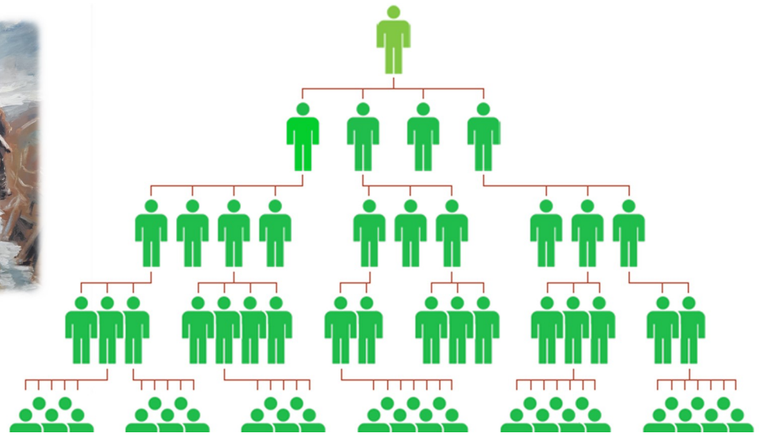
- YOU HAVE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE AND HIS NAME IS JESUS & HE WILL SAVE YOU FROM THE MESS THAT *YOU* ARE AND THE MESS THAT *YOU* HAVE MADE..

"HE SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE. ... "PEACE BE WITH YOU. AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO ALSO I AM SENDING YOU." WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE BREATHED ON THEM AND SAID, "RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT...."
- JN 20:21

4
IT'S GOING TO REQUIRE SOMETHING OF YOU:

- RE-ORIENT YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST, BE BAPTIZED AND FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT
- RESPOND TO PROMPTINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FAITH IS SPELLED: "RISK"

- TESTIMONIES OF HEALING:
ANDREW LAUBACHER
"GIFT OF HEALING: A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE - MARY HEALY"



5
GRAFTED INTO THE VINE:

- YOU WILL RECEIVE DIVINE POWER: PRAYER, CONFESSION, HOLY MASS.. *THEN*:
- GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES...

"TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL ALSO DO THE WORKS THAT I DO;
AND GREATER WORKS THAN THESE WILL HE DO,
BECAUSE I AM GOING TO THE FATHER."
- JN 14:12

- I CAN IMAGINE A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IN RELIGION CLASS RAISING HIS/HER HAND BACK IN 2016 (A FRIEND OF THE GIRL IN THE WHEELCHAIR) & ASKING HOW A GOOD GOD COULD LET HER FRIEND SUFFER FROM CRUSHING ILLNESS....

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF ANDREW DID NOT RESPOND TO THE PROMPTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO PRAY OVER THAT GIRL....?

It was a beautiful afternoon on the southern California coast, and 22-year-old Andrew Laubacher had just finished surfing. He was walking along the boardwalk in his wetsuit, heading back to his car, when he spotted a young girl sitting in a wheelchair on the beach. He knew he had to pray with her.

Andrew was in many ways a typical Catholic young adult. He loved surfing, playing music, and hanging out with his friends. In his teen years he had gone through a time of rebellion and had gotten into some trouble with the law. He had become an atheist for a time. Then he experienced a powerful conversion at a Steubenville Youth Conference,1 and he began to learn that as followers of Christ we are called to bring the good news to others in the power of the Holy Spirit. He had even witnessed some miraculous healings. So when he saw the teenage Hispanic girl, sitting by the ocean in a wheelchair, he felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to stop and pray with her. In his own words, Andrew recounts what happened next:

"I got out of my wetsuit and dried off and approached the girl, who was with her parents. They didn't speak English but the girl did. I went up and asked how she was doing and if she wanted prayer for anything. The fear of rejection and of having nothing happen when I prayed was real and strong, but I went anyway. As I asked her what was going on with her and why she was in a wheelchair, she began to pour out her life to me. It was shocking. She had just gotten out of the hospital because she had tried to kill herself for the second time. She had done meth and several other drugs, and she struggled with depression and anxiety. She had difficulty walking because she had had cerebral palsy since she was born. After she said all this, I was extremely moved with compassion and the conviction that God wanted to encounter her, and boldness came over me, casting out all fear that I was not good enough pray with her. So I prayed for healing for her condition, for peace and the power of the Holy Spirit to flood her body. After I prayed for a little while I asked her to get up and walk. She began to walk and realized she was walking straighter and with less pain. Then I prayed over her knees. They visibly were crooked and sticking out in opposite directions, but after the prayer they were perfectly straight. When her parents saw that she was walking better and her knees were straightened out, they were shocked. After all this I asked her what she was experiencing and she said her knees were hot and her body was tingling and there was no pain in her body. I told her, "That's Jesus, baby!" It turned out she was Catholic but not into her faith at all. I told her to get to Mass and confession and receive the forgiveness that God wanted to give her. I stayed in touch with her after that day. She texted me to tell me she went to confession and Mass and said she felt free and lighter and experienced the love of God. After reflecting on that experience and many more, I am convinced that, as the Scriptures say, the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power (1 Cor 4:20). As Christians, little "anointed ones," we can bring people healing and redemption through Jesus everywhere we go. We seem to do a lot of ministry and mission trips, but what if every day in our very homes we prayed with the sick, the depressed, the lame, and the blind for healing? It would change everything. We would be manifesting the kingdom, which is his love. This is our mission, to go out into all the world and bring the good news of healing, mercy, compassion, and most of all, unconditional love!"

Because of Andrew's faith and courage in obeying the prompting of the Holy Spirit, that young girl's life was changed forever. If he had done nothing but talk to her about God's love, that alone would have been a very good thing. However, she might have thought to herself, "Sure, I know. I've heard all that before." But because Andrew took the bold step of praying with her for healing, she experienced God's love in her very body. In a most tangible way, this broken person encountered the power and mercy of the risen Lord, restoring her to the fullness of life.

I am convinced that Andrew's story represents something immensely significant that God is doing in the Church in our time. […] In this age when so many have wandered far from God, the Lord is once more clothing his followers with power from on high (cf. Luke 24:49). He is calling us to go out and proclaim the gospel not only in words, but also in signs and wonders that bear witness to the truth of the words.

YouTube Video titled: "**Gift of Healing: A Catholic Perspective - Mary Healy**" https://youtu.be/FHMdVa9ouBE

"We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually **seen** and **heard** so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

Fieldtrips w/ Jesus

MT.

- ☐ Joseph & Angel Mt. 1:18-25
- ☐ Wise men & Star Mt. 2:1-12
- ☐ Joseph & Angel Mt. 2:13-15
- ☐ Joseph & Angel Mt. 2:19-23
- ☐ Jesus & John Mt. 3:13-17
- ☐ Jesus vs satan Mt. 4:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & 1st disciples Mt. 4:18-22
- ☐ Jesus & crowds Mt. 4:23-25
- ☐ Jesus & crowds on hillside Mt. 5:3-12
- ☐ Jesus & leper Mt. 8:1-3
- ☐ Jesus & Roman officer Mt. 8:5-13
- ☐ Jesus & Peter's mother-in-law Mt. 8:14-17
- ☐ Jesus & disciples on boat in storm Mt. 8:23-34
- ☐ Jesus & 2 possessed men Mt. 8:28-34
- ☐ Jesus & paralyzed man Mt. 9:1-8
- ☐ Jesus & tax collector Mt. 9:9-13
- ☐ Jesus & leader of synagogue Mt. 9:18-25
- ☐ Jesus & woman with flow of blood Mt. 9:19-22
- ☐ Jesus & 2 blind men Mt. 9:27-31
- ☐ Jesus & possessed man Mt. 9:32-34
- ☐ Jesus & 12 disciples Mt. 10:1-20
- ☐ Jesus & John the Baptist's disciples Mt. 11:2-13
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisee Mt. 12:9-14
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisee Mt. 12:22-37
- ☐ Jesus & His hometown Mt. 13:53-58
- ☐ Jesus & 5,000 people Mt. 14:13-21
- ☐ Jesus & Peter in boat Mt. 14:22-36
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mt. 15:1-20
- ☐ Jesus & woman w/ possessed dtr. Mt. 15:21-28
- ☐ Jesus & crowd on hill Mt. 15:29-31
- ☐ Jesus & 4,000 people Mt. 15:32-39
- ☐ Jesus & disciple who forgot lunch Mt. 16:5-12
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 16:13-20
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 16:21-28
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 17:1-13
- ☐ Jesus & man with sick son Mt. 17:14-23
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 17:24-27
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mt. 18:1-10
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 18:21-35
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees Mt. 19:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & children Mt. 19:13-15
- ☐ Jesus & rich man Mt. 19:16-30
- ☐ Jesus & sons of Zebedee Mt. 20:20-28
- ☐ Jesus & 2 blind men Mt. 20:29-34
- ☐ Jesus & 2 disciples Mt. 21:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & religious leaders Mt. 21:12-17
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mt. 21:18-22
- ☐ Jesus and priests, elders Mt. 21:23-27
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees Mt. 22:15-32
- ☐ Jesus & Sadducees Mt. 22:23-33
- ☐ Jesus & expert of religious law Mt. 22:34-40
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees Mt. 22:41-46
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mt. 26:1-5
- ☐ Jesus & woman with perfume Mt. 26:6-13
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mt. 26:17-19
- ☐ Jesus & 12 disciples at Last Supper Mt. 26:20-30
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mt. 26:31-35
- ☐ Jesus & disciples in garden Mt. 26:36-56
- ☐ Jesus & religious leaders Mt. 26:57-67
- ☐ Peter & Jesus in courtyard Mt. 26:69-75
- ☐ Jesus & Roman Governor at trial Mt. 27:11-26
- ☐ Jesus & mocking soldiers Mt. 27:27-31
- ☐ Jesus & Simon of Cyrene Mt. 27:32-44
- ☐ Jesus & people at foot of cross Mt. 27:45-55
- ☐ Jesus & people at tomb Mt. 27:57-61
- ☐ Jesus & several Marys' at tomb Mt. 28:1-10
- ☐ Jesus & 11 disciples commissioned Mt. 28:16-20

MK.

- ☐ Jesus & John the Baptist Mk. 1:1-15
- ☐ Jesus & fisherman Mk. 1:16-20
- ☐ Jesus & people in Synagogue Mk. 1:21-28
- ☐ Jesus & Simon's mother-in-law Mk. 1:29-34
- ☐ Jesus & disciples Mk. 1:35-39
- ☐ Jesus & leper Mk. 1:40-45
- ☐ Jesus & paralyzed man Mk. 2:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & tax collector Mk. 2:13-17
- ☐ Jesus & man with deformed hand Mk. 3:1-5
- ☐ Jesus & evil spirits Mk. 3:7-12
- ☐ Jesus & 12 apostles chosen Mk. 3:13-19
- ☐ Jesus & teachers of religious law Mk. 3:20-30
- ☐ Jesus & crowd Mk. 3:31-35
- ☐ Jesus & disciples in a boat Mk. 4:35-41
- ☐ Jesus & possessed man Mk. 5:1-20
- ☐ Jesus & woman ill for 12 years Mk. 5:21-43
- ☐ Jesus & people from hometown Mk. 6:1-6
- ☐ Jesus & 12 disciples sent on mission Mk. 6:6-13
- ☐ Jesus & Herod Mk. 6:14-29
- ☐ Jesus & 5,000 Mk. 6:30-44
- ☐ Jesus & Peter on water Mk. 6:45-56
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees Mk. 7:1-23
- ☐ Jesus & Gentile woman Mk. 7:24-37
- ☐ Jesus & deaf man Mk. 7:31-37
- ☐ Jesus & 4,000 Mk. 8:1-10
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees Mk. 8:11-13
- ☐ Jesus & blind man Mk. 8:22-26
- ☐ Jesus & Peter in Caesarea Philippi Mk. 8:27-30
- ☐ Jesus & Peter reprimanded Mk. 8:31-38
- ☐ Jesus & disciples at Transfiguration Mk. 9:2-13
- ☐ Jesus & possessed boy Mk. 9:14-29
- ☐ Jesus & 12 disciples arguing Mk. 9:33-37
- ☐ Jesus & John Mk. 9:38-41
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees disputing divorce Mk. 10:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & disciples with children Mk. 10:13-16
- ☐ Jesus & rich man Mk. 10:17-27
- ☐ Jesus & Peter counting the cost Mk. 10:28-31
- ☐ Jesus & sons of Zebedee Mk. 10:35-45
- ☐ Jesus & Bartimaeus Mk. 10:46-52
- ☐ Jesus & 2 disciples scouting a room Mk. 11:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & disciples near fig tree Mk. 11:12-14
- ☐ Jesus & merchants in temple Mk. 11:15-18
- ☐ Jesus & priests questioning authority Mk. 11:27-33
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees concerning taxes Mk. 12:13-17
- ☐ Jesus & sadducees re: resurrection Mk. 12:18-27
- ☐ Jesus & teacher re: commandments Mk. 12:28-43
- ☐ Jesus & disciples eyeing collection box Mk. 12:41-44
- ☐ Jesus & disciples sight seeing Mk. 13:1-13
- ☐ Jesus & woman with perfume Mk. 14:1-9
- ☐ Jesus & disciples at festival Mk. 14:12-17
- ☐ Jesus & disciples at last supper Mk. 14:18-26
- ☐ Jesus & Peter Mk. 14:27-31
- ☐ Jesus & disciples asleep Mk. 14:32-42
- ☐ Jesus & disciples at showdown Mk. 14:43-52
- ☐ Jesus & high priest Mk. 14:53-65
- ☐ Jesus & Peter in courtyard Mk. 14:66-72
- ☐ Jesus & Pontus Pilate Mk. 15:1-15
- ☐ Jesus & Simon of Cyrene Mk. 15:21-32
- ☐ Jesus & Roman Soldiers at cross Mk. 15:33-41
- ☐ Jesus & Joseph of Arimathea Mk. 15:42-47
- ☐ Jesus & 3 Marys' Mk. 16:1-8
- ☐ Jesus & disciples before Ascension Mk. 16:9-20

LK.

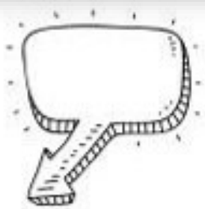
- ☐ Jesus & John the Baptist in the womb Lk. 1:39-56
- ☐ Jesus & Simeon at the close of his life Lk. 2:25-35
- ☐ Jesus & Anna a prophet Lk. 2:36-40
- ☐ Jesus & parents Lk. 2:41-52
- ☐ Jesus & Satan Lk. 4:1-13
- ☐ Jesus & hometown reunion Lk. 4:14-22
- ☐ Jesus & possessed man Lk. 4:31-37
- ☐ Jesus & townspeople Lk. 4:38-41
- ☐ Jesus & Peter along the sea shore Lk. 5:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees sitting nearby Lk. 5:17-26
- ☐ Jesus & Levi at tax collectors post Lk. 5:27-31
- ☐ Jesus & man with deformed hand Lk. 6:6-11
- ☐ Jesus & 12 Apostles Lk. 6:12-16
- ☐ Jesus & Roman Officer Lk. 7:1-10
- ☐ Jesus & widow's son Lk. 7:11-17
- ☐ Jesus & John's disciples Lk. 7:18-35
- ☐ Jesus & woman with perfume Lk. 7:36-50
- ☐ Jesus & stranger Lk. 8: 19-21
- ☐ Jesus & disciples crossing lake in storm Lk. 8:22-25
- ☐ Jesus & possessed man Lk. 8:26-39
- ☐ Jesus & woman sick for 12 years Lk. 8:40-53
- ☐ Jesus & 12 disciples sent on mission Lk. 9:1-6
- ☐ Jesus & 5,000 Lk. 9:10-17
- ☐ Jesus & disciples leave to pray alone Lk. 9:18-20
- ☐ Jesus & disciples on mountain Lk. 9:28-36
- ☐ Jesus & man's son possessed by demon Lk. 9:37-43
- ☐ Jesus & crowd Lk. 9:44-45
- ☐ Jesus & arguing disciples Lk. 9:46-48
- ☐ Jesus & pyro-disciples Lk. 9:51-56
- ☐ Jesus & would-be disciples Lk. 9:57-62
- ☐ Jesus & 72 disciples sent on mission Lk. 10:1-20
- ☐ Jesus & expert questioning eternal life Lk. 10:25-29
- ☐ Jesus & Martha/Mary at dinner Lk. 10:38-41
- ☐ Jesus & a disciple asking how to pray Lk. 11:1-13
- ☐ Jesus & man with demon Lk. 11:14-26
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisee at dinner Lk. 11:37-54
- ☐ Jesus & disciples in dense crowd Lk. 12:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & possessed woman Lk. 13:10-17
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees trying to scare Him Lk. 13:31-35
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees at dinner with sick man Lk. 14:1-6
- ☐ Jesus & dinner guests worried about seating order Lk. 14:7-14
- ☐ Jesus & man sitting at table with him Lk. 14:15-24
- ☐ Jesus & parents with children Lk. 18:15-17
- ☐ Jesus & Zacchaeus in a tree Lk. 19:1-10
- ☐ Jesus & greeters to Jerusalem Lk. 19:28-40
- ☐ Jesus & people doing business in temple Lk. 19:45-48
- ☐ Jesus & priests asking Him about authority Lk. 20:1-8
- ☐ Jesus & spies Lk. 20:20-26
- ☐ Jesus & sadducees re: resurrection Lk. 20:27-40
- ☐ Jesus & disciples watching poor box Lk. 21:1-3
- ☐ Jesus & disciples talking end times Lk. 21:5-38
- ☐ Jesus & disciples at Last Supper Lk. 22:7-30
- ☐ Jesus & Peter denying future denials Lk. 22:31-38
- ☐ Jesus & tired disciples in olive garden Lk. 22:39-46
- ☐ Jesus & Judas betraying Him with a kiss Lk. 22:47-53
- ☐ Jesus & Peter following from a distance Lk. 22:54-65
- ☐ Jesus & high council around bonfire Lk. 22:66-71
- ☐ Jesus & Pilate the Roman Governor Lk. 23:1-25
- ☐ Jesus & good thief on cross next to Him Lk. 23:26-43
- ☐ Jesus & 3 Marys on Sunday morning Lk. 24:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & 2 followers walking along a road Lk. 24:13-34
- ☐ Jesus & Thomas who was doubting Lk. 24:49
- ☐ Jesus & disciples present at Ascension

JN.

- ☐ Jesus & John the Baptist with 2 disciples Jn. 1:35-51
- ☐ Jesus & Mary at wedding celebration Jn. 2:1-12
- ☐ Jesus & people doing business in temple Jn. 2:13-22
- ☐ Jesus & Nicodemus in a secret meeting Jn. 3:1-21
- ☐ Jesus & woman at well Jn. 4:1-38
- ☐ Jesus & samaritans Jn. 4:39-42
- ☐ Jesus & officials sick son Jn. 4:43-54
- ☐ Jesus & man sick for 38 years Jn. 1-15
- ☐ Jesus & leaders harassing him re: rules Jn. 5:16-30
- ☐ Jesus & crowd of 5,000 Jn. 6:1-15
- ☐ Jesus & disciples on boat during a storm Jn. 6:16-21
- ☐ Jesus & followers re: Bread of Life Jn. 6:22-70
- ☐ Jesus & crowds re: rumors about Him Jn. 7:25-36
- ☐ Jesus & crowds re: Living Water Jn. 7:37-53
- ☐ Jesus & woman caught in act of adultrey Jn. 8:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & Pharisees re: Light of the World Jn. 8:12-20
- ☐ Jesus & blind man Jn. 9:1-41
- ☐ Jesus & people re: Good Shepherd Jn. 10:1-21
- ☐ Jesus & people surrounding Him w/ Q's Jn. 10:22-42
- ☐ Jesus & Lazarus, dead Jn. 11:1-44
- ☐ Jesus & Mary with expensive perfume Jn. 12:1-11
- ☐ Jesus & people greeting Him at city gate Jn. 12:12-19
- ☐ Jesus & Peter re: feet washed Jn. 13:1-17
- ☐ Jesus & Peter re: rooster Jn. 13:31-38
- ☐ Jesus & Judas with band of soldiers Jn. 18:1-14
- ☐ Jesus & Pilate the Roman Governor Jn. 18 - 19:16
- ☐ Jesus & His Mother below the cross Jn. 19:16-27
- ☐ Jesus & Mary re: Sunday morning Jn. 20:1-18
- ☐ Jesus & disciples behind locked doors Jn. 20:19-29
- ☐ Jesus & Peter fishing after Resurrection Jn. 21:1-25

What did Jesus say / do ?

How did people respond ?



What can I learn from this response ?

WWJT: What was Jesus Thinking?

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Catechism

Table of Contents

Lesson	Page Number
1. Faith and Revelation	1
2. The Church and Grace	4
3. God the Father	6
4. Jesus Christ	8
5. The Holy Spirit	10
6. Prayer	11
7. The Sacraments/Baptism	13
8. Confirmation	15
9. The Most Holy Eucharist	16
10. Confession	18
11. Anointing of the Sick	21
12. Holy Matrimony	23
13. Holy Orders	25
14. The Commandments: 1-3	28
15. The Commandments: 4-5	31
16. The Commandments: 6-7	33
17. The Commandments: 8-10	35
18. The Saints and Mary	37
19. Sacramentals and Rituals	40
20. The Last Things	42

Lesson 1
Faith and Revelation

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) references: #27-43, 50, 105-107, 120-130

What is Truth? (John 18:38)

We begin with the assumption that all people have an innate desire to know and explore the truth. No one really wants to be unknowing, or to be lost in the darkness or error. But there are many errors in the world which deceive people. Some of these deceptions are deliberate, and are set forth to mislead and gain power over people. Other errors are self-deceptions, by which people, in searching for the truth, believe they have found it when in fact they have not.

So, what is truth, and how do we know if we have found it? How can we avoid being deceived, either by ourselves or others? To answer these questions we can set forth some general philosophical and scientific principles regarding truth:

1. the truth does not contradict itself;
2. the truth is final, that is, it is the defining boundary which cannot be transgressed;
3. the truth causes, or sets all things, in motion.

Take a few moments to reflect on and discuss these principles.

Truth According to Jesus

Read John 14:1-7 and share your impressions. According to this passage, Jesus is the truth in person. When we study the life and teachings of Jesus, the fullness of truth is revealed to us. Below are three principles of Jesus' teaching regarding the truth. Look up and read each corresponding Bible passage:

1. The truth is absolute (John 14:6 & 17:17)
2. The truth is liberating (John 8:31-32)
3. The truth demands obedience (John 14:15, 23-24)

Discuss how these Gospel principles of truth compare to the philosophical and scientific principles above.

Our culture tends to be anti-truth in the following ways:

1. Many believe the truth is "relative", that is, "whatever works for me."
2. Many believe that belief in absolute truth takes away the freedom of the individual.
3. Many want to create their own reality and obey their own set of rules.

The fact is we are not "free" to believe anything less than the truth, for ignorance is binding, not liberating.

What can we say, then, about the truth? Truth is what is most singular, pure, and whole. Truth is what unites all things as one in an ordered system of harmony. Truth is a relationship. It can be explored, but ultimately, truth is revealed by its source. The philosophers called this source the

"first cause", or the "unmoved mover", but we know Him as "God". So, the truth is not a "what", but a "who": God, the source and cause of all that is, was, and ever shall be.

In The Beginning, God… (Genesis 1:1)

Who is God? All people have ideas about God, what He is like, and who He is. But all we can really say about God, and believe about Him, is what He has revealed about Himself to us; anything else is simply speculation. From God's self-revelation comes what we know and believe about Him. These beliefs and revealed truths about God lead to our faith in Him, and faith is essential if we are to be in a relationship with God. The book of Hebrews in the Bible tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith begins with God and comes from Him. God wants us to know Him, and from the beginning, He has revealed Himself in many and various ways. For example, He makes Himself known in creation. When we look at the beauty of the earth and all created things, as well as the splendor of the sky above, and all living things, we learn something about God who created all that exists. We can learn about God through the study of philosophy, which means literally, "love of wisdom". The ancient philosophers all concluded that there must be a God who is eternal, infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, and the source of all things. In a special way we know about God through the desire in our hearts. Deep down we know there must be a God who loves us and cares for us. This desire in our hearts was put there by God Himself, because He wants us to look for Him and to come to know Him. St. Augustine, an early bishop of the Catholic Church, once wrote, "O God, our hearts are restless until they rest in you!"

Most of the world's religions know something true about God, but they do not have the full truth. The full knowledge of God can only be received from what God says of Himself, and ultimately, we know God most fully through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the full and complete revelation of God in truth. Again, the book of Hebrews (1:1) says, "In ancient times God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways; but in these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son!" However, this full revelation of God through Jesus Christ came about slowly, over many centuries. Each time God revealed something about Himself to a chosen person, He would establish a "covenant" (a promise) with them. The covenant promises all looked ahead to God's final promise: Jesus. Beginning with Noah, God began to speak to people, revealing more and more about Himself through the ages. The collections of these special revelations of God have been collected into the Holy Scriptures, our Bible.

Use what you have just read to answer these questions:

1. From where do we get our beliefs about God?
2. List some ways, besides the Bible, in which God reveals Himself.
3. Why does God reveal Himself to us?
4. What is the fullest way in which God has made Himself known to us?

The Bible: Revelation of God

The purpose of the Holy Scriptures is to reveal the fullness of truth to us. God loves us and calls us into a personal relationship with Himself. We can only know the full truth through God's revelation of Himself. Why? Above we said that truth is a "who," not a "what." We can gather all sorts of facts which are true, but facts alone cannot give us the full truth. Because God is personal and not just factual, He must introduce Himself to us, and invite us to know Him.

The Bible presents to us the various stages of God's self-revelation. The entire Old Testament is a continuous unfolding of God's identity and His love and plan for His people. From Noah to Abraham to Moses and Israel; from David to the Prophets, and unto the most complete revelation of Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ in the New Testament, God reveals and introduces Himself in Scripture.

We believe that the Bible is the true word of God. Whenever you read it, or hear it read, you are hearing God speak! We believe that it was written by God's chosen servants who were directed in their writing by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Bible is true and contains no errors. It is often misquoted and misunderstood, but that is due to our own human ignorance.

The Bible contains 73 books, written over a period of approximately 1,400 years. It is divided into two parts: Old Testament, and New Testament. The Old Testament refers to the 46 books written before the birth of Jesus, which promise His coming. The New Testament refers to the 27 books written after Jesus' birth, which tell us about Him, and how God has fulfilled His promises through Him. The Old Testament contains the five books of Moses, called the Law, as well as history, poetry, wisdom, and prophecies concerning Jesus' coming. The New Testament contains the four Gospels (the stories of Jesus' life), the history of the Apostles as they started the church (the book of Acts), and several letters to churches by the Apostles.

Using the table of contents in the front of your Bible, look up these passages and answer the following questions:

1. How is God revealed in Genesis chapter 1 through chapter 2, verse 4?
2. What covenant promise did God make with Noah in Genesis 9:1-17?
3. What did God promise Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3? What was the sign of this covenant? (see Genesis 17:1-4)
4. How did God appear to Moses in Exodus 3:1-14? What did God reveal about Himself to Moses?
5. What did God give to Moses on Mount Sinai? (see Exodus 19:16 – 20:17) Why? (see Ezekiel 37:26-28).

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson #2

The Church and Grace

Catechism references: #770-776, 857-865, 386-387, 397-398

The Church

In lesson one we learned about God's desire to make Himself known to us, and how He does so in many ways. We learned that the greatest revelation of God is His Son, Jesus Christ, and that we learn about Him in the Bible. The Bible sets God's plan before us. It is of the highest authority in what we believe and teach and teach about God, because it is His own word. But the Bible alone does not contain all of what we believe and teach. The second source of authority in what we believe is called Church Tradition. This is the teachings handed on to the Church from the Apostles, passed down and preserved in the Church for over 2,000 years. The word "tradition" means to "hand down." Church Tradition is not man-made, but flows from the authority of Christ Himself.

Why don't we simply obey the Bible alone? Because the Bible was never meant to contain every detail of our faith. The Apostolic letters of the New Testament, for example, were written to particular churches to address particular circumstances when the Apostles themselves could not be present in person. These letters speak to universal truths which apply to the whole Church, but they are not exhaustive collections of Church dogma. Christ Himself gave His own authority to His Apostles, to teach the truth in His name, to govern the Church, and to make people holy by forgiving their sins and celebrating the Sacraments. The Catholic Church existed 400 years before the Bible was assembled into one volume as we know it today. There were many books of the Bible circulating around the world, and several false books, which claimed to teach the truth, but were false and misleading. The bishops of the Church, using the authority given them from the Apostles by Jesus Himself, determined which books were truly God's words, and which were not. The complete Bible as we know it was put together by the Catholic Church as a collection of 73 books in the year 401 A.D.

The Bible and Church Traditions together make up what we call the "Deposit of Faith," the collection of our beliefs and teachings as handed down to us from Jesus Himself. Who can legitimately interpret our teachings? Bishops, in unity with the Pope, have received the authority from Christ, passed on to them from the Apostles, to rightly and correctly guard and teach the truths of our Catholic faith. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles, and in unity with the Pope (the direct successor of St. Peter), they are called the Magisterium (that is, teachers) of the Church.

So, the Catholic Church, under the leadership of her bishops, has the authority of Jesus Christ, to speak in His name. The Catholic Church continues the work of Jesus Himself, under the direction of her bishops: teaching, shepherding, and forgiving sins. The word "catholic" is a Greek word which means "universal." It was first applied to the Church by St. Ignatius of Antioch, one of the first bishops of the Catholic Church.

Discuss the following questions:

1. Where does the authority of bishops come from?
2. What three things are they given authority to do?
3. What is the "Deposit of Faith"?

Sin and Grace

"Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). God is holy, and whatever is not holy is unacceptable to Him. God is the source of all life. Therefore, whatever is contrary to God's will leads to death. God did not create death; it is the result of disobedience to God. This disobedience we call "sin." Sin is an offense against God's will, against the natural order of creation, and against divine revelation. Read Genesis 3:1-19 and answer the following questions:

1. Describe the progression of events which led to the "original" sin.
2. What are the results of sin as described in this passage from Genesis?
3. What is our hope as sinners according to 1 John 1:8-10?

We are moral beings, able to make choices which will affect ourselves and others, either for good or for bad. God has given us a free will to make choices concerning good and evil. Although sin has damaged our free will, it has not completely destroyed it. Through the power of grace, which God gives us, we can choose to avoid sin and to cooperate with God in fulfilling His will. Sin is not simply a choice between something good or something evil; it is a choice of ourselves over God. Sin is choosing to do what God has forbidden, a choice which sets us over God as our own authority. This was the sin of Satan. Because of his pride he wanted to rule over God, and was cast out of Heaven. God never keeps anything good from us. If God forbids something, it is because it is detrimental to our eternal well-being. Any choices directly contrary to God's will are sins.

St. Paul tells us in Romans 3:23-24, "All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus." All people are guilty of sin, and sinners are not able to enter eternal life in Heaven. No one is able, by his own power, to achieve forgiveness of sins. That is why God sent His Son, Jesus, to become our substitute. He could live a holy life for us, and then shed His blood for us on the cross to wash away our sins, so that we could be forgiven. Forgiveness of sins is God's free gift through Jesus; we cannot earn it. That is why we call it "grace," meaning, "a gift." God's grace shows His love for us, and His desire that we be able to live with Him forever.

Jesus gave the power to forgive sins to the Apostles and through them to the Church. This power to forgive sins is called the "Office of the Keys," because when a priest forgives us our sins it's as if he unlocked the gates of Heaven for us. The Church forgives sins and imparts grace through her seven sacraments, and particularly in the sacrament of Confession. Through Jesus we have forgiveness of sins, but this grace is not given to us directly; it is given to us through the Church, which He entrusted with His power to continue to do His work until the end of time.

Look up these Bible passages and see what they say about sin and grace:

1. Colossians 1:13-14
2. John 20:19-23
3. Why is the Pope, as successor to St. Peter, head of the Church? (see Matthew 16:13-19)

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 3

God the Father

The Creeds of the Church

The word "creed" is from the Latin word "credo," which means, "I believe." A creed is a statement of what a person, or an organization, believes, and how they view and live life according to those beliefs. In the first days of the Church, there were many adults who were converting to the Christian faith. Before being allowed to be baptized as members of the church, they underwent a period of study to learn about the teachings of the Church, and how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. At baptism they publicly declared their faith using the words of a creed.

The Apostles' Creed is a very ancient creed of the Catholic Church. It states in a few paragraphs what we believe about God as a "Trinity": that although God is one, He is a unity of three "persons": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The creed describes the proper work of each person of the Holy Trinity, attributing the life of the Church to the Holy Spirit, who works to build up the faith of Christ's people.

In the year 325 A.D., the Nicene Creed was formulated. It is quite similar to the Apostle's Creed, but much longer, especially in describing the person and work of Jesus Christ. The next few lessons will explore the creeds, as they help us to better understand the work of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Read Philippians 2:5-11. This is an ancient creed of the Church in the time of the Apostle Paul. What does it say about Jesus? How does it compare to the Nicene Creed?

The Holy Trinity (see Catechism #222-227, 232-233)

We use various words and expressions to describe God, but God as a Trinity remains very much a mystery to us. But this is how God has revealed Himself. God is one God, not three Gods. Yet, at the same time, He is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We say God is one in three and three in one. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. But the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father. Yet, each one is equal to the other two as God. An early Father of the Church, St. Athanasius, was one who helped the Church understand the Trinity, but still, the Trinity is a mystery to us, and is understood more fully only by faith that this is who God says He is.

God the Father (see Catechism #240, 268, 270, 272)

The Apostles' Creed begins, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." When we think of the Father, we might also think of the creation of the universe. Creation is properly the work of the Father. However, this does not mean that the Son and the Holy Spirit were not active in creation, for the three persons of the Trinity always work in unity as one God. But each person of the Trinity has His own proper work: for example, the Son's work is as Savior, and the work of the Holy Spirit is to give life to the Church.

Creation

Creation shows God's love and concern for us as our Father, because all that He created He gave to us as our own. All that exists was created by God for our benefit and use. God continues to watch over us as a loving and caring Father, calling us His own children. He is in control of the universe, even when it seems that the world is crazy and out of hand. One day, God will bring all things to a close, and those who have proven to be His true and faithful children will receive their inheritance: the Kingdom of Heaven. To make us worthy and able to receive this inheritance, the Father sent the Son into the world to become our Redeemer: Jesus Christ!

Read the following Scripture passages to see what they say about God the Father:

1. Genesis 1:1-3. How did God create light and all other things?
2. Exodus 34:4-7. What does this passage say about God?
3. Psalm 104:24-30. What would happen if God turned away from creation for an instant?
4. Luke 12:22-34. Why does Jesus tell us not to worry?
5. 1 John 3:1-3. What does God call us?

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 4

Jesus Christ

Catechism References: #426-27/ 458, 460/ 495, 499, 500o/ 516-517, 520-521/ 598, 602-605, 613-614/ 632, 635/ 651, 663-664, 668-669, 677, 679

Who is Jesus Christ?

The entire life of a Christian should be spent in answering the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" The more we learn about Jesus, the more we grow in our personal relationship with Him. The more we come to know Him, the more we realize there is to learn about Him. The life of the Christian is one of constant growing in the knowledge of Jesus, and His plan for us.

The second article of the Apostles' Creed says, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." The name "Jesus" was given to our Lord by Mary and Joseph because the Angel Gabriel had instructed them to do so. The name means "God saves." "Christ" is the Greek word for Messiah, a Hebrew word meaning "the anointed," or "chosen one." In Old Testament times God chose special men to do His work, such as kings, prophets, and priests. As a symbol of their being chosen, oil was poured over their heads, representing the Holy Spirit. This was called "anointing." Jesus was not anointed with oil, but the Holy Spirit directly, who came down upon Him when He was being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.

Jesus is truly the Son of God, and the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. Jesus has no biological, earthly father; St. Joseph is called the foster father of Jesus. Jesus is also called, "Our Lord," because He is God. We say that Jesus has two natures: divine and human. Jesus is fully God, but at the same time, fully human. According to his human nature, He was born in Bethlehem in about the year 3 B.C.

The Creed continues, "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." Jesus is fully God, and truly the Son of God, because He had no earthly father. Instead, the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary was by the Holy Spirit. The man Jesus received His divinity from God the Father, and His humanity from His mother, Mary. Mary was a virgin, engaged to a man named Joseph. Mary and Joseph never had sexual relations, even after they were married. Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life.

The creed continues, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." Because Jesus is true God and true man, He is the only perfect Savior. As a man, Jesus could take our place on the cross, suffering for us the punishment due for our sins. As God, Jesus destroyed the power of sin, death, and the devil.

"He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again." While Jesus' body was in the tomb, His soul went down to the place of the dead, where He proclaimed His victory over the devil, and set free many souls which were imprisoned there. Jesus died on a Friday, and rose to life on Sunday. He came out of the tomb alive: body and soul.

"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." Jesus went back to Heaven, and is now enthroned in glory with the Father. But He will come back again on judgment day, when all people who ever lived stand before Him to receive their eternal sentence: to Heaven, or to hell. We do not know when that day will come, so we are expected to be prepared at all times.

Using what you have read, and the Bible, discuss the following questions:

1. What are the two natures of Christ?
2. Why is Jesus called the Son of God?
3. What happened at Jesus' baptism? (see Mark 1:4-11)
4. What does Jesus say about His mission in Luke 4:18-19?
5. Why did the people of Jesus' hometown not believe in Him? (see Mark 6:1-6) *note: in the Greek language of the New Testament, "brothers" and "sisters" also means "cousins."
6. What does Peter profess about Jesus in Matthew 16:16?
7. Read what St. Paul says about Jesus in Colossians 2:9-15.
8. What does Jesus say in Revelation 22:12-16?

Heresies concerning Jesus: (discuss why these are heresies)

- Gnosticism: Jesus only appeared to have a body, but was only a phantom.
- Adoptionism: Jesus was merely a mortal man, "adopted" by God to be the Christ.
- Modalism: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are really all the same; God simply appears at different times as one of the three different persons.
- Arianism: Christ was created and did not exist from eternity.
- Monophysitism: Christ has only a divine nature.
- Monothelitism: Christ has only a divine will.
- Nestorianism: Mary gave birth to a mere man, and is not "Mother of God."

True Church teachings about Jesus:

- Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.
- He is the second Person of the eternal Trinity.
- Christ has a human body, mind, will, and soul.
- He arose from the dead in both body and soul.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 5

The Holy Spirit

Catechism References: #688/ 692-701/ 737-739/ 767-768

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The third article of the Apostles' Creed says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Most Holy Trinity. Other names for the Holy Spirit are: Holy Ghost, and Paraclete, which means "Comforter," "Advocate," or "Counselor." The Holy Spirit is depicted in Scripture as a wind, a flame, or a dove. Water and oil are used in liturgies, such as Baptism and Confirmation, to symbolize the Holy Spirit coming down on a person.

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is truly and fully God, equal in power and majesty to the Father and the Son. It is through the Holy Spirit that God dwells within us here on earth. At Baptism, the Holy Spirit works through the preaching, teaching, and Sacraments of the Church, for the sake of making people holy. We can say that God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is with us and active among us through the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for us to believe in Jesus as our Savior, or to live a Christian life of faith, hope, and love. The Holy Spirit gives every Christian the gift of faith, but He also gives certain gifts to certain people. These gifts of the Holy Spirit are called "charisms," from which comes the word "charismatic." Perhaps the Holy Spirit has given you the gift of teaching, or compassion, or leadership, or prayerfulness. Whatever gifts you have received are not just for your own good, but are given for you to use for the good of the whole Church.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit gives rare and exceptional gifts, such as the gift of healing, or of speaking foreign languages on impulse. As with all spiritual gifts, these charisms are not to make a person prideful, but are for the good of all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Reading the following Bible passages and answering these questions will help you to learn more about the Holy Spirit:

1. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:34-35?
2. How does the Holy Spirit appear in Luke 3:21-22?
3. What things does Jesus say the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) will do in John 14)15-26?
4. What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost? (see Acts 2:1-6)
5. What does the Holy Spirit do for us, according to Romans 8:26-27?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. Where does faith in Jesus Christ come from? What else does St. Paul say about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this reading?
7. Read Isaiah 11:1-2. What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit? (see also the Catechism #1831) Discuss the meaning of each of them.
8. Read Galatians 5:22-23. What are the fruits, or results, of the Holy Spirit working in the life of a person? (see also Catechism #1832)

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 6

Prayer

Catechism References: #2559-2565/ 2608-2614

Prayer as God's Invitation

Why do we pray? We pray because God has promised to hear our prayers. In fact, God invites us to pray to Him. God loves us, cares for us, and desires to be in dialogue with us. As 1 Peter 5:7 states, "Cast all your worries upon Him because He cares for you." Again, Psalm 50:15 says, "Call on Me in the time of distress; I will rescue you and you shall honor Me."

Prayer brings us into relationship with God. The more we pray, the more we come to know God, and who we are in relation to Him. Prayer helps us to realize that we are not only weak human beings who need God to give us strength, protection, and all that we need for life in this world, and the life to come. Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God. Two things are necessary for genuine prayer: the Holy Spirit and faith. How can we possibly begin to communicate with the almighty and eternal God without His help? The Holy Spirit helps us to pray to God and gives us the faith which enables us to believe that God hears our prayers, and that He desires to give us all that is best for us.

What should we pray for? We can ask God to provide for our daily needs of food, clothing, good health, and protection. We can pray for God's guidance in making decisions, or for strength to accomplish a particular task, or to face a situation. We can pray for others: our loved ones, those who are sick, or even for the souls in purgatory. Whatever is important to us can be brought before God in prayer. Above all, we always ask that God's will be done, for God knows what is best for us in the long run. Does God always answer prayer? Yes, but not always as we desire. Therefore we pray to God in faith, trusting Him to do what is best. Essentially, there are five types of prayer:

1. Adoration (see Catechism #2628)
2. Petition (Catechism #2629)
3. Intercession (Catechism #2634-2635)
4. Thanksgiving (Catechism #2637)
5. Praise (Catechism #2639)

How do we pray? There are many ways to pray: vocally, as we do together in Church; quietly, in our minds; reading the Bible or a devotional book; praying the Rosary; or simply being silent in our hearts with God. The book of Psalms in the Bible is a collection of 150 prayers for all occasions, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The greatest prayer of all is the prayer taught to us by Jesus: the "Our Father." When should we pray? Daily, and several times a day!

Discuss the following Scriptural directives to prayer:

1. persistence (Luke 18:1-8; Matthew 7:7)
2. faith (Matthew 6:5-15)
3. at all times (1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
4. in community (Acts 2:42)
5. for one another (James 5:13-160)
6. What else does Jesus say about prayer in John 14:13-14 and 16:22-28?

The Our Father (Catechism #2786-2854)

The structure of the Our Father is as follows:

I. The Address: "Our Father in Heaven"
   a. What does this opening to the Our Father teach us?

II. The Seven Petitions
   a. Hallowed be Thy name
   b. Thy Kingdom come
   c. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven
   d. Give us this day our daily bread
   e. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us
   f. Lead us not into temptation
   g. Deliver us from evil (or "from the evil one")

The Our Father is found in Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:2-4.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 7
The Sacraments/Baptism

Catechism References: #1113, 1131/ 1140-1143

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an action of the Church in which Christ Himself is working. Sacraments are the ways which the work of Christ continues on earth to this very day. Sacraments are:

1. visible signs
2. instituted by Christ
3. which cause grace.

Grace is the life and strength of God poured into us which enables us to live the new life won for us by Jesus. There are seven Sacraments:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Eucharist
4. Confession
5. Anointing of the Sick
6. Matrimony
7. Holy Orders.

The first three are called Sacraments of Initiation, because they are necessary to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church. Confession and Anointing are called Sacraments of Healing, because they restore spiritual and physical health. The last two are vocations (callings) to married life or the priesthood (or permanent diaconate). The next several lessons will explore each of these Sacraments separately.

Baptism

The first Sacrament to be received is Baptism. It is performed by the pouring of water over a person, while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." If any other words are substituted, the Baptism is not valid. Normally a priest or deacon administers Baptism. But in an emergency, in danger of death, anyone may baptize if a priest or deacon is not available.

What happens at Baptism? As with all Sacraments, earthly elements are used to symbolize invisible heavenly realities. The water is a visible symbol of the Holy Spirit, who invisibly comes down upon the person being baptized. The name of God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is imprinted on the soul. The person is born again, not in the flesh, but of the Holy Spirit, for eternal life. All sin is washed away. The person dies with Christ and rises to new life with Him. Before the pouring of the water, the person is anointed with blessed oil, called the oil of catechumens, or the oil of exorcism. This does not mean the person is possessed, but it is an indication to the devil that he is to have no power over this person who now belongs to Christ. After the pouring of the water, the person is anointed with an aromatic oil, called chrism. This indicates that the newly baptized person shares the whole life and work of Christ as prophet, priest, and king.

After Baptism, even though the guilt of sin is washed away, the tendency to sin remains. This tendency toward sin is called "concupiscence," and because of it, the Christian is engaged in daily struggle to avoid sin and to live a virtuous life. But we do not – in fact cannot – overcome

concupiscence on our own. We need God's help: His grace. Baptism, as do all the Sacraments, gives us the grace – the power – of God to enable us to overcome temptation and avoid sin. (See the Catechism #1264).

Why do we baptize infants? They have not sinned, have they? Infants have committed no actual or personal sins, but they have inherited from their parents what is called "original sin." Original sin refers to the sin of disobedience committed by Adam and Eve, which brought upon them and their children the curse of death, and separated them from God. We know that infants have inherited this sin because they are susceptible to death. In Baptism they are born anew as God's children in Christ.

But infants do not know what is happening to them; how can Baptism do them any good? For many Protestants, Baptism is something we do for God, to show our commitment to Him. But such theology is backwards. Baptism is not our work for God; it is instead something God is doing to us: it is the life of Jesus being applied to us, poured into us. It is important that parents and sponsors (godparents) make certain that as the child grows he is instructed about what happened to him at Baptism, and taught to live the Christian life of faith. Only then can Baptism reach maturity.

Answer and discuss the following questions:

1. Baptism comes from the Greek word "batizein," which means "to wash." In the Old Testament, male children were circumcised eight days after birth to show they were God's people. Now that Jesus has come, we are made God's people through Baptism. Most Baptismal fonts have eight sides, which symbolizes the eighth day of Creation…a day without end, so that by being baptized we enter eternity with God!
   What does St. Paul say about Baptism in Colossians 2:11-12?

2. Baptism makes a person a member of Christ's Body, the Church. Many parents are superstitious, and believe Baptism works like magic. They baptize their baby, but never come to Church afterward. Baptism does a person very little good if they do not attend Mass regularly and participate in the life of the Church.
   What does St. Paul say about Baptism and the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13?

3. What three things happened at Jesus' baptism? (see Mark 1:9-11) These things happen to all who are baptized.

4. How does Jesus describe Baptism in John 3:1-7?

5. What does St. Paul say about it in Romans 6:3-4?

6. What does St. Peter compare Baptism to in 1 Peter 3:18-22?

7. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus sent the Apostles to make disciples of all nations through Baptism. But what else were they to do along with Baptism?

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 8
Confirmation

Catechism References: #1285, 1287, 1290-1292, 1297, 1299, 1300, 1302-1304,1306-1311

The Holy Spirit is received in Baptism to give us new life, so that we are born again as God's children. The Holy Spirit is received again in the sacrament of Confirmation to empower us to become faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ our Savior, and to enable us to live a truly Christian life of faith, hope, and love. The sacrament of Confirmation joins us more closely to the church and the mission entrusted to her by Jesus Christ; this mission is His own mission. Read Luke 4:18-21 and discuss the mission of Jesus which is now entrusted to us. Confirmation binds us more closely to the teachings of our Church, to her sacramental and liturgical life, to the hierarchy, and to all Christians throughout the world and across time who have professed the Catholic faith.

Many people have the impression that Confirmation is a sort of graduation from religious instruction. But a true disciple of Jesus continues to learn more about the faith during his entire life. Confirmation is not graduation, but rather, the full initiation of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion. Initiation is not the end of the Christian journey, but the beginning. The sacrament of Confirmation (with Baptism and Communion) equips us fully for the Christian life, to witness to Jesus with our lives, and to follow Him unto eternal life. See how St. Paul describes the Christian life in Ephesians 4:25-32. For this purpose the Holy Spirit, which we receive in this sacrament, equips us with the various gifts we need for completing our Christian mission. Read and discuss these gifts as they are presented in Romans 12:3-8.

How is this sacrament celebrated? To show that Confirmation joins a person more closely to the Catholic (meaning "universal") Church, it is normally celebrated by the bishop or his representative. In ancient times the bishop would slap the face of the one being confirmed, just as soldiers in old times were commissioned by their generals. The idea was this: "Be tough now as a soldier for Christ!" Today, the slap has been replaced by an embrace. The sacrament is celebrated by the bishop's hand being placed on the candidate's head, while applying sacred chrism in the sign of the cross with his thumb on the candidate's forehead, while saying, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Like Baptism, Confirmation imprints God's seal on the soul of the person who is confirmed.

So, what is the definition of Confirmation? It is:

1. A sacrament of initiation,
2. in which the Holy Spirit is received,
3. for the living of a truly Christian life in testimony to Jesus Christ.

Acts chapter two tells us of the first Confirmation. Read it and discuss the following questions:

1. What happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost?
2. What did the Apostles begin to do next?
3. What did Peter tell the people to do in verse 38?
4. Describe the early Church as found in verses 42-47.

The sacrament of Confirmation also has an "eschatological" dimension, meaning that it directs us toward the fulfillment of God's Kingdom in Heaven. Read Ephesians 1:13-14 and discuss this eschatological dimension.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 9

The Most Holy Eucharist

Catechism References: #1323, 1325, 1337, 1340, 1345, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1376-1377, 1403-1405

The most important sacrament of all is the Most Holy Eucharist. All the other sacraments point toward it, and prepare us for it in some way. It is also called the "Mass," or "Holy Communion." It is the new covenant (the new promise) which God made with us through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. To begin this study of the Eucharist, read Matthew 26:17-30.

The Last Supper of Jesus was the Jewish Passover Supper. It was the yearly renewal of God's old covenant with the people of Israel. On the night God slew the firstborn of the Egyptians so that they would release the Israelites from slavery, the people of Israel were ordered by God to celebrate the Passover Supper. They were to kill a lamb, smear its blood on the doorposts of their homes, and then eat the lamb. As the Angel of God came to kill the firstborn, he would "pass over" any house which was marked by the blood of the lamb – the blood of the covenant – and those inside would not die. The next day the Israelites left Egypt and God brought them eventually to the land He had promised, and made them His special people: the people through which Jesus would come into the world!

At the Last Supper, Jesus celebrated the Passover, but then He did something new: He took bread, gave thanks to His Heavenly Father, and said, "This is my body." Then He took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and said, "This is my blood." The word "eucharist" is a Greek word which means "to give thanks," and refers to Jesus giving thanks to the Father as He blessed the bread and wine. After this blessing, the bread was no longer bread, and the wine no longer wine: they had become Jesus' body and blood! What Jesus would do the next day on the cross – that is, lay down His body and blood to the Apostles, and through them to the Church. We receive this gift of Jesus when we celebrate this sacrament. It may not look, taste, smell, or feel like Jesus, but it is His body and blood being given to us in a mysterious way. Read #1376-1377 in the Catechism, and discuss Transubstantiation.

We call the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus "transubstantiation." This is a fancy way of saying that the bread and wine really become Jesus' body and blood. They are not just symbols, but the real thing! Who performs this miracle? Only a priest or a bishop can change bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. They have been given this power at their ordination, but it is not any human power which does this; it is Christ Himself working through the priest or bishop. Once bread and wine have been consecrated (blessed) and have become Christ's body and blood, we show them every respect. The consecrated hosts (blessed bread) are kept in the tabernacle, which should always be respected because it is Christ's throne on earth. Deacons, and even laypeople (with permission) can take the body of Christ from the tabernacle for Communion services, but this is not the same as Mass, which only a priest or bishop can celebrate. Read and discuss #1345 in the Catechism.

What happens at Mass? At each Mass Jesus is crucified before our very eyes! This does not mean that Jesus is crucified over and over again. It means that the one crucifixion of Jesus is made present in a miraculous way at each Mass. This is why we call Mass a "sacred mystery." We do not see them, but at Mass all the Angels and Saints of Heaven are present and celebrating with us. When we receive Holy Communion, we are receiving Jesus Himself: His life and all that is His to give. In exchange, we pledge our lives to Him. Read and discuss #1363, 1365, and 1367 in the Catechism.

How should we receive Holy Communion? We should be properly prepared by focusing our minds on Jesus, and preparing our hearts by prayer. If we have committed a serious sin (breaking any of the 10 Commandments) we are not permitted to receive Communion until we have been to Confession; to receive Communion in a state of sin is itself a serious sin and a sacrilege. We should receive our Lord joyfully, as the promise of eternal life, and remember to say a prayer of thanksgiving after receiving Him.

Read what St. Paul says about the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, and answer these questions:

1. Where did Paul get his information on the Eucharist?
2. When we receive Communion, what are we doing? (see verse 26). Read #1403-1405.
3. What does Paul warn us against in verses 27-29?

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 10
Confession

Catechism References: #1422, 1434-1438, 1440-1441, 1446, 1451-1453, 1456-1457, 1459-1460, 1467-1468, 1471-1472

Confession, along with the Anointing of the Sick, is known as the sacrament of healing. These two sacraments are for the health, well-being, and healing of our bodies and souls. Because we are creatures who are both physical and spiritual, health and healing refer to the whole person.

To understand the sacrament of Confession (or Penance, or Reconciliation) we must understand sin, and the different types of sin. Sin separates us from the life of God. God is holy, and all who would approach Him must become holy. Sin is offensive to God, and is the cause of death. For a more descriptive definition of sin, see #1850 of the Catechism. Original sin, with which all people are born (having inherited it from Adam and Eve), is washed away at Baptism. But despite its being washed away, its effects still remain. The effects of original sin are a tendency toward sin, and this tendency is known as "concupiscence" (see Catechism #1264). Any sins committed after Baptism are removed through the sacrament of Confession. Read Genesis 3:7-9, 23 and list and discuss the effects of sin found there.

The sins which we commit are called "actual" sins, and they are two types: mortal (meaning deadly), and venial. Read #1855 in the Catechism for a definition of mortal sin. A mortal sin grieves the Holy Spirit so that He cannot dwell in us, and causes spiritual death. What is a mortal sin? A mortal sin is any serious offense against God which causes serious damage to our neighbor; it is an offense against charity. Essentially, breaking any of the 10 Commandments is a mortal sin. To be culpable, that is, held responsible by God for a sin, three conditions must be met:

1. the sin is mortal (a serious offense)
2. the person has knowledge that it is a sin
3. the person wills to do it anyway.

Even if a person is not culpable, this lack of culpability does not diminish the seriousness of the sin itself. For example, a young woman may have an abortion without realizing that what she is doing is wrong. Nonetheless, a life has been taken. If a person dies in a state of mortal sin, objectively speaking the soul goes to hell.

Venial sins are lesser sins, which damage, but do not destroy our relationship with God, and do not strongly harm our neighbor. Read #1863 of the Catechism. An example might be shouting at your spouse, or taking a box of pens from work, or telling a "white lie." Venial sins lead to mortal sins, and even though they are not a serious, are still contrary to God's will and must be avoided.

Why do I need to confess my sins to a priest instead of going directly to God? The truth is, no one goes "directly to God;" we need a mediator, and that mediator is Christ. He goes before God on our behalf to plead for us. It is only Christ who has authority to forgive sins, and He has given this authority to priests. Priests, by virtue of their ordination, represent Christ for us in person and in their work. The authority to forgive sins was actually given by Jesus to the whole Church. This authority is called the "Office of the Keys," meaning the keys to Heaven, which is locked to unforgiven sinners. However, this authority, which lies within the Church, is exercised only by priests and bishops, who speak in the name of Jesus and forgive our sins. Read Matthew 16:13-20 and John 20:21-23 to see how Jesus gave the authority to forgive sins to His Church.

All mortal sins must be confessed. Hiding sins from the priest is itself a sin, and makes the entire Confession invalid. Three things are required for a person to be validly forgiven:

1. contrition (true sorrow for sin),
2. hatred of the sin committed,
3. the resolve to sin no more (this means avoiding even situations which might tempt us).

Contrition is of two types: perfect and imperfect. Imperfect contrition is sorrow for sin out of fear of the loss of salvation and of the fear of punishment. Perfect contrition is sorrow for sin because it has offended God and betrayed His love.

Absolution is the forgiveness which the priest imparts, and it takes away the eternal punishment due for mortal sin. However, some temporal punishment, or restitution, is due for the wrongdoing. This restitution is called "penance." The priest will assign you a prayer, or some deed to perform which is an indication that your heart has been turned back to God and set on the right path. Confession restores us to both God and His Church. When we sin, we offend God, and also do damage to the holiness of His Church: His people. There is no such thing as a sin which harms only the individual. Each individual is a member of the Body, the Church; so, even if one member is sick, the whole body suffers. Therefore, sin is against God and His Church; and Confession reconciles us to God and to one another. After a good Confession your soul is as clean as if you had just been baptized! Read #1468 of the Catechism.

An item which is related to Confession is an "indulgence." Indulgences are pardons granted by the Church which remove all or part of the temporal punishment due for sin. Although the guilt – that is, the eternal punishment – of a sin is removed by Confession, the temporal punishment remains to be atoned for by some act of penance, either on earth or in purgatory. Because the Church is holy, she has an overabundance of graces which she can apply to her children. These graces are called indulgences, and they make up for, or take the place of, personal acts of penance or charitable deeds. They are granted by the Church on certain occasions or for certain specified acts. For example, a partial indulgence is granted to anyone who prays the Rosary publicly and prays for the Pope's intentions. Indulgences may be gained for the living or the dead.

How do I go to Confession?

The faithful are obliged to make a Confession at least once a year, during the Easter season. However, we must go to Confession without delay whenever we become aware of having committed a mortal sin. The first step to making a Confession is to examine your conscience. Take some time, preferably in prayer, to think about your life since your last Confession, and make a list of the sins you need to confess. You must confess all mortal sin, and should include the number of times you committed each one. Do not worry that the priest knows your sins. Priests are bound to secrecy by the "seal" of Confession. This means that what you tell the priest during Confession is in sacred trust, and the priest will never divulge to anyone what he has heard in Confession, even if it means his own death. The priest is not permitted to speak to you later about your sins, unless you first bring them up to him, and give him permission to discuss them. A priest who breaks the seal of Confession is subject to excommunication and the removal of his priestly privileges.

When you enter the Confessional, the priest will begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You say, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _ (amount of time) _ since my last Confession, and these are my sins." After confessing your sins, the priest will address you briefly to encourage you to live a better life, and give advice on how to do so. Then he will assign you a penance. Once you have received a penance, say an Act of Contrition, and then the priest will absolve you of your sins and dismiss you. Do your penance as soon as possible after leaving the Confessional.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 11

Anointing of the Sick

Catechism References: #1499, 1505, 1506, 1512, 1514-1523, 1525

"By the sacred anointing of the sick and prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that He may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ" (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1499).

The Scripture passage which explicitly mentions anointing of the sick by a priest is James 5:14-15 (feel free to look this up). Through this Sacrament the sick person is assured that their suffering is not in vain, and that they do not suffer alone: their suffering has meaning because it is joined to the suffering of Jesus Christ Himself. Through His suffering salvation has been brought to the world. Suffering and death entered the world as a result of sin; Jesus has made suffering and death the means of our salvation through His passion and death on the cross.

Scripture Reflections:

- Wisdom 1:12 –15
- John 9:1-3

Compare the two passages, especially as it relates to what Jesus says about suffering in John's Gospel.

Biblical History of Healing of the Sick

Throughout the Scriptures we see God's concern over the suffering of His people, and His desire that they be healed.

Scripture Reflections:

- 2 Kings 4:18-20, 32 –37
- 2 Kings 5:1, 9-14
- Tobit 11:10 –15
- Matthew 9:18 –31
- Mark 6:7, 12-13
- Acts 3:1 –8

Healing Through Suffering

Strange as it may sound, the Catholic Church has a theology of healing through suffering. In our world today, suffering is looked upon as worthless. But when endured through faith in Christ, suffering conforms us to the image of our Savior.

Scripture Reflections:

- Isaiah 53:5
- 1 Peter 4:13
- Romans 8:18, 35-39
- see also: #1505 in the Catechism

Compare these readings, especially to what St. Peter says "Rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when His glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly."

Christ gives meaning to our suffering, for through our Baptisms, the Anointing of the Sick, and faith, we share in His cross and resurrection. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has several effects, which are outlined in the Catechism 1520-1523.

Celebration of the Sacrament

Who is to be anointed? Those who are baptized, of the age of reason, and are in danger of death or facing a serious illness. Also, those who are about to undergo major surgery should be anointed, as well as those who have become feeble due to old age.
The sacrament may be repeated if a person's condition worsens due to the same illness.

The person who is anointed should prepare by making a good Confession if they are aware of any serious sins. After the anointing the person usually receives Holy Communion if they are able. Only a priest or a bishop can celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. It should be noted that today there are some "charismatic" Catholics who visit the sick and anoint them with blessed oil. If these people are not priests, they are not able to perform the true Sacrament.

Misconceptions

There are various misconceptions about the Anointing of the Sick. The Sacrament used to be called "extreme unction" and people developed the idea that before it could be performed, a person had to be very near death. It is dangerous, however, to wait until a person comes near to death as the priest may not be able to arrive in time. The Anointing of the sick should be administered, if possible, when a person first becomes ill so that the person may make a confession if necessary, and also receive Holy Communion, known as "Viaticum", which means, with you on the way.

The Anointing of the Sick does not imply that a person is going to die: it is a sacrament of healing. It gives comfort to the sick and increases their faith to help them face their suffering with hope in Jesus Christ. It does not always bring about physical healing, but always prepares the person spiritually to accept their sickness, and if the Lord calls, to face death confidently.

The Ritual

The anointing is performed by the priest, anointing the sick person on the forehead and hands with the oil of the infirm, which is blessed each year by the bishop. As the priest anoints with the oil, he speaks, "Through this holy anointing may the Lord, in His love and mercy, help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit; may the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 12
Holy Matrimony

Catechism references: 1601, 1626-28, 1638, 1640-41, 1644, 1646.

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."
-*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1601, quoting Code of Canon Law, 1055.*

From the definition above we can understand marriage as follows:

1. a covenant relationship,
2. a relationship between a man and a woman,
3. a relationship for the whole of life,
4. a relationship for the mutual help and good of the spouses,
5. a relationship based on the procreation and education of children, and
6. a Sacrament when entered into by two baptized persons.

Marriage is more than a contract: it is covenant by which a man and woman promise themselves entirely to one another, to share the whole of life with one another. Marriage presumes a permanent, conjugal, and fidelis relationship. A very important reason for marriage is the procreation and education of children, within a stable and secure family environment.

Marriage was the first relationship established by God between human beings. At the very beginning of Creation we find God creating man and woman for each other.

Scripture Readings:

- Matthew 19:1-12
- 1 Corinthians 7:1-1
- Revelation 19:7-9

The Marriage Bond

Marriage is sacred to God, for it was established by Him, and therefore should not be entered into lightly. Marriage is intended by God to be permanent and holy. When a man and woman enter into marriage freely, without reservation, force or fear, giving their consent to one another in the form of vows, a bond comes into existence. This bond is sacred and cannot be broken by any earthly institution, even the Church. The only thing which can break a marriage bond is death. If a bond has truly come into existence by the couple's free and unconditional consent, it is called a "valid marriage."

Catholic Form and Validity of Marriage

Catholics are bound to "Catholic Form," meaning they must be married through the Catholic Church for their marriage to be valid. If only one of the parties to a marriage is Catholic, the marriage is still invalid if it takes place outside the Catholic Church (unless express written permission or a "dispensation" is given by the bishop). Marriage between two non-Catholics is valid even if it is performed by a Justice of the Peace, because they are not bound by Catholic Form.

Another thing which makes a marriage invalid is "simulation of consent." This is when a person says, "I do," but has mental reservations, or does not intend to follow through with what he or she is vowing. Some examples are: a person who does not really intend to enter a permanent marriage, or a couple which does not intend to have children. Also, to give valid consent, a person must be in his or her right mind, that is, not mentally ill or inebriated. A person under force or fear cannot enter into a valid marriage. Other things which make a marriage invalid are called impediments which include being already married, taking sacred vows (religious life), being an ordained priest, being too closely related to the intended spouse, and impotence (natural sterility is not considered an impediment, as long as the person is able to perform the conjugal act).

Annulment

There are often misconceptions about what an annulment is. An annulment is not a "Catholic divorce." A divorce is a civil and legal matter, and must be obtained before annulment proceedings may begin. In an annulment, an investigation is made to see if the marriage bond truly exists. The marriage tribunal investigates to see if the consent of the couple was valid. If the marriage is valid (and thus the marriage bond exists), then an annulment cannot be granted. However, if it is determined that the marriage is invalid, the Church grants the annulment, and the parties are free to enter into marriage with other persons.

Marriage as a Sacrament & the Domestic Church

A sacrament is a "cause of grace" or a way of sharing in the life and love of Jesus Christ. Marriage between two baptized persons is also a Sacrament. As a Sacrament it is a visible symbol of Christ's love for His own bride – the Church. Just as Christ gave His life completely and totally to His spouse, so married couples are to give themselves to one another. The family is very holy to God, and is the smallest unit of the Church. Therefore the Catholic Church teaches that every family is a "Domestic Church" where love is fostered, and Christ is worshipped and glorified. The home should be a place of prayer where Christ is welcomed daily, to bless each member of the family, and prepare them for eternal life in His Father's heavenly home.

Scripture Reflection:

What are the duties of family members to each other and God?
Ephesians 5:21-33 & 6:1-4

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 13
Holy Orders

Catechism References: 1536, 1539-40, 1577-79

"Holy Orders is the Sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to His Apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the Sacrament of Apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1536).

Jesus Christ possesses what we call a three-fold office. This means that He fills three essential roles in God's plan of salvation: He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. As prophet He speaks God's word to us. As Priest He offers Himself as sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. As King he rules over Heaven and earth and all creation.

When Jesus came down from Heaven He called twelve men to assist Him in His work, and to carry on after His death and resurrection. These twelve men were called Apostles, and Jesus empowered them with His own authority: to speak and act in His name. After Jesus had gone back to Heaven the Apostles founded the Church. Just as Jesus had given them authority, so they in turn gave authority to bishops to succeed them. Bishops pass on this authority to priests and deacons, and this passing on of Christ's authority is called *ordination* or *Holy Orders*.

Scripture Reflection: Luke 9:1-6

At ordination the bishop calls down the Holy Spirit by placing his hands on the head of the man being ordained. The man is then given the power to exercise his duties with Christ's authority. There are three degrees of Holy Orders: bishops, priests, and deacons. Once a man has received the sacrament of Holy Orders, it can never be taken away from him; like baptism and confirmation, Holy Orders imprints an *indelible mark* on his soul. Occasionally priests are removed from office for reasons of discipline and not allowed to function as a priest. Sometimes a priest may ask to be *laicized* or to give up the priestly life and return to lay life, even getting married (which requires permission from the Pope). But, in essence, the man is still a priest for all eternity.

Priests and bishops are forbidden to marry or to engage in any sexual activity. Deacons are either permanent or transitional. Transitional deacons are celibate, as they are going to the priesthood. Permanent deacons may be married if they are already wedded prior to ordination. However, if the wife of the deacon dies, the deacon cannot remarry. Those who receive Holy Orders give their lives to Christ and His Church. They continue to do His work on earth, acting in His name and with His authority, by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Bishops

Bishops possess the fullness of Holy Orders. They are able to perform all of the Sacraments, including ordination. Bishops fill the three-fold office of Christ as the successors of the Apostles. They are called to serve as prophet by teaching; to serve as priests by overseeing the sacramental life of the Church; and to serve as king by leading and governing the Church. Collectively the bishops of the world possess the grace of *infallibility*. This means that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when they speak on matters of faith (what is to be believed) and morals (how we are to live) they speak without error. The bishop of Rome, known as the Pope, is the successor to St. Peter, the head of the Apostles. The Pope by himself possesses the grace of infallibility…but only in matters of faith and morals. This grace assures God's people that His Church will never teach error or heresy.

Scriptural Reflection: Matthew 16:13-20

Priests

Priests are the representatives of bishops, and their assistants. In the New Testament, priests are called the presbyters. Priests can perform all the Sacraments, except ordination. Priests can confirm those who are brought into the Church on Holy Saturday. The essential work of priests is to tend to the flock of Christ in the parishes, which make up a diocese. Some priests are appointed by the bishop to be pastors, which means that they have the bishop's own authority in governing a particular parish. Because priests make Christ present to the people by their ordination, and celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, they are called the *alter Christus* which means *another Christ* in Latin. Without priests there can be no Eucharist, and without the Eucharist there can be no Church. To priests has been entrusted the *power of the keys* or the power to forgive sins in Christ's name. In doing so, they literally unlock the Kingdom of Heaven to repentant sinners.

Scriptural Reflection:

To Learn more on the power of the keys
John 20:19-23

Deacons

Deacons are ordained for the service to Christ's people, to assist them in growing holiness. They were ordained initially for the service to the poor and needy. In the early days of the Church, deacons accompanied bishops wherever they went to assist them in celebrating Mass. Deacons were specifically entrusted with the chalice. Perhaps the greatest ministry of deacons is their ministry of God's Word. Deacons may preach, assist at mass, baptize, perform weddings, and give the blessing at Church. Deacons cannot say Mass, hear confessions, or anoint the sick.

Scriptural Reflection:

Read about the ordination of the first deacons.
Acts 6:1-7

One Priesthood of Christ

There is only one priesthood of Jesus Christ. His people share in this priesthood each in their own way. All people who are baptized share in the common priesthood of Christ. This means that all Christians are to live a holy or sanctified life, offering their lives daily to the Father in Heaven. Then there is the ordained priesthood, in which only ordained priests have the grace and authority to celebrate the sacraments. The Great Commission of Jesus was given to His whole Church, but it is carried out by those who share in the common priesthood of baptism, and those who are ordained priests in different ways.

Scriptural Reflection:

What are the various ways ordained clergy and lay people carry out the Great Commission?
Matthew 28:16-20

Religious Life

For those who are unable, or who choose not to receive Holy Orders, but wish to serve Christ more fully with their lives, there are various forms of Religious or *consecrated* life. Those in Religious Life adhere, through vows or promises, to the three *evangelic counsels* of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The more familiar Religious Life are the major Religious Orders, such as the Franciscans, Benedictines, and the Dominicans, to name a few. Religious Orders are for both men and women. In men's Orders, you may find priests, but also brothers, or Monks. These men do various types of work, from manual labor, to teaching in Catholic Schools. Women in Religious Orders may be teachers, nurses, social-workers, do manual labor, or spend their days in quiet prayer. They are known as Sisters or Nuns.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 14

The Commandments: 1-3

Catechism References: 2083-84, 2087, 2090-94, 2113, 2116-17, 2146, 2148, 2150, 2157-58, 2172, 2174, 2181-82, 2185

God chose the Israelites, descendants of Abraham, to be people particularly holy to Himself. To them was given the promise of the Messiah, who would be the Savior of the whole world. Therefore, they needed to be especially holy because the Savior would be born through them.

To teach His people to be holy, God gave them the Ten Commandments, The Commandments are known as the *Decalogue* meaning the ten statements. The Ten Commandments are also known as God's Law. We may speak of two tables of the Law, by which we mean the two parts of the Ten Commandments. The first table is composed of Commandments 1-3, which teach us about the right relationship we are to have with God. The Second Table is composed of Commandments 4-10, which teach us how to live in peace and holiness with each other.

The Ten Commandments are found listed in two places in the Bible: Exodus 20:2-17, and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. In Summary, they are as follows:

First Table

1. You shall worship the Lord your God and Serve Him only.
2. You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Second Table

4. Honor your father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's property.

The two tables of the Law are summed up by Jesus in Matthew.

Scriptural Reflections: What is the importance of the commandments in the relationship between man and God?

- Matthew 22:34-40
- Deuteronomy 26:18-19
- John 14:21-24

<u>The First Commandment:</u>

"You shall worship the Lord your God and Serve Him only."

By keeping the first commandment we enter into a unique relationship with the one God. He claims us as His people and beloved children, as we love and adore Him above all other things in our lives.

How do we keep this commandment? None of the commandments are truly kept through blind observance. Grace is necessary for keeping the Commandments in truth. Such grace is found in

the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love. These virtues enable us to keep all of the commandments. Keeping the first commandment leads to a life of adoration of God, prayer, and sacrifice.

How is this commandment broken? By placing anyone or anything in place of God in our lives, or by failing to give due honor to God, through greed, idolatry, superstition, divination, witchcraft, magic, atheism, or agnosticism.

Read Catechism:

- 2087-88, 2090-92, 2093-94
- 2084, 2113, 2116, and 2117

The Second Commandment:

"You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain."

To know the name of a person indicates a certain degree of familiarity and a type of relationship. Out of respect we only call someone we know by his first name. In God's mercy and out of love for us, He has revealed His personal name to us through Moses. When Moses was on Mt. Sinai the first time, God spoke to him from the burning bush and gave His name, Yahweh, which means "I am" in Hebrew. Centuries later God would reveal Himself fully through His Son, Jesus Christ. In Hebrew, Jesus means "I am saves".

To bless the name of God, and to use it in blessing, is to bring honor and glory to God and to His relationship with us. To invoke God's name makes God present. To abuse the name of God leads only to our own downfall and to offense against the relationship with Himself to which God calls.

At baptism, the name of God is written in our hearts. To call oneself Christian while living a sinful life is perhaps the worst sin against God's name.

Read Catechism:

- 2146, 2148, 2150, 2157-58

The Third Commandment:

"Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day."

God invites us to become like Him by sharing His life and imitating Him. On the seventh day of creation, God rested from His work. He blessed the seventh day as the Sabbath and made it holy. The third commandment is that we are to cease our regular work schedule to take a day for worshiping God, remembering His blessings, and resting from our labors. The Lord's Day is a promise of Heaven, when we will end the labors of this world and enter into rest and peace with God. Until then the Lord's Day renews us each week in our relationship with God, and helps us to stay focused on who we are as God's children; it's a time of refreshment in mind, body, and spirit and a time of re-creation.

In the Old Testament the Lord's Day was observed on a Saturday. In the new Testament the Lord's Day came to be observed on Sunday, because the resurrection of Jesus occurred on a Sunday. We can say that every Sunday throughout the year is a mini-Easter Celebration. All Sundays are Holy Days of Obligation, meaning that Catholics are obligated to attend Mass.

There are also other Holy Days throughout the year on which Catholics are also obligated to attend Mass:

- January 1: Mary, Mother of God
- Ascension Thursday
- August 15: Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- November 1: All Saints Day
- December 8: Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- December 25: Christmas

Read Catechism:

- 2172, 2174, 2181-82, 2185

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 15

The Commandments: 4-5

Catechism References: 2199, 2204, 2223, 2226, 2233-34, 2237, 2239, 2258, 2260, 2318-30.

Beginning with Commandment #4, we enter the second table of God's Law, which teaches us about the right relationship we are to have with one another. We have already examined the words of Jesus regarding the second table of the Law, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus also gives us a simple rule to live by, known popularly as "the Golden Rule," which says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Mt. 7:12)

In our relationships with other people we are expected to live according to ethics, and as Christians adhere to a higher moral code of conduct, which flows out of our faith in Jesus Christ. To simply believe in Jesus is not enough. We are obliged as believers to put our faith into practice. Read James 2:14-19 and discuss what James has to say about living out our faith.

The second table of the Law teaches us to value the lives of others, as well as our own. It teaches us respect for the rights of others and concern for their needs. It also teaches us to be aware of our obligations and duties to one another, to be "our brother's keeper." In essence, the second table of the Law teaches us about charity. Jesus speaks of our obligations to one another in charity in Matthew 25:31-46. Read and discuss this passage.

The Fourth Commandment:

"Honor your father and Mother."

This commandment comes with a promise, "that it may go well with you, and that you may live long upon the land the Lord your God is giving to you." The gift of the Promised Land of Israel was a strong symbol of the Covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. To live a long life in the Promised Land was a sign of God's blessing upon a person, and of a mutual keeping of the Covenant. Therefore, honoring one's father and mother was, for the ancient Israelites, an essential element in keeping God's Covenant.

To honor, respect, and obey one's parents is to honor, respect, and obey God. It is through our parents that we inherit God's Covenant promises. As with all the Commandments of the second table of the Law, there are both rights imparted to and duties imposed upon God's people who desire to live the faith and inherit an eternal reward. Just as parents have a right to respect from their children, so they also have a duty to provide their children with a good example, and a stable and holy home environment to equip their children for life in this world, as well as the world to come.

Read and discuss the following references from the Catechism: #2199, 2204, 2223, 2226, 2233, 2234, 2237, 2239.

The Fifth Commandment:

"You shall not kill."

Read #2258 from the Catechism. This Commandment refers to the direct taking of human life. God is the giver of all life, and human life is particularly precious to Him, as He made human beings in His own image and likeness. The most obvious way to break this Commandment is to murder someone. But there are also many other ways to break this Commandment: for

example, recklessness, which endangers one's own life or the lives of others; abortion, which kills an unborn human life (supporting or counseling someone to have an abortion also make one guilty); artificial forms of contraception, such as "the pill" and the "day after pill" are abortifacients, meaning they kill a newly-conceived human life; suicide breaks this Commandment by taking one's own life; euthanasia, or "mercy-killing" is also murder. In short, any disrespect or harm toward human life offends God and breaks the fifth Commandment, including physical abuse, verbal abuse, and contempt for another person.

Read the following passages from Matthew to see what Jesus says about anger, retaliation, and love for enemies: Mt. 5:21-22, 38-42, 43-48.

What about war and capital punishment? When authorities, such as government, make decisions to go to war, those who kill the enemy are not guilty of breaking this Commandment. War displeases God, and human life is taken but soldiers are not culpable for murder, as long as they do not kill needlessly, or kill the innocent. Also, police officers, or others in self-defense, or in defense of innocent life, are not guilty of breaking this Commandment. Capital punishment (the death penalty) may be ordered by governing authorities when there is no hope of rehabilitation, and when the crime of the individual is so grave that justice is best served by the individual's death. The key is respect for all life, which acknowledges the value of human beings to God, and glorifies Him.

Review the following references from the Catechism: #2318-2330.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 16

The Commandments: 6-7

Catechism References: #2351-54; 2359, 2368, 2380-81, 2384-85; 2402-3, 2425, 2429, 2433-34, 2443

The Sixth Commandment:

"You shall not commit adultery."

Read Matthew 5:27-28. In this passage Jesus teaches us about sexual morality: that sexuality is not only a matter of our bodies, but of our souls, of our very personhood. Sexuality is a part of who we are – of our identity, of our self. Physical sexuality is a way we live out our interior identity as a man or a woman, and physical sexuality is a very special gift from god: a way He enables us to give the gift of our self to someone else most intimately. Therefore, sexual activity is not a simple recreation, but it is the most profound and intimate gift of self.

An amazing thing about our sexuality is that it is expressed most often not in sexual intercourse, but in chastity. We, as sexual beings, live out our sexuality in a day to day basis in relationships with most people through chastity. God allows us only one special and significant partner to whom we give ourselves intimately in sexual intercourse. To all others we express our sexuality through chaste relationships.

Sexuality is God's gift, especially to human beings, because a man and a woman are able to share in God's capacity to create other human beings in His image. Read and discuss Genesis 1:27-28 & 2:18, 21-24. Sexuality is holy to God, and represents His love and faithfulness to His people. On the cross, Jesus gave Himself fully to His Bride, the Church. Marriage is to express God's own love and faithfulness in Christ, and the marriage of two baptized people is elevated to the status of a Sacrament!

Marriage is holy to God, and should never be entered into lightly or without serious personal preparation. Marriage gives rise to family life, which is precious to God. Jesus Christ Himself entered into our world through a family; that of Mary and Joseph. Children have a right to a safe, healthy and normal family life, in which they are loved and nurtured physically, mentally and spiritually.

Sexuality implies responsibility because it is that capacity to create powerful relationships and to generate human life. Discuss how our sexuality makes us responsible to:

- self (gift of virginity & self-respect/ cf. 1 Cor. 6:13-14)
- mate (fidelity/ 1 Cor. 7:2-5, 39)
- family (our parents & our children)
- society
- Church (1 Cor. 5:1-5)
- God (1 Cor. 6:15-20)

The following are virtues which bring honor to God and our sexuality:

- chastity = self control, even in marriage
- modesty = respect for God, self and others
- celibacy = perpetual chastity

There are many ways to abuse God's gift of sexuality and to sin against it. Read and discuss the following paragraphs from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- adultery #2380-81
- divorce #2384-85 (cf. Matthew 5:31-32)

- lust #2351
- masturbation #2352
- fornication #2353
- pornography #2354
- homosexuality #2359
- contraception #2368

The Seventh Commandment:

"You shall not steal."

Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2402-03. This Commandment presumes the right to private property. God gives His gifts of creation for the good and use of all His people. Therefore, every person has the right to adequate food, clothing, shelter and whatever else is necessary for life. To deprive a person of these rights is an offense against their dignity as a person, and against God. When people work to earn a living, they are putting themselves into whatever they earn. They have a right to the fruits of their labor. Therefore, workers can expect to earn a fair wage, and employers deserve an honest day's work in return. Those who have an abundance should share what they can with the less fortunate. We should deprive no one of what is rightfully their property. If we borrow something, we should return it quickly. Also, we must not steal from God by failing to give support to His Church.

Read Matthew 5:40-42 & 6:24-34. What does Jesus teach us about the value of material goods and their proper use?

The Seventh Commandment not only forbids stealing and greed, but also directs us to implement fair economic standards: a just wage and fair prices. Governments should function so as to create an environment where all may earn a living and be rewarded in a way commensurate with their work. Read and discuss paragraphs 2425, 2429 and 2433-34 in the Catechism.

Jesus had great love and concern for the poor, for those who could not provide for themselves. In fact, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor, for the Kingdom of God is theirs" (Luke 6:20). Those who are poor in material things often find joy in the things of Heaven. The Church teaches us that the poor are a treasure to us, because in providing for their needs, we ourselves grow in our likeness to Christ. Our Lord entrusts the care of the poor to us, and to withhold help from them is to steal from them. Read and discuss paragraph #2443 in the Catechism.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 17

The Commandments: 8-10

Catechism References: #2464, 2475-77, 2479-84, 2518, 2520-21, 2525, 2534, 2536, 2539

The Eighth Commandment:

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Read paragraph #2464 from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Just as the Second Commandment teaches us to keep God's name holy, so the Eighth Commandment teaches us to keep holy the name of our neighbor. Because we are created with dignity in God's image, and Christ has exalted that dignity through the shedding of His blood for each person, so each person has the right to a good reputation. Not only that, but each person has the right to the truth. Jesus came into our world to bear witness to the truth (cf. John 18:37). In Scripture, lies and deception are equated with darkness and death, while truth and honesty are equated with light and life. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not work in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

On the contrary, Jesus calls the devil the father of lies, as He says, "(the devil) was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

What does Jesus say about the Eighth Commandment in Matthew 5:33-37 and Luke 6:37-42? There are many offenses against truth in our lives. Read and discuss the following paragraphs from the Catechism: #2475-77, 2479-82, 2484.

The Ninth Commandment:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments prohibit "coveting." To covet is to resent the good fortune of someone else. It may lead to the cursing of someone more fortunate than oneself, or to the desire to gain for oneself what belongs to someone else by immoral or illicit means. Coveting may lead to the breaking of the Seventh Commandment, and is also linked to envy, one of the seven deadly sins. What does Jesus say about coveting in Matthew 6:19-21?

The Ninth Commandment specifically forbids coveting someone else's spouse. As we discussed in the lesson on the Sixth Commandment, marriage is sacred to God. To desire the spouse of another is to break the Sixth Commandment, even if the desire remains hidden in one's heart (see Matthew 5:27-28). God detests sins against marital purity and family life. The book of Deuteronomy illustrates how sacred marital purity is to God in chapter 22, verses 22-24 and 28-29. Read and discuss these pages.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church summarizes the Ninth Commandment nicely in the following paragraphs. Read and discuss them: #2518, 2520, 2521, 2525.

The Tenth Commandment:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's property."

Read Luke 12:13-15. In our material world there is always the temptation toward greed, one of the seven deadly sins. As we discussed in the lesson on the Seventh Commandment, everyone has a right to private property. Not only is it our duty not to steal, it is also our duty to help our neighbor retain his property (see Deuteronomy 22:1-4).

An offense against someone's property is an offense against the dignity of the person to whom the property belongs, and therefore a sin against charity. Sins which destroy charity (love for God and/or neighbor) are mortal sins. Thus we see that it is nearly impossible to break one of the Commandments without breaking several – or even all – at the same time. But is it wrong to admire someone's property? No. To admire a possession of someone else, and to aspire to attain something similar for oneself by legal and moral means, is perfectly acceptable, and does not break this Commandment.

It is important to note that this Commandment applies not only to the coveting of material possessions, but also to personal qualities and talents; for example, someone's natural beauty, or their singing voice or athletic ability.

Read and discuss the following paragraphs from the Catechism: #2534, 2536, 2539. How do we keep the Ninth and Tenth Commandments? In summary, read and discuss Luke 12:16-21.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 18

The Saints and Mary

Catechism References: #948-9, 960-62, 964, 966-69, 971

The Cult of Saints:

Read paragraph #948 from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There is only one Church of Jesus Christ, but its members are in one of three stages: the Church Militant, which is the Church on earth, struggling against the power of sin and the devil; the Church Suffering, which is made up of the souls in purgatory, who are not yet perfect enough to see God face to face; and the Church Triumphant, which is the Church in Heaven: the souls of the Saints, who have been made perfectly holy through the grace of Christ. In the end, all the faithful will be gathered in by our Savior, and there will remain alone for all eternity the Church Triumphant.

Sainthood is the goal for every Christian: to be holy and perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. But no one enters Heaven without the grace of our Lord, and this necessary grace is imparted through the Catholic Church: in the proclamation of the Gospel, in the Sacraments and through the prayers of the faithful… especially of the Saints of Heaven, who are constantly interceding for us. St. Therese of Lisieux once said, "I will spend Heaven doing good on earth." In essence, we need one another, as fellow Christians – as the Church – to achieve our final goal of eternal life in Heaven.

While we await the fulfillment of that goal, we are not cut off from it. Rather, we already share partially in the life of the Church in Heaven through our participation in the life of the Church on earth. Whenever we celebrate any of the liturgies of the Church on earth, we are sharing in the endless liturgies of the Church in Heaven. At Mass, for example, although our eyes do not see them, we are immersed in Heavenly realities. The Angels and Saints are present, and we are before the very Throne of God!

This is what we mean by the "Communion of Saints:" that whether on earth, in purgatory, or in Heaven, God's people are one in Jesus Christ. We share as one holy people – made holy through Christ – in holy things, such as the Word, the Sacraments, and prayer in the name of Jesus. Together we share the one Faith (see Catechism #949). Therefore, "the Faith" is not the possession of any one person. It is greater than ourselves, and something we participate in and share with all the faithful. Still, it must also belong to each one personally. In other words, no one is saved by the faith of someone else. Each individual needs a personal relationship with Christ. This relationship with Christ is always at the same time a relationship with the whole Church. While we cannot believe for someone else, we can help other to believe, and build up one another in faith: by encouraging each other, setting a good example and praying for one another. Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

When it comes to living the life of faith, the Saints in Heaven are the experts. Their lives are an example to us, as well as an encouragement. But the Saints help us the most through their prayers for us. By their intercessions they protect us, guide us, attain graces for us and lead us ever closer to holiness and eternal life with themselves and our God.

Devotion to the Saints helps us to live out our faith in Jesus Christ. Such devotion never diminishes the role of Jesus as our Savior, but magnifies it. We do not worship (adore) the Saints! Worship (adoration) is reserved to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do, however, honor (venerate) the Saints. Such honor, or veneration, is not worship, but is the respect that we might show to any

person who exhibits admirable qualities which help and serve others. To honor the Saints is to honor what Christ accomplished in their lives through grace.

How do we practice devotion to the Saints? Perhaps there is a particular Saint which appeals to you because you can relate to something in his or her life, or because you admire the qualities or accomplishments of the life of a particular Saint. Take that Saint as a prayer-partner and a model for your own life. If you call on any of the Saints, they will be present to pray for you and to guide you. The Saints should never take the place of Christ in our lives. Rather, their purpose is to lead us to a stronger faith in Him as our Lord and Savior.

Do not become superstitious about the Saints. They are not magic charms to be invoked or used for selfish and/or petty purposes. Never attempt to see visions of Saints or to hear their voices, as you may find yourself deceived by the devil, or cultivating mental illness. The Saints never draw attention to themselves, but always direct us more closely to Christ. Their whole concern is to gather us all safely home to Heaven, to share with them fully in the eternal reward which is ours through Jesus Christ! Read and discuss paragraph #960-62 in the Catechism.

The Cult of Mary:

Read paragraph #964 in the Catechism. When Mary consented to become the mother of Jesus, she was consenting to many things: to give her entire life in service to Jesus Christ, to make His mission of salvation her own by participation and cooperation, to give her Son up to death for the life of the world, and to show a mother's care for all people for whom her Son would give his life.

No one else has or ever will share in the life of Jesus in the way that Mary does, as her role in the Church is unique. She gave to our Savior His humanity, and in this way she represents all human beings. The Son of God became incarnate in her, and through her He entered into the world as its Savior. Mary is an indispensable part of God's plan of salvation, and He decreed from all eternity that without her salvation would not have been possible. Just as human beings consented to the first sin, and brought death to the world, so God desired that through a human being's consent life would be restored to the world. Mary said "yes" to becoming the mother of our Savior. Because Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine, Mary is called "Theotokos" – Mother of God – for in giving birth to Jesus, she gave birth to God! Read and discuss paragraphs #966-969 in the Catechism.

Catholics are sometimes criticized for "worshipping" Mary and for "praying" to her. As was mentioned above regarding the Saints, we do not worship Mary, but we honor her as the Mother of Jesus and as our Mother by grace. Worship is reserved to God alone. But should we not honor Mary, for her faithfulness to our Lord and the essential role He entrusted to her in our salvation? Also, we do not pray to Mary as we pray to God. Mary is not God, and she is not able to answer our prayers as God can. But she is the Saint closest to God, and her prayers to Him for us are most powerful. How can Jesus resist His own dear Mother? When we pray to Mary, we are simply speaking to our Mother, and asking for her prayers, her guidance and her protection.

As with all the Saints, Mary never takes the place of Jesus. Rather, her role is to lead us closer to Him. In legitimate apparitions of Mary, approved by the Church (e.g. Lourdes and Fatima), Mary never draws attention to herself, but directs all people to her Son, Jesus. We must be careful in our devotion to Mary to avoid superstition and excess, and to allow Mary to guide us, as a good Mother, to her Son's love. Read paragraph #971 in the Catechism.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 19

Sacramentals and Rituals

Catechism References: #1667-68, 1671-73, 1068, 1070, 1090, 1140-43, 1189, 1192, 1194, 1198

Begin by reading Acts 2:42-47.

Sacramentals

Besides the Seven Sacraments, the Church has what are called "Sacramentals." These are items which carry the blessing of the Church, or are considered holy. Their purpose is to increase devotion, faith, hope and love in Christ's people. Sacramentals so not directly impart grace, as the Sacraments do, but they direct us to a greater love for the Sacraments and the Church, and help us live a life of faith. The Seven Sacraments are activities of the Church in which Christ Himself is active, giving u His life and the power to live the new life of grace. So, we call the Sacraments "causes" of grace, because by them Christ imparts grace to His Church. Sacramentals, on the other hand, are not courses or causes of grace, but they strengthen us in the graces received in the Sacraments. Read and discuss paragraphs #1667-68, 1671-73 on the Catechism.

What are some examples of Sacramentals? Holy Water, religious medals, scapulars, statues and images of Christ or the Saints, rosaries, incense, crucifixes and many other such things which help lead us closer to Christ each day. Relics are the remains of Saints. Because these are people who achieved holiness on earth, the Church considers even their remains as holy, and capable of working miracles. First-class relics are usually bones or particles of bones of Saints. Second-class relics are personal items, such as clothing, which belonged to the Saint. Third-class relics are items (usually rosaries or pieces of cloth) which have been touched to the body of the Saint.

Rituals

Read Revelations 4:1-11, and paragraphs #1068 & 1070 in the Catechism. The Catholic Church is also very rich in its many rituals. Rituals are the expressions by which we worship God. Also called "liturgies," our rituals are orderly ways in which individuals and groups (large or small) bring honor to God and participate in His work of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. Our liturgies are first of all the work of Jesus, in which we participate. Rituals are not magic hocus-pocus, nor are they simply superstition (which is ritual devoid of true faith). They are the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, joining in the self-offering of Jesus to His Father for the salvation of the world. Therefore, our rituals are considered holy, and are to be carried out in a reverent manner. Read paragraph 1090 in the Catechism.

Perhaps the foremost ritual of the Church is the celebration of Mass. It is important to understand the various parts and symbols of the Mass, so that we may participate whole-heartedly. The Mass is divided into two parts: the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. During the liturgy of the Word, we gather into God's presence, mindful that we are sinners, and praising God for His goodness to us. We listen as the Word of God is proclaimed, and then we profess that we believe what we just heard by reciting the Nicene Creed. In between the two parts of the Mass, joining them together, is the Offertory. We bring before God our earthly offerings, and our whole selves, to be offered to Him in Christ. Then begins the liturgy of the Eucharist. In this liturgy, bread and wine become the true Body and Blood of Jesus! We can say that during this liturgy we are seeing Christ crucified and offered to His Father, then rising

again in our midst to give us forgiveness and new life! Every time Mass is offered, God's New Covenant in Christ is made new and the world is saved once again. Read and discuss paragraphs #1140-43, 1189, 1193, 1194, 1198.

Places in the Church

Holy Water Fonts – as we enter the Church, we find by the doors the Holy Water fonts. When entering the Church we should bless ourselves to remind us of our Baptism, and to prepare to participate in sacred things. Then leaving the Church, we bless ourselves to ask for God's blessing and protection wherever we go, and to protect us from evil.

Nave – this is the largest section of the Church, which is filled with pews. It is the space reserved for gatherings of Christ's faithful people, from which they offer themselves in prayer and worship and receive God's gifts of grace.

Sanctuary – this is the space most holy in the Church, as it is the central place of the celebration of the Sacraments. It contains the ambo, or lectern, from which God's Word is proclaimed. It also contains the presider's chair, from which the priest – acting in the person of Christ – conducts the liturgy. The altar of sacrifice, where Christ offers up His Body and Blood, is central to the sanctuary. Then there is the Most Holy Place: the altar of repose, upon which the Tabernacle is placed. The Tabernacle contains the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Near the Tabernacle is the sanctuary lamp, which indicates that Christ is present in the Tabernacle, and in all the Church, as the Light of Life. The sanctuary also contains the Crucifix: a constant reminder of the price of our salvation.

Baptistry – this is the place where Baptisms take place. It may be in a special room near the entrance to the Church, or perhaps in the sanctuary, or some other suitable place in the Church.

Ambry – this is a special storage compartment for the Holy Oils. Often is it located in the sanctuary, or in the Baptistry, or in another suitable place.

Stations of the Cross – the fourteen (sometimes fifteen) Stations of the Cross are an important prayer of the Church by which we walk with Jesus to the Cross. They are normally located along the interior walls of the nave.

Sacristy/Vestry – the sacristy is a room in the Church, usually off of the sanctuary, where all the necessary items for Mass are kept: ritual books, chalices, altar-bread, wine, candles, etc. Some Churches also have a vestry, where the priest's vestments are kept and where he vests for liturgies. Often, however, the sacristy and vestry are one.

Notes/Thoughts:

Lesson 20

The Last Things

Catechism References: #675, 989,997-99, 1001, 1022-23, 1030-33,1038

Read Mark 13:3-37. The theology which deals with the end of times is called "eschatology," which is Greek for "study of the end." Currently we are living in the end of times. These end times, or the final phase of the unfolding of God's plan of salvation, began when Jesus arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, with the promise that He would return again (see Acts 1:6-11).

Read paragraph #675 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The age of the Church is an age of waiting and longing for our Lords' return. All that we do as members of the Church is in preparation for that day, when all the dead will rise, and all people who ever lived will be gathered before our Lord for judgment (see paragraphs #989, 997-99 & 1001 in the Catechism). In hopes of receiving the reward of eternal life in Heaven with our Lord, we prepare ourselves daily through prayer and works of mercy and charity. Even the liturgy of the Church has an "eschatological" dimension, directing us always toward our fulfillment in Christ. This is especially true of the Mass, of which St. Paul says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Most people are curious about what happens when they die, and also about what will happen at the end of the world. The Church answers these questions with what are called "the Four Last Things." These four last things are: judgment, purgatory, Heaven, and hell.

Read Revelation 1:7. All people, at the time of death, receive judgment from God and are assigned either to eternal reward or punishment, based on their conduct while on earth. This is called the "particular" judgment. When Christ returns on the last day, all the world will be judged at once in what is called the "final" judgment. On the day of the final judgment, the bodies of everyone who ever lived will be raised up, and they will stand before God along with those who are still alive on that day. Those who have lived a life of faith in Christ, having observed His commands and found worthy, will go to Heaven. Those who have lived in sin and have refused to obey Christ will be cast with the devil into eternal hell-fire and punishment. Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Purgatory is the place most Christian souls go before entering into Heaven. Purgatory is not a place of punishment, but of purification, where souls learn to love God above all else, and to let go of attachments to earthly and/or sinful things. Most Christians die without being holy enough to see God face to face. Purgatory prepares the soul to enter Heaven. The souls in purgatory pray for us, and we can also help them to enter Heaven sooner by our prayers for them, by doing penance for them, and by offering Mass for them. All Souls Day (November 2nd) is specifically set aside for this purpose.

Heaven is the final destination for Christ's faithful people. Only souls which are completely purified and holy may enter into God's presence. Saints are the souls in Heaven. There are souls in Heaven who were purified in purgatory. Others were holy enough on earth to go directly to Heaven; such examples are St. Francis, St. Teresa, and those we generally refer to as "Saints," because we know they are in Heaven.

Hell is the final destination for those who stubbornly reject the grace of Christ and persist in their sins, refusing to repent. Because they have chosen to leave God out of their lives, they are eternally separated from Him. These people suffer eternally with the devil in the fires of hell. We

do not pray for them, because our prayers cannot help them. They can never be released from their torment, because they chose sin over God. Read Revelation 21:1-8 and 22:6-21.

Notes/Thoughts:

Thresholds of faith

Charisms

Initial Trust

Spiritual Curiosity

Mercy: (fosters trust and arouses curiosity) | is hands-on, practical deeds that relieve suffering and restore dignity | Mercy not only alleviate physical suffering but also have an incredible ability to restore the dignity, hope, and sense of being loved by God to those who suffer | find personally serving the poor, the rejected, and marginalized to be a compelling privilege even when it is difficult | I once worked with a nurse who told me, "It's very strange. I can just walk into a room where a patient is crawling the walls with fear, pain, or anxiety and they instantly calm down and relax into peace even though I haven't had time to do anything yet. I've noticed that this doesn't happen with all nurses." | their spiritual life will falter if they don't also have a chance to work directly with those who suffer

Spiritual Openness

Service: (can build trust, arouse curiosity and foster openness) recognizing the gaps or unmet needs that prevent good things from happening, and by personally doing whatever it takes to bridge the gap | have a kind of radar for the unmet needs around them and are personally motivated to respond in a hands-on way to meet those needs | They are typically self-starting and multi-talented, a jack-of-all-trades | They do not want to delegate; they make things happen by taking personal, hands-on action | because they are so capable and proactive, they are often moved quickly into leadership in voluntary organizations. As a result, people with a charism of Service can become over-committed in all the wrong places | The challenge for someone with this charism is discerning when and where to say "no."

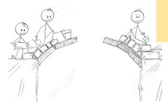
Healing: (especially helpful for thresholds of trust, curiosity and openness) through whom God cures illness and restores health when healing is unlikely to occur quickly or to happen at all | heal others physically and emotionally in ways that clearly transcend normal clinical outcomes | Healing will occur much faster than normal or where healing is not expected to occur at all. The healing does not have to be medically inexplicable to be the fruit of this charism | Healing needs some kind of contact with the person, preferably face-to-face, but sometimes over the phone or via Skype. That is one of the things that sets it apart from Intercessory Prayer.

Hospitality: (helps people cross thresholds of trust, curiosity and openness) warmly welcoming and caring for those in need of food, shelter, and friendship | making a place for others as individuals and as a group | means by which God heals and strengthens individuals through the experience of Christian community | community. Someone with this gift has an amazing ability to create a warm, welcoming environment in which a person's needs for physical nurture, relational roots, and personal and spiritual companionship are met | A person or family with this charism might welcome many individuals, but they always see you

Craftsmanship: (thresholds of trust, curiosity and openness) sacred or secular artistic creativity that beautifies and orders the physical world | The art created with this gift need not be explicitly religious for it to impact others for God's purposes | power of this gift touches the whole of us and baptizes our imaginations and our senses | For those who are given this gift, creating beauty is a major form of prayer and a critical part of their spiritual life.

Giving: (thresholds of trust, curiosity, openness and seeking) cheerful channel of God's provision by giving money and material goods with extraordinary generosity to those in need | Disciples with the charism of giving either are empowered to make money or find that money and other resources mysteriously come to them so that these things can be provided to others | They are confident that their own material needs will be met by God | People who struggle with belief in God's love and care can have their entire spiritual worldview transformed by witnessing or being the recipients of dramatic acts of generosity. Witnessing this charism in action can be enormously thought-provoking for agnostics and atheists as well as those at any threshold of pre-discipleship.

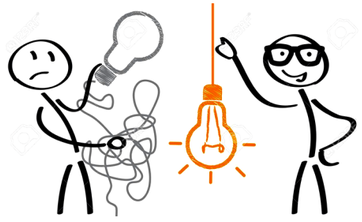
Missionary: (thresholds of trust, curiosity, openness and seeking) by effectively and joyfully using his or her charisms in a second culture | become quickly bored and frustrated in mono-cultural settings. They love the richness, color, and challenge of relating to and working with people from different cultures | In the twenty-first century, this charism could also be exercised by disciples who can relate fruitfully to skeptics and unbelievers saturated in post-modern assumptions | care passionately about living, relating, and speaking in ways that make the Gospel intelligible and credible to the people from a different culture | are intensely sensitive to the nuances of the culture in which they seek to be a witness of Jesus Christ.



Prophecy: (Especially useful in thresholds of curiosity, openness and seeking) by communicating a word or call of God to individuals or a group through inspired words or actions | The charism of Prophecy can take many forms, including a prophetic exhortation that calls people to action; a "word of knowledge" or "word of wisdom" through which God reveals what he is doing (such as a healing) in the life of an individual or community; an interior vision (not an apparition) or prophetic actions through which God's word to a community is communicated | A good deal of emotional and spiritual maturity and disinterested discipline is necessary for someone with this charism to exercise it fruitfully.

Spiritual Seeking

Intentional Discipleship

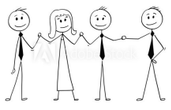


Leadership: (seeking and discipleship thresholds) sharing a new and compelling vision of a better future with others and then directing the overall efforts of the group as they work together to make that vision a reality | People with a charism of Leadership contemplate the world about them, asking, "What can we do together to change things for the better?" | typically found new vision-centered groups or organizations | People often confuse the charisms of Leadership and Administration because they are both group-oriented gifts. The difference is that those with a charism of Leadership will come up with the original vision and gather a new group about that vision, while someone with the gift of Administration wants to coordinate a group's efforts to implement an existing vision | Disciples given the gift of Leadership need people with the charism of Administration about them | There are two questions I always ask someone who is discerning a possible charism of Leadership: (1) Have you ever started a new mission-centered group or organization? (2) Has someone with a charism of Helps offered to help you carry out a vision?

Helps: (emerging disciples) by using his or her skills, talents, and charisms to enable other individuals to serve God and people more fruitfully | The people exercising this gift get their joy and satisfaction from assisting you | People with this gift tend to stand behind the person they are helping | typically drawn to people with a charism of Leadership | need to see how what they are doing is making a real difference in the life of the person they are seeking to help | Helps is all about assisting people who are trying to accomplish the mission for which God has anointed them

Administration: (important in all thresholds) planning and delegation, and by coordinating the resources and efforts of a group to accomplish a Kingdom purpose | love to lead a group to achieve a complicated task | They don't necessarily come up with the original vision, but they are really effective at leading a group to implement the vision by planning, delegating, and then coordinating the efforts of a group | Delegation is their particular forte because they prefer to make things happen through the efforts of others. They can break up a complicated task and delegate different responsibilities to a number of different people while coordinating the efforts of the whole group. They are "make it happen" people who are especially energized and fruitful when asked to lead a group to make it happen | People like working with someone with a charism of Administration because they know it will be a positive, low-stress experience: their time will not be wasted, their responsibilities will be clear, and the mission will be accomplished.

Extraordinary Faith: (the speak to people at all thresholds) radical trust in the love, power, and provision of God and an extraordinary freedom to act on that trust. one of the first things we look for is a pattern of risk-taking for God's purposes | For those with the charism, this kind of risk-taking is not recklessness or carelessness | Where the average Christian sees a wall, the person of Extraordinary Faith sees an open door. The person with the charism of Extraordinary Faith often feels a spontaneous rush of confidence in God in the midst of an impossible situation | People with the charism of Extraordinary Faith will often be found on the bleeding edge of mission | When you are around somebody with Extraordinary Faith, your own faith in the presence, love, and power of God will grow.



Intercessory Prayer: (important to all thresholds, but especially threshold of openness and disciples) sustained, intense prayer of a Christian for others as the means by which God's love and deliverance reaches those in need | tend to see remarkable — even miraculous — answers to their prayers for others on a regular basis. They have a tremendous confidence that God hears and will answer their prayers. They find praying for others energizing | Such prayer is crucial to this work because it changes the spiritual atmosphere of a place or community. Intercessory prayer also fosters the spiritual openness of individuals, even those who just happen to "drop by" our parish,

"When people start discerning their charisms, they start discerning their vocation" – Sherry Weddell

"Self knowledge is so important that, even if you were raised right up to the heavens, I should like you never to relax your cultivation of it.." - St. Teresa of Avila

Thresholds of faith

Charisms

Initial Trust — Spiritual Curiosity — Spiritual Openness — Spiritual Seeking — Intentional Discipleship

Wisdom: (especially helpful in understanding where non-believers are coming from) extraordinary insight that enables him or her to come up with original or creative solutions to specific problems and to make good decisions | Wisdom focuses on inspired, creative solutions to practical problems. Wisdom is all about the creative application of knowledge in order to better the lives of human beings and build the Kingdom of God | It is not enough for a Wisdom person that something simply be objectively true. It must also be applicable in a way that makes a significant difference in the lives of real people and brings glory to God | Wisdom is the gift of extraordinary problem-solving insight that is triggered by an encounter with and understanding of a real-life problem that cries out for a solution | One of the signs of this charism is that a deep understanding of negative realities doesn't depress you but sparks your energy and creativity, because you know that contemplating a problem is the first step toward finding an elegant, transforming solution. You do not need an academic background to exercise this charism | People with this charism often find themselves sought out by those who want to talk over the issues and situations they are facing. People with this charism are often brilliant at diagnosis and prescription | Where the rest of us see chaos, they see patterns, and therefore possible causes — and therefore possible remedies | remedies. Disciples exercising a charism of Wisdom are usually able to sum up the situation in clear, illuminating language | The words "insight" and "clarity" are often used to describe them.

Knowledge: (especially helpful in pre-evangelization thresholds and discipleship) channel of God's truth through diligent, prayerful study and intellectual inquiry that enables us to better understand God, ourselves, and the universe | supernaturally empowered study | The foundational passion for those with a charism of Knowledge is intellectual wonder, and you can follow it freely into realms as diverse as philosophy, theology, metaphysics, mathematics, or any of the other natural sciences | study is a major form of prayer | often end up in academic settings or perhaps involved with intellectually and culturally sophisticated apologetics | Someone with the charism of Knowledge can be enormously helpful working with intellectually oriented skeptics, agnostics, atheists, academics, and those for whom truth is the transcendental that will most readily lead them to encountering God. They can also help form disciples and apostles for mission in a skeptical world and in academic settings.

Poverty: (useful at all thresholds) living a life of cheerful, voluntary simplicity or poverty in order to identify with Jesus and the poor | feel uncomfortable when they have too much stuff. They are attracted to a life uncluttered by possessions and focused in simplicity on God and neighbor | This is a pretty rare charism at the parish level, so individuals with this gift can feel isolated and at odds with the values of other Catholics around them.

Music: (all thresholds) writing or performing music for the delight of others and the praise of God | The music can be of any genre, played in a secular or religious setting, and still impact people and open them up to the presence of God | You do not have to be a professional or have had extensive training to have this charism.

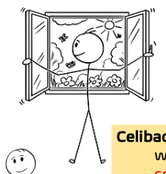
Writing: (all thresholds) using words to create works of truth or beauty that reflect the fullness of human experience and bring glory to God | If writing is a charism, it will often feel like prayer or contemplation at the moment you are engaged in it and will be a major spiritual discipline for you.

Discover your spiritual gifts — discover where you fit in in the work of evangelization:

- Q: What do you find energizing, satisfying and joyful in ministry?
- Q: What makes your heart come alive in ministry?
- Q: Are you happy? What would make you happier?
- Q: What do people often ask you to help with?
- Q: Can you share a "God moment" with me? (When you experienced the Presence of God in your life)
- Q: What was your most effective moment in helping others? What did you do to reach hearts & minds?
- Q: In your opinion, what is the most effective way to reach out to others and help them?
- Q: If I gave you full reign to begin a ministry to reach hearts and minds, what ministry would you begin?

Pastoring: (most effective with disciples) building Christian community by nurturing the relationships and long-term spiritual growth of a group | directed toward shepherding groups, not individuals | eagerly seeks to promote the long-term spiritual growth of individuals in and through Christian community | Gathering people into groups to grow is their methodology. If your parish doesn't already have small Christian communities, someone with this gift will be eager to start them members. The charism of Pastoring is an important part of God's provision for our situation because a single priest cannot possibly manage care of the souls of three thousand people by himself | prefers to work with groups that are small enough to know everyone in the group personally: twenty people, not two hundred.

Teaching: (seeking and intentional discipleship) enabling others to learn information and skills that help them reach their fullest spiritual and personal potential | live for the joy of witnessing the great "Aha!" moment when the learner they are working with grasps the implications of some new knowledge or skill | people who normally do not like a subject nor do well in it suddenly find it surprisingly interesting | They are always thinking how they can pass on their knowledge or skills to others

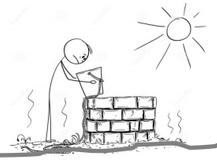


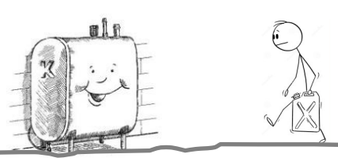
Evangelism: (Curiosity, openness and seeking) | sharing the faith with others — baptized or not — in a way that draws them to intentionally follow Jesus | They are constantly asking, "Where are these individuals in their living relationship with God, and how can I help them move closer to Jesus and his Church?" | even unbelievers and skeptics can find talking about God with the evangelizer to be intriguing and compelling. | Consequently, most people with this gift are not much interested in insider ecclesial debates. They are too busy looking for ways to start spiritual conversations with friends — at work, at the gym, or over coffee or a couple of beers. | can be exercised in a giant gathering like World Youth Day or with one person in intimate conversation. The goal is the same: to give everyone a chance to respond to what Jesus has accomplished

Celibacy: (threshold of disciple) most fulfilled and spiritually fruitful by remaining unmarried and celibate for the sake of Christ | For someone with this gift, a celibate life is not a void; it is not just the absence of marriage or romantic attachment. It is a positive call to a particular relational lifestyle that carries with it the freedom to take on unusual vocations or missions | Friendship is the primary kind of relational intimacy to which those with this gift are called | It is important for those with a charism of Celibacy to seriously contemplate the other charisms they have been given. Celibacy gives one freedom for something else, and that something else will be significantly shaped and colored by one's other charisms | Celibacy calls us to live a life that would not make sense if God did not exist.

Encouragement: (useful in all thresholds) strengthening and healing individuals in remarkable ways through his or her presence and words | They never see a crowd; they see you in your uniqueness | Those listening to a preacher or teacher with this charism will feel as if he or she is speaking to them personally — even in the midst of a crowd | when working with a group they will still tune in to each individual member | They will be drawn to work or ministry that enables them to have extensive personal contact with individuals

5 Love Languages





Words of Affirmation : These individuals both give and receive love most effectively through the sharing of encouraging, kind, or validating words, either in the form of verbal or written communication. An unsolicited compliment speaks directly to the heart!

Acts of Service: Individuals whose top love language is Acts of Service communicate and receive love best when engaging in an activity/task, without being asked, that can ease the burden of another. Any act great or small in which a person takes time to do something helpful for another can make a huge impact!

Quality Time: Those who give and receive love through quality time feel that being present both mentally and emotionally for another is of the utmost importance. Setting time aside, active listening, and showing interest through meaningful conversation are ways to their heart!

Physical Touch: Individuals with this love language communicate love in tactile ways such as giving a hug, holding hands, or a pat on the back. Simply exhibiting body language that shows your attention is focused on and directed toward this individual means the world!

Receiving Gifts: To these individuals, a meaningful gift communicates to the receiver that they are known and cared for. This means putting time, love, and thoughtfulness into a gift. It is important to note that those with this love language, communicate through both the giving and receiving of gifts. A gift does not have to be expensive to be meaningful. It can be the gift of self/time or even a handmade card!

Love is not about abstractions... "Love can be expressed and received in all five languages. However, if you don't speak a person's primary love language, that person will not feel loved, even though you may be speaking the other four."

cf. Weddell, Sherry A.. Fruitful Discipleship: Living the Mission of Jesus in the Church and the World (p. 113-184). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.
cf. Chapman, Gary D.. The 5 Love Languages. Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

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