

Catechism
of the
Catholic
Church

SUMMARY



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**APOSTOLIC LETTER
LAETAMUR MAGNOPERE**

IN WHICH THE LATIN TYPICAL EDITION OF THE

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

IS APPROVED AND PROMULGATED

**JOHN PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
FOR EVERLASTING MEMORY**

To my Venerable Brothers the cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and to all the People of God.

IT IS A CAUSE FOR GREAT JOY THAT THE LATIN TYPICAL EDITION OF THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH* IS BEING PUBLISHED. It is approved and promulgated by me in this Apostolic Letter and thus becomes the definitive text of the aforementioned *Catechism*. This is occurring about five years after the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* of October 11, 1992, which, on the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, accompanied the publication of the first, French-language text of the *Catechism*. We have all been able to note with pleasure the broad positive reception and wide dissemination of the *Catechism* in these years, especially in the particular Churches, which have had it translated into their respective languages, thus making it as accessible as possible to the various linguistic communities of the world. This fact confirms how fitting was the request submitted to me in 1985 by the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding faith and morals be composed.

Drawn up by the special Commission of Cardinals and Bishops established in 1986, the *Catechism* was approved and promulgated by me in the aforementioned Apostolic Constitution, which today retains all its validity and timeliness, and finds its definitive achievement in this Latin typical edition.

This edition was prepared by an Interdicasterial Commission which I appointed for this purpose in 1993. Presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, this Commission worked diligently to fulfill the mandate it received. It devoted particular attention to a study of the many suggested changes to the contents of the text, which in these years had come from around the world and from various parts of the ecclesial community.

In this regard one can certainly understand that such a remarkable number of suggested improvements shows the extraordinary interest that the *Catechism* has raised throughout the world, even among non-Christians, and confirms its purpose of being presented as a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine, enabling everyone to know what the Church professes, celebrates, lives, and prays in her daily life. At the same time it draws attention to the eager desire of all to make their contribution so that the Christian faith, whose essential and necessary elements are summarized in the *Catechism*, can be presented to the people of our day in the most suitable way possible. Furthermore, this collaboration of the various members of the Church will once again achieve what I wrote in the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*: "The harmony of so many voices truly expresses what could be called the 'symphony' of the faith" (no. 2).

For these reasons too, the Commission seriously considered the suggestions offered, carefully examined them at various levels and submitted its conclusions for my approval. These conclusions, insofar as they allow for a better expression of the *Catechism's* contents regarding the deposit of the Catholic faith, or enable certain truths of this faith to be formulated in a way more suited to the requirements of contemporary catechetical instruction, have been approved by me and thus have been incorporated into this Latin typical edition. Therefore it faithfully repeats the doctrinal content which I officially presented to the Church and to the world in December 1992.

With today's promulgation of the Latin typical edition, therefore, the task of composing the *Catechism*, begun in 1986, is brought to a close and the desire of the aforementioned

Extraordinary Synod of Bishops is happily fulfilled. The Church now has at her disposal this new, authoritative exposition of the one and perennial apostolic faith, and it will serve as a "valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion" and as a "sure norm for teaching the faith," as well as a "sure and authentic reference text" for preparing local catechisms (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, no. 4).

Catechesis will find in this genuine, systematic presentation of the faith and of Catholic doctrine a totally reliable way to present, with renewed fervor, each and every part of the Christian message to the people of our time. This text will provide every catechist with sound help for communicating the one, perennial deposit of faith within the local Church, while seeking, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to link the wondrous unity of the Christian mystery with the varied needs and conditions of those to whom this message is addressed. All catechetical activity will be able to experience a new, widespread impetus among the People of God, if it can properly use and appreciate this post-conciliar *Catechism*.

All this seems even more important today with the approach of the third millennium. For an extraordinary commitment to evangelization is urgently needed so that everyone can know and receive the Gospel message and thus grow "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (*Eph* 4:13).

I therefore strongly urge my Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, for whom the *Catechism* is primarily intended, to take the excellent opportunity afforded by the promulgation of this Latin edition to intensify their efforts to disseminate the text more widely and to ensure that it is well received as an outstanding gift for the communities entrusted to them, which will thus be able to rediscover the inexhaustible riches of the faith.

Through the harmonious and complementary efforts of all the ranks of the People of God, may this *Catechism* be known and shared by everyone, so that the unity in faith whose supreme model and origin is found in the Unity of the Trinity may be strengthened and extended to the ends of the earth.

To Mary, Mother of Christ, whose Assumption body and soul into heaven we celebrate today, I entrust these wishes so that they may be brought to fulfillment for the spiritual good of all humanity.

From Castel Gandolfo, August 15, 1997, the nineteenth year of the Pontificate.



APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION *FIDEI DEPOSITUM*

ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PREPARED FOLLOWING THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

**JOHN PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
FOR EVERLASTING MEMORY**

To my Venerable Brothers the cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and to all the People of God.

GUARDING THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH IS THE MISSION WHICH THE LORD ENTRUSTED TO HIS CHURCH, and which she fulfills in every age. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which was opened 30 years ago by my predecessor Pope John XXIII, of happy memory, had as its intention and purpose to highlight the Church's apostolic and pastoral mission, and by making the truth of the Gospel shine forth to lead all people to seek and receive Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge (cf. *Eph* 3:19).

The principal task entrusted to the Council by Pope John XXIII was to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will. For this reason the Council was not first of all to condemn the errors of the time, but above all to strive calmly to show the strength and beauty of the doctrine of the faith. "Illumined by the light of this Council", the Pope said, "the Church. . . will become greater in spiritual riches and gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, she will look to the future without fear. . . Our duty is to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us, thus pursuing the path which the Church has followed for 20 centuries."¹

With the help of God, the Council Fathers in four years of work were able to produce a considerable number of doctrinal statements and pastoral norms which were presented to the whole Church. There the Pastors and Christian faithful find directives for that "renewal of thought, action, practices and moral virtue, of joy and hope, which was the very purpose of the Council".²

After its conclusion, the Council did not cease to inspire the Church's life. In 1985 I was able to assert, "For me, then - who had the special grace of participating in it and actively collaborating in its development - Vatican II has always been, and especially during these years of my Pontificate, the constant reference point of my every pastoral action, in the conscious commitment to implement its directives concretely and faithfully at the level of each Church and the whole Church."³

In this spirit, on 25 January 1985, I convoked an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the 20th anniversary of the close of the Council. The purpose of this assembly was to celebrate the graces and spiritual fruits of Vatican II, to study its teaching in greater depth in order that all the Christian faithful might better adhere to it, and to promote knowledge and application of it.

On that occasion the Synod Fathers stated: "Very many have expressed the desire that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed, that it might be, as it were, a point of reference for the catechisms or compendiums that are prepared in various regions. The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine suited to the present life of Christians."⁴ After the Synod ended, I made this desire my own, considering it as "fully responding to a real need of the universal Church and of the particular Churches".⁵

For this reason we thank the Lord wholeheartedly on this day when we can offer the entire Church this "reference text" entitled the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, for a catechesis renewed at the living sources of the faith!

Following the renewal of the Liturgy and the new codification of the canon law of the Latin Church and that of the Oriental Catholic Churches, this catechism will make a very important contribution to that work of renewing the whole life of the Church, as desired and begun by the Second Vatican Council.

1. The Process and Spirit of Drafting the Text

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the result of very extensive collaboration; it was prepared over six years of intense work done in a spirit of complete openness and fervent zeal.

In 1986, I entrusted a commission of twelve Cardinals and Bishops, chaired by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, with the task of preparing a draft of the catechism requested by the Synod Fathers. An editorial committee of seven diocesan Bishops, experts in theology and catechesis, assisted the commission in its work.

The commission, charged with giving directives and with overseeing the course of the work, attentively followed all the stages in editing the nine subsequent drafts. The editorial committee, for its part, assumed responsibility for writing the text, making the emendations requested by the commission and examining the observations of numerous theologians, exegetes and catechists, and above all, of the Bishops of the whole world, in order to produce a better text. In the committee various opinions were compared with great profit, and thus a richer text has resulted whose unity and coherence are assured.

The project was the object of extensive consultation among all Catholic Bishops, their Episcopal Conferences or Synods, and theological and catechetical institutes. As a whole, it received a broadly favorable acceptance on the part of the Episcopate. It can be said that this Catechism is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generously accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise which directly concerns the life of the Church. This response elicits in me a deep feeling of joy, because the harmony of so many voices truly expresses what could be called the "symphony" of the faith. The achievement of this Catechism thus reflects the collegial nature of the Episcopate; it testifies to the Church's catholicity.

2. Arrangement of the Material

A catechism should faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers, Doctors and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to his Church. It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past.

This catechism will thus contain both the new and the old (cf. *Mt* 13:52), because the faith is always the same yet the source of ever new light.

To respond to this twofold demand, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on the one hand repeats the "old", traditional order already followed by the Catechism of St. Pius V, arranging the material in four parts: the *Creed*, the *Sacred Liturgy*, with pride of place given to the sacraments, the *Christian way of life*, explained beginning with the Ten Commandments, and finally, *Christian prayer*. At the same time, however, the contents are often presented in a "new" way in order to respond to the questions of our age.

The four parts are related one to another: the Christian mystery is the object of faith (first part); it is celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions (second part); it is present to enlighten and sustain the children of God in their actions (third part); it is the basis for our prayer, the privileged expression of which is the *Our Father*, and it represents the object of our supplication, our praise and our intercession (fourth part).

The Liturgy itself is prayer; the confession of faith finds its proper place in the celebration of worship. Grace, the fruit of the sacraments, is the irreplaceable condition for Christian living, just as participation in the Church's Liturgy requires faith. If faith is not expressed in works, it is dead (cf. *Jas* 2:14-16) and cannot bear fruit unto eternal life. In reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church we can perceive the wonderful unity of the mystery of God, his saving will, as well as the central place of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, sent by the Father, made man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be our Savior. Having died and risen, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the sacraments; he is the source of our faith, the model of Christian conduct and the Teacher of our prayer.

3. The Doctrinal Value of the Text

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I approved 25 June last and the publication of which I today order by virtue of my Apostolic Authority, is a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion. May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!

The approval and publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* represent a service which the Successor of Peter wishes to offer to the Holy Catholic Church, to all the particular Churches in peace and communion with the Apostolic See: the service, that is, of supporting and confirming the faith of all the Lord Jesus' disciples (cf. *Lk* 22:32 as well as of strengthening the bonds of unity in the same apostolic faith. Therefore, I ask all the Church's Pastors and the Christian faithful to receive this catechism in a spirit of communion and to use it assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life. This catechism is given to them that it may be a sure and authentic reference text for teaching catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms. It is also offered to all the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation (cf. *Eph* 3:8). It is meant to support ecumenical efforts that are moved by the holy desire for the unity of all Christians, showing carefully the content and wondrous harmony of the catholic faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, lastly, is offered to every individual who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes.

This catechism is not intended to replace the local catechisms duly approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, the diocesan Bishops and the Episcopal Conferences, especially if they have been approved by the Apostolic See. It is meant to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to catholic doctrine. At the conclusion of this document presenting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, I beseech the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word and Mother of the Church, to support with her powerful intercession the catechetical work of the entire Church on every level, at this time when she is called to a new effort of evangelization. May the light of the true faith free humanity from the ignorance and slavery of sin in order to lead it to the only freedom worthy of the name (cf. *Jn* 8:32): that of life in Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, here below and in the Kingdom of heaven, in the fullness of the blessed vision of God face to face (cf. *1 Cor* 13:12; *2 Cor* 5:6-8)!

Given 11 October 1992, the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in the fourteenth year of my Pontificate.



1 John XXIII, Discourse at the Opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 11 October 1962: AAS 54 (1962), 788-91.

2 Paul VI, Discourse at the Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 7 December 1965: AAS 58 (1966), 7-8.

3 John Paul II, Discourse of 25 January 1985: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 January 1985.

4 *Final Report* of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 7 December 1985: the *Enchiridion Vaticanum* vol. 9, II B a, n. 4:p. 1758, n. 1797.

5 John Paul II, Discourse at the of Closing of Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 7 December 1985, n. 6: AAS 78 (1986), 435

PROLOGUE

"FATHER, . . . this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."¹ "God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."² "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"³ - than the name of JESUS.

I. THE LIFE OF MAN - TO KNOW AND LOVE GOD

1 God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

2 So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."⁴ Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it."⁵

3 Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.⁶

II. HANDING ON THE FAITH: CATECHESIS

4 Quite early on, the name *catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ.⁷

5 "Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."⁸

6 While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness.⁹

7 "Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis."¹⁰

8 Periods of renewal in the Church are also intense moments of catechesis. In the great era of the Fathers of the Church, saintly bishops devoted an important part of their ministry to catechesis. St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and many other Fathers wrote catechetical works that remain models for us.¹¹

9 "The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the councils. The Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the *Roman Catechism*, which is also known by the name of that council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching. . . ."¹² The Council of Trent initiated a remarkable organization of the Church's catechesis. Thanks to the work of holy bishops and theologians such as St. Peter Canisius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Turibius of Mongrovejo or St. Robert Bellarmine, it occasioned the publication of numerous catechisms.

10 It is therefore no surprise that catechesis in the Church has again attracted attention in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope Paul VI considered the great catechism of modern times. The General Catechetical Directory (1971) the sessions of the Synod of Bishops devoted to evangelization (1974) and catechesis (1977), the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) and *Catechesi tradendae* (1979), attest to this. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 asked "that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed"¹³ The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, made the Synod's wish his own, acknowledging that "this desire wholly corresponds to a real need of the universal Church and of the particular Churches."¹⁴ He set in motion everything needed to carry out the Synod Fathers' wish.

III. THE AIM AND INTENDED READERSHIP OF THE CATECHISM

11 This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve "as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries".¹⁵

12 This work is intended primarily for those responsible for catechesis: first of all the bishops, as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. It is offered to them as an instrument in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching the People of God. Through the bishops, it is addressed to redactors of catechisms, to priests, and to catechists. It will also be useful reading for all other Christian faithful.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THIS CATECHISM

13 The plan of this catechism is inspired by the great tradition of catechisms which build catechesis on four pillars: the baptismal profession of faith (the *Creed*), the sacraments of faith, the life of faith (the *Commandments*), and the prayer of the believer (the *Lord's Prayer*).

Part One: *The Profession of Faith*

14 Those who belong to Christ through faith and Baptism must confess their baptismal faith before men.¹⁶ First therefore the Catechism expounds revelation, by which God addresses and gives himself to man, and the faith by which man responds to God (*Section One*). The profession of faith summarizes the gifts that God gives man: as the Author of all that is good; as Redeemer; and as Sanctifier. It develops these in the three chapters on our baptismal faith in the one God: the almighty *Father*, the Creator; his *Son* Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; and the *Holy Spirit*, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (*Section Two*).

Part Two: *The Sacraments of Faith*

15 The second part of the Catechism explains how God's salvation, accomplished once for all through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, is made present in the sacred actions of the Church's liturgy (*Section One*), especially in the seven sacraments (*Section Two*).

Part Three: *The Life of Faith*

16 The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it - through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God's law and grace (*Section One*), and through conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God's Ten Commandments (*Section Two*).

Part Four: *Prayer in the Life of Faith*

17 The last part of the Catechism deals with the meaning and importance of prayer in the life of believers (*Section One*). It concludes with a brief commentary on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer (*Section Two*), for indeed we find in these the sum of all the good things which we must hope for, and which our heavenly Father wants to grant us.

V. PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR USING THIS CATECHISM

18 This catechism is conceived as *an organic presentation* of the Catholic faith in its entirety. It should be seen therefore as a unified whole. Numerous cross-references in the margin of the text (numbers found at the end of a sentence referring to other paragraphs that deal with the same theme), as well as the analytical index at the end of the volume, allow the reader to view each theme in its relationship with the entirety of the faith.

19 The texts of Sacred Scripture are often not quoted word for word but are merely indicated by a reference (**cf.**). For a deeper understanding of such passages, the reader should refer to the Scriptural texts themselves. Such Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis.

20 The use of **small print** in certain passages indicates observations of an historical or apologetic nature, or supplementary doctrinal explanations.

21 The **quotations**, also in small print, from patristic, liturgical, magisterial or hagiographical sources, are intended to enrich the doctrinal presentations. These texts have often been chosen with a view to direct catechetical use.

22 At the end of each thematic unit, a series of brief texts in small italics sums up the essentials of that unit's teaching in condensed formula. These **IN BRIEF** summaries may suggest to local catechists brief summary formula that could be memorized.

VI. NECESSARY ADAPTATIONS

23 The Catechism emphasizes the exposition of doctrine. It seeks to help deepen understanding of faith. In this way it is oriented towards the maturing of that faith, its putting down roots in personal life, and its shining forth in personal conduct.¹⁷

24 By design, this Catechism does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition among all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms and, even more, of those who instruct the faithful:

Whoever teaches must become "all things to all men" (*1 Cor 9:22*), to win everyone to Christ. . . . Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! Let them realize that some are in Christ as newborn babes, others as adolescents, and still others as adults in full command of their powers. . . . Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct.¹⁸

Above all - Charity

25 To conclude this Prologue, it is fitting to recall this pastoral principle stated by the *Roman Catechism*:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.¹⁹

1 *Jn* 17:3.

2 *1 Tim* 2:3-4.

3 *Acts* 4:12.

4 *Mt* 28:19-20.

5 *Mk* 16:20.

6 Cf. *Acts* 2:42.

7 Cf. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi tradendae* 1; 2.

8 *CT* 18.

9 *CT* 18.

10 *CT* 13.

11 Cf. *CT* 12.

12 *CT* 13.

13 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985, *Final Report*, II B a, 4.

14 John Paul II, Discourse at the Closing Of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 7 December 1985: AAS 78, (1986).

15 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985, *Final Report* II B a, 4.

16 Cf. *Mt* 10:32; *Rom* 10:9.

17 Cf. *CT* 20-22; 25.

18 *Roman Catechism*, Preface II; cf. *1 Cor* 9:22; *1 Pt* 2:2.

19 *Roman Catechism*, Preface 10; cf. *1 Cor* 13:8.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

"I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

26 We begin our profession of faith by saying: "I believe" or "We believe". Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search (*Chapter One*), then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man (*Chapter Two*), and finally the response of faith (*Chapter Three*).

CHAPTER ONE

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD

I. THE DESIRE FOR GOD

27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.¹

28 In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a *religious being*:

From one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "in him we live and move and have our being."²

29 But this "intimate and vital bond of man to God" (GS 19 § 1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man.³ Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call.⁴

30 "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice."⁵ Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.⁶

II. WAYS OF COMING TO KNOW GOD

31 Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments", which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person.

32 The *world*: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.⁷

And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky. . . question all these realities. All respond: "See, we are beautiful." Their beauty is a profession [confessio]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [Pulcher] who is not subject to change?⁸

33 The *human person*: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material",⁹ can have its origin only in God.

34 The world, and man, attest that they contain within themselves neither their first principle nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end. Thus, in different ways, man can come to know that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, a reality "that everyone calls God".¹⁰

35 Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.

III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH

36 "Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason."¹¹ Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created "in the image of God".¹²

37 In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.¹³

38 This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also "about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error".¹⁴

IV. HOW CAN WE SPEAK ABOUT GOD?

39 In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists.

40 Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking.

41 All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator".¹⁵

42 God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, image-bound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God--"the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable"--with our human representations.¹⁶ Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.

43 Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall that "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude";¹⁷ and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him."¹⁸

IN BRIEF

44 Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God.

45 Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795}.

46 When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything.

47 The Church teaches that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human reason (cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 § 1: DS 3026),

48 We really can name God, starting from the manifold perfections of his creatures, which are likenesses of the infinitely perfect God, even if our limited language cannot exhaust the mystery.

49 Without the Creator, the creature vanishes (GS 36). This is the reason why believers know that the love of Christ urges them to bring the light of the living God to those who do not know him or who reject him.

1 Vatican Council II, *GS* 19 § 1.

2 *Acts* 17:26-28.

3 *GS* 19 § 1.

4 Cf. *GS* 19-21; *Mt* 13:22; *Gen* 3:8-10; *Jon* 1:3.

5 *Ps* 105:3.

6 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1,1,1:PL 32,659-661.

7 *Rom* 1:19-20; cf. *Acts* 14:15,17; 17:27-28; *Wis* 13:1-9.

8 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 241, 2:PL 38,1134.

9 *GS* 18 § 1; cf. 14 § 2.

10 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,2,3.

11 Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 2:DS 3004; cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* 6.

12 Cf. *Gen* 1:27.

13 Pius XII, *Humani generis*, 561:DS 3875.

14 Pius XII, *Humani generis*, 561:DS 3876; cf. *Dei Filius* 2:DS 3005; *DV* 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,1,1.

15 *Wis* 13:5.

16 *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Anaphora.

17 Lateran Council IV:DS 806.

18 St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* I,30.

PART ONE THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE "I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

CHAPTER TWO GOD COMES TO MEET MAN

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

ARTICLE 1 THE REVELATION OF GOD

I. GOD REVEALS HIS "PLAN OF LOVING GOODNESS"

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

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

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

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

II. THE STAGES OF REVELATION

In the beginning God makes himself known

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

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

Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death. . . Again and again you offered a covenant to man.⁸

The Covenant with Noah

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

57 This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity¹⁰ united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel.¹¹ But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism.¹²

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

God chooses Abraham

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

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

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

God forms his people Israel

62 After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Savior.²⁰

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

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

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

God has said everything in his Word

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

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

There will be no further Revelation

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

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

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

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

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

72 God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.

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

1 Cf. *Dei Filius*:DS 3015.

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

3 *1 Tim* 6:16, cf. *Eph* 1:4-5.

4 *DV* 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 *Jn* 11:52.

16 *Gen* 12:1.

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

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

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

20 Cf. *DV* 3.

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

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

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

24 Cf. *Ezek* 2:3; *Lk* 1:38.

25 *DV* 2.

26 *Heb* 1:1-2.

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

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

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

"I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

CHAPTER TWO

GOD COMES TO MEET MAN

ARTICLE 2

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

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

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

I. THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

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

In the apostolic preaching. . .

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

- *orally* "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received - whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit",³³

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

. . . continued in apostolic succession

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

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

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

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITION AND SACRED SCRIPTURE

One common source. . .

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

. . . two distinct modes of transmission

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

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

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

Apostolic Tradition and ecclesial traditions

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

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HERITAGE OF FAITH

The heritage of faith entrusted to the whole of the Church

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

The Magisterium of the Church

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

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

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

The dogmas of the faith

88 The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

89 There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.⁵⁰

90 The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ.⁵¹ "In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith."⁵²

The supernatural sense of faith

91 All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them⁵³ and guides them into all truth.⁵⁴

92 "The whole body of the faithful. . . cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals."⁵⁵

93 "By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*),. . . receives. . . the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. . . The People unfaithfully adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life."⁵⁶

Growth in understanding the faith

94 Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church:

- "through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts";⁵⁷ it is in particular "theological research [which] deepens knowledge of revealed truth".⁵⁸

- "from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience",⁵⁹ the sacred Scriptures "grow with the one who reads them."⁶⁰

- "from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth".⁶¹

95 "It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."⁶²

IN BRIEF

96 What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

97 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God" (DV 10) in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

98 "The Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes" (DV 8 § 1).

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

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

29 *1 Tim* 2:4.

30 cf. *Jn* 14:6.

31 *DV* 7; cf. *2 Cor* 1:20; 3:16-4:6.

32 *DV* 7; cf. *Mt* 28:19-20; *Mk* 16:15.

33 *DV* 7.

34 *DV* 7.

35 *DV* 7 § 2; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3,3,1:PG 7/1,848; Harvey,2,9.

36 *DV* 8 § 1.

37 *DV* 8 § 1.

38 *DV* 8 § 3.

39 *DV* 8 § 3; cf. *Col* 3:16.

40 *DV* 9.

41 *Mt* 28:20.

42 *DV* 9.

43 *DV* 9.

44 *DV* 9.

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

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

47 *DV* 10 § 2.

48 *DV* 10 para 2.

49 *Lk* 10:16; cf. *LG* 20.

50 Cf. *Jn* 8:31-32.

51 Cf. Vatican Council I:DS 3016:*nexus mysteriorum*; *LG* 25.

52 *UR* II.

53 Cf. *1 Jn* 2:20,27.

54 Cf. *Jn* 16:13.

55 *LG* 12; cf. St. Augustine, *De praed. sanct.* 14,27:PL 44,980.

56 *LG* 12; cf. *Jude* 3.

57 *DV* 8 § 2; cf. *Lk* 2:19,51.

58 *GS* 62 § 7; cf. *GS* 44 § 2; *DV* 23; 24; *UR* 4.

59 *DV* 8 § 2.

60 *DV* 8 § 2.

61 St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ez.* 1,7,8:PL 76,843D.

62 *DV* 10 § 3.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

"I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

CHAPTER TWO GOD COMES TO MEET MAN

ARTICLE 3 SACRED SCRIPTURE

I. CHRIST - THE UNIQUE WORD OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

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

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

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

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

104 In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God".⁶⁷ "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them."⁶⁸

II. INSPIRATION AND TRUTH OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

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

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

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

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

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

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT, INTERPRETER OF SCRIPTURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

113 2. *Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church"*. According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("... according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church"⁸¹).

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

The senses of Scripture

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

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

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

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

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

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

118 A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses:

The Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith;
The Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny.⁸⁷

119 "It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgement. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God."⁸⁸

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

IV. THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

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

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

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

The Old Testament

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

122 Indeed, "the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men."⁹³ "Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional,"⁹⁴ the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these writings "are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way."⁹⁵

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

The New Testament

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

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

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

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

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

3. *The written Gospels.* "The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form; others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches, the while sustaining the form of preaching, but always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus."¹⁰¹

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

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

But above all it's the gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer; my poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there; hidden meanings which had meant nothing to me hitherto.¹⁰³

The unity of the Old and New Testaments

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

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

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

V. SACRED SCRIPTURE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

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

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

136 God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors; he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth (cf. DV11).

137 Interpretation of the inspired Scripture must be attentive above all to what God wants to reveal through the sacred authors for our salvation. What comes from the Spirit is not fully "understood except by the Spirit's action" (cf. Origen, *Hom. in Ex.* 4, 5: PG 12, 320).

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

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

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

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

63 DV 13.

64 Cf. *Heb* 1:1-3.

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

66 Cf. DV 21.

67 *1 Thes* 2:13; cf. DV 24.

68 DV 21.

69 DV 11.

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

71 DV 11.

72 DV 11.

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

74 Cf. *Lk* 24:45.

75 Cf. DV 12 § 1.

76 DV 12 § 2.

77 DV 12 § 3.

78 Cf. DV 12 § 4.

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

80 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in Ps.* 21,11; cf. *Ps* 22:14.

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

82 Cf. *Rom* 12:6.

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

84 Cf. *1 Cor* 10:2.

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

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

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

88 DV 12 § 3.

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

90 Cf. *DV* 8 § 3.
91 Cf. *DS* 179; 1334-1336; 1501-1504.
92 Cf. *DV* 14.
93 *DV* 15.
94 *DV* 15.
95 *DV* 15.
96 *DV* 17; cf. *Rom* 1:16.
97 Cf. *DV* 20.
98 *DV* 18.
99 *DV* 19; cf. *Acts* 1:1-2.
100 *DV* 19.
101 *DV* 19.
102 St. Caesaria the Younger to St. Richildis and St. Radegunde, *SCh* 345, 480.
103 St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *ms. autob.* A 83v.
104 Cf. *1 Cor* 10:6,11; *Heb* 10:1; *1 Pet* 3:21.
105 Cf. *Mk* 12:29-31
106 Cf. *1 Cor* 5:6-8; 10:1-11.
107 Cf. St. Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.* 2,73:PL 34,623; Cf. *DV* 16.
108 *1 Cor* 15:28.
109 *DV* 21.
110 *DV* 22.
111 *DV* 24.
112 *DV* 25; cf. *Phil* 3:8 and St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii* prol.:PL 24,17B.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

"I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

CHAPTER THREE

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD

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

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

ARTICLE 1

I BELIEVE

I. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

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

Abraham - "father of all who believe"

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

146 Abraham thus fulfills the definition of faith in *Hebrews* 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen":⁷ "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."⁸ Because he was "strong in his faith", Abraham became the "father of all who believe".⁹

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

Mary - "Blessed is she who believed"

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

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

II. "I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED"¹⁶

To believe in God alone

150 Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature.¹⁷

To believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

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

To believe in the Holy Spirit

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

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

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

Faith is a grace

153 When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven".²⁴ *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.* "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.'²⁵

Faith is a human act

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

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

Faith and understanding

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

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

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

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

The freedom of faith

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

The necessity of faith

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

Perseverance in faith

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

Faith - the beginning of eternal life

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

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

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

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

1 DV 2; cf. Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15; Bar 3:38 (Vulg.).
2 Cf. DV 5.
3 Cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26.
4 Heb 11:8; cf. Gen 12:1-4.
5 Cf. Gen 23:4.
6 Cf. Heb 11:17.
7 Heb 11:1.
8 Rom 4:3; cf. Gen 15:6.
9 Rom 4:11,18; 4:20; cf. Gen 15:5.
10 Heb 11:2, 39.
11 Heb 11:40; 12:2.
12 Lk 1:37-38; cf. Gen 18:14.
13 Lk 1:45.
14 Cf. Lk 1:48.
15 Cf. Lk 2:35.
16 2 Tim 1:12.
17 Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Ps 40:5; 146:3-4.
18 Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7.
19 Jn 14:1.
20 Jn 1:18.
21 Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27.
22 1 Cor 12:3.
23 1 Cor 2:10-11.
24 Mt 16:17; cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25.
25 DV 5; cf. DS 377; 3010.
26 Dei Filius 3:DS 3008.
27 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II,2,9; cf. *Dei Filius* 3:DS 3010.
28 *Dei Filius* 3:DS 3008.
29 *Dei Filius* 3:DS 3009.
30 *Dei Filius* 3:DS 3008-3010; Cf. Mk 16 20; Heb 2:4.
31 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II,171,5,obj.3.
32 John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (London: Longman, 1878) 239.
33 St. Anselm, *Prosl. prooem.*:PL 153,225A.
34 Eph 1:18.
35 DV 5.
36 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 43,7,9:PL 38,257-258.
37 *Dei Filius* 4:DS 3017.
38 GS 36 § 1.
39 DH 10; cf. CIC, can. 748 § 2.
40 DH 11.
41 DH 11; cf. Jn 18:37; 12:32.
42 Cf. 16:16; Jn 3:36; 6:40 *et al.*
43 *Dei Filius* 3:DS 3012; cf. Mt 10:22; 24:13 and Heb 11:6; Council of Trent:DS 1532.
44 1 Tim 1:18-19.
45 Cf. Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5; 22:32.
46 Gal 5:6; Rom 15:13; cf. Jas 2:14-26.
47 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2.
48 St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15,36:PG 32,132; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II,4,1.
49 2 Cor 5:7.
50 1 Cor 13:12.
51 Rom 4:18.
52 LG 58; John Paul II, *RMat* 18.
53 Heb 12:1-2.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

"I BELIEVE" - "WE BELIEVE"

CHAPTER THREE

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD

ARTICLE 2

WE BELIEVE

166 Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

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

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

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

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

II. THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

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

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

III. ONLY ONE FAITH

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

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

176 Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.

177 "To believe" has thus a twofold reference: to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.

178 We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

179 Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit.

180 "Believing" is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.

181 "Believing" is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother" (St. Cyprian, *De unit.* 6: PL 4, 519).

182 We believe all "that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed" (Paul VI, CPG § 20).

183 Faith is necessary for salvation. The Lord himself affirms: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (*Mk* 16:16).

184 "Faith is a foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come" (St. Thomas Aquinas. *Comp. theol.* 1, 2).

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

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

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

57 *1 Tim* 3:15; *Jude* 3.

58 Cf. *Eph* 4:4-6.

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

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

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

62 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3,24,1:PG 7/1,966.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

THE CREDO

The Apostles Creed

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

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

He was conceived by the
power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

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

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

The Nicene Creed

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

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

by the power of the Holy Spirit
he was born of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

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

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

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

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

Amen.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

THE CREEDS

185 Whoever says "I believe" says "I pledge myself to what *we* believe." Communion in faith needs a common language of faith, normative for all and uniting all in the same confession of faith.

186 From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her faith in brief formula normative for all.¹ But already very early on, the Church also wanted to gather the essential elements of her faith into organic and articulated summaries, intended especially for candidates for Baptism:

This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and the New Testaments.²

187 Such syntheses are called "professions of faith" since they summarize the faith that Christians profess. They are called "creeds" on account of what is usually their first word in Latin: *credo* ("I believe"). They are also called "symbols of faith".

188 The Greek word *symbolon* meant half of a broken object, for example, a seal presented as a token of recognition. The broken parts were placed together to verify the bearer's identity. The symbol of faith, then, is a sign of recognition and communion between believers. *Symbolon* also means a gathering, collection or summary. A symbol of faith is a summary of the principal truths of the faith and therefore serves as the first and fundamental point of reference for catechesis.

189 The first "profession of faith" is made during Baptism. The symbol of faith is first and foremost the *baptismal* creed. Since Baptism is given "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit",³ the truths of faith professed during Baptism are articulated in terms of their reference to the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

190 And so the Creed is divided into three parts: "the first part speaks of the first divine Person and the wonderful work of creation; the next speaks of the second divine Person and the mystery of his redemption of men; the final part speaks of the third divine Person, the origin and source of our sanctification."⁴ These are "the three chapters of our [baptismal] seal".⁵

191 "These three parts are distinct although connected with one another. According to a comparison often used by the Fathers, we call them *articles*. Indeed, just as in our bodily members there are certain articulations which distinguish and separate them, so too in this profession of faith, the name *articles* has justly and rightly been given to the truths we must believe particularly and distinctly."⁶ In accordance with an ancient tradition, already attested to by St. Ambrose, it is also customary to reckon the articles of the Creed as *twelve*, thus symbolizing the fullness of the apostolic faith by the number of the apostles.⁷

192 Through the centuries many professions or symbols of faith have been articulated in response to the needs of the different eras: the creeds of the different apostolic and ancient Churches,⁸ e.g., the *Quicumque*, also called the Athanasian Creed;⁹ the professions of faith of certain Councils, such as Toledo, Lateran, Lyons, Trent;¹⁰ or the symbols of certain popes, e.g., the *Fides Damasi*¹¹ or the *Credo of the People of God* of Paul VI.¹²

193 None of the creeds from the different stages in the Church's life can be considered superseded or irrelevant. They help us today to attain and deepen the faith of all times by means of the different summaries made of it.

Among all the creeds, two occupy a special place in the Church's life:

194 *The Apostles' Creed* is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is "the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith".¹³

195 *The Niceno-Constantinopolitan or Nicene Creed* draws its great authority from the fact that it stems from the first two ecumenical Councils (in 325 and 381). It remains common to all the great Churches of both East and West to this day.

196 Our presentation of the faith will follow the Apostles' Creed, which constitutes, as it were, "the oldest Roman catechism". The presentation will be completed however by constant references to the Nicene Creed, which is often more explicit and more detailed.

197 As on the day of our Baptism, when our whole life was entrusted to the "standard of teaching",¹⁴ let us embrace the Creed of our life-giving faith. To say the Credo with faith is to enter into communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and also with the whole Church which transmits the faith to us and in whose midst we believe:

This Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and an ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul.¹⁵

1 Cf. *Rom* 10:9; *1 Cor* 15:3-5, etc.

2 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. illum.* 5,12: PG 33,521-524.

3 *Mt* 28:19.

4 *Roman Catechism* I,1,3.

5 St. Irenaeus, *Dem. ap.* 100: *SCh* 62,170.

6 *Roman Catechism* I,1,4.

7 Cf. St. Ambrose, *Expl. symb.* 8.

8 Cf. DS 1-64.

9 Cf. DS 75-76.

10 Cf. DS 525-541; 800-802; 851-861; 1862-1870.

11 Cf. DS 71-72.

12 Paul VI, *CPG* (1968).

13 St. Ambrose, *Expl. symb.* 7: PL 17,1196.

14 *Rom* 6:17.

15 St. Ambrose, *Expl. symb.* 1: PL 17,1193.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

198 Our profession of faith begins with *God*, for God is the First and the Last,¹ the beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the *Father*, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works.

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 1. I Believe in God

199 "I believe in God": this first affirmation of the Apostles' Creed is also the most fundamental. The whole Creed speaks of God, and when it also speaks of man and of the world it does so in relation to God. The other articles of the Creed all depend on the first, just as the remaining Commandments make the first explicit. The other articles help us to know God better as he revealed himself progressively to men. "The faithful first profess their belief in God."²

I. "I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD"

200 These are the words with which the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed begins. The confession of God's oneness, which has its roots in the divine revelation of the Old Covenant, is inseparable from the profession of God's existence and is equally fundamental. God is unique; there is only one God: "The Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance and essence."³

201 To Israel, his chosen, God revealed himself as the only One: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."⁴ Through the prophets, God calls Israel and all nations to turn to him, the one and only God: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. . . To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 'Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength."⁵

202 Jesus himself affirms that God is "the one Lord" whom you must love "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength".⁶ At the same time Jesus gives us to understand that he himself is "the Lord".⁷ To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as "Lord and giver of life" introduce any division into the One God:

We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal infinite (immensus) and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty and ineffable, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple.⁸

II. GOD REVEALS HIS NAME

203 God revealed himself to his people Israel by making his name known to them. A name expresses a person's essence and identity and the meaning of this person's life. God has a name; he is not an anonymous force. To disclose one's name is to make oneself known to others; in a way it is to hand oneself over by becoming accessible, capable of being known more intimately and addressed personally.

204 God revealed himself progressively and under different names to his people, but the revelation that proved to be the fundamental one for both the Old and the New Covenants was the revelation of the divine name to Moses in the theophany of the burning bush, on the threshold of the Exodus and of the covenant on Sinai.

The living God

205 God calls Moses from the midst of a bush that burns without being consumed: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."⁹ God is the God of the fathers, the One who had called and guided the patriarchs in their wanderings. He is the faithful and compassionate God who remembers them and his promises; he comes to free their descendants from slavery. He is the God who, from beyond space and time, can do this and wills to do it, the God who will put his almighty power to work for this plan.

"I Am who I Am"

Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'. . . this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."¹⁰

206 In revealing his mysterious name, YHWH ("I AM HE WHO IS", "I AM WHO AM" or "I AM WHO I AM"), God says who he is and by what name he is to be called. This divine name is mysterious just as God is mystery. It is at once a name revealed and something like the refusal of a name, and hence it better expresses God as what he is - infinitely above everything that we can understand or say: he is the "hidden God", his name is ineffable, and he is the God who makes himself close to men.¹¹

207 By revealing his name God at the same time reveals his faithfulness which is from everlasting to everlasting, valid for the past ("I am the God of your father"), as for the future ("I will be with you").¹² God, who reveals his name as "I AM", reveals himself as the God who is always there, present to his people in order to save them.

208 Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance. Before the burning bush, Moses takes off his sandals and veils his face in the presence of God's holiness.¹³ Before the glory of the thrice-holy God, Isaiah cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips."¹⁴ Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."¹⁵ But because God is holy, he can forgive the man who realizes that he is a sinner before him: "I will not execute my fierce anger. . . for I am God and not man,

the Holy One in your midst."¹⁶ The apostle John says likewise: "We shall. . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."¹⁷

209 Out of respect for the holiness of God, the people of Israel do not pronounce his name. In the reading of Sacred Scripture, the revealed name (YHWH) is replaced by the divine title "LORD" (in Hebrew *Adonai*, in Greek *Kyrios*). It is under this title that the divinity of Jesus will be acclaimed: "Jesus is LORD."

"A God merciful and gracious"

210 After Israel's sin, when the people had turned away from God to worship the golden calf, God hears Moses' prayer of intercession and agrees to walk in the midst of an unfaithful people, thus demonstrating his love.¹⁸ When Moses asks to see his glory, God responds "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name 'the LORD' [YHWH]."¹⁹ Then the LORD passes before Moses and proclaims, "YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"; Moses then confesses that the LORD is a forgiving God.²⁰

211 The divine name, "I Am" or "He Is", expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps "steadfast love for thousands".²¹ By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is "rich in mercy".²² By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that "I AM".²³

God alone IS

212 Over the centuries, Israel's faith was able to manifest and deepen realization of the riches contained in the revelation of the divine name. God is unique; there are no other gods besides him.²⁴ He transcends the world and history. He made heaven and earth: "They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. . . .but you are the same, and your years have no end."²⁵ In God "there is no variation or shadow due to change."²⁶ God is "HE WHO IS", from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises.

213 The revelation of the ineffable name "I AM WHO AM" contains then the truth that God alone IS. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and following it the Church's Tradition, understood the divine name in this sense: God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without origin and without end. All creatures receive all that they are and have from him; but he alone is his very being, and he is of himself everything that he is.

III. GOD, "HE WHO IS", IS TRUTH AND LOVE

214 God, "HE WHO IS", revealed himself to Israel as the one "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness".²⁷ These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. "I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness."²⁸ He is the Truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; "God is love", as the apostle John teaches.²⁹

God is Truth

215 "The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever."³⁰ "And now, O LORD God, you are God, and your words are true";³¹ this is why God's promises always come true.³² God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. The beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness and faithfulness.

216 God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world.³³ God, who alone made heaven and earth, can alone impart true knowledge of every created thing in relation to himself.³⁴

217 God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is "true instruction".³⁵ When he sends his Son into the world it will be "to bear witness to the truth":³⁶ "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true."³⁷

God is Love

218 In the course of its history, Israel was able to discover that God had only one reason to reveal himself to them, a single motive for choosing them from among all peoples as his special possession: his sheer gratuitous love.³⁸ And

thanks to the prophets Israel understood that it was again out of love that God never stopped saving them and pardoning their unfaithfulness and sins.³⁹

219 God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and will extend to his most precious gift: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."⁴⁰

220 God's love is "everlasting":⁴¹ "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you."⁴² Through Jeremiah, God declares to his people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."⁴³

221 But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love":⁴⁴ God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret:⁴⁵ God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.

IV. THE IMPLICATIONS OF FAITH IN ONE GOD

222 Believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life.

223 *It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty:* "Behold, God is great, and we know him not."⁴⁶ Therefore, we must "serve God first".⁴⁷

224 *It means living in thanksgiving:* if God is the only One, everything we are and have comes from him: "What have you that you did not receive?"⁴⁸ "What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me?"⁴⁹

225 *It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men:* everyone is made in the image and likeness of God.⁵⁰

226 *It means making good use of created things:* faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him:

My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you.
My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you.
My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you.⁵¹

227 *It means trusting God in every circumstance,* even in adversity. A prayer of St. Teresa of Jesus wonderfully expresses this trust:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you
Everything passes / God never changes
Patience / Obtains all
Whoever has God / Wants for nothing
God alone is enough.⁵²

IN BRIEF

228 "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD. . ." (*Dt* 6:4; *Mk* 12:29). "The supreme being must be unique, without equal. . . If God is not one, he is not God" (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 1, 3, 5: PL 2, 274).

229 Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and neither to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him.

230 Even when he reveals himself, God remains a mystery beyond words: "If you understood him, it would not be God" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 52, 6, 16: PL 38, 360 and *Sermo* 117, 3, 5: PL 38, 663).

231 The God of our faith has revealed himself as HE WHO IS; and he has made himself known as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (*Ex* 34:6). God's very being is Truth and Love.

1 Cf. *Isa* 44:6.

2 *Roman Catechism* 1,2,2.

3 *Roman Catechism* 1,2,2.

4 *Deut* 6:45.

5 *Isa* 45:22-24; cf. *Phil* 2:10-11.
6 *Mk* 12:29-30
7 Cf. *Mk* 12:35-37.
8 Lateran Council IV: DS 800.
9 *Ex* 3:6.
10 *Ex* 3:13-15.
11 Cf. *Isa* 45:15; *Judg* 13:18.
12 *Ex* 3:6,12.
13 Cf. *Ex* 3:5-6.
14 *Isa* 6:5.
15 *Lk* 5:8.
16 *Hos* 11:9.
17 *I Jn* 3:19-20.
18 Cf. *Ex* 32; 33:12-17.
19 *Ex* 33:18-19.
20 *Ex* 34:5-6; cf. 34:9.
21 *Ex* 34:7.
22 *Eph* 2:4.
23 *Jn* 8:28 (Gk.).
24 Cf. *Isa* 44:6.
25 *Ps* 102:26-27.
26 *Jas* 1:17.
27 *Ex* 34:6.
28 *Ps* 138:2; cf. *Ps* 85:11.
29 *I Jn* 1:5; 4:8.
30 *Ps* 119:160.
31 *2 Sam* 7:28.
32 Cf. *Deut* 7:9.
33 Cf. *Wis* 13:1-9.
34 Cf. *Ps* 115:15; *Wis* 7:17-21.
35 *Mal* 2:6.
36 *Jn* 18:37.
37 *I Jn* 5:20; cf. *Jn* 17:3.
38 Cf. *Deut* 4:37; 7:8; 10:15.
39 Cf. *Isa* 43:1-7; *Hos* 2.
40 *Jn* 3:16; cf. *Hos* 11:1; *Isa* 49:14-15; 62:4-5; *Ezek* 16; *Hos* 11.
41 *Isa* 54:8.
42 *Isa* 54:10; cf. 54:8.
43 *Jer* 31:3.
44 *I Jn* 4:8,16.
45 Cf. *I Cor* 2:7-16; *Eph* 3:9-12.
46 *Job* 36:26.
47 St. Joan of Arc.
48 *I Cor* 4:7.
49 *Ps* 116:12.
50 *Gen* 1:26.
51 St. Nicholas of Flüe; cf. *Mt* 5:29-30; 16:24-26.
52 St. Teresa of Jesus, Poesías 30, in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. III, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985), 386 no. 9, tr. by John Wall.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 2. The Father

I. "IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

232 Christians are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"⁵³ Before receiving the sacrament, they respond to a three-part question when asked to confess the Father, the Son and the Spirit: "I do." "The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity."⁵⁴

233 Christians are baptized in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their *names*,⁵⁵ for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.

234 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith".⁵⁶ The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin".⁵⁷

235 This paragraph expounds briefly (I) how the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was revealed, (II) how the Church has articulated the doctrine of the faith regarding this mystery, and (III) how, by the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, God the Father fulfills the "plan of his loving goodness" of creation, redemption and sanctification.

236 The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*). "Theology" refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and "economy" to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions.

237 The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the "mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God".⁵⁸ To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD AS TRINITY

The Father revealed by the Son

238 Many religions invoke God as "Father". The deity is often considered the "father of gods and of men". In Israel, God is called "Father" inasmuch as he is Creator of the world.⁵⁹ Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, "his first-born son".⁶⁰ God is also called the Father of the king of Israel. Most especially he is "the Father of the poor", of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection.⁶¹

239 By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood,⁶² which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard:⁶³ no one is father as God is Father.

240 Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."⁶⁴

241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature".⁶⁵

242 Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father, that is, one only God with him.⁶⁶ The second ecumenical

council, held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed "the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father".⁶⁷

The Father and the Son revealed by the Spirit

243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously "spoken through the prophets", the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them "into all the truth".⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.

244 The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father.⁶⁹ The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification⁷⁰ reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

245 The apostolic faith concerning the Spirit was confessed by the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (381): "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father."⁷¹ By this confession, the Church recognizes the Father as "the source and origin of the whole divinity".⁷² But the eternal origin of the Spirit is not unconnected with the Son's origin: "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature. . . Yet he is not called the Spirit of the Father alone, . . . but the Spirit of both the Father and the Son."⁷³ The Creed of the Church from the Council of Constantinople confesses: "With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified."⁷⁴

246 The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque*)". The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: "The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (*simul*) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration. . . . And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son."⁷⁵

247 The affirmation of the *filioque* does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447,⁷⁶ even before Rome, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, came to recognize and receive the Symbol of 381. The use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). The introduction of the *filioque* into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

248 At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he "who proceeds from the Father", it affirms that he *comes from* the Father *through* the Son.⁷⁷ The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). It says this, "legitimately and with good reason",⁷⁸ for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as "the principle without principle",⁷⁹ is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds.⁸⁰ This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.

III. THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE TEACHING OF THE FAITH

The formation of the Trinitarian dogma

249 From the beginning, the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity has been at the very root of the Church's living faith, principally by means of Baptism. It finds its expression in the rule of baptismal faith, formulated in the preaching, catechesis and prayer of the Church. Such formulations are already found in the apostolic writings, such as this salutation taken up in the Eucharistic liturgy: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."⁸¹

250 During the first centuries the Church sought to clarify her Trinitarian faith, both to deepen her own understanding of the faith and to defend it against the errors that were deforming it. This clarification was the work of the early councils, aided by the theological work of the Church Fathers and sustained by the Christian people's sense of the faith.

251 In order to articulate the dogma of the Trinity, the Church had to develop her own terminology with the help of certain notions of philosophical origin: "substance", "person" or "hypostasis", "relation" and so on. In doing this, she did not submit the faith to human wisdom, but gave a new and unprecedented meaning to these terms, which from then on would be used to signify an ineffable mystery, "infinitely beyond all that we can humanly understand".⁸²

252 The Church uses (I) the term "substance" (rendered also at times by "essence" or "nature") to designate the divine being in its unity, (II) the term "person" or "hypostasis" to designate the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them, and (III) the term "relation" to designate the fact that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity

253 *The Trinity is One.* We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the "consubstantial Trinity".⁸³ The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: "The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God."⁸⁴ In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), "Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature."⁸⁵

254 *The divine persons are really distinct from one another.* "God is one but not solitary."⁸⁶ "Father", "Son", "Holy Spirit" are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: "He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son."⁸⁷ They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: "It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds."⁸⁸ The divine Unity is Triune.

255 *The divine persons are relative to one another.* Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: "In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance."⁸⁹ Indeed "everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship."⁹⁰ "Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son."⁹¹

256 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, also called "the Theologian", entrusts this summary of Trinitarian faith to the catechumens of Constantinople:

Above all guard for me this great deposit of faith for which I live and fight, which I want to take with me as a companion, and which makes me bear all evils and despise all pleasures: I mean the profession of faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I entrust it to you today. By it I am soon going to plunge you into water and raise you up from it. I give it to you as the companion and patron of your whole life. I give you but one divinity and power, existing one in three, and containing the three in a distinct way. Divinity without disparity of substance or nature, without superior degree that raises up or inferior degree that casts down. . . the infinite co-naturality of three infinities. Each person considered in himself is entirely God. . . the three considered together. . . I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendor. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me. . .⁹²

IV. THE DIVINE WORKS AND THE TRINITARIAN MISSIONS

257 "O blessed light, O Trinity and first Unity!"⁹³ God is eternal blessedness, undying life, unfading light. God is love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life. Such is the "plan of his loving kindness", conceived by the Father before the foundation of the world, in his beloved Son: "He destined us in love to be his sons" and "to be conformed to the image of his Son", through "the spirit of sonship".⁹⁴ This plan is a "grace [which] was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began", stemming immediately from Trinitarian love.⁹⁵ It unfolds in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the missions of the Son and the Spirit, which are continued in the mission of the Church.⁹⁶

258 The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine persons. For as the Trinity has only one and the same natures so too does it have only one and the same operation: "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation but one principle."⁹⁷ However, each divine person performs the common work according to his unique personal property. Thus the Church confesses, following the New Testament, "one God and Father from whom all things are, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom

all things are, and one Holy Spirit in whom all things are".⁹⁸ It is above all the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that show forth the properties of the divine persons.

259 Being a work at once common and personal, the whole divine economy makes known both what is proper to the divine persons, and their one divine nature. Hence the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.⁹⁹

260 The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.¹⁰⁰ But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: "If a man loves me", says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him".¹⁰¹

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action.¹⁰²

IN BRIEF

261 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

262 The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God.

263 The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (*Jn* 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (*Jn* 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed).

264 "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095).

265 By the grace of Baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (cf. Paul VI, *CPG* § 9).

266 "Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16).

267 Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

53 *Mt* 28:19.

54 St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 9, *Exp. symb.*:CCL 103,47.

55 Cf. Profession of faith of Pope Vigilius I (552):DS 415.

56 *GCD* 43.

57 *GCD* 47.

58 *Dei Filius* 4:DS 3015.

59 Cf. *Deut* 32:6; *Mal* 2:10.

60 *Ex* 4:22.

61 Cf. 2 *Sam* 7:14; *Ps* 68:6.

62 Cf. *Isa* 66:13; *Ps* 131:2.

63 Cf. *Ps* 27:10; *Eph* 3:14; *Isa* 49:15.

64 *Mt* 11-27.

65 *Jn* 1:1; *Col* 1:15; *Heb* 1:3.
66 The English phrases "of one being" and "one in being" translate the Greek word *homoousios*, which was rendered in Latin by *consubstantialis*.
67 Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; cf. DS 150.
68 Cf. *Gen* 1:2; Nicene Creed (DS 150); *Jn* 14:17, 26; 16:13.
69 Cf. *Jn* 14:26; 15:26; 16:14.
70 Cf. *Jn* 7:39.
71 Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150.
72 Council of Toledo VI (638): DS 490.
73 Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 527.
74 Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150.
75 Council of Florence (1439): DS 1300-1301.
76 Cf. Leo I, *Quam laudabiliter* (447): DS 284.
77 *Jn* 15:26; cf. *AG* 2.
78 Council of Florence (1439): DS 1302.
79 Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331.
80 Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 850.
81 2 *Cor* 13:14; cf. 1 *Cor* 12:4-6; *Eph* 4:4-6.
82 Paul VI, *CPG* § 2.
83 Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 421.
84 Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:26.
85 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 804.
86 *Fides Damasi*: DS 71.
87 Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:25.
88 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 804.
89 Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 528.
90 Council of Florence (1442): DS 1330.
91 Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331.
92 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40,41: PG 36,417.
93 *LH*, Hymn for Evening Prayer.
94 *Eph* 1:4-5,9; *Rom* 8:15,29.
95 2 *Tim* 1:9-10.
96 Cf. *AG* 2-9.
97 Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331; cf. Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 421.
98 Council of Constantinople II: DS 421.
99 Cf. *Jn* 6:44; *Rom* 8:14.
100 Cf. *Jn* 17:21-23.
101 *Jn* 14:23.
102 Prayer of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 3. The Almighty

268 Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is loving, for he is our Father, and *mysterious*, for only faith can discern it when it "is made perfect in weakness".¹⁰³

"He does whatever he pleases"¹⁰⁴

269 The Holy Scriptures repeatedly confess the universal power of God. He is called the "Mighty One of Jacob", the "LORD of hosts", the "strong and mighty" one. If God is almighty "in heaven and on earth", it is because he made them.¹⁰⁵ Nothing is impossible with God, who disposes his works according to his will.¹⁰⁶ He is the Lord of the universe, whose order he established and which remains wholly subject to him and at his disposal. He is master of history, governing hearts and events in keeping with his will: "It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the strength of your arm?"¹⁰⁷

"You are merciful to all, for you can do all things"¹⁰⁸

270 God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ("I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty");¹⁰⁹ finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

271 God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: "In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect."¹¹⁰

The mystery of God's apparent powerlessness

272 Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."¹¹¹ It is in Christ's Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe".¹¹²

273 Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power.¹¹³ The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that "nothing will be impossible with God", and was able to magnify the Lord: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."¹¹⁴

274 "Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God. Once our reason has grasped the idea of God's almighty power, it will easily and without any hesitation admit everything that [the Creed] will afterwards propose for us to believe - even if they be great and marvelous things, far above the ordinary laws of nature."¹¹⁵

IN BRIEF

275 With Job, the just man, we confess: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (*Job* 42:2).

276 Faithful to the witness of Scripture, the Church often addresses her prayer to the "almighty and eternal God" ("omnipotens sempiternus Deus. . ."), believing firmly that "nothing will be impossible with God" (*Gen* 18:14; *Lk* 1:37; *Mt* 19:26).

277 God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. "God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness. . ." (*Roman Missal*, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer).

278 If we do not believe that God's love is almighty, how can we believe that the Father could create us, the Son redeem us and the Holy Spirit sanctify us?

103 Cf. *Gen* 1:1; *Jn* 1:3; *Mt* 6:9; *2 Cor* 12:9; cf. *1 Cor* 1:18.

104 *Ps* 115:3.

105 *Gen* 49:24; *Isa* 1:24 etc.; *Ps* 24:8-10; 135:6.

106 Cf. *Jer* 27:5; 32:17; *Lk* 1:37.

107 *Wis* 11:21; cf. *Esth* 4:17b; *Prov* 21:1; *Tob* 13:2.

108 *Wis* 11:23.

109 *2 Cor* 6:18; cf. *Mt* 6:32.

110 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,25,5, ad I.

111 *1 Cor* 1:24-25.

112 *Eph* 1:19-22.

113 Cf. *2 Cor* 12:9; *Phil* 4:13.

114 *Lk* 1:37, 49.

115 *Roman Catechism* I,2,13.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 4. The Creator

279 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."¹¹⁶ Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. The profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is "Creator of heaven and earth" (*Apostles' Creed*), "of all that is, seen and unseen" (*Nicene Creed*). We shall speak first of the Creator, then of creation and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again.

280 Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation"¹¹⁷ that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ.¹¹⁸

281 And so the readings of the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the new creation in Christ, begin with the creation account; likewise in the Byzantine liturgy, the account of creation always constitutes the first reading at the vigils of the great feasts of the Lord. According to ancient witnesses the instruction of catechumens for Baptism followed the same itinerary.¹¹⁹

I. CATECHESIS ON CREATION

282 Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked themselves:¹²⁰ "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is our origin?" "What is our end?" "Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?" The two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions.

283 The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers. With Solomon they can say: "It is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements. . . for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me."¹²¹

284 The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called "God"? And if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?

285 Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions and cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism). Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God and returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, locked, in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is evil, the product of a fall, and is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watch-maker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism). All these attempts bear witness to the permanence and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

286 Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a response to the question of origins. The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason,¹²² even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear."¹²³

287 The truth about creation is so important for all of human life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator,¹²⁴ God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. He who chose the patriarchs, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and who by choosing Israel created and formed it, this same God reveals himself as the One to

whom belong all the peoples of the earth, and the whole earth itself; he is the One who alone "made heaven and earth".¹²⁵

288 Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love.¹²⁶ And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigor in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People.¹²⁷

289 Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation - its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the "beginning": creation, fall, and promise of salvation.

II. CREATION - WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

290 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth":¹²⁸ three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture: the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (the verb "create" - Hebrew *bara* - always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (expressed by the formula "the heavens and the earth") depends on the One who gives it being.

291 "In the beginning was the Word. . . and the Word was God. . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."¹²⁹ The New Testament reveals that God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."¹³⁰ The Church's faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life", "the Creator Spirit" (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the "source of every good".¹³¹

292 The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant reveals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit,¹³² inseparably one with that of the Father. This creative co-operation is clearly affirmed in the Church's rule of faith: "There exists but one God. . . he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He made all things by *himself*, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom", "by the Son and the Spirit" who, so to speak, are "his hands".¹³³ Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity.

III. "THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD"

293 Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: "The world was made for the glory of God."¹³⁴ St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it",¹³⁵ for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: "Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand."¹³⁶ The First Vatican Council explains:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and "almighty power", not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel "and from the beginning of time, made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal. . ."¹³⁷

294 The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us "to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*",¹³⁸ for "the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God."¹³⁹ The ultimate purpose of creation is that God "who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all", thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude."¹⁴⁰

IV. THE MYSTERY OF CREATION

God creates by wisdom and love

295 We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom.¹⁴¹ It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: "For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."¹⁴² Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all"; and "The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made."¹⁴³

God creates "out of nothing"

296 We believe that God needs no pre-existent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from the divine substance.¹⁴⁴ God creates freely "out of nothing".¹⁴⁵

If God had drawn the world from pre-existent matter, what would be so extraordinary in that? A human artisan makes from a given material whatever he wants, while God shows his power by starting from nothing to make all he wants.¹⁴⁶

297 Scripture bears witness to faith in creation "out of nothing" as a truth full of promise and hope. Thus the mother of seven sons encourages them for martyrdom:

I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws. . . Look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind comes into being.¹⁴⁷

298 Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them,¹⁴⁸ and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist."¹⁴⁹ And since God was able to make light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him.¹⁵⁰

God creates an ordered and good world

299 Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: "You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight."¹⁵¹ The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the "image of the invisible God", is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the "image of God" and called to a personal relationship with God.¹⁵² Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work.¹⁵³ Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness - "And God saw that it was good. . . very good"¹⁵⁴ - for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. On many occasions the Church has had to defend the goodness of creation, including that of the physical world.¹⁵⁵

God transcends creation and is present to it.

300 God is infinitely greater than all his works: "You have set your glory above the heavens."¹⁵⁶ Indeed, God's "greatness is unsearchable".¹⁵⁷ But because he is the free

and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures' inmost being: "In him we live and move and have our being."¹⁵⁸ In the words of St. Augustine, God is "higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self".¹⁵⁹

God upholds and sustains creation.

301 With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence:

For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living.¹⁶⁰

V. GOD CARRIES OUT HIS PLAN: DIVINE PROVIDENCE

302 Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call "divine providence" the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection:

By his providence God protects and governs all things which he has made, "reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well". For "all are open and laid bare to his eyes", even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures.¹⁶¹

303 The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is concrete and immediate; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases."¹⁶² And so it is with Christ, "who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens".¹⁶³ As the book of Proverbs states: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established."¹⁶⁴

304 And so we see the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Sacred Scripture, often attributing actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a "primitive mode of speech", but a profound way of recalling God's primacy and absolute Lordship over history and the world,¹⁶⁵ and so of educating his people to trust in him. The prayer of the Psalms is the great school of this trust.¹⁶⁶

305 Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?". . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."¹⁶⁷

Providence and secondary causes

306 God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their

existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan.

307 To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it.¹⁶⁸ God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers and their sufferings.¹⁶⁹ They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom.¹⁷⁰

308 The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."¹⁷¹ Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes."¹⁷² Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace.¹⁷³

Providence and the scandal of evil.

309 If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of creation, the drama of sin and the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments and his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. *There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.*

310 But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? With infinite power God could always create something better.¹⁷⁴ But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world "in a state of journeying" towards its ultimate perfection. In God's plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also *physical evil* as long as creation has not reached perfection.¹⁷⁵

311 Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus *hasmoral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil.¹⁷⁶ He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it:

For almighty God. . . because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself.¹⁷⁷

312 In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: "It was not you", said Joseph to his brothers, "who sent me here, but God. . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive."¹⁷⁸ From the greatest moral evil ever committed - the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men - God, by his grace that "abounded all the more",¹⁷⁹ brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good.

313 "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him."¹⁸⁰ The constant witness of the saints confirms this truth:

St. Catherine of Siena said to "those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them": "Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind."¹⁸¹

St. Thomas More, shortly before his martyrdom, consoled his daughter: "Nothing can come but that that God wills. And I make me very sure that whatsoever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be the best."¹⁸²

Dame Julian of Norwich: "Here I was taught by the grace of God that I should steadfastly keep me in the faith. . . and that at the same time I should take my stand on and earnestly believe in what our Lord shewed in this time - that 'all manner [of] thing shall be well.'"¹⁸³

314 We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God "face to face",¹⁸⁴ will we fully know the ways by which - even through the dramas of evil and sin - God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest¹⁸⁵ for which he created heaven and earth.

IN BRIEF

315 In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the "plan of his loving goodness", which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ.

316 Though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a truth of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are the one, indivisible principle of creation.

317 God alone created the universe, freely, directly and without any help.

318 No creature has the infinite power necessary to "create" in the proper sense of the word, that is, to produce and give being to that which had in no way possessed it (to call into existence "out of nothing") (cf DS 3624).

319 God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them.

320 God created the universe and keeps it in existence by his Word, the Son "upholding the universe by his word of power" (*Heb* 1:3), and by his Creator Spirit, the giver of life.

321 Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end.

322 Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf. *Mt* 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you" (*I Pt* 5:7; cf. *Ps* 55:23).

323 Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to cooperate freely with his plans.

324 The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life.

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- 116 *Gen* 1:1.
117 *GCD* 51.
118 *Gen* 1:1; cf. *Rom* 8:18-23.
119 Cf. Egeria, *Peregrinatio at loca sancta*, 46: PLS 1,1047; St. Augustine, *De catechizantis rudibus* 3,5: PL 40,256.
120 Cf. *NA* 2.
121 *Wis* 7:17-22.
122 Cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 § I: DS 3026.
123 *Heb* 11:3.
124 Cf. *Acts* 17:24-29; *Rom* 1:19-20.
125 Cf. *Isa* 43:1; *Ps* 115:15; 124:8; 134:3.
126 Cf. *Gen* 15:5; *Jer* 33:19-26.
127 Cf. *Isa* 44:24; *Ps* 104; *Prov* 8:22-31.
128 *Gen* 1:1.
129 *Jn* 1:1-3.
130 *Col* 1:16-17.
131 Cf. Nicene Creed: DS 150; Hymn "Veni, Creator Spiritus"; Byzantine Troparion of Pentecost Vespers, "O heavenly King, Consoler".
132 Cf. *Ps* 33:6; 104:30; *Gen* 1:2-3.
133 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 2,30,9; 4,20,1: PG 7/1,822,1032.
134 *Dei Filius*, can. § 5: DS 3025.
135 St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1,2,2,1.
136 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent.* II, Prol.
137 *Dei Filius*, 1: DS 3002; cf. Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800.
138 *Eph* 1:5-6.
139 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4,20,7: PG 7/1,1037.
140 *AG* 2; cf. *I Cor* 15:28.
141 Cf. *Wis* 9:9.
142 *Rev* 4:11.
143 *Ps* 104:24; 145:9.
144 Cf. *Dei Filius*, can. 2-4: DS 3022-3024.
145 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3025.
146 St. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* II, 4: PG 6,1052.
147 *2 Macc* 7:22-21,28.
148 Cf. *Ps* 51:12.
149 *Rom* 4:17.
150 Cf. *Gen* 1:3; *2 Cor* 4:6.
151 *Wis* 11:20.
152 *Col* 1:15; *Gen* 1:26.
153 Cf. *Ps* 19:2-5; *Job* 42:3.
154 *Gen* 1:4,10,12,18,21,31.
155 Cf. DS 286; 455-463; 800; 1333; 3002.
156 *Ps* 8:1; cf. *Sir* 43:28.
157 *Ps* 145:3.
158 *Acts* 17:28.
159 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 3,6,11: PL 32,688.
160 *Wis* 11:24-26.
161 Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 1: DS 3003; cf. *Wis* 8:1; *Heb* 4:13.
162 *Ps* 115:3.
163 *Rev* 3:7.
164 *Prov* 19:21.
165 Cf. *Isa* 10:5-15; 45:51; *Deut* 32:39; *Sir* 11:14.
166 Cf. *Ps* 22; 32; 35; 103; 138; *et al.*
167 *Mt* 6:31-33; cf. 10:29-31.
168 Cf. *Gen* 1:26-28.
169 Cf. *Col* 1:24.

170 *1 Cor* 3:9; *1 Thes* 3:2; *Col* 4:11.
171 *Phil* 2:13; cf. *1 Cor* 12:6.
172 *GS* 36 § 3.
173 Cf. *Mt* 19:26; *Jn* 15:5; 14:13
174 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,25,6.
175 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* III,71.
176 Cf. St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1,1,2: PL 32,1221-1223; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II,79,1.
177 St. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 3,11: PL 40,236.
178 *Gen* 45:8; 50:20; cf. *Tob* 2:12 (Vulg.).
179 Cf. *Rom* 5:20.
180 *Rom* 8:28.
181 St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue On Providence*, ch. IV, 138.
182 *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), letter 206, lines 661-663.
183 Julian of Norwich, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, tr. James Walshe SJ (London: 1961), ch. 32,99-100.
184 *1 Cor* 13:12.
185 Cf. *Gen* 2:2.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 5. Heaven and Earth

325 The Apostles' Creed professes that God is "creator of heaven and earth". The Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes "all that is, seen and unseen".

326 The Scriptural expression "heaven and earth" means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: "the earth" is the world of men, while "heaven" or "the heavens" can designate both the firmament and God's own "place" - "our Father in heaven" and consequently the "heaven" too which is eschatological glory. Finally, "heaven" refers to the saints and the "place" of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God.¹⁸⁶

327 The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirms that God "from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (*deinde*) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body."¹⁸⁷

I. THE ANGELS

The existence of angels - a truth of faith

328 The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

Who are they?

329 St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel'."¹⁸⁸ With their whole beings the angels are *servants* and messengers of God. Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word".¹⁸⁹

330 As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness.¹⁹⁰

Christ "with all his angels"

331 Christ is the center of the angelic world. They are *his* angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. . ."¹⁹¹ They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him."¹⁹² They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"¹⁹³

332 Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself.¹⁹⁵

333 From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"¹⁹⁶ Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!"¹⁹⁷ They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been.¹⁹⁸ Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection.¹⁹⁹ They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement.²⁰⁰

The angels in the life of the Church

334 In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels.²⁰¹

335 In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*. . .["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]). Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

336 From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.²⁰² "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."²⁰³ Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

II. THE VISIBLE WORLD

337 God himself created the visible world in all its richness, diversity and order. Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six days of divine "work", concluded by the "rest" of the seventh day.²⁰⁴ On the subject of creation, the sacred text teaches the truths revealed by God for our salvation,²⁰⁵ permitting us to "recognize the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God."²⁰⁶

338 *Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator.* The world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time begun.²⁰⁷

339 *Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection.* For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "And God saw that it was good." "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws."²⁰⁸ Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

340 God wills the *interdependence of creatures.* The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.

341 *The beauty of the universe:* The order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them. Man discovers them progressively as the laws of nature. They call forth the admiration of scholars. The beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man's intellect and will.

342 The *hierarchy of creatures* is expressed by the order of the "six days", from the less perfect to the more perfect. God loves all his creatures²⁰⁹ and takes care of each one, even the sparrow. Nevertheless, Jesus said: "You are of more value than many sparrows", or again: "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!"²¹⁰

343 *Man is the summit* of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures.²¹¹

344 There is a *solidarity among all creatures* arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory: May you be praised, O Lord, in all your creatures, especially brother sun, by whom you give us light for the day; he is beautiful, radiating great splendor, and offering us a symbol of you, the Most High. . .

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister water, who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste. . .

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister earth, our mother, who bears and feeds us, and produces the variety of fruits and dappled flowers and grasses. . .

Praise and bless my Lord, give thanks and serve him in all humility.²¹²

345 *The sabbath - the end of the work of the six days.* The sacred text says that "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done", that the "heavens and the earth were finished", and that God "rested" on this day and sanctified and blessed it.²¹³ These inspired words are rich in profitable instruction:

346 In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant.²¹⁴ For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it.

347 Creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation.²¹⁵ As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over "the work of God", that is, solemn worship.²¹⁶ This indicates the right order of human concerns.

348 The sabbath is at the heart of Israel's law. To keep the commandments is to correspond to the wisdom and the will of God as expressed in his work of creation.

349 *The eighth day.* But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation.²¹⁷

IN BRIEF

350 Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: "The angels work together for the benefit of us all" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 114, 3, *ad* 3).

351 The angels surround Christ their Lord. They serve him especially in the accomplishment of his saving mission to men.

352 The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being.

353 God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence and their order. He destined all material creatures for the good of the human race. Man, and through him all creation, is destined for the glory of God.

354 Respect for laws inscribed in creation and the relations which derive from the nature of things is a principle of wisdom and a foundation for morality.

186 *Ps* 115:16; 19:2; *Mt* 5:16.

187 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3002 and Paul VI, *CPG* § 8.

188 St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 103,1,15: PL 37,1348.

189 *Mt* 18:10; *Ps* 103:20.

190 Cf. Pius XII, *Humani generis*: DS 3891; *Lk* 20:36; *Dan* 10:9-12.

191 *Mt* 25:31.

192 *Col* 1:16.

193 *Heb* 1:14.

194 Cf. *Job* 38:7 (where angels are called "sons of God"); *Gen* 3:24; 19; 21:17; 22:11; *Acts* 7:53; *Ex* 23:20-23; *Judg* 13; 6:11-24; *Isa* 6:6; *I Kings* 19:5.

195 Cf. *Lk* 1:11,26.

196 *Heb* 1:6.
197 *Lk* 2:14.
198 Cf. *Mt* 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; *Mk* 1:13; *Lk* 22:43; 2 *Macc* 10:29-30; 11:8.
199 Cf. *Lk* 2:8-14; *Mk* 16:5-7.
200 Cf. *Acts* 1:10-11; *Mt* 13:41; 24:31; *Lk* 12:8-9.
201 Cf. *Acts* 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25.
202 Cf. *Mt* 18:10; *Lk* 16:22; *Ps* 34:7; 91:10-13; *Job* 33:23-24; *Zech* 1:12; *Tob* 12:12.
203 St. Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* III, I: PG 29,656B.
204 *Gen* 1:1-2:4.
205 Cf. *DV* 11.
206 *LG* 36 § 2.
207 Cf. St. Augustine, *De Genesi adv. Man.* 1,2,4: PL 34,175.
208 *GS* 36 § 1.
209 Cf. *Ps* 145:9.
210 *Lk* 12:6-7; *Mt* 12:12.
211 Cf. *Gen* 1-26.
212 St. Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Creatures*.
213 *Gen* 2:1-3.
214 Cf. *Heb* 4:3-4; *Jer* 31:35-37; 33:19-26.
215 Cf. *Gen* 1:14.
216 St. Benedict, *Regula* 43,3: PL 66,675-676.
217 Cf. *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 24, prayer after the first reading.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 6. Man

355 "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."²¹⁸ Man occupies a unique place in creation: (I) he is "in the image of God"; (II) in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; (III) he is created "male and female"; (IV) God established him in his friendship.

I. "IN THE IMAGE OF GOD"

356 Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator".²¹⁹ He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake",²²⁰ and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity:

What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good.²²¹

357 Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.

358 God created everything for man,²²² but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him:

What is it that is about to be created, that enjoys such honor? It is man that great and wonderful living creature, more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures! For him the heavens and the earth, the sea and all the rest of creation exist. God attached so much importance to his salvation that he did not spare his own Son for the sake of man. Nor does he ever cease to work, trying every possible means, until he has raised man up to himself and made him sit at his right hand.²²³

359 "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear."²²⁴

St. Paul tells us that the human race takes its origin from two men: Adam and Christ. . . The first man, Adam, he says, became a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. The first Adam was made by the last Adam, from whom he also received his soul, to give him life. . . The second Adam stamped his image on the first Adam when he created him. That is why he took on himself the role and the name of the first Adam, in order that he might not lose what he had made in his own image. The first Adam, the last Adam: the first had a beginning, the last knows no end. The last Adam is indeed the first; as he himself says: "I am the first and the last."²²⁵

360 Because of its common origin *the human race forms a unity*, for "from one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth":²²⁶

O wondrous vision, which makes us contemplate the human race in the unity of its origin in God. . . in the unity of its nature, composed equally in all men of a material body and a spiritual soul; in the unity of its immediate end and its mission in the world; in the unity of its dwelling, the earth, whose benefits all men, by right of nature, may use to sustain and develop life; in the unity of its supernatural end: God himself, to whom all ought to tend; in the unity of the means for attaining this end; . . . in the unity of the redemption wrought by Christ for all.²²⁷

361 "This law of human solidarity and charity",²²⁸ without excluding the rich variety of persons, cultures and peoples, assures us that all men are truly brethren.

II. "BODY AND SOUL BUT TRULY ONE"

362 The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. The biblical account expresses this reality in symbolic language when it affirms that "then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."²²⁹ Man, whole and entire, is therefore *willed* by God.

363 In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human *life* or the entire human *person*.²³⁰ But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him,²³¹ that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the *spiritual principle* in man.

364 The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit.²³²

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day.²³³

365 The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the "form" of the body:²³⁴ i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.

366 The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not "produced" by the parents - and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.²³⁵

367 Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people "wholly", with "spirit and soul and body" kept sound and blameless at the Lord's coming.²³⁶ The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul.²³⁷ "Spirit" signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God.²³⁸

368 The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the *heart*, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God.²³⁹

* III. "MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM"

Equality and difference willed by God

369 Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator.²⁴⁰ Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God". In their "being-man" and "being-woman", they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness.

370 In no way is God in man's image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective "perfections" of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband.²⁴¹

"Each for the other" - "A unity in two"

371 God created man and woman together and willed each for the other. The Word of God gives us to understand this through various features of the sacred text. "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him."²⁴² None of the animals can be man's partner.²⁴³ The woman God "fashions" from the man's rib and brings to him elicits on the man's part a cry of wonder, an exclamation of love and communion: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."²⁴⁴ Man discovers woman as another "I", sharing the same humanity.

372 Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones. . .") and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh",²⁴⁵ they can transmit human life: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."²⁴⁶ By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work.²⁴⁷

373 In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth²⁴⁸ as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists",²⁴⁹ to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.

IV. MAN IN PARADISE

374 The first man was not only created good, but was also established in friendship with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him, in a state that would be surpassed only by the glory of the new creation in Christ.

375 The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original "state of holiness and justice".²⁵⁰ This grace of original holiness was "to share in. . .divine life".²⁵¹

376 By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed. As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die.²⁵² The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman,²⁵³ and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called "original justice".

377 The "mastery" over the world that God offered man from the beginning was realized above all within man himself: *mastery of self*. The first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscence²⁵⁴ that subjugates him to the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion, contrary to the dictates of reason.

378 The sign of man's familiarity with God is that God places him in the garden.²⁵⁵ There he lives "to till it and keep it". Work is not yet a burden,²⁵⁶ but rather the collaboration of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation.

379 This entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents.

IN BRIEF

380 "Father, . . . you formed man in your own likeness and set him over the whole world to serve you, his creator, and to rule over all creatures" (*Roman Missal*, EP IV, 118).

381 Man is predestined to reproduce the image of God's Son made man, the "image of the invisible God" (*Col* 1:15), so that Christ shall be the first-born of a multitude of brothers and sisters (cf. *Eph* 1:3-6; *Rom* 8:29).

382 "Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity" (*GS* 14 § 1). The doctrine of the faith affirms that the spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God.

383 "God did not create man a solitary being. From the beginning, "male and female he created them" (*Gen* 1:27). This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons" (*GS* 12 § 4).

384 Revelation makes known to us the state of original holiness and justice of man and woman before sin: from their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise.

- 218 *Gen* 1:27.
- 219 *GS* 12 § 3.
- 220 *GS* 24 § 3.
- 221 St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* 4,13 "On Divine Providence": *LH*, Sunday, week 19, OR.
- 222 Cf. *GS* 12 § 1; 24 § 3; 39 § 1.
- 223 St. John Chrysostom, *In Gen. Sermo* 2,1: PG 54,587D-588A.
- 224 *GS* 22 § 1.
- 225 St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 117: PL 52,520-521.
- 226 *Acts* 17:26; cf. *Tob* 8:6.
- 227 Pius XII, *Enc. Summi Pontificatus* 3; cf. *NA* 1.
- 228 Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus* 3.
- 229 *Gen* 2:7.
- 230 Cf. *Mt* 16:25-26; *Jn* 15:13; *Acts* 2:41.
- 231 Cf. *Mt* 10:28; 26:38; *Jn* 12:27; 2 *Macc* 6:30.
- 232 Cf. 1 *Cor* 6:19-20; 15:44-45.
- 233 *GS* 14 § 1; cf. *Dan* 3:57-80.
- 234 Cf. Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902.
- 235 Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis*: DS 3896; Paul VI, *CPG* § 8; Lateran Council V (1513): DS 1440.
- 236 1 *Thess* 5:23.
- 237 Cf. Council of Constantinople IV (870): DS 657.
- 238 Cf. Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*: DS 3005; *GS* 22 § 5; *Humani Generis*: DS 3891.
- 239 Cf. *Jer* 31:33; *Deut* 6:5; 29:3; *Isa* 29:13; *Ezek* 36:26; *Mt* 6:21; *Lk* 8:15; *Rom* 5:5.
- 240 Cf. *Gen* 2:7,22.
- 241 Cf. *Isa* 49:14-15; 66:13; *Ps* 131:2-3; *Hos* 11:1-4; *Jer* 3:4-19.
- 242 *Gen* 2:18.
- 243 *Gen* 2:19-20.
- 244 *Gen* 2:23.
- 245 *Gen* 2:24.
- 246 *Gen* 1:28.
- 247 Cf. *GS* 50 § 1.
- 248 *Gen* 1:28.
- 249 *Wis* 11:24.
- 250 Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511.
- 251 Cf. *LG* 2.
- 252 Cf. *Gen* 2:17; 3:16,19.
- 253 Cf. *Gen* 2:25.
- 254 Cf. 1 *Jn* 2:16.
- 255 Cf. *Gen* 2:8.
- 256 *Gen* 2:15; cf. 3:17-19

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 7. The Fall

385 God is infinitely good and all his works are good. Yet no one can escape the experience of suffering or the evils in nature which seem to be linked to the limitations proper to creatures: and above all to the question of moral evil. Where does evil come from? "I sought whence evil comes and there was no solution", said St. Augustine,²⁵⁷ and his own painful quest would only be resolved by his conversion to the living God. For "the mystery of lawlessness" is clarified only in the light of the "mystery of our religion".²⁵⁸ The revelation of divine love in Christ manifested at the same time the extent of evil and the superabundance of grace.²⁵⁹ We must therefore approach the question of the origin of evil by fixing the eyes of our faith on him who alone is its conqueror.²⁶⁰

I. WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE

The reality of sin

386 Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize *the profound relation of man to God*, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history.

387 Only the light of divine Revelation clarifies the reality of sin and particularly of the sin committed at mankind's origins. Without the knowledge Revelation gives of God we cannot recognize sin clearly and are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure, etc. Only in the knowledge of God's plan for man can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.

Original sin - an essential truth of the faith

388 With the progress of Revelation, the reality of sin is also illuminated. Although to some extent the People of God in the Old Testament had tried to understand the pathos of the human condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in Genesis, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁶¹ We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin. The Spirit-Paraclete, sent by the risen Christ, came to "convict the world concerning sin",²⁶² by revealing him who is its Redeemer.

389 The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the "reverse side" of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ,²⁶³ knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.

How to read the account of the fall

390 The account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man*.²⁶⁴ Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.²⁶⁵

II. THE FALL OF THE ANGELS

391 Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy.²⁶⁶ Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil".²⁶⁷ The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing."²⁶⁸

392 Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels.²⁶⁹ This "fall" consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably *rejected* God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: "You will be like God."²⁷⁰ The devil "has sinned from the beginning"; he is "a liar and the father of lies".²⁷¹

393 It is the *irrevocable* character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. "There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death."²⁷²

394 Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning", who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father.²⁷³ "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."²⁷⁴ In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God.

395 The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature- to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him."²⁷⁵

III. ORIGINAL SIN

Freedom put to the test

396 God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. The prohibition against eating "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" spells this out: "for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die."²⁷⁶ The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil"²⁷⁷ symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom.

Man's first sin

397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of.²⁷⁸ All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

398 In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to "be like God", but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God".²⁷⁹

399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness.²⁸⁰ They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.²⁸¹

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination.²⁸² Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man.²⁸³ Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay".²⁸⁴ Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground",²⁸⁵ for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history.*²⁸⁶

401 After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated by sin. There is Cain's murder of his brother Abel and the universal corruption which follows in the wake of sin. Likewise, sin frequently manifests itself in the history of Israel, especially as infidelity to the God of the Covenant and as transgression of the Law of Moses. And even after Christ's atonement, sin raises its head in countless ways among Christians.²⁸⁷ Scripture and the Church's Tradition continually recall the presence and *universality of sin in man's history*:

What Revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience. For when man looks into his own heart he finds that he is drawn towards what is wrong and sunk in many evils which cannot come from his good creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his source, man has also upset the relationship which should link him to his last end, and at the same time he has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures.²⁸⁸

The consequences of Adam's sin for humanity

402 All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St. Paul affirms: "By one man's disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners": "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned."²⁸⁹ The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men."²⁹⁰

403 Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul".²⁹¹ Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin.²⁹²

404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".²⁹³ By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they

would then transmit *in a fallen state*.²⁹⁴ It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.

405 Although it is proper to each individual,²⁹⁵ original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin - an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence". Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.

406 The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine's reflections against Pelagianism, and in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam's fault to bad example. The first Protestant reformers, on the contrary, taught that original sin has radically perverted man and destroyed his freedom; they identified the sin inherited by each man with the tendency to evil (concupiscentia), which would be insurmountable. The Church pronounced on the meaning of the data of Revelation on original sin especially at the second Council of Orange (529)²⁹⁶ and at the Council of Trent (1546).²⁹⁷

A hard battle. . .

407 The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil".²⁹⁸ Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action²⁹⁹ and morals.

408 The consequences of original sin and of all men's personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition aptly described in St. John's expression, "the sin of the world".³⁰⁰ This expression can also refer to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins.³⁰¹

409 This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one"³⁰² makes man's life a battle:

The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity.³⁰³

IV. "YOU DID NOT ABANDON HIM TO THE POWER OF DEATH"

410 After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall.³⁰⁴ This passage in Genesis is called the *Protoevangelium* ("first gospel"): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers.

411 The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience, of Adam.³⁰⁵ Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the *Protoevangelium* as Mary, the mother of Christ, the "new Eve". Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.³⁰⁶

412 But *why did God not prevent the first man from sinning?* St. Leo the Great responds, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away."³⁰⁷ And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'"³⁰⁸

IN BRIEF

413 "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. . . It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world" (*Wis* 1:13; 2:24).

414 Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God.

415 "Although set by God in a state of rectitude man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very start of history. He lifted himself up against God, and sought to attain his goal apart from him" (GS 13 § 1).

416 By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings.

417 Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin".

418 As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called "concupiscence").

419 "We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, "by propagation, not by imitation" and that it is. . . 'proper to each'" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 16).

420 The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (*Rom* 5:20).

421 Christians believe that "the world has been established and kept in being by the Creator's love; has fallen into slavery to sin but has been set free by Christ, crucified and risen to break the power of the evil one. . ." (GS 2 § 2).

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- 257 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 7.7,11: PL 32,739.
258 2 *Thess* 2:7; 1 *Tim* 3:16.
259 Cf. *Rom* 5:20.
260 Cf. *Lk* 11:21-22; *Jn* 16:11; 1 *Jn* 3:8.
261 Cf. *Rom* 5:12-21.
262 *Jn* 16:8.
263 Cf. 1 *Cor* 2:16.
264 Cf. GS 13 § 1.
265 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1513; Pius XII: DS 3897; Paul VI: AAS 58 (1966), 654.
266 Cf. *Gen* 3:1-5; *Wis* 2:24.
267 Cf. *Jn* 8:44; *Rev* 12:9.
268 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800.
269 Cf. 2 *Pet* 2:4.
270 *Gen* 3:5.
271 1 *Jn* 3:8; *Jn* 8:44.
272 St. John Damascene, *De Fide orth.* 2,4: PG 94,877.
273 *Jn* 8:44; cf. *Mt* 4:1-11.
274 1 *Jn* 3:8.
275 *Rom* 8:28.
276 *Gen* 2:17.
277 *Gen* 2:17.
278 Cf. *Gen* 3:1-11; *Rom* 5:19.
279 St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*: PG 91,1156C; cf. *Gen* 3:5.
280 Cf. *Rom* 3:23.
281 Cf. *Gen* 3:5-10.
282 Cf. *Gen* 3:7-16.
283 Cf. *Gen* 3:17,19.
284 *Rom* 8:21.
285 *Gen* 3:19; cf. 2:17.
286 Cf. *Rom* 5:12.
287 Cf. *Gen* 4:3-15; 6:5,12; *Rom* 1:18-32; 1 *Cor* 1-6; *Rev* 2-3.
288 GS 13 § 1.
289 *Rom* 5:12,19.
290 *Rom* 5:18.
291 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1512.
292 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1514.
293 St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo* 4,1.
294 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1511-1512
295 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1513.
296 DS 371-372.
297 Cf. DS 1510-1516.
298 Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; cf. *Heb* 2:14.
299 Cf. John Paul II, *CA* 25.
300 *Jn* 1:29.
301 Cf. John Paul II, *RP* 16.
302 1 *Jn* 5:19; cf. 1 *Pet* 5:8.
303 GS 37 § 2.
304 Cf. *Gen* 3:9,15.
305 Cf. 1 *Cor* 15:21-22,45; *Phil* 2:8; *Rom* 5:19-20.
306 Cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: DS 2803; Council of Trent: DS 1573.

307 St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 73,4: PL 54,396.

308 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III,1,3, *ad* 3; cf. *Rom* 5:20.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

The Good News: God has sent his Son

422 'But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.'¹ This is 'the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God':² God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own 'beloved Son'.³

423 We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He 'came from God',⁴ 'descended from heaven',⁵ and 'came in the flesh'.⁶ For 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.'⁷

424 Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'⁸ On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church.⁹

"To preach. . . the unsearchable riches of Christ"¹⁰

425 The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."¹¹ It And they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.¹²

At the heart of catechesis: Christ

426 "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father. . . who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever."¹³ To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him."¹⁴ Catechesis aims at putting "people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."¹⁵

427 In catechesis "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God,. . . is taught - everything else is taught with reference to him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. . . Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'¹⁶

428 Whoever is called "to teach Christ" must first seek "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"; he must suffer "the loss of all things. . ." in order to "gain Christ and be found in him", and "to know him and

the power of his resurrection, and [to] share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible [he] may attain the resurrection from the dead".¹⁷

429 From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to "evangelize", and to lead others to the "yes" of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt. To this end, following the order of the Creed, Jesus' principal titles - "Christ", "Son of God", and "Lord" (*article 2*) - will be presented. The Creed next confesses the chief mysteries of his life - those of his Incarnation (*article 3*), Paschal mystery (*articles 4 and 5*) and glorification (*articles 6 and 7*).

1 *Gal* 4:4-5.

2 *Mk* 1:1.

3 *Mk* 1:11; cf. *Lk* 1:5,68.

4 *Jn* 13:3.

5 *Jn* 3:13; 6:33.

6 *1 Jn* 4:2.

7 *Jn* 1:14,16.

8 *Mt* 16:16.

9 Cf. *Mt* 16:18; St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 4,3:PL 54,150-152; 51,1:PL 54,309B; 62,2:PL 54,350-351; 83,3:PL 54,431-432.

10 *Eph* 3:8.

11 *Acts* 4:20.

12 *1 Jn* 1:1-4.

13 *CT* 5.

14 *CT* 5.

15 *CT* 5.

16 *CT* 6; cf. *Jn* 7:16.

17 *Phil* 3:8-11.

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ARTICLE 2

"AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD"

I. JESUS

430 Jesus means in Hebrew: "God saves." At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission.¹⁸ Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, "will save his people from their sins".¹⁹ In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.

431 In the history of salvation God was not content to deliver Israel "out of the house of bondage"²⁰ by bringing them out of Egypt. He also saves them from their sin. Because sin is always an offence against God, only he can forgive it.²¹ For this reason Israel, becoming more and more aware of the universality of sin, will no longer be able to seek salvation except by invoking the name of the Redeemer God.²²

432 The name "Jesus" signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation,²³ so that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."²⁴

433 The name of the Savior God was invoked only once in the year by the high priest in atonement for the sins of Israel, after he had sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies with the sacrificial blood. The mercy seat was the place of God's presence.²⁵ When St. Paul speaks of Jesus whom "God put forward as an expiation by his blood", he means that in Christ's humanity "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."²⁶

434 Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Savior God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name".²⁷ The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name.²⁸

435 The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words "through our Lord Jesus Christ". The *Hail Mary* reaches its high point in the words "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." The Eastern prayer of the heart, the *Jesus Prayer*, says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word "Jesus" on their lips.

II. CHRIST

436 The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means "anointed". It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets.²⁹ This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively.³⁰ It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet.³¹ Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet and king.

437 To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."³² From the beginning he was "the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world", conceived as "holy" in Mary's virginal womb.³³ God called Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", so that Jesus, "who is called Christ", should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic lineage of David.³⁴

438 Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission, "for the name 'Christ' implies 'he who anointed', 'he who was anointed' and 'the very anointing with which he was anointed'. The one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing."³⁵ His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power", "that he might be revealed to Israel"³⁶ as its Messiah. His works and words will manifest him as "the Holy One of God".³⁷

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to Israel.³⁸ Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political.³⁹

440 Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴¹ Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross.⁴² Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."⁴³

III. THE ONLY SON OF GOD

441 In the Old Testament, "*son of God*" is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings.⁴⁴ It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called "son of God", it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus "son of God", as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this.⁴⁵

442 Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God", for Jesus responds solemnly: "Flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but *my Father* who is in heaven."⁴⁶ Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles. . ."⁴⁷ "And in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'⁴⁸ From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the center of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation.⁴⁹

443 Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am."⁵⁰ Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as

distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels.⁵¹ He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father", except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father'", and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father".⁵²

444 The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son".⁵³ Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence.⁵⁴ He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God".⁵⁵ In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God",⁵⁶ that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

445 After his Resurrection, Jesus' divine sonship becomes manifest in the power of his glorified humanity. He was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead".⁵⁷ The apostles can confess: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."⁵⁸

IV. LORD

446 In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name YHWH, by which God revealed himself to Moses,⁵⁹ is rendered as *Kyrios*, "Lord". From then on, "*Lord*" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "Lord" both for the Father and - what is new - for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself.⁶⁰

447 Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of Psalm 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles.⁶¹ Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

448 Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as "Lord". This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing.⁶² At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "Lord" expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus.⁶³ In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: "My Lord and my God!" It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: "It is the Lord!"⁶⁴

449 By attributing to Jesus the divine title "Lord", the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honor and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because "he was in the form of God",⁶⁵ and the Father manifested the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting him into his glory.⁶⁶

450 From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not "the Lord".⁶⁷ "The Church. . . believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master."⁶⁸

451 Christian prayer is characterized by the title "Lord", whether in the invitation to prayer ("The Lord be with you"), its conclusion ("through Christ our Lord") or the exclamation full of trust and hope: *Maran atha* ("Our Lord, come!") or *Marana tha* ("Come, Lord!") - "Amen Come Lord Jesus!"⁶⁹

IN BRIEF

452 The name Jesus means "God saves". The child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt* 1:21): "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12).

453 The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*Acts* 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (*Lk* 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (*Acts* 28:20).

454 The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf. *Jn* 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. *Acts* 8:37; *1 Jn* 2:23).

455 The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (*1 Cor* 12:3).

18 Cf. *Lk* 1:31.
19 *Mt* 1:21; cf. 2:7.
20 *Deut* 5:6.
21 Cf. *Ps* 51:4,12.
22 Cf. *Ps* 79:9.
23 Cf. *Jn* 3:18; *Acts* 2:21; 5:41; 3 *Jn* 7; *Rom* 10:6-13.
24 *Acts* 4:12; cf. 9:14; *Jas* 2:7.
25 Cf. *Ex* 25:22; *Lev* 16:2,15-16; *Num* 7:89; *Sir* 50:20; *Heb* 9:5,7.
26 *Rom* 3:25; 2 *Cor* 5:19.
27 *Phil* 2:9-10; cf. *Jn* 12:28.
28 Cf. *Acts* 16:16-18; 19:13-16; *Mk* 16:17; *Jn* 15:16.
29 Cf. *Ex* 29:7; *Lev* 8:12; 1 *Sam* 9:16; 10:1; 16:1,12-13; 1 *Kings* 1:39; 19:16.
30 Cf. *Ps* 2:2; *Acts* 4:26-27.
31 Cf. *Isa* 11:2; 61:1; *Zech* 4:14; 6:13; *Lk* 4:16-21.
32 *Lk* 2:11.
33 *Jn* 10:36; cf. *Lk* 1:35.
34 *Mt* 1:20; cf. 1:16; *Rom* 1:1; 2 *Tim* 2:8; *Rev* 22:16.
35 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3,18,3:PG 7/1,934.
36 *Acts* 10:38; *Jn* 1:31.
37 *Mk* 1:24; *Jn* 6:69; *Acts* 3:14.
38 Cf. *Mt* 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9,15.
39 Cf. *Jn* 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; *Mt* 22:41-46; *Lk* 24:21.
40 Cf. *Mt* 16:16-23.
41 *Jn* 3:13; *Mt* 20:28; cf. *Jn* 6:62; *Dan* 7:13; *Isa* 53:10-12.
42 Cf. *Jn* 19:19-22; *Lk* 23:39-43.
43 *Acts* 2:36.
44 Cf. *Deut* 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; *Job* 1:6; *Ex* 4:22; *Hos* 2:1; 11:1; *Jer* 3:19; *Sir* 36:11; *Wis* 18:13; 2 *Sam* 7:14; *Ps* 82:6.
45 Cf. 1 *Chr* 17:13; *Ps* 2:7; *Mt* 27:54; *Lk* 23:47.
46 *Mt* 16:16-17.
47 *Gal* 1:15-16.
48 *Acts* 9:20.
49 Cf. 1 *Thess* 1:10; *Jn* 20:31; *Mt* 16:18.
50 *Lk* 22:70; cf. *Mt* 26:64; *Mk* 14:61-62.
51 Cf. *Mt* 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36.
52 *Mt* 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; *Lk* 11:13; *Jn* 20:17.
53 Cf. *Mt* 3:17; cf. 17:5.
54 *Jn* 3:16; cf. 10:36.
55 *Jn* 3:18.
56 *Mk* 15:39.
57 *Rom* 1:3; cf. *Acts* 13:33.
58 *Jn* 1:14.
59 Cf. *Ex* 3:14.
60 Cf. 1 *Cor* 2:8.
61 Cf. *Mt* 22:41-46; cf. *Acts* 2:34-36; *Heb* 1:13; *Jn* 13:13.
62 Cf. *Mt* 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; *et al.*
63 Cf. *Lk* 1:43; 2:11.
64 *Jn* 20:28,21:7.
65 Cf. *Acts* 2:34-36; *Rom* 9:5; *Titus* 2:13; *Rev* 5:13; *Phil* 2:6.
66 Cf. *Rom* 10:9; 1 *Cor* 12:3; *Phil* 2:9-11.
67 Cf. *Rev* 11:15; *Mk* 12:17; *Acts* 5:29.
68 GS 10 § 3; Cf. 45 § 2.
69 1 *Cor* 16:22; *Rev* 22:20.

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THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 3

"HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Paragraph 1. The Son of God Became Man

I. WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

456 With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

457 The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God*, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world", and "he was revealed to take away sins".⁷⁰

Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?⁷¹

458 The Word became flesh so *that thus we might know God's love*: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."⁷² "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."⁷³

459 The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."⁷⁴ On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!"⁷⁵ Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you."⁷⁶ This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example.⁷⁷

460 The Word became flesh to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*":⁷⁸ "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God."⁷⁹ "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God."⁸⁰ "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."⁸¹

II. THE INCARNATION

461 Taking up St. John's expression, "The Word became flesh",⁸² the Church calls "Incarnation" the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.⁸³

462 The Letter to the Hebrews refers to the same mystery:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I have come to do your will, O God."⁸⁴

463 Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God."⁸⁵ Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings "the mystery of our religion": "He was manifested in the flesh."⁸⁶

III. TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

464 The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man.

During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

465 The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh".⁸⁷ But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father", and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father.⁸⁸

466 The Nestorian heresy regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's Son. Opposing this heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the third ecumenical council, at Ephesus in 431, confessed "that the Word, uniting to himself in his person the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man."⁸⁹ Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it and made it his own, from his conception. For this reason

the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb: "Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh."⁹⁰

467 The Monophysites affirmed that the human nature had ceased to exist as such in Christ when the divine person of God's Son assumed it. Faced with this heresy, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, confessed:

Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin". He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.⁹¹

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (*prosopon*) and one hypostasis.⁹²

468 After the Council of Chalcedon, some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople in 553, confessed that "there is but one *hypostasis* [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity."⁹³ Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: "He who was crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and *one of the Holy Trinity*."⁹⁴

469 The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother:

"What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed", sings the Roman Liturgy.⁹⁵ And the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: "O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!"⁹⁶

IV. HOW IS THE SON OF GOD MAN?

470 Because "human nature was assumed, not absorbed",⁹⁷ in the mysterious union of the Incarnation, the Church was led over the course of centuries to confess the full reality of Christ's human soul, with its operations of intellect and will, and of his human body. In parallel fashion, she had to recall on each occasion that Christ's human nature belongs, as his own, to the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it. Everything that Christ is and does in this nature derives from "one of the Trinity". The Son of God therefore communicates to his humanity his own personal mode of existence in the Trinity. In his soul as in his body, Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity:⁹⁸

The Son of God. . . worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.⁹⁹

Christ's soul and his human knowledge

471 Apollinarius of Laodicea asserted that in Christ the divine Word had replaced the soul or spirit. Against this error the Church confessed that the eternal Son also assumed a rational, human soul.¹⁰⁰

472 This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in

the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man",¹⁰¹ and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience.¹⁰² This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking "the form of a slave".¹⁰³

473 But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person.¹⁰⁴ "The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God."¹⁰⁵ Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father.¹⁰⁶ The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.¹⁰⁷

474 By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal.¹⁰⁸ What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.¹⁰⁹

Christ's human will

475 Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but cooperate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation.¹¹⁰ Christ's human will "does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will."¹¹¹

Christ's true body

476 Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity, Christ's body was finite.¹¹² Therefore the human face of Jesus can be portrayed; at the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea II in 787) the Church recognized its representation in holy images to be legitimate.¹¹³

477 At the same time the Church has always acknowledged that in the body of Jesus "we see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see."¹¹⁴ The individual characteristics of Christ's body express the divine person of God's Son. He has made the features of his human body his own, to the point that they can be venerated when portrayed in a holy image, for the believer "who venerates the icon is venerating in it the person of the one depicted".¹¹⁵

The heart of the Incarnate Word

478 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God. . . loved me and gave himself for me."¹¹⁶ He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation,¹¹⁷ "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that. . . love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.¹¹⁸

IN BRIEF

479 At the time appointed by God, the only Son of the Father, the eternal Word, that is, the Word and substantial Image of the Father, became incarnate; without losing his divine nature he has assumed human nature.

480 Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men.

481 Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son.

482 Christ, being true God and true man, has a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to his divine intellect and divine will, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

483 The Incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word.

70 *1 Jn* 4:10; 4:14; 3:5.

71 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech* 15: PG 45, 48B.

72 *1 Jn* 4:9.

73 *Jn* 3:16.

74 *Mt* 11:29; *Jn* 14:6.

75 *Mk* 9:7; cf. *Dt* 6:4-5. 76 *Jn* 15:12.

77 Cf. *Mk* 8:34.

78 2 *Pt* 1:4.

79 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939.

80 St. Athanasius, *De inc.* 54, 3: PG 25, 192B.

81 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57, 1-4.

82 *Jn* 1:14.

83 *Phil* 2:5-8; cf. *LH*, Saturday, Canticle at Evening Prayer.

84 *Heb* 10:5-7, citing *Ps* 40:6-8 ([7-9] LXX).

85 *1 Jn* 4:2.

86 *1 Tim* 3:16.

87 Cf. *1 Jn* 4:2-3; 2 *Jn* 7.

88 Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126.

89 Council of Ephesus (431): DS 250.

90 Council of Ephesus: DS 251.

91 Council of Chalcedon (451): DS 301; cf. *Heb* 4:15.

92 Council of Chalcedon: DS 302.

93 Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 424.

94 Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 432; cf. DS 424; Council of Ephesus, DS 255.

95 *LH*, 1 January, Antiphon for Morning Prayer; cf. St. Leo the Great, *Sermo in nat. Dom.* 1, 2; PL 54, 191-192.

95 Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Troparion "*O monogenes.*"

97 *GS* 22 § 2.

98 Cf. *Jn* 14:9-10.

99 *GS* 22 § 2.

100 Cf. Damasus 1: DS 149.

101 *Lk* 2:52.

102 Cf. *Mk* 6 38; 8 27; *Jn* 11:34; etc.

103 *Phil* 2:7.

104 Cf. St. Gregory the Great, "*Sicut aqua*" *ad Eulogium, Epist. Lib.* 10, 39 PL 77, 1097A ff.; DS 475.

105 St. Maximus the Confessor, *Qu. et dub.* 66: PG 90, 840A.

106 Cf. *Mk* 14:36; *Mt* 11:27; *Jn* 1:18; 8:55; etc.

107 Cf. *Mk* 2:8; *Jn* 2 25; 6:61; etc.

108 Cf. *Mk* 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30.

109 Cf. *Mk* 13:32, Acts 1:7.

110 Cf. Council of Constantinople III (681): DS 556-559.

111 Council of Constantinople III: DS 556.

112 Cf. Council of the Lateran (649): DS 504.

113 Cf. *Gal* 3:1; cf. Council of Nicaea II (787): DS 600-603.

114 *Roman Missal*, Preface of Christmas I.

115 Council of Nicaea II: DS 601.

116 *Gal* 2:20.

117 Cf. *Jn* 19:34.

118 Pius XII, encyclical, *Haurietis aquas* (1956): DS 3924; cf. DS 3812.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 3

"HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Paragraph 2. "Conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary"

I. CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. . .

484 The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates "the fullness of time",¹¹⁹ the time of the fulfillment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the "whole fullness of deity" would dwell "bodily".¹²⁰ The divine response to her question, "How can this be, since I know not man?", was given by the power of the Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you."¹²¹

485 The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son.¹²² The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of Life", is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own.

486 The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is "Christ", that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples.¹²³ Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."¹²⁴

II. . . BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

487 What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.

Mary's predestination

488 "God sent forth his Son", but to prepare a body for him,¹²⁵ he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary":¹²⁶

The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life.¹²⁷

489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women *prepared* for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living.¹²⁸ By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age.¹²⁹ Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women.¹³⁰ Mary "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established."¹³¹

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Savior, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role."¹³² The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as "full of grace".¹³³ In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God,¹³⁴ was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.¹³⁵

492 The "splendor of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son".¹³⁶ The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love".¹³⁷

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature".¹³⁸ By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

"Let it be done to me according to your word. . ."

494 At the announcement that she would give birth to "the Son of the Most High" without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that "with God nothing will be impossible": "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."¹³⁹ Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace.¹⁴⁰

As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."¹⁴¹ Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert. . . : "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."¹⁴² Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary "the Mother of the living" and frequently claim: "Death through Eve, life through Mary."¹⁴³

Mary's divine motherhood

495 Called in the Gospels "the mother of Jesus", Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as "the mother of my Lord".¹⁴⁴ In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*).¹⁴⁵

Mary's virginity

496 From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived "by the Holy Spirit without human seed".¹⁴⁶ The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says:

You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin. . . he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate. . . he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen.¹⁴⁷

497 The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility.¹⁴⁸ "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée.¹⁴⁹ The Church sees here the fulfillment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."¹⁵⁰

498 People are sometimes troubled by the silence of St. Mark's Gospel and the New Testament Epistles about Jesus' virginal conception. Some might wonder if we were merely dealing with legends or theological constructs not claiming to be history. To this we must respond: Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus met with the lively opposition, mockery or incomprehension of non-believers, Jews and pagans alike,¹⁵¹ so it could hardly have been motivated by pagan mythology or by some adaptation to the ideas of the age. The meaning of this event is accessible only to faith, which understands in it the "connection of these mysteries with one another"¹⁵² in the totality of Christ's mysteries, from his Incarnation to his Passover. St. Ignatius of Antioch already bears witness to this connection: "Mary's virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord's death escaped the notice of the prince of this world: these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God's silence."¹⁵³

Mary - "ever-virgin"

499 The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man.¹⁵⁴ In fact, Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it."¹⁵⁵ And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the "Ever-virgin".¹⁵⁶

500 Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus.¹⁵⁷ The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary".¹⁵⁸ They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.¹⁵⁹

501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love."¹⁶⁰

Mary's virginal motherhood in God's plan

502 The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in his saving plan wanted his Son to be born of a virgin. These reasons touch both on the person of Christ and his redemptive mission, and on the welcome Mary gave that mission on behalf of all men.

503 Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. "He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures."¹⁶¹

504 Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: "The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven."¹⁶² From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God "gives him the Spirit without measure."¹⁶³ From "his fullness" as the head of redeemed humanity "we have all received, grace upon grace."¹⁶⁴

505 By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in *the new birth* of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith. "How can this be?"¹⁶⁵ Participation in the divine life arises "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God".¹⁶⁶ The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. The spousal character of the human vocation in relation to God¹⁶⁷ is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood.

506 Mary is a virgin because her virginity is *the sign of her faith* "unadulterated by any doubt", and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will.¹⁶⁸ It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Savior: "Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ."¹⁶⁹

507 At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: "the Church indeed. . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse."¹⁷⁰

IN BRIEF

508 From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. "Full of grace", Mary is "the most excellent fruit of redemption" (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

509 Mary is truly "Mother of God" since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.

510 Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" (*Lk* 1:38).

511 The Virgin Mary "cooperated through free faith and obedience in human salvation" (LG 56). She uttered her yes "in the name of all human nature" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 30, 1). By her obedience she became the new Eve, mother of the living.

119 *Gal* 4:4.

120 *Col* 2:9.

121 *Lk* 1:34-35 (Gk.).

122 Cf. *Jn* 16:14-15.

123 Cf. *Mt* 1:20; 2:1-12; *Lk* 1:35; 2:8-20; *Jn* 1:31-34; 2:11.

124 *Acts* 10:38.

125 *Gal* 4:4; *Heb* 10:5.

126 *Lk* 1:26-27.
 127 *LG* 56; cf. *LG* 61.
 128 Cf. *Gen* 3:15, 20.
 129 Cf. *Gen* 18:10-14; 21:1-2.
 130 Cf. *1 Cor* 1:17; *1 Sam* 1.
 131 *LG* 55.
 132 *LG* 56.
 133 *Lk* 1:28.
 134 *Lk* 1:28.
 135 Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854): DS 2803.
 136 *LG* 53, 56.
 137 Cf. *Eph* 1:3-4.
 138 *LG* 56.
 139 *Lk* 1:28-38; cf. *Rom* 1:5.
 140 Cf. *LG* 56.
 141 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.
 142 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.
 143 *LG* 56; Epiphanius, *Haer.* 78, 18: PG 42, 728CD-729AB; St. Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 21: PL 22, 408.
 144 *Lk* 1:43; *Jn* 2:1; 19:25; cf. *Mt* 13:55; *et al.*
 145 Council of Ephesus (431): DS 251.
 146 Council of the Lateran (649): DS 503; cf. DS 10-64.
 147 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn* 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan, 1889), II/2, 289-293; SCh 10, 154-156; cf. *Rom* 1:3; *Jn* 1:13.
 148 *Mt* 1 18-25; *Lk* 1:26-38.
 149 *Mt* 1:20.
 150 *Isa* 7:14 in the LXX, quoted in *Mt* 1:23 (Gk.).
 151 Cf. St. Justin, *Dial.*, 99, 7: PG 6, 708-709; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1, 32, 69: PG 11, 720-721; *et al.*
 152 *Dei Filius* 4: DS 3016.
 153 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph.* 19, 1: AF II/2 76-80; SCh 10,88; cf. *1 Cor* 2:8.
 154 Cf. DS 291; 294; 427; 442; 503; 571; 1880.
 155 *LG* 57.
 156 Cf. *LG* 52.
 157 Cf. *Mk* 3:31-35; 6:3; *1 Cor* 9:5; *Gal* 1:19.
 158 *Mt* 13:55; 28:1; cf. *Mt* 27:56.
 159 Cf. *Gen* 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc.
 160 *LG* 63; cf. *Jn* 19:26-27; *Rom* 8:29; *Rev* 12:17.
 161 Council of Friuli (796): DS 619; cf. *Lk* 2:48-49.
 162 *1 Cor* 15:45,47.
 163 *Jn* 3:34.
 164 *Jn* 1:16; cf. *Col* 1:18.
 165 *Lk* 1:34; cf. *Jn* 3:9.
 166 *Jn* 1:13.
 167 Cf. *2 Cor* 11:2.
 168 *LG* 63; cf. *1 Cor* 7:34-35.
 169 St. Augustine, *De virg.*, 3: PL 40, 398.
 170 *LG* 64; cf. 63.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 3

"HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Paragraph 3. The Mysteries of Christ's Life

512 Concerning Christ's life the Creed speaks only about the mysteries of the Incarnation (conception and birth) and Paschal mystery (passion, crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension). It says nothing explicitly about the mysteries of Jesus' hidden or public life, but the articles of faith concerning his Incarnation and Passover do shed light on the whole of his earthly life. "All that Jesus did and taught, from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven",¹⁷¹ is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter.

513 According to circumstances catechesis will make use of all the richness of the mysteries of Jesus. Here it is enough merely to indicate some elements common to all the mysteries of Christ's life (I), in order then to sketch the principal mysteries of Jesus' hidden (II) and public (III) life.

I. CHRIST'S WHOLE LIFE IS MYSTERY

514 Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted.¹⁷² What is written in the Gospels was set down there "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."¹⁷³

515 The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith¹⁷⁴ and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery.¹⁷⁵ His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."¹⁷⁶ His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission

Characteristics common to Jesus' mysteries

516 Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"¹⁷⁷ Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love. . . among us".¹⁷⁸

517 Christ's whole life is a mystery of *redemption*. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross,¹⁷⁹ but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;¹⁸⁰
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;¹⁸¹
- in his word which purifies its hearers;¹⁸²
- in his healings and exorcisms by which "he took our infirmities and bore our diseases";¹⁸³
- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.¹⁸⁴

518 Christ's whole life is a mystery of recapitulation. All Jesus did, said and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation:

When Christ became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of mankind and procured for us a "short cut" to salvation, so that what we had lost in Adam, that is, being in the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus.¹⁸⁵ For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men.¹⁸⁶

Our communion in the mysteries of Jesus

519 All Christ's riches "are for every individual and are everybody's property."¹⁸⁷ Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation "for us men and for our salvation" to his death "for our sins" and Resurrection "for our justification".¹⁸⁸ He is still "our advocate with the Father", who "always lives to make intercession" for us.¹⁸⁹ He remains ever "in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us."¹⁹⁰

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man",¹⁹¹ who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.¹⁹²

521 Christ enables us to *live in him* all that he himself lived, and *he lives it in us*. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man."¹⁹³ We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model:

We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. . . For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.¹⁹⁴

II. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' INFANCY AND HIDDEN LIFE

The preparations

522 The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant".¹⁹⁵ He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

523 *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way.¹⁹⁶ "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last.¹⁹⁷ He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".¹⁹⁸ Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.¹⁹⁹

524 When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.²⁰⁰ By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease."²⁰¹

The Christmas mystery

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family.²⁰² Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest.²⁰³ The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal
And the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.
The angels and shepherds praise him
And the magi advance with the star,
For you are born for us,
Little Child, God eternal!²⁰⁴

526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom.²⁰⁵ For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God".²⁰⁶ Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.²⁰⁷ Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange":

O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.²⁰⁸

The mysteries of Jesus' infancy

527 Jesus' *circumcision*, on the eighth day after his birth,²⁰⁹ is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law²¹⁰ and his deputation to Israel's worship, in which he will participate throughout his life. This sign prefigures that "circumcision of Christ" which is Baptism.²¹¹

528 The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee.²¹² In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations.²¹³ Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament.²¹⁴ The Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas*²¹⁵ (is made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

529 The *presentation of Jesus in the temple* shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord.²¹⁶ With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its *encounter* with the Savior—the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the "light to the nations" and the "glory of Israel", but also "a sign that is spoken against". The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had "prepared in the presence of all peoples".

530 The *flight into Egypt* and the massacre of the innocents²¹⁷ make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not."²¹⁸ Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of

persecution. His own share it with him.²¹⁹ Jesus' departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people.²²⁰

The mysteries of Jesus' hidden life

531 During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God,²²¹ a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."²²²

532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will. . ." ²²³ The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.²²⁴

533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus - the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for *silence*, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us. . . A lesson on *family life*. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character. . . A lesson of *work*. Nazareth, home of the "Carpenter's Son", in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work. . . To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern their brother who is God.²²⁵

534 The *finding of Jesus in the temple* is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus.²²⁶ Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?"²²⁷ Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary "kept all these things in her heart" during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life.

III. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

The baptism of Jesus

535 Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan.²²⁸ John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins".²²⁹ A crowd of sinners²³⁰ - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes-come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son."²³¹ This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

536 The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".²³² Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death.²³³ Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins.²³⁴ The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son.²³⁵ The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him".²³⁶ Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened"²³⁷ - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

537 Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and "walk in newness of life".²³⁸

Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him.²³⁹

Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God.²⁴⁰

Jesus' temptations

538 The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him.²⁴¹ At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him "until an opportune time".²⁴²

539 The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder.²⁴³ Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.

540 Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.²⁴⁴ This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."²⁴⁵ By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

"The kingdom of God is at hand"

541 "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel.'"²⁴⁶ "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth."²⁴⁷ Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life".²⁴⁸ He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms".²⁴⁹

542 Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the "family of God". By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery - his death on the cross and his Resurrection - he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Into this union with Christ all men are called.²⁵⁰

The proclamation of the kingdom of God

543 *Everyone* is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations.²⁵¹ To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word:

The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest.²⁵²

544 The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor",²⁵³ he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."²⁵⁴ To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned.²⁵⁵ Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation.²⁵⁶ Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.²⁵⁷

545 Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."²⁵⁸ He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents".²⁵⁹ The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins".²⁶⁰

546 Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching.²⁶¹ Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything.²⁶² Words are not enough, deeds are required.²⁶³ The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word?²⁶⁴ What use has he made of the talents he has received?²⁶⁵ Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven".²⁶⁶ For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic.²⁶⁷

The signs of the kingdom of God

547 Jesus accompanies his words with many "mighty works and wonders and signs", which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah.²⁶⁸

548 The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him.²⁶⁹ To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask.²⁷⁰ So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God.²⁷¹ But his miracles can also be occasions for "offence";²⁷² they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.²⁷³

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death,²⁷⁴ Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below,²⁷⁵ but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage.²⁷⁶

550 The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."²⁷⁷ Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world".²⁷⁸ The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood."²⁷⁹

"The keys of the kingdom"

551 From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission.²⁸⁰ He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and 'sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.'²⁸¹ They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁸²

552 Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve;²⁸³ Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."²⁸⁴ Christ, the "living Stone",²⁸⁵ thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.²⁸⁶

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."²⁸⁷ The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: "Feed my sheep."²⁸⁸ The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles²⁸⁹ and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

A foretaste of the Kingdom: the Transfiguration

554 From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised."²⁹⁰ Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he.²⁹¹ In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain,²⁹² before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem".²⁹³ A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"²⁹⁴

555 For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter's confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to "enter into his glory".²⁹⁵ Moses and Elijah had seen God's glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah's sufferings.²⁹⁶ Christ's Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God's servant;²⁹⁷ the cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. "The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud."²⁹⁸

You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendor of the Father.²⁹⁹

556 On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection.³⁰⁰ From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body."³⁰¹ But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God".³⁰²

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?"³⁰³

Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem

557 "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem."³⁰⁴ By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."³⁰⁵

558 Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"³⁰⁶ When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes."³⁰⁷

Jesus' messianic entrance into Jerusalem

559 How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David".³⁰⁸ Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass".³⁰⁹ Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth.³¹⁰ And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds.³¹¹ Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord",³¹² is taken up by the Church in the "*Sanctus*" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover.

560 *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem* manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

IN BRIEF

561 "The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfillment of Revelation" John Paul II, *CT* 9).

562 Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf. *Gal* 4:19). "For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him" (*LG* 7 § 4).

563 No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child.

564 By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work.

565 From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the "Servant", wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by the "baptism" of his Passion.

566 The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.

567 The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. "This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ" (*LG* 5). The Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter.

568 Christ's Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles' faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent on to the "high mountain" prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: "the hope of glory" (*Col* 1:27; cf.: St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 51, 3: PL 54, 310C).

569 Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf. *Heb* 12:3).

570 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifests the coming of the kingdom that the Messiah-King, welcomed into his city by children and the humble of heart, is going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection.

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- 171 *Acts* 1:1-2.
172 Cf. *Jn* 20:30.
173 *Jn* 20:31.
174 Cf. *Mk* 1:1; *Jn* 21:24.
175 Cf. *Lk* 2:7; *Mt* 27: 48; *Jn* 20:7.
176 *Col* 2:9.
177 *Jn* 14:9; *Lk* 9:35; cf. *Mt* 17:5; *Mk* 9:7 ("my beloved Son").
178 *1 Jn* 4:9.
179 Cf. *Eph* 1:7; *Col* 1:13-14; *1 Pt* 1:18-19.
180 Cf. *2 Cor* 8:9.
181 Cf. *Lk* 2:51.
182 Cf. *Jn* 15:3.
183 *Mt* 8:17; cf. *Isa* 53:4.
184 Cf. *Rom* 4:25.
185 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 18, 1: PG 7/1, 932.
186 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 18, 7: PG 7/1, 937; cf. 2, 22, 4.
187 John Paul II, *RH* 11.
188 *1 Cor* 15:3; *Rom* 4:25.
189 *1 Jn* 2:1 *Heb* 7:25.
190 *Heb* 9:24.
191 *GS* 38; cf. *Rom* 1 5:5; *Phil* 2:5.
192 Cf. *Jn* 13:15; *Lk* 11:1; *Mt* 5:11-12.
193 *GS* 22 § 2.
194 St. John Eudes, *LH*, Week 33, Friday, OR.
195 *Heb* 9:15.
196 Cf. *Acts* 13:24; *Mt* 3:3.
197 *Lk* 1:76; cf. 7:26; *Mt* 11:13.
198 *Jn* 1 29; cf. *Acts* 1:22; *Lk* 1:41; 16:16; *Jn* 3:29.
199 *Lk* 1:17; cf. *Mk* 6:17-29.
200 Cf. *Rev* 22:17.
201 *Jn* 3:30.
202 Cf. *Lk* 2:61.
203 Cf. *Lk* 2:8-20.
204 *Kontakion* of Romanos the Melodist.
205 Cf. *Mt* 18:3-4.
206 *Jn* 3 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. *Mt* 23:12.
207 Cf. *Gal* 4:19.
208 *LH*, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st.
209 Cf. *Lk* 2:21.
210 Cf. *Gal* 4:4.
211 Cf. *Col* 2:11-13.
212 *Mt* 2:1; cf. *LH*, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon at the Canticle of Mary.
213 Cf. *Mt* 2:2; *Num* 24:17-19; *Rev* 22:16.
214 Cf. *Jn* 4 22; *Mt* 2:4-6.
215 St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini* 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; *LH*, Epiphany, OR; *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third reading.
216 Cf. *Lk* 2:22-39; *Ex* 13:2, 12-13.
217 Cf. *Mt* 2:13-18.
218 *Jn* 1:11.
219 Cf. *Jn* 15:20.
220 Cf. *Mt* 2:15; *Hos* 11:1.
221 Cf. *Gal* 4:4.
222 *Lk* 2:51-52.
223 *Lk* 22:42.
224 Cf. *Rom* 5:19.
225 Paul VI at Nazareth, 5 January 1964: *LH*, Feast of the Holy Family, OR.
226 Cf. *Lk* 2:41-52.
227 *Lk* 2:49 alt.
228 Cf. *Lk* 3:23; *Acts* 1:22.
229 *Lk* 3:3.

230 Cf. *Lk* 3:10-14; *Mt* 3:7; 21:32.
231 *Mt* 3:13-17.
232 *Jn* 1:29; cf. *Isa* 53:12.
233 Cf. *Mk* 10:38; *Lk* 12:50.
234 *Mt* 3:15; cf. 26:39.
235 Cf. *Lk* 3:22; *Isa* 42:1.
236 *Jn* 1:32-33; cf. *Isa* 11:2.
237 *Mt* 3:16.
238 *Rom* 6:4.
239 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40, 9; PG 36, 369.
240 St. Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matth.* 2, 5; PL 9, 927.
241 Cf. *Mk* 1:12-13.
242 *Lk* 4:13.
243 Cf. *Ps* 95:10; *Mk* 3:27.
244 Cf. *Mt* 16:2 1-23.
245 *Heb* 4:15.
246 *Mk* 1:14-15.
247 *LG* 3.
248 *LG* 2.
249 *LG* 5.
250 *Jn* 12:32; cf. *LG* 3.
251 Cf. *Mt* 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19.
252 *LG* 5; cf. *Mk* 4:14, 26-29; *Lk* 12:32.
253 *Lk* 4:18; cf. 7:22.
254 *Mt* 5:3.
255 Cf. *Mt* 11:25.
256 Cf. *Mt* 21:18; *Mk* 2:23-26; *Jn* 4:6-7; 19:28; *Lk* 9:58.
257 Cf. *Mt* 25:31-46.
258 *Mk* 2:17; cf. *I Tim* 1:15.
259 *Lk* 15:7; cf. 7:11-32.
260 *Mt* 26:28.
261 Cf. *Mk* 4:33-34.
262 Cf. *Mt* 13:44-45; 22:1-14.
263 Cf. *Mt* 21:28-32.
264 Cf. *Mt* 13:3-9.
265 Cf. *Mt* 25:14-30.
266 *Mt* 13:11.
267 *Mk* 4:11; cf. *Mt* 13:10-15.
268 *Acts* 2:22; cf. *Lk* 7:18-23.
269 Cf. *Jn* 5:36; 10:25, 38.
270 Cf. *Mk* 5:25-34; 10:52; etc.
271 Cf. *Jn* 10:31-38.
272 *Mt* 11:6.
273 Cf. *Jn* 11:47-48; *Mk* 3:22.
274 Cf. *Jn* 6:5-15; *Lk* 19:8; *Mt* 11:5.
275 Cf. *Lk* 12 13-14; *Jn* 18:36.
276 Cf. *Jn* 8:34-36.
277 *Mt* 12:26, 28.
278 *Jn* 12:31; cf. *Lk* 8:26-39.
279 *LH*, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn Vexilla Regis: "*Regnavit a ligno Deus.*"
280 Cf. *Mk* 3:13-19.
281 *Lk* 9:2.
282 *Lk* 22:29-30.
283 Cf. *Mk* 3:16; 9:2; *Lk* 24:34; *I Cor* 15:5.
284 *Mt* 16:18.
285 *I Pet* 2:4.
286 Cf. *Lk* 22:32.
287 *Mt* 16:19.
288 *Jn* 21:15-17; cf. 10:11.
289 Cf. *Mt* 18:18.
290 *Mt* 16:21.
291 Cf. *Mt* 16:22-23; *Mt* 17:23; *Lk* 9:45.
292 Cf. *Mt* 17:1-8 and parallels; *2 Pet* 1:16-18.
293 *Lk* 9:31.
294 *Lk* 9:35.
295 *Lk* 24:26.
296 Cf. *Lk* 24:27.
297 Cf. *Isa* 42:1.
298 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, *ad* 2.
299 Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Transfiguration, *Kontakion*.
300 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, *ad* 2.
301 *Phil* 3:21.
302 *Acts* 14:22.
303 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 78, 6; PL 38, 492-493; cf. *Lk* 9:33.
304 *Lk* 9:51; cf. *Jn* 13:1.
305 *Lk* 13:33; cf. *Mk* 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34.
306 *Mt* 23:37.
307 *Lk* 19:41-42.
308 *Lk* 1:32; cf. *Mt* 21:1-11; *Jn* 6:15.
309 *Ps* 24:7-10; *Zech* 9:9.
310 Cf. *Jn* 18:37.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 4

"JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED"

571 The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the center of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all"³¹³ by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ.

572 The Church remains faithful to the interpretation of "all the Scriptures" that Jesus gave both before and after his Passover: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"³¹⁴ Jesus' sufferings took their historical, concrete form from the fact that he was "rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes", who handed "him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified".³¹⁵

573 Faith can therefore try to examine the circumstances of Jesus' death, faithfully handed on by the Gospels³¹⁶ and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption.

Paragraph 1. Jesus and Israel

574 From the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, certain Pharisees and partisans of Herod together with priests and scribes agreed together to destroy him.³¹⁷ Because of certain acts of his expelling demons, forgiving sins, healing on the sabbath day, his novel interpretation of the precepts of the Law regarding purity, and his familiarity with tax collectors and public sinners³¹⁸ -- some ill-intentioned persons suspected Jesus of demonic possession.³¹⁹ He is accused of blasphemy and false prophecy, religious crimes which the Law punished with death by stoning.³²⁰

575 Many of Jesus' deeds and words constituted a "sign of contradiction",³²¹ but more so for the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whom the Gospel according to John often calls simply "the Jews",³²² than for the ordinary People of God.³²³ To be sure, Christ's relations with the Pharisees were not exclusively polemical. Some Pharisees warn him of the danger he was courting;³²⁴ Jesus praises some of them, like the scribe of *Mark* 12:34, and dines several times at their homes.³²⁵ Jesus endorses some of the teachings imparted by this religious elite of God's people: the resurrection of the dead,³²⁶ certain forms of piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer),³²⁷ the custom of addressing God as Father, and the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbor.³²⁸

576 In the eyes of many in Israel, Jesus seems to be acting against essential institutions of the Chosen People:

- submission to the whole of the Law in its written commandments and, for the Pharisees, in the interpretation of oral tradition;
- the centrality of the Temple at Jerusalem as the holy place where God's presence dwells in a special way;
- faith in the one God whose glory no man can share.

I. JESUS AND THE LAW

577 At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus issued a solemn warning in which he presented God's law, given on Sinai during the first covenant, in light of the grace of the New Covenant:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law, until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.³²⁹

578 Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all embracing detail - according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments".³³⁰ He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly.³³¹ On their own admission the Jews were never able to observe the Law in its entirety without violating the least of its precepts.³³² This is why every year on the Day of Atonement the children of Israel ask God's forgiveness for their transgressions of the Law. The Law indeed makes up one inseparable whole, and St. James recalls, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it."³³³

579 This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal.³³⁴ This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry,³³⁵ could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfillment of the Law by the only Righteous One in place of all sinners.³³⁶

580 The perfect fulfillment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son.³³⁷ In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but "upon the heart" of the Servant who becomes "a covenant to the people", because he will "faithfully bring forth justice".³³⁸ Jesus fulfills the Law to the point of taking upon himself "the curse of the Law" incurred by those who do not "abide by the things written in the book of the Law, and do them", for his death took place to redeem them "from the transgressions under the first covenant".³³⁹

581 The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi.³⁴⁰ He often argued within the framework of rabbinical interpretation of the Law.³⁴¹ Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes".³⁴² In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes.³⁴³ Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old. . . But I say to you. . ." ³⁴⁴ With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were "making void the word of God".³⁴⁵

582 Going even further, Jesus perfects the dietary law, so important in Jewish daily life, by revealing its pedagogical meaning through a divine interpretation: "Whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him. . . (Thus he declared all foods clean.) . . . What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts. . ." ³⁴⁶ In presenting with divine authority the definitive interpretation of the Law, Jesus found himself confronted by certain teachers of the Law who did not accept his interpretation of the Law, guaranteed though it was by the divine signs that accompanied it.³⁴⁷ This was the case especially with the sabbath laws, for he recalls, often with rabbinical arguments, that the sabbath rest is not violated by serving God and neighbor,³⁴⁸ which his own healings did.

II. JESUS AND THE TEMPLE

583 Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth.³⁴⁹ At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business.³⁵⁰ He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover.³⁵¹ His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts.³⁵²

584 Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce.³⁵³ He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" ³⁵⁴ After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple.³⁵⁵

585 On the threshold of his Passion Jesus announced the coming destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain "one stone upon another".³⁵⁶ By doing so, he announced a sign of the last days, which were to begin with his own Passover.³⁵⁷ But this prophecy would be distorted in its telling by false witnesses during his interrogation at the high priest's house, and would be thrown back at him as an insult when he was nailed to the cross.³⁵⁸

586 Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church.³⁵⁹ He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men.³⁶⁰ Therefore his being put to bodily death³⁶¹ presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."³⁶²

III. JESUS AND ISRAEL'S FAITH IN THE ONE GOD AND SAVIOR

587 If the Law and the Jerusalem Temple could be occasions of opposition to Jesus by Israel's religious authorities, his role in the redemption of sins, the divine work par excellence, was the true stumbling-block for them.³⁶³

588 Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves.³⁶⁴ Against those among them "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others",

Jesus affirmed: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."³⁶⁵ He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves.³⁶⁶

589 Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them.³⁶⁷ He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet.³⁶⁸ But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"³⁶⁹ By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name.³⁷⁰

590 Only the divine identity of Jesus' person can justify so absolute a claim as "He who is not with me is against me"; and his saying that there was in him "something greater than Jonah, . . . greater than Solomon", something "greater than the Temple"; his reminder that David had called the Messiah his Lord,³⁷¹ and his affirmations, "Before Abraham was, I AM", and even "I and the Father are one."³⁷²

591 Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished.³⁷³ But such an act of faith must go through a mysterious death to self, for a new "birth from above" under the influence of divine grace.³⁷⁴ Such a demand for conversion in the face of so surprising a fulfillment of the promises³⁷⁵ allows one to understand the Sanhedrin's tragic misunderstanding of Jesus: they judged that he deserved the death sentence as a blasphemer.³⁷⁶ The members of the Sanhedrin were thus acting at the same time out of "ignorance" and the "hardness" of their "unbelief".³⁷⁷

IN BRIEF

592 Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf. *Mt* 5:17-19) with such perfection (cf. *Jn* 8:46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf.: *Mt* 5:33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf. *Heb*9:15).

593 Jesus venerated the Temple by going up to it for the Jewish feasts of pilgrimage, and with a jealous love he loved this dwelling of God among men. The Temple prefigures his own mystery. When he announces its destruction, it is as a manifestation of his own execution and of the entry into a new age in the history of salvation, when his Body would be the definitive Temple.

594 Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Savior God himself (cf. *Jn* 5:16-18). Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man (cf. *Jn* 1:14), saw in him only a man who made himself God (*Jn* 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer.

313 *Heb* 9:26.

314 *Lk* 24:26-27,44-45.

315 *Mk* 8:31; *Mt* 20:19.

316 Cf. *DV* 19.

317 Cf. *Mk* 3:6; 14:1.

318 Cf. *Mt* 12:24; *Mk* 2:7,14-17; 3:1-6; 7:14-23.

319 Cf. *Mk* 3:22; *Jn* 8:48; 10:20.

320 Cf. *Mk* 2:7; *Jn* 5:18; *Jn* 7:12, 7:52; 8:59; 10:31, 33.

321 *Lk* 2:34.

322 Cf. *Jn* 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19.

323 *Jn* 7:48-49.

324 Cf. *Lk* 13:31.

325 Cf. *Lk* 7:36; 14:1.

326 Cf. *Mt* 22:23-34; *Lk* 20:39.

327 Cf. *Mt* 6:18.

328 Cf. *Mk* 12:28-34.

329 *Mt* 5:17-19.

330 *Mt* 5:19.

331 Cf. *Jn* 8:46.

332 Cf. *Jn* 7:19; *Acts* 13:38-41; 15:10.

333 *Jas* 2:10; cf. *Gal* 3:10; 5:3.

334 Cf. *Rom* 10:2.

335 Cf. *Mt* 15:31; *Lk* 11:39-54.

336 Cf. *Isa* 53:11; *Heb* 9:15.

337 Cf. *Gal* 4:4.

338 *Jer* 31:33; *Isa* 42:3, 6.

339 *Gal* 3:13; 3:10; *Heb* 9:15.

340 Cf. *Jn* 11:28; 3:2; *Mt* 22:23-24, 34-36.

341 Cf. *Mt* 12:5; 9:12; *Mk* 2:23-27; *Lk* 6:6-9; *Jn* 7:22-23.

342 *Mt* 7:28-29.

343 Cf. *Mt* 5:1.

344 *Mt* 5:33-34.

345 *Mk* 7:13; cf. 3:8.
346 *Mk* 7:18-21; cf. *Gal* 3:24.
347 Cf. *Jn* 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 12:37.
348 Cf. *Num* 28 9; *Mt* 12:5; *Mk* 2:25-27; *Lk* 13:15-16; 14:3-4; *Jn* 7:22-24.
349 *Lk* 2:22-39.
350 Cf. *Lk* 2:46-49.
351 Cf. *Lk* 2:41.
352 Cf. *Jn* 2:13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8:2; 10:22-23.
353 Cf. *Mt* 21:13.
354 *Jn* 2:16-17; cf. *Ps* 69:10.
355 Cf. *Acts* 2:46; 3:1; 5:20, 21; etc.
356 Cf. *Mt* 24:1-2.
357 Cf. *Mt* 24:3; *Lk* 13:35.
358 Cf. *Mk* 14:57-58; *Mt* 27:39-40.
359 Cf. *Mt* 8:4; 16:18; 17:24-27; *Lk* 17:14; *Jn* 4:22; 18:20.
360 Cf. *Jn* 2:21; *Mt* 12:6.
361 Cf. *Jn* 2:18-22.
362 *Jn* 4:21; cf. *Jn* 4:23-24; *Mt* 27:5; *Heb* 9:11; *Rev* 21:22.
363 Cf. *Lk* 2:34; 20:17-18; *Ps* 118:22.
364 Cf. *Lk* 5:30; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1.
365 *Lk* 18:9; 5:32; cf. *Jn* 7:49; 9:34.
366 Cf. *Jn* 8:33-36; 9:40-41.
367 Cf. *Mt* 9:13; *Hos* 6:6.
368 Cf. *Lk* 15:1-2, 22-32.
369 *Mk* 2:7.
370 Cf. *Jn* 5:18; 10:33; 17:6, 26.
371 Cf. *Mt* 12:6, 30, 36, 37, 41-42.
372 *Jn* 8:58; 10:30.
373 *Jn* 10:36-38.
374 Cf. *Jn* 3:7; 6:44.
375 Cf. *Isa* 53:1.
376 Cf. *Mk* 3:6; *Mt* 26:64-66.
377 Cf. *Lk* 23:34; *Acts* 3:17-18; *Mk* 3:5; *Rom* 11:25, 20.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 4

"JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED"

Paragraph 2. Jesus Died Crucified

I. THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Divisions among the Jewish authorities concerning Jesus

595 Among the religious authorities of Jerusalem, not only were the Pharisee Nicodemus and the prominent Joseph of Arimathea both secret disciples of Jesus, but there was also long-standing dissension about him, so much so that St. John says of these authorities on the very eve of Christ's Passion, "many... believed in him", though very imperfectly.³⁷⁸ This is not surprising, if one recalls that on the day after Pentecost "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" and "some believers... belonged to the party of the Pharisees", to the point that St. James could tell St. Paul, "How many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; and they are all zealous for the Law."³⁷⁹

596 The religious authorities in Jerusalem were not unanimous about what stance to take towards Jesus.³⁸⁰ The Pharisees threatened to excommunicate his followers.³⁸¹ To those who feared that "everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation", the high priest Caiaphas replied by prophesying: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."³⁸² The Sanhedrin, having declared Jesus deserving of death as a blasphemer but having lost the right to put anyone to death, hands him over to the Romans, accusing him of political revolt, a charge that puts him in the same category as Barabbas who had been accused of sedition.³⁸³ The chief priests also threatened Pilate politically so that he would condemn Jesus to death.³⁸⁴

Jews are not collectively responsible for Jesus' death

597 The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles'

calls to conversion after Pentecost.³⁸⁵ Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept "the ignorance" of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders.³⁸⁶ Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!", a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence.³⁸⁷ As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council:

... [N]either all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion. . . [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture.³⁸⁸

All sinners were the authors of Christ's Passion

598 In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured."³⁸⁹ Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself,³⁹⁰ the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone:

We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. And it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." We, however, profess to know him. And when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him.³⁹¹

Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins.³⁹²

II. CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE DEATH IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"Jesus handed over according to the definite plan of God"

599 Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."³⁹³ This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God.³⁹⁴

600 To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of "predestination", he includes in it each person's free response to his grace: "In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."³⁹⁵ For the sake of accomplishing his plan of salvation, God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness.³⁹⁶

"He died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures"

601 The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin.³⁹⁷ Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received", St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures."³⁹⁸ In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant.³⁹⁹ Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant.⁴⁰⁰ After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.⁴⁰¹

"For our sake God made him to be sin"

602 Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers. . . with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake."⁴⁰² Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death.⁴⁰³ By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."⁴⁰⁴

603 Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned.⁴⁰⁵ But in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"⁴⁰⁶ Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all", so that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son".⁴⁰⁷

God takes the initiative of universal redeeming love

604 By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins."⁴⁰⁸ God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."⁴⁰⁹

605 At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."⁴¹⁰ He affirms that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us.⁴¹¹ The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer."⁴¹²

III. CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF TO HIS FATHER FOR OUR SINS

Christ's whole life is an offering to the Father

606 The Son of God, who came down "from heaven, not to do [his] own will, but the will of him who sent [him]",⁴¹³ said on coming into the world, "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."⁴¹⁴ From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."⁴¹⁵ The sacrifice of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world"⁴¹⁶ expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "[for] I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."⁴¹⁷

607 The desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus' whole life, <sup#418< sup=""> for his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation. And so he asked, "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour."⁴¹⁹ And again, "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?"⁴²⁰ From the cross, just before "It is finished", he said, "I thirst."⁴²¹ </sup#418<>

"The Lamb who takes away the sin of the world"

60 After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".⁴²² By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover.⁴²³ Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴²⁴

Jesus freely embraced the Father's redeeming love

609 By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁴²⁵ In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men.⁴²⁶ Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."⁴²⁷ Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death.⁴²⁸

At the Last Supper Jesus anticipated the free offering of his life

610 Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles "on the night he was betrayed".⁴²⁹ On the eve of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: "This is my body which is given for you." "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁴³⁰

611 The Eucharist that Christ institutes at that moment will be the memorial of his sacrifice.⁴³¹ Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it.⁴³² By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth."⁴³³

The agony at Gethsemani

612 The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani,⁴³⁴ making himself "obedient unto death". Jesus prays: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. . ."⁴³⁵ Thus he expresses the horror that

death represented for his human nature. Like ours, his human nature is destined for eternal life; but unlike ours, it is perfectly exempt from sin, the cause of death.⁴³⁶ Above all, his human nature has been assumed by the divine person of the "Author of life", the "Living One".⁴³⁷ By accepting in his human will that the Father's will be done, he accepts his death as redemptive, for "he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree."⁴³⁸

Christ's death is the unique and definitive sacrifice

613 Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world",⁴³⁹ and the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".⁴⁴⁰

614 This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices.⁴⁴¹ First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience.⁴⁴²

Jesus substitutes his obedience for our disobedience

615 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."⁴⁴³ By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an *offering for sin*", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities".⁴⁴⁴ Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father.⁴⁴⁵

Jesus consummates his sacrifice on the cross

616 It is love "to the end"⁴⁴⁶ that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life.⁴⁴⁷ Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died."⁴⁴⁸ No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.

617 The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as "the source of eternal salvation"⁴⁴⁹ and teaches that "his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us."⁴⁵⁰ And the Church venerates his cross as she sings: "Hail, O Cross, our only hope."⁴⁵¹

Our participation in Christ's sacrifice

618 The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men".⁴⁵² But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men.⁴⁵³ He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]",⁴⁵⁴ for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps."⁴⁵⁵ In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries.⁴⁵⁶ This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.⁴⁵⁷

Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.⁴⁵⁸

IN BRIEF

619 "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (I Cor 15:3).

620 Our salvation flows from God's initiative of love for us, because "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (I Jn 4:10). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19).

621 Jesus freely offered himself for our salvation. Beforehand, during the Last Supper, he both symbolized this offering and made it really present: "This is my body which is given for you" (Lk 22:19).

622 The redemption won by Christ consists in this, that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28), that is, he "loved [his own] to the end" (Jn 13:1), so that they might be "ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] fathers" (I Pt 1:18).

623 By his loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (*Phil* 2:8), Jesus fulfills the atoning mission (cf. *Is* 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (*Is* 53:11; cf. *Rom* 5:19).

- 378 *Jn* 12:42; cf. 7:50; 9:16-17; 10:19-21; 19:38-39.
379 *Acts* 6:7; 15:5; 21:20.
380 Cf. *Jn* 9:16; *Jn* 10:19.
381 Cf. *Jn* 9:22.
382 *Jn* 11:48-50.
383 Cf. *Mt* 26:66; *Jn* 18:31; *Lk* 23:2, 19.
384 Cf. *Jn* 19:12, 15, 21.
385 Cf. *Mk* 15:11; *Acts* 2:23, 36; 3:13-14; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; *1 Thess* 2:14-15.
386 Cf. *Lk* 23:34; *Acts* 3:17.
387 *Mt* 27:25; cf. *Acts* 5:28; 18:6.
388 NA 4.
389 *Roman Catechism* I, 5, 11; cf. *Heb* 12:3.
390 Cf. *Mt* 25:45; *Acts* 9:4-5.
391 *Roman Catechism* I, 5, 11; cf. *Heb* 6:6; *1 Cor* 2:8.
392 St. Francis of Assisi, *Admonitio* 5, 3.
393 *Acts* 2:23.
394 Cf. *Acts* 3:13.
395 *Acts* 4:27-28; cf. *Ps* 2:1-2.
396 Cf. *Mt* 26:54; *Jn* 18:36; 19:11; *Acts* 3:17-18.
397 *Isa* 53:11; cf. 53:12; *Jn* 8:34-36; *Acts* 3:14.
398 *1 Cor* 15:3; cf. also *Acts* 3:18; 7:52; 13:29; 26:22-23.
399 Cf. *Isa* 53:7-8 and *Acts* 8:32-35.
400 Cf. *Mt* 20:28.
401 Cf. *Lk* 24:25-27, 44-45.
402 *1 Pt* 1:18-20.
403 Cf. *Rom* 5:12; *1 Cor* 15:56.
404 *2 Cor* 5:21; cf. *Phil* 2:7; *Rom* 8:3.
405 Cf. *Jn* 8:46.
406 *Mk* 15:34; *Ps* 22:2; cf. *Jn* 8:29.
407 *Rom* 8:32; 5:10.
408 *1 Jn* 4:10; 4:19.
409 *Rom* 5:8.
410 *Mt* 18:14.
411 *Mt* 20:28; cf. *Rom* 5:18-19.
412 Council of Quiercy (853): DS 624; cf. *2 Cor* 5:15; *1 Jn* 2:2.
413 *Jn* 6:38.
414 *Heb* 10:5-10.
415 *Jn* 4:34.
416 *1 Jn* 2:2.
417 *Jn* 10:17; 14:31.
418 Cf. *Lk* 12:50; 22:15; *Mt* 16:21-23.
419 *Jn* 12:27.
420 *Jn* 18:11.
421 *Jn* 19:30; 19:28.
422 *Jn* 1:29; cf. *Lk* 3:21; *Mt* 3:14-15; *Jn* 1:36.
423 *Isa* 53:7,12; cf. *Jer* 11:19; *Ex* 12:3-14; *Jn* 19:36; *1 Cor* 5:7.
424 *Mk* 10:45.
425 *Jn* 13:1; 15:13.
426 Cf. *Heb* 2:10,17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9.
427 *Jn* 10:18.
428 Cf. *Jn* 18:4-6; *Mt* 26:53.
429 *Roman Missal*, EP 111; cf. *Mt* 26:20; *1 Cor* 11:23.
430 *Lk* 22:19; *Mt* 26:28; cf. *1 Cor* 5:7.
431 *1 Cor* 11:25.
432 Cf. *Lk* 22:19.
433 *Jn* 17:19; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1752; 1764.
434 Cf. *Mt* 26:42; *Lk* 22:20.
435 *Phil* 2:8; *Mt* 26:39; cf. *Heb* 5:7-8.
436 Cf. *Rom* 5:12; *Heb* 4:15.
437 Cf. *Acts* 3:15; *Rev* 1:17; *Jn* 1:4; 5:26.
438 *1 Pet* 2:24; cf. *Mt* 26:42.
439 *Jn* 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; *1 Cor* 5:7; *1 Pet* 1:19.
440 *Mt* 26:28; cf. *Ex* 24:8; *Lev* 16:15-16; *1 Cor* 11:25.
441 Cf. *Heb* 10:10.
442 Cf. *Jn* 10:17-18; 15:13; *Heb* 9:14; *1 Jn* 4:10.
443 *Rom* 5:19.
444 *Isa* 53:10-12.
445 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529.
446 *Jn* 13:1.
447 Cf. *Gal* 2:20; *Eph* 5:2, 25.
448 *2 Cor* 5:14.
449 *Heb* 5:9.
450 Council of Trent: DS 1529.

451 *LH*, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn *Vexilla regis*.
452 *1 Tim* 2:5.
453 *GS* 22 § 5; cf. § 2.
454 *Mt* 16:24.
455 *1 Pet* 2:21.
456 Cf *Mk* 10:39; *Jn* 21:18-19; *Col* 1:24.
457 Cf. *Lk* 2:35.
458 St. Rose of Lima, cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* (Louvain, 1668).

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 4

"JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED"

Paragraph 3. Jesus Christ was Buried

624 "By the grace of God" Jesus tasted death "for every one".⁴⁵⁹ In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only "die for our sins"⁴⁶⁰ but should also "taste death", experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb,⁴⁶¹ reveals God's great sabbath rest⁴⁶² after the fulfillment⁴⁶³ of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe.⁴⁶⁴

Christ in the tomb in his body

625 Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. The same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore":⁴⁶⁵

God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts.⁴⁶⁶

626 Since the "Author of life" who was killed⁴⁶⁷ is the same "living one [who has] risen",⁴⁶⁸ the divine person of the Son of God necessarily continued to possess his human soul and body, separated from each other by death:

By the fact that at Christ's death his soul was separated from his flesh, his one person is not itself divided into two persons; for the human body and soul of Christ have existed in the same way from the beginning of his earthly existence, in the divine person of the Word; and in death, although separated from each other, both remained with one and the same person of the Word.⁴⁶⁹

"You will not let your Holy One see corruption"

627 Christ's death was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union which the person of the Son retained with his body, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for "it was not possible for death to hold him"⁴⁷⁰ and therefore "divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption."⁴⁷¹ Both of these statements can be said of Christ: "He was cut off out of the land of the living",⁴⁷² and "My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption."⁴⁷³ Jesus' Resurrection "on the third day" was the sign of this, also because bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death.⁴⁷⁴

"Buried with Christ. . ."

628 Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."⁴⁷⁵

IN BRIEF

629 To the benefit of every man, Jesus Christ tasted death (cf. *Heb* 2:9). It is truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried.

630 During Christ's period in the tomb, his divine person continued to assume both his soul and his body, although they were separated from each other by death. For this reason the dead Christ's body "saw no corruption" (*Acts* 13:37).

459 *Heb* 2:9.

460 *1 Cor* 15:3.

461 Cf. *Jn* 19:42.

462 Cf. *Heb* 4:7-9.

463 Cf. *Jn* 19:30.

464 Cf. *Col* 1:18-20.

465 *Rev* 1:18.

466 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech.* 16: PG 45, 52D.

467 *Acts* 3:15.

468 *Lk* 24:5-6.

469 St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 27: PG 94, 1098A.

470 *Acts* 2:24.

471 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 51, 3.

472 *Isa* 53:8.

473 *Acts* 2:26-27; cf. *Ps* 16:9-10.

474 Cf. *1 Cor* 15:4; *Lk* 24:46; *Mt* 12:40; *Jon* 2:1; *Hos* 6:2; cf. *Jn* 11:39.

475 *Rom* 6:4; cf. *Col* 2:12; *Eph* 5:26.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 5

"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN"

631 Jesus "descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens."⁴⁷⁶ The Apostles' Creed confesses in the same article Christ's descent into hell and his Resurrection from the dead on the third day, because in his Passover it was precisely out of the depths of death that he made life spring forth:

Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.⁴⁷⁷

Paragraph 1. Christ Descended into Hell

632 The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was "raised from the dead" presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection.⁴⁷⁸ This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.⁴⁷⁹

633 Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, "hell" - *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God.⁴⁸⁰ Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into "Abraham's bosom".⁴⁸¹ "It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell."⁴⁸² Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him.⁴⁸³

634 "The gospel was preached even to the dead."⁴⁸⁴ The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfillment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.

635 Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."⁴⁸⁵ Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage."⁴⁸⁶ Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades", so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."⁴⁸⁷

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve. . . "I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead."⁴⁸⁸

IN BRIEF

636 By the expression "He descended into hell", the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death" (*Heb 2:14*).

637 In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.

476 *Eph 4:9-10*.

477 *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 18, *Exsultet*.

478 *Acts 3:15; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20*; cf. *Heb 13:20*.

479 Cf. *1 Pet 3:18-19*.

480 Cf. *Phil 2:10; Acts 2:24; Rev 1:18; Eph 4:9; Pss 6:6; 88:11-13*.

481 Cf. *Ps 89:49; 1 Sam 28:19; Ezek 32:17-32; Lk 16:22-26*.

482 *Roman Catechism I*, 6, 3.

483 Cf. Council of Rome (745): DS 587; Benedict XII, *Cum dudum* (1341): DS 1011; Clement VI, *Super quibusdam* (1351): DS 1077; Council of Toledo IV (625): DS 485; *Mt 27:52-53*.

484 *1 Pet 4:6*.

485 *Jn 5:25*; cf. *Mt 12:40; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9*.

486 *Heb 2:14-15*; cf. *Acts 3:15*.

487 *Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10*.

488 Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday: PG 43, 440A, 452C; *LH*, Holy Saturday, OR.

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SECTION TWO THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 5

"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN"

Paragraph 2. On the Third Day He Rose from the Dead

638 "We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus."⁴⁸⁹ The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross:

Christ is risen from the dead!
Dying, he conquered death;
To the dead, he has given life.
490

I. THE HISTORICAL AND TRANSCENDENT EVENT

639 The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. . ."⁴⁹¹ The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus.⁴⁹²

The empty tomb

640 "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."⁴⁹³ The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise.⁴⁹⁴ Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter.⁴⁹⁵ The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered "the linen cloths lying there", "he saw and believed".⁴⁹⁶ This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus.⁴⁹⁷

The appearances of the Risen One

641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One.⁴⁹⁸ Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves.⁴⁹⁹ They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers,⁵⁰⁰ and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"⁵⁰¹

642 Everything that happened during those Paschal days involves each of the apostles - and Peter in particular - in the building of the new era begun on Easter morning. As witnesses of the Risen One, they remain the foundation stones of his Church. The faith of the first community of believers is based on the witness of concrete men known to the Christians and for the most part still living among them. Peter and the Twelve are the primary "witnesses to his Resurrection", but they are not the only ones - Paul speaks clearly of more than five hundred persons to whom Jesus appeared on a single occasion and also of James and of all the apostles.⁵⁰²

643 Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold.⁵⁰³ The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ("looking sad"⁵⁰⁴) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an "idle tale".⁵⁰⁵ When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, "he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen."⁵⁰⁶

644 Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. "In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering."⁵⁰⁷ Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee "some doubted."⁵⁰⁸ Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.

The condition of Christ's risen humanity

645 By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion.⁵⁰⁹ Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm.⁵¹⁰ For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith.⁵¹¹

646 Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven".⁵¹²

The Resurrection as transcendent event

647 O truly blessed Night, sings the Exultet of the Easter Vigil, which alone deserved to know the time and the hour when Christ rose from the realm of the dead!⁵¹³ But no one was an eyewitness to Christ's Resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was an historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb and by the reality of the apostles' encounters with the risen Christ, still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history. This is why the risen Christ does not reveal himself to the world, but to his disciples, "to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people."⁵¹⁴

II. THE RESURRECTION - A WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

648 Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. The Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead".⁵¹⁵ St. Paul insists on the manifestation of God's power⁵¹⁶ through the working of the Spirit who gave life to Jesus' dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship.

649 As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise.⁵¹⁷ Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."⁵¹⁸ "We believe that Jesus died and rose again."⁵¹⁹

650 The Fathers contemplate the Resurrection from the perspective of the divine person of Christ who remained united to his soul and body, even when these were separated from each other by death: "By the unity of the divine nature, which remains present in each of the two components of man, these are reunited. For as death is produced by the separation of the human components, so Resurrection is achieved by the union of the two."⁵²⁰

III. THE MEANING AND SAVING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

651 "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."⁵²¹ The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification if Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised.

652 Christ's Resurrection is the fulfillment of the promises both of the Old Testament and of Jesus himself during his earthly life.⁵²² The phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures"⁵²³ indicates that Christ's Resurrection fulfilled these predictions.

653 The truth of Jesus' divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he."⁵²⁴ The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly "I AM", the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: "What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"⁵²⁵ Christ's Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God's Son, and is its fulfillment in accordance with God's eternal plan.

654 The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."⁵²⁶ Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace.⁵²⁷ It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: "Go and tell my brethren."⁵²⁸ We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.

655 Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."⁵²⁹ The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfillment. In Christ, Christians "have tasted. . . the powers of the age to come"⁵³⁰ and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."⁵³⁰

IN BRIEF

656 Faith in the Resurrection has as its object an event which is historically attested to by the disciples, who really encountered the Risen One. At the same time, this event is mysteriously transcendent insofar as it is the entry of Christ's humanity into the glory of God.

657 The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.

658 Christ, "the first-born from the dead" (*Col 1:18*), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the justification of our souls (cf. *Rom 6:4*), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf.: *Rom8:11*).

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- 489 *Acts 13:32-33*.
490 Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter.
491 *1 Cor 15:3-4*.
492 Cf. *Acts 9:3-18*.
493 *Lk 24:5-6*.
494 Cf. *Jn 20:13; Mt 28:11-15*.
495 Cf. *Lk 24:3,12,22-23*.
496 *Jn 20:2, 6, 8*.
497 Cf. *Jn 11:44; 20:5-7*.
498 *Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31,42*.
499 Cf. *Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18*.
500 Cf. *1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32*.
501 *Lk 24:34,36*.
502 *1 Cor 15:4-8; cf. Acts 1:22*.
503 Cf. *Lk 22:31-32*.
504 *Lk 24:17; cf. Jn 20:19*.
505 *Lk 24:11; cf. Mk 16:11,13*.
506 *Mk 16:14*.
507 *Lk 24:38-41*.
508 Cf. *Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17*.
509 Cf. *Lk 24:30,39-40,41-43; Jn 20:20,27; 21:9,13-15*.
510 Cf. *Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15,36; Jn 20:14,17,19,26; 21:4*.
511 Cf. *Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4,7*.
512 Cf. *1 Cor 15:35-50*.
513 "*O vere beata nox, quae sola meruit scire tempus et horam, in qua Christus ab inferis resurrexit!*"
514 *Acts 13:31; cf. Jn 14:22*.
515 *Rom 1:3-4; cf. Acts 2:24*.
516 Cf. *Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-22; Heb 7:16*.
517 Cf. *Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34*.
518 *Jn 10:17-18*.
519 *1 Thess 4:14*.
520 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Christi res. orat.* 1:PG 46,617B; cf. also DS 325; 359; 369.
521 *1 Cor 15:14*.
522 Cf. *Mt 28:6; Mk 16:7; Lk 24:6-7,26-27,44-48*.
523 Cf. *1 Cor 15:3-4; cf. the Nicene Creed*.
524 *Jn 8:28*.
525 *Acts 13:32-33; cf. Ps 2:7*.
526 *Rom 6:4; cf. 4:25*.
527 Cf. *Eph 2:4-5; 1 Pet 1:3*.
528 *Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17*.
529 *1 Cor 15:20-22*.
530 *Heb 6:5*.
531 *2 Cor 5:15; cf. Col 3:1-3*.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 6

"HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER"

659 "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."⁵³² Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys.⁵³³ But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity.⁵³⁴ Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand.⁵³⁵ Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul "as to one untimely born", in a last apparition that established him as an apostle.⁵³⁶

660 The veiled character of the glory of the Risen One during this time is intimated in his mysterious words to Mary Magdalene: "I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."⁵³⁷ This indicates a difference in manifestation between the glory of the risen Christ and that of the Christ exalted to the Father's right hand, a transition marked by the historical and transcendent event of the Ascension.

661 This final stage stays closely linked to the first, that is, to his descent from heaven in the Incarnation. Only the one who "came from the Father" can return to the Father: Christ Jesus.⁵³⁸ "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."⁵³⁹ Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the "Father's house", to God's life and happiness.⁵⁴⁰ Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us.⁵⁴¹

662 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."⁵⁴² The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, "entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands. . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."⁵⁴³ There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he "always lives to make intercession" for "those who draw near to God through him".⁵⁴⁴ As "high priest of the good things to come" he is the center and the principal actor of the liturgy that honors the Father in heaven.⁵⁴⁵

663 Henceforth Christ is *seated at the right hand of the Father*: "By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honor of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified."⁵⁴⁶

664 Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."⁵⁴⁷ After this event the apostles became witnesses of the "kingdom [that] will have no end".⁵⁴⁸

IN BRIEF

665 Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. *Acts* 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf. *Col* 3:3).

666 Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.

667 Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

532 *Mk* 16:19.

533 Cf. *Lk* 24:31; *Jn* 20:19,26.

534 Cf. *Acts* 1:3; 10:41; *Mk* 16:12; *Lk* 24:15; *Jn* 20:14-15; 21:4.

535 Cf. *Acts* 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; *Lk* 9:34-35; 24:51; *Ex* 13:22; *Mk* 16:19; *Ps* 110:1.

536 *1 Cor* 15:8; cf. 9:1; *Gal* 1:16.

537 *Jn* 20:17.

538 Cf. *Jn* 16:28.

539 *Jn* 3:13; cf. *Eph* 4:8-10.

540 *Jn* 14:2.

541 *Roman Missal*, Preface of the Ascension: "*sed ut illuc confideremus, sua membra, nos subsequi quo ipse, caput nostrum principiumque, praecessit.*"

542 *Jn* 12:32.

543 *Heb* 9:24.

544 *Heb* 7:25.

545 *Heb* 9:11; cf. *Rev* 4:6-11.

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THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

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THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 7

"FROM THENCE HE WILL COME AGAIN TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD"

I. HE WILL COME AGAIN IN GLORY

Christ already reigns through the Church. . .

668 "Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."⁵⁴⁹ Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion", for the Father "has put all things under his feet."⁵⁵⁰ Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are "set forth" and transcendentally fulfilled.⁵⁵¹

669 As Lord, Christ is also head of the Church, which is his Body.⁵⁵² Taken up to heaven and glorified after he had thus fully accomplished his mission, Christ dwells on earth in his Church. The redemption is the source of the authority that Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, exercises over the Church. "The kingdom of Christ [is] already present in mystery", "on earth, the seed and the beginning of the kingdom".⁵⁵³

670 Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfillment. We are already at "the last hour".⁵⁵⁴ "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect."⁵⁵⁵ Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church.⁵⁵⁶

. . .until all things are subjected to him

671 Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the King's return to earth.⁵⁵⁷ This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover.⁵⁵⁷ Until everything is subject to him, "until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God."⁵⁵⁹ That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him:⁵⁶⁰ *Marana tha!* "Our Lord, come!"⁵⁶¹

672 Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel⁵⁶² which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love and peace.⁵⁶³ According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by "distress" and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church⁵⁶⁴ and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching.⁵⁶⁵

The glorious advent of Christ, the hope of Israel

673 Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent,⁵⁶⁶ even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority."⁵⁶⁷ This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed".⁵⁶⁸

674 The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus.⁵⁶⁹ St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old."⁵⁷⁰ St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?"⁵⁷¹ The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles",⁵⁷² will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all".⁵⁷³

The Church's ultimate trial

675 Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers.⁵⁷⁴ The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth⁵⁷⁵ will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.⁵⁷⁶

676 The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism,⁵⁷⁷ especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism.⁵⁷⁸

677 The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection.⁵⁷⁹ The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven.⁵⁸⁰ God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.⁵⁸¹

*** II. TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD**

678 Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching.⁵⁸² Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light.⁵⁸³ Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned.⁵⁸⁴ Our attitude to our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love.⁵⁸⁵ On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."⁵⁸⁶

679 Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgment to the Son".⁵⁸⁷ Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself.⁵⁸⁸ By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love.⁵⁸⁹

IN BRIEF

680 Christ the Lord already reigns through the Church, but all the things of this world are not yet subjected to him. The triumph of Christ's kingdom will not come about without one last assault by the powers of evil.

681 On Judgment Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history.

682 When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace.

549 *Rom* 14:9.
550 *Eph* 1:20-22.
551 *Eph* 1:10; cf. 4:10; *1 Cor* 15:24,27-28.
552 Cf. *Eph* 1:22.
553 *LG* 3; 5; cf. *Eph* 4:11-13.
554 *1 Jn* 2:18; cf. *1 Pet* 4:7.
555 *LG* 48 § 3; cf. *1 Cor* 10:11.
556 Cf. *Mk* 16:17-18,20.
557 *Lk* 21:27; cf. *Mt* 25:31.
558 Cf. *2 Thess* 2:7.
559 *LG* 48 § 3; cf. *2 Pet* 3:13; *Rom* 8:19-22; *1 Cor* 15:28.
560 Cf. *1 Cor* 11:26; *2 Pet* 3:11-12.
561 *1 Cor* 16:22; *Rev* 22:17,20.
562 Cf. *Acts* 1:6-7.
563 Cf. *Isa* 11:1-9.
564 Cf. *Acts* 1:8; *1 Cor* 7:26; *Eph* 5:16; *1 Pet* 4:17.
565 Cf. *Mt* 25:1, 13; *Mk* 13:33-37; *1 Jn* 2:18; 4:3; *1 Tim* 4:1.
566 Cf. *Rev* 22:20.
567 *Acts* 1:7; Cf. *Mk* 13:32.
568 Cf. *Mt* 24:44; *1 Thess* 5:2; *2 Thess* 2:3-12.
569 *Rom* 11:20-26; cf. *Mt* 23:39.
570 *Acts* 3:19-21.
571 *Rom* 11:15.
572 *Rom* 11:12, 25; cf. *Lk* 21:24.
573 *Eph* 4:13; *1 Cor* 15:28.
574 Cf. *Lk* 18:8; *Mt* 24:12.
575 Cf. *Lk* 21:12; *Jn* 15:19-20.
576 Cf. *2 Thess* 2:4-12; *1 Thess* 5:2-3; *2 Jn* 7; *1 Jn* 2:18,22.
577 Cf. DS 3839.
578 Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, condemning the "false mysticism" of this "counterfeit of the redemption of the lowly"; cf. GS 20-21.
579 Cf. *Rev* 19:1-9.
580 Cf. *Rev* 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4.
581 Cf. *Rev* 20:12 *2 Pet* 3:12-13.
582 Cf. *Dan* 7:10; *Joel* 3-4; *Mal* 3:19; *Mt* 3:7-12.
583 Cf. *Mk* 12:38-40; *Lk* 12:1-3; *Jn* 3:20-21; *Rom* 2:16; *1 Cor* 4:5.
584 Cf. *Mt* 11:20-24; 12:41-42.
585 Cf. *Mt* 5:22; 7:1-5.
586 *Mt* 25:40.
587 *Jn* 5:22; cf. 5:27; *Mt* 25:31; *Acts* 10:42; 17:31; *2 Tim* 4:1.
588 Cf. *Lk* 21:12; *Jn* 15:19-20.
589 Cf. *Jn* 3:18; 12:48; *Mt* 12:32; *1 Cor* 3:12-15; *Heb* 6:4-6; 10:26-31.

PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION TWO

THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER THREE

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

683 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."¹ "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"² This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son.

Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them. And it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit.³

684 Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to "know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ."⁴ But the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, explains this progression in terms of the pedagogy of divine "condescension":

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when

the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly. . . . By advancing and progressing "from glory to glory," the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays.⁵

685 To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: "with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified."⁶ For this reason, the divine mystery of the Holy Spirit was already treated in the context of Trinitarian "theology." Here, however, we have to do with the Holy Spirit only in the divine "economy."

686 The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these "end times," ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

1 *1 Cor* 12:3.

2 *Gal* 4:6.

3 St. Irenaeus, *Dem. ap.* 7: SCh 62,41-42.

4 *Jn* 17:3.

5 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio theol.*,5,26 (= *Oratio* 31,26):PG 36,161-163.

6 Nicene Creed; see above, par. 465.