

Cathedral of St. John Berchmans

Faith Formation

2022-2023



Living the Catholic Faith 2022-2023

- September 11, 2022 Who is God and Who is Jesus?
Deeper Focus: Are there “Proofs” for the Existence of God?
- September 18, 2022 What is the Catholic Church?
Deeper Focus: Catholic Authority and the Apostolic Succession
- September 25, 2022 Who is Mary? Praying the Rosary
Deeper Focus: Development of Marian Devotions
- October 2, 2022 Respect Life Sunday (Family Day) Gathering in Cathedral for
Rosary
- October 9, 2022 Understanding the Bible
Deeper Focus: Towards a Canon of Scripture – How the Catholic
Church Finalized “the Bible”
- October 16, 2022 Morality and Formation of Conscience
Deeper Focus: Exploring the Philosophy of a “Moral Law”
- October 23, 2022 Understanding the Mass
Deeper Focus: How Did the Earliest Christians Worship?
- October 30, 2022 Saints and Holy Days
Deeper Focus: Understanding Veneration of Saints and Sacred
Relics
- November 6, 2022 Short Retreat – Rite of Acceptance –
AFF meets separately (Lectionary Bible Study)

November 13, 2022	Rite of Acceptance Deeper Focus: Pilgrim Church, Eternal Church: The Mystery of the Body of Christ
November 20, 2022	Berchmans Book Reading Discussion: <i>Encounters With Angels</i>
November 27, 2022	Holiday – Thanksgiving
December 4, 2022	Sanctity of Life Deeper Focus: Exploring Catholic Social Teaching on Life
December 11, 2022	The Trinity Deeper Focus: “The Doctor of Grace:” St. Augustine and The Trinity
December 18, 2022	The Incarnation Deeper Focus: The Voice of the Fathers on the Mystery of Incarnation
December 25, 2022	Holiday – Christmas
January 1, 2023	Holiday – Christmas
January 8, 2023	What are the Sacraments Deeper Focus: Living a Sacramental Life of Grace
January 15, 2023	Baptism and Confirmation Deeper Focus: The Need for Regeneration and Claiming the Soul for God

January 22, 2023	Holy Orders and Marriage
January 29, 2023	Catholic Social Justice Deeper Focus: Politics and the Christian Life – Right, Left, and Listening to the Voice of the Church
February 5, 2023	Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick Deeper Focus: Mercy Rules the Church – Historical Controversies and Resolutions
February 12, 2023	Holy Eucharist Deeper Focus: - Exploring Eucharistic Miracles
February 19, 2023	Short Retreat Review Rite of Sending (AFF meets separately – Lectionary Bible Study)
February 26, 2023	Rite of Sending and Review Rite of Election (AFF meets separately – Lectionary Bible Study)
March 5, 2023	Reconciliation Deeper Focus: Our Need for a Savior: The Meaning of Atonement
March 12, 2023	The Nicene Creed Deeper Focus: The Nature of Christ and the Early Councils
March 19, 2023	God’s Mercy Deeper Focus: An Exploration and Reading of <i>Misericordia Et Misera</i> of Pope Francis

March 26, 2023	Holy Week/Reconciliation Review Deeper Focus: The Meaning of Passiontide
April 2, 2023	(Palm Sunday) Easter Vigil Review (OCIA ONLY – NO AFF)
April 9, 2023	Holiday – Easter
April 16, 2023	Mystagogy: Sharing the Experience of the Sacraments
April 23, 2023	Mystagogy: Peak Moments in Church History
April 30, 2023	Mystagogy: Mary and Marian Teachings
May 7, 2023	Mystagogy: Topic to be announced
May 14, 2023	Mystagogy: Topic to be announced
May 21, 2023	Mystagogy: The Ascension of the Lord Discerning the Holy Spirit at Work in Our Lives (Spiritual Exercises)



CCD

C.C.D / Sacraments Calendar 2022-2023

(Please Note: Calendar dates are subject to change)

<u>AUGUST 2022</u>		<u>FEBRUARY 2023</u>	
27	TBD Religious Education Retreat	5	9:30-10:40 Class
<u>SEPTEMBER 2022</u>		12	9:30-10:40 Class
11	9:30-10:40 Class & Parent Meeting	19	9:30-10:40 Class - Family Day
18	9:30-10:40 Class	24-26	Confirmation Retreat
	Catechetical Sunday	26	9:30-10:40 Class
25	9:30-10:40 Class	<u>MARCH 2023</u>	
<u>OCTOBER 2022</u>		5	9:30-10:40 Class
2	9:30-10:40 Class - Family Day	12	9:30-10:40 Class
	Respect Life Sunday Rosary	19	No Class
9	9:30-10:40 Class	25	9:00-12:00 First Communion Retreat
	Confirmation Meeting	26	9:30-10:40 Class
16	9:30-10:40 Class		CCD & SJBS First Sacrament of Reconciliation
	First Communion Meeting	30	5:30-7:00p Shadow Stations
23	9:30-10:40 No Class	<u>APRIL 2023</u>	
30	9:30-10:40 Class	2	9:30-10:40 Class
<u>NOVEMBER 2022</u>		9	No Class Easter Sunday
6	9:30-10:40 Class	16	9:30-10:40 Class
13	9:30-10:40 Class	23	9:30-10:40 Class - Family Day
20	9:30-10:40 Class	30	9:30-10:40 Class
27	No Class Thanksgiving Holiday	<u>MAY 2023</u>	
<u>DECEMBER 2022</u>		6	Pictures & Rehearsal
4	9:30-10:40 Class		10:00-12:00 First Holy Communion
11	9:30-10:40 Class	7	First Holy Communion Mass 11:00 am
18	9:30-10:40 Class - Christmas Program	7	9:30-10:40 Class
25	No Class Christmas Holiday	14	No class Mother's Day
<u>JANUARY 2023</u>		20	Pictures & Rehearsal
1	9:30-10:40 No Class		10:00- 12:00 Confirmation
8	9:30-10:40 Class	21	9:30-10:40 Last day of CCD
15	9:30-10:40 Class	21	Sacrament Confirmation
22	9:30-10:40 Class		Mass 11:00 am
29	9:30-10:40 Class		(Confirmation Mass subject to Bishop's approval)

Note: Schedule is Subject to Change

VBS 2023: June 12 -16

Confirmation Witnessing Meetings 7th Grade

Thursday September 15 @ 6:00pm-7:00pm – Ice cream social in Parish Hall - *Loyola student (How I live my faith in High School after Confirmation)*

Saturday November 5 @ 9:30am-11:00am – Hike – *The Gift of the Saints (TBD)*

Tuesday January 10th @ 7:00-8:00pm – Adoration – Cathedral - *Loyola student (experience of Adoration)/music/prayer*

Tuesday April 18 @ 6:00pm-8:30pm – Movie & Discussion – Parish Hall

Confirmation Witnessing Meetings (8th Grade)

Thursday September 15 @ 6:00pm-7:00pm – Ice cream social in Parish Hall - *Loyola student (How I live my faith in High School after Confirmation)*

Saturday October 15 @ 1:00pm- 2:30pm – Hike - *Mary White (Prayer as a Conversation)*

Monday November 14 @ 5:30pm-6:30pm – Carpenter Coffee House

Thursday December 5 TBD

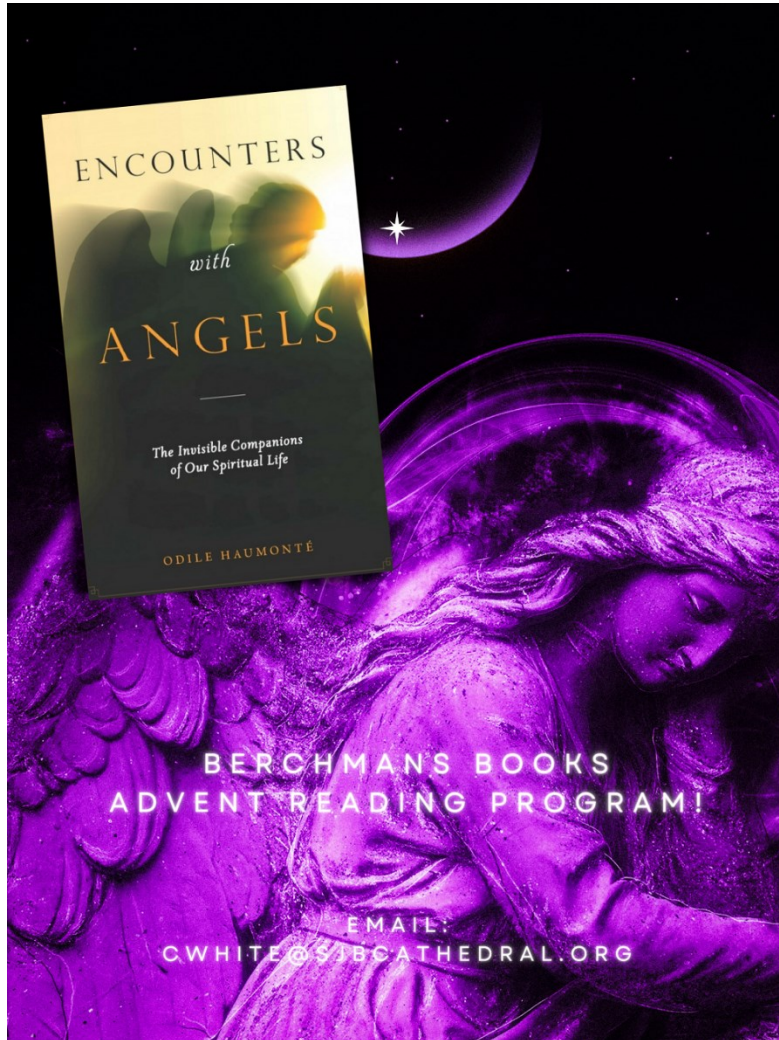
Tuesday January 10 @ 7:00-8:00pm – Adoration – Cathedral - *Loyola student (experience of Adoration)/music/prayer*

Thursday January 19 @ 4:30pm-6:30pm – Highland Blessing Meal

Friday February 10 TBD

Saturday March 25 TBD

Tuesday April 18 @ 6:00pm-8:30pm – Movie & Discussion – Parish Hall



BERCHMAN'S BOOKS
ADVENT READING PROGRAM!

EMAIL:
CWHITE@STBCATHEDRAL.ORG

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR MINISTRIES

If there is there a ministry that you might want to join, email us, churchoffice@sjbcathedral.org.

MUSIC MINISTRY

- **Children's Choirs**
- **Cathedral Choir**
- **Women's & Men's Schola Cantorum**

LITURGY PREPARATIONS

- **Flower / Environment**
- **Altar Society**
- **Sacristans**

LITURGY

- **Greeters**
- **Ushers**
- **Readers**
- **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**
- **Altar Servers**
- **Children's Liturgy of the Word**
- **Nursery Care**
- **Devotion Leaders: Recitation of the Rosary, etc.**

SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRIES

- **Society of St. Vincent de Paul**
- **Knights of Columbus**

- **Meal Ministry: Meals on Wheels, Highland Blessing Meal, Christian Service & Veterans Meal Programs**
- **Grief Support + St. Raphael's Guild (greeters for funerals) + St. Michael Ministry (meals to the bereaved)**
- **Ministers of Care: visit/bring Holy Communion to shut-ins/hospitalized; card/phone call ministry to shut-ins**
- **Pro-Life programs: One Life, Mary's House**
- **Donations to Hope Connections & other Non-Profits**

FAITH FORMATION

- **Cathedral Grade School**
- **CCD/Parish School of Religion + Vacation Bible School**
- **Order of Christian Initiation of Adults**
- **Faith Formation opportunities for Adults: Adult Faith Formation, Bible Study Groups, Missions, Speakers**
- **Sacramental Preparation: Baptism & Marriage**
- **Diocesan Young Adults & Calling Catholics Home**

PARISH FAMILY LIFE

- **Reception Committee & Appreciation Ministry**
- **Family Life, 50 & Over & Parish Family Celebrations**
- **SJB Card Ministry, Knit & Stitch Ministry**

OTHER

- **Prayer Garden & Grounds**
- **Parish Office Volunteers**

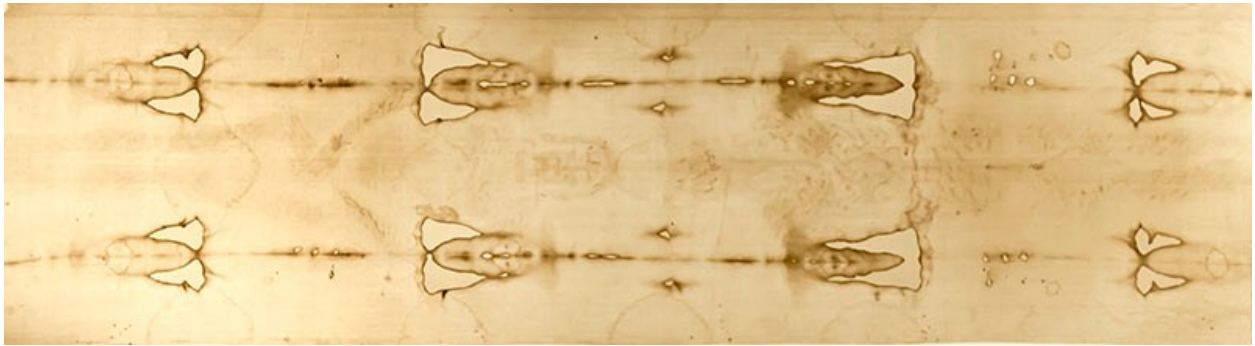
Coming to the Cathedral Soon!

Relics of St. Padre Pio



Parish Lenten Mission: 2023





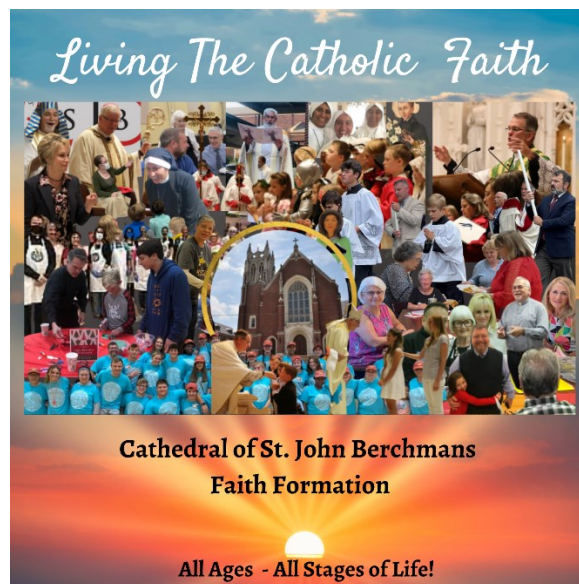
Faith and Science Encounter
Shroud of Turin Art and Education Collection

Tours and Presentations for Groups

Available by Appointment

cwhite@sjbcathedral.org

Cathedral of St. John Berchmans



Faith Formation Resources

Deeper Focus Resource: September 11

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

The First Way: Motion

1. All bodies are either potentially in motion or actually in motion.
2. "But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality" (419).
3. Nothing can be at once in both actuality and potentiality in the same respect.
4. Therefore nothing can be at once in both actuality and potentiality with respect to motion
5. Therefore nothing can move itself; it must be put into motion by something else.
6. If there were no "first mover, moved by no other" there would be no motion.
7. But there is motion.
8. Therefore there is a first mover, God.

The Second Way: Efficient Cause

1. Nothing is the efficient cause of itself.
2. If A is the efficient cause of B, then if A is absent, so is B.
3. Efficient causes are ordered from first cause, through intermediate cause(s), to ultimate effect.
4. By (2) and (3), if there is no first cause, there cannot be any ultimate effect.
5. But there are effects.
6. Therefore there must be a first cause for all of them: God.

The Third Way: Possibility and Necessity

1. "We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be:" contingent beings.
2. Everything is either necessary or contingent.
3. Assume that everything is contingent.
4. "It is impossible for [contingent beings] always to exist, for that which can not-be at some time is not."
5. Therefore, by (3) and (4), at one time there was nothing.
6. "That which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing."
7. Therefore, by (5) and (6), there is nothing now.
8. But there is something now!
9. Therefore (3) is false.
10. Therefore, by (2), there is a necessary being: God.

The Fourth Way: Gradation

1. There is a gradation to be found in things: some are better (hotter, colder, etc.) than others.
2. Things are X in proportion to how closely they resemble that which is most X.
3. Therefore, if there is nothing which is most X, there can be nothing which is good.

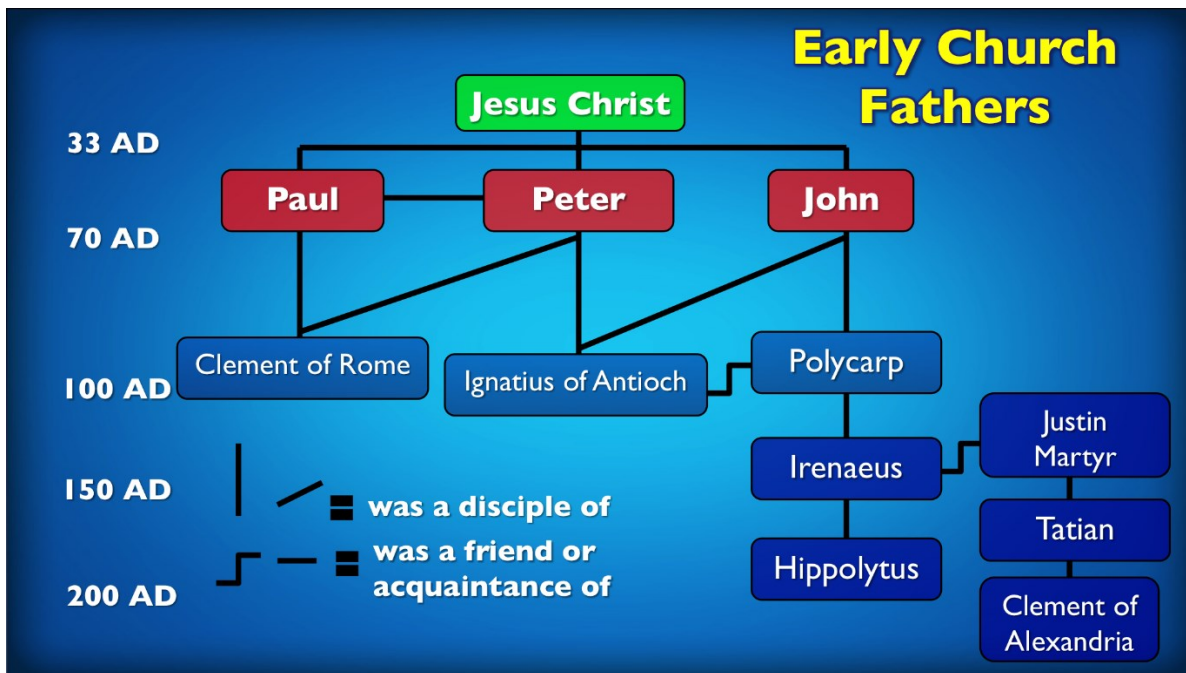
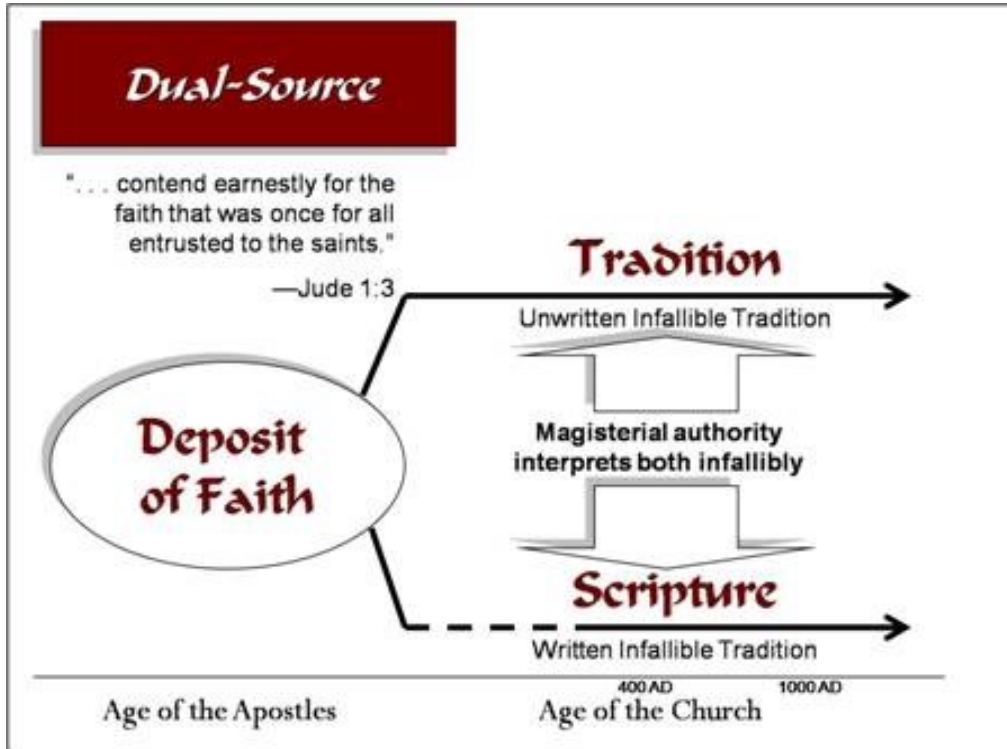
4. It follows that if anything is good, there must be something that is most good.
5. "Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God."

The Fifth Way: Design

1. We observe that natural bodies act toward ends.
2. Anything that acts toward an end either acts out of knowledge, or under the direction of something with knowledge, "as the arrow is directed by the archer."
3. But many natural beings lack knowledge.
4. "Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God."

Deeper Focus Resource: September 18

The Apostolic Succession



Deeper Focus Resource: September 25

Development of Marian Devotions

From the Liturgical Calendar: Marian Feasts are in Bold

- January 1:** **Mary, the Holy Mother of God**
- February 2:** **Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary** also known as **Candlemas**
- March 25:** **The Annunciation of the Lord**
- May 31:** **The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- Monday after Pentecost: The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
- 9 days after Corpus Christi: The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- August 15:** **The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- August 22: The Queenship of Mary
- September 8:** **The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows
- October 7: Our Lady of the Rosary
- November 21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- December 8:** **The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Deeper Focus Resource: October 9

Third Council of Carthage (397)

The primary source of information about this Council is an ancient document known as the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanae*, sometimes called simply the “African Code.”

One of the statements of the Council closed the Canon of Sacred Scripture, affirmed in previous councils (Rome in 382, Hippo in 3939) defining the “Canonical Scriptures:”

“It was also determined that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in the Church under the title of Divine Scriptures. The Canonical Scriptures are these: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two books of Paraleipomena (Chronicles) Job, the Psalter, five books of Solomon, the books of the twelve prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, two books of Esdras, two books of the Maccabees. Of the New Testament: four books of the Gospels, one book of the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul, one epistle of the same [writer] to the Hebrews, two Epistles of the Apostle Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Jude, one book of the Apocalypse of John. Let this be known also...for the purpose of confirming that Canon, because we received from our Fathers that those books must be read in the Church...”

Deeper Focus Resource: October 16

Catechism of the Catholic Church on Moral Conscience

I. The Judgment of Conscience

1777 Moral conscience,⁴⁸ present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil.⁴⁹ It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.

1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise.... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.⁵⁰

1779 It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection:

Return to your conscience, question it.... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.⁵¹

1780 The dignity of the human person implies and requires uprightness of moral conscience. Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. the truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the prudent judgment of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.

1781 Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. the verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to

mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God:

We shall . . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.⁵²

1782 Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."

48 Cf. Rom 2:14-16.

49 Cf. Rom 1:32.

50 John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk," V, in *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching II* (London: Longmans Green, 1885), 248.

51 St. Augustine, In ep Jo. 8, 9: PL 35, 2041.

52 1 Jn 3:19-20.

Deeper Focus Resource: October 23

St. Justin Martyr: Excerpted from *First Apology*, c. 155

This represents one of the earliest references to a formula of the Mass.



St. Justin Martyr presenting his work
to the Roman Emperor.

Engraving by Jacques Callot, 1632.

Chapter 65:

But we, after we have washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren and are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized person, and for all others, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Having ended the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. Then is brought to the presider of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water, and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands.

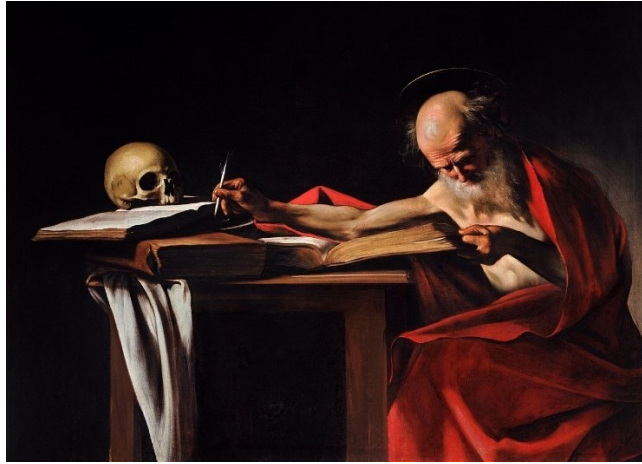
And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen [so be it].

And when the presider has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

Deeper Focus Resource: October 30

St. Jerome: *Against Vigilantius*, c. 406

St. Jerome Writing, by Caravaggio, 1605



The world has given birth to many monsters...All at once Vigilantius has arisen, animated by an unclean spirit, to fight against the Spirit of Christ, and to deny that religious reverence is to be paid to the tombs of the martyrs. Vigils, he says, are to be condemned; Alleluia must never be sung except at Easter; continence is a heresy; chastity a hot-bed of lust... According to the trick which he knows of old, he is trying to blend his perfidious poison with the Catholic faith; he assails virginity and hates chastity; he revels with worldlings and declaims against the fasts of the saints...This I have poured forth with more grief than amusement, for I cannot restrain myself and turn a deaf ear to the wrongs inflicted on apostles and martyrs.

Among other blasphemies, he may be heard to say, What need is there for you not only to pay such honour, not to say adoration, to the thing, whatever it may be, which you carry about in a little vessel and worship? And again, in the same book, Why do you kiss and adore a bit of powder wrapped up in a cloth? And again, in the same book, Under the cloak of religion we see what is all but a heathen ceremony introduced into the churches: while the sun is still shining, heaps of tapers are lighted, and everywhere a paltry bit of powder, wrapped up in a costly cloth, is kissed and worshipped. Great honour do men of this sort pay to the blessed martyrs, who, they think, are to be made glorious by trumpery tapers, when the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, with all the brightness of His majesty, gives them light?

Madman, who in the world ever adored the martyrs? Who ever thought man was God? Did not Acts 14:11 Paul and Barnabas, when the people of Lycaonia thought them to be Jupiter and Mercury, and would have offered sacrifices to them, rend their clothes and declare they were men? Not that they were not better than Jupiter and Mercury, who were but men long ago dead, but because, under the mistaken ideas of the Gentiles, the honour due to God was being paid to them. And we read the same respecting Peter, who, when Cornelius wished to adore him, raised him by the hand, and said, Acts 10:26 Stand up, for I also am a man. And have you the audacity to speak of the mysterious something or other which you carry about in a little vessel and

worship? I want to know what it is that you call something or other. Tell us more clearly (that there may be no restraint on your blasphemy) what you mean by the phrase a bit of powder wrapped up in a costly cloth in a tiny vessel. It is nothing less than the relics of the martyrs which he is vexed to see covered with a costly veil, and not bound up with rags or hair-cloth, or thrown on the midden, so that Vigilantius alone in his drunken slumber may be worshipped. Are we, therefore guilty of sacrilege when we enter the basilicas of the Apostles? Was the Emperor Constantius I. guilty of sacrilege when he transferred the sacred relics of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy to Constantinople? In their presence the demons cry out, and the devils who dwell in Vigilantius confess that they feel the influence of the saints. And at the present day is the Emperor Arcadius guilty of sacrilege, who after so long a time has conveyed the bones of the blessed Samuel from Judea to Thrace? Are all the bishops to be considered not only sacrilegious, but silly into the bargain, because they carried that most worthless thing, dust and ashes, wrapped in silk in golden vessel? Are the people of all the Churches fools, because they went to meet the sacred relics, and welcomed them with as much joy as if they beheld a living prophet in the midst of them, so that there was one great swarm of people from Palestine to Chalcedon with one voice re-echoing the praises of Christ? They were forsooth, adoring Samuel and not Christ, whose Levite and prophet Samuel was. You show mistrust because you think only of the dead body, and therefore blaspheme. Read the Gospel— Matthew 22:32 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob: He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. If then they are alive, they are not, to use your expression, kept in honourable confinement.

For you say that the souls of Apostles and martyrs have their abode either in the bosom of Abraham, or in the place of refreshment, or under the altar of God, and that they cannot leave their own tombs, and be present where they will. They are, it seems, of senatorial rank, and are not subjected to the worst kind of prison and the society of murderers, but are kept apart in liberal and honourable custody in the isles of the blessed and the Elysian fields. Will you lay down the law for God? Will you put the Apostles into chains? So that to the day of judgment they are to be kept in confinement, and are not with their Lord, although it is written concerning them, Revelation 14:4 They follow the Lamb, wherever he goes. If the Lamb is present everywhere, the same must be believed respecting those who are with the Lamb. And while the devil and the demons wander through the whole world, and with only too great speed present themselves everywhere; are martyrs, after the shedding of their blood, to be kept out of sight shut up in a coffin, from whence they cannot escape? You say, in your pamphlet, that so long as we are alive we can pray for one another; but once we die, the prayer of no person for another can be heard, and all the more because the martyrs, though they Revelation 6:10 cry for the avenging of their blood, have never been able to obtain their request. If Apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, when they ought still to be anxious for themselves, how much more must they do so when once they have won their crowns, overcome, and triumphed? A single man, Moses, oft wins pardon from God for six hundred thousand armed men; and Acts 7:59-60 Stephen, the follower of his Lord and the first Christian martyr, entreats pardon for his persecutors; and when once they have entered on their life with Christ, shall they have less power than before? The Apostle Paul Acts 27:37 says that two hundred and seventy-six souls were given to him in the ship; and when, after his dissolution, he has begun to be with Christ, must he shut his mouth, and be unable to say a word for those who throughout the whole

world have believed in his Gospel? Shall Vigilantius the live dog be better than Paul the dead lion?

As to the question of candles (tapers)... light them in the daytime, but by their solace we would cheer the darkness of the night, and watch for the dawn, lest we should be blind like you and sleep in darkness. And if some persons, being ignorant and simple minded laymen, or, at all events, religious women— of whom we can truly say, Romans 10:2 I allow that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge— adopt the practice in honour of the martyrs, what harm is thereby done to you? Once upon a time even the Apostles pleaded that the ointment was wasted, but they were rebuked by the voice of the Lord. Christ did not need the ointment, nor do martyrs need the light of tapers; and yet that woman poured out the ointment in honour of Christ, and her heart's devotion was accepted. All those who light these tapers have their reward according to their faith, as the Apostle says: Let every one abound in his own meaning. Do you call men of this sort idolaters? I do not deny, that all of us who believe in Christ have passed from the error of idolatry. For we are not born Christians, but become Christians by being born again. And because we formerly worshipped idols, does it follow that we ought not now to worship God lest we seem to pay like honour to Him and to idols? In the one case respect was paid to idols, and therefore the ceremony is to be abhorred; in the other the martyrs are venerated, and the same ceremony is therefore to be allowed. Throughout the whole Eastern Church, even when there are no relics of the martyrs, whenever the Gospel is to be read the candles are lighted, although the dawn may be reddening the sky, not of course to scatter the darkness, but by way of evidencing our joy. Matthew 25:1 And accordingly the virgins in the Gospel always have their lamps lighted. And the Apostles are Luke 12:35 told to have their loins girded, and their lamps burning in their hands. And of John Baptist we read, John 5:35 He was the lamp that burns and shines; so that, under the figure of corporeal light, that light is represented of which we read in the Psalter, Your word is a lamp unto my feet, O Lord, and a light unto my paths.

Does the bishop of Rome do wrong when he offers sacrifices to the Lord over the venerable bones of the dead men Peter and Paul, as we should say, but according to you, over a worthless bit of dust, and judges their tombs worthy to be Christ's altars? And not only is the bishop of one city in error, but the bishops of the whole world, who, despite the tavern-keeper Vigilantius, enter the basilicas of the dead, in which a worthless bit of dust and ashes lies wrapped up in a cloth, defiled and defiling all else. Thus, according to you, the sacred buildings are like the sepulchres of the Pharisees, whitened without, while within they have filthy remains, and are full of foul smells and uncleanness. And then he dares to expectorate his filth upon the subject and to say: Is it the case that the souls of the martyrs love their ashes, and hover round them, and are always present, lest haply if any one come to pray and they were absent, they could not hear? Oh, monster, who ought to be banished to the ends of the earth! Do you laugh at the relics of the martyrs, and in company with Eunomius, the father of this heresy, slander the Churches of Christ? Are you not afraid of being in such company, and of speaking against us the same things which he utters against the Church?

He argues against the signs and miracles which are wrought in the basilicas of the martyrs, and says that they are of service to the unbelieving, not to believers, as though the question now were for whose advantage they occur, not by what power. Granted that signs belong to the faithless, who, because they would not obey the word and doctrine, are brought to believe by means of

signs. Even our Lord wrought signs for the unbelieving, and yet our Lord's signs are not on that account to be impugned, because those people were faithless, but must be worthy of greater admiration because they were so powerful that they subdued even the hardest hearts, and compelled men to believe. And so I will not have you tell me that signs are for the unbelieving; but answer my question — how is it that poor worthless dust and ashes are associated with this wondrous power of signs and miracles? ... Let me give you my advice: go to the basilicas of the martyrs, and some day you will be cleansed; you will find there many in like case with yourself, and will be set on fire, not by the martyrs' tapers which offend you, but by invisible flames; and you will then confess what you now deny...

Deeper Focus Resource: November 7



The Church Militant, Penitent, and Triumphant, by Andrea de Firenze, 1365.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Communion of Saints

946 After confessing "the holy catholic Church," the Apostles' Creed adds "the communion of saints." In a certain sense this article is a further explanation of the preceding: "What is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints?"⁴⁷⁹ The communion of saints is the Church.

947 "Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others. . . . We must therefore believe that there exists a communion of goods in the Church. But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head. . . . Therefore, the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments."⁴⁸⁰ "As this Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods she has received necessarily become a common fund."⁴⁸¹

948 The term "communion of saints" therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion in holy things (*sancta*)" and "among holy persons (*sancti*)."

Sancta sanctis! ("God's holy gifts for God's holy people") is proclaimed by the celebrant in most Eastern liturgies during the elevation of the holy Gifts before the distribution of

communion. The faithful (*sancti*) are fed by Christ's holy body and blood (*sancta*) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*) and to communicate it to the world.

I. COMMUNION IN SPIRITUAL GOODS

949 In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers."⁴⁸²

Communion in the faith. The faith of the faithful is the faith of the Church, received from the apostles. Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared.

950 *Communion of the sacraments.* "The fruit of all the sacraments belongs to all the faithful. All the sacraments are sacred links uniting the faithful with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ, and above all Baptism, the gate by which we enter into the Church. The communion of saints must be understood as the communion of the sacraments. . . . The name 'communion' can be applied to all of them, for they unite us to God. . . . But this name is better suited to the Eucharist than to any other, because it is primarily the Eucharist that brings this communion about."⁴⁸³

951 *Communion of charisms.* Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit "distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" for the building up of the Church.⁴⁸⁴ Now, "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."⁴⁸⁵

952 *"They had everything in common."*⁴⁸⁶ "Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy . . . and of their neighbors in want."⁴⁸⁷ A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods.⁴⁸⁸

953 *Communion in charity.* In the sanctorum communio, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself."⁴⁸⁹ "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."⁴⁹⁰ "Charity does not insist on its own way."⁴⁹¹ In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.

II. THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

954 *The three states of the Church.* "When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is'."⁴⁹²

All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbors, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together.⁴⁹³

955 "So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods."⁴⁹⁴

956 *The intercession of the saints.* "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped."⁴⁹⁵

Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.⁴⁹⁶

I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.⁴⁹⁷

957 *Communion with the saints.* "It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself"⁴⁹⁸:

We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples!⁴⁹⁹

958 *Communion with the dead.* "In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them."⁵⁰⁰ Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

959 *In the one family of God.* "For if we continue to love one another and to join in praising the Most Holy Trinity - all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ - we will be faithful to the deepest vocation of the Church."⁵⁰¹

IN BRIEF

960 The Church is a "communion of saints": this expression refers first to the "holy things" (*sancta*), above all the Eucharist, by which "the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about" (*LG 3*).

961 The term "communion of saints" refers also to the communion of "holy persons" (*sancti*) in Christ who "died for all," so that what each one does or suffers in and for Christ bears fruit for all.

962 "We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 30).

Deeper Focus Resource: December 4

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Scripture

- *Genesis 1:26-31*
God created man and woman in his image.
- *Deuteronomy 10:17-19*
God loves the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.
- *Psalms 139:13-16*
God formed each of us and knows us intimately.
- *Proverbs 22:2*
The Lord is the maker of both rich and poor.
- *Luke 10:25-37*
The good Samaritan recognized the dignity in the other and cared for his life.
- *John 4:1-42*
Jesus broke with societal and religious customs to honor the dignity of the Samaritan woman.
- *Romans 12: 9-18*
Love one another, contribute to the needs of others, live peaceably with all.
- *1 Corinthians 3:16*
You are holy, for you are God's temple and God dwells in you.
- *Galatians 3:27-28*
All Christians are one in Christ Jesus.
- *James 2:1-8*
Honor the poor.
- *1 John 3: 1-2*
See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called Children of God.
- *1 John 4:7-12*
Let us love one another because love is from God.

Tradition

When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. (Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home [Laudato

Si'], no. 117)

*Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers". (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [Evangelii Gaudium], no. 153)*

*The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [Caritas in Veritate], no. 32)*
*Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are. (St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [Centesimus annus], no. 11)*

The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth -- the sacredness -- of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured.

*All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27). (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 28)*

*Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church's very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15). (St. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* [Evangelium vitae], no. 3)*

As explicitly formulated, the precept "You shall not kill" is strongly negative: it indicates the extreme limit which can never be exceeded. Implicitly, however, it encourages a positive attitude of absolute respect for life; it leads to the promotion of life and to progress along the way of a

love which gives, receives and serves. (St. John Paul II, The Gospel of Life [Evangelium vitae],no. 54)

This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. (St. John XXIII, Mother and Teacher [Mater et Magistra], no. 219)

There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1938)

Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. (Second Vatican Council, The Church in the Modern World [Gaudium et Spes], no. 27)

Deeper Focus Resource: December 11

On the Trinity, by St. Augustine (Excerpt)



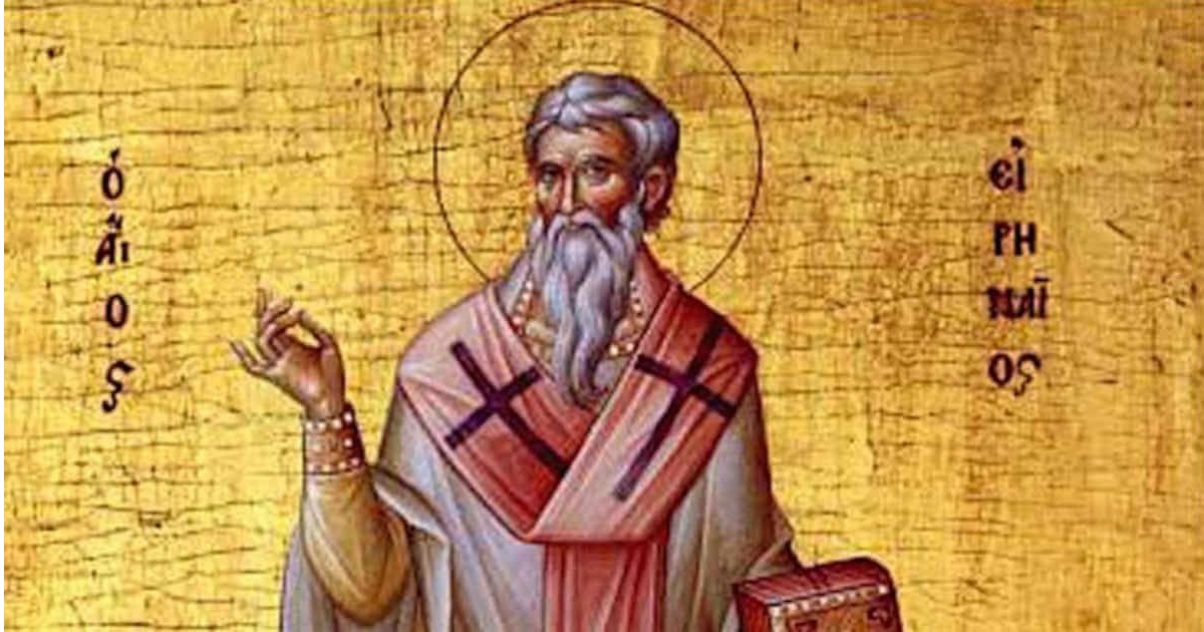
St. Augustine by Antonio Rodriguez, c. 1680

All those Catholic expounders of the divine Scriptures, both Old and New, whom I have been able to read, who have written before me concerning the Trinity, Who is God, have purposed to teach, according to the Scriptures, this doctrine, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God: although the Father has begotten the Son, and so He who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and so He who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Himself also co-equal with the Father and the Son, and pertaining to the unity of the Trinity. Yet not that this Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into

heaven, but only the Son. Nor, again, that this Trinity descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized; nor that, on the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of the Lord, when there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, the same Trinity sat upon each of them with cloven tongues like as of fire, but only the Holy Spirit. Nor yet that this Trinity said from heaven, You are my Son, whether when He was baptized by John, or when the three disciples were with Him in the mount, or when the voice sounded, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again; but that it was a word of the Father only, spoken to the Son; although the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly. This is also my faith, since it is the Catholic faith.

Deeper Focus Resource: December 18

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* (Excerpt on the Incarnation), c. 180



Jesus Christ was not a mere man, begotten from Joseph in the ordinary course of nature, but was very God, begotten of the Father most high, and very man, born of the Virgin. Those who assert that He was simply a mere man, begotten by Joseph, remaining in the bondage of the old disobedience, are in a state of death having been not as yet joined to the Word of God the Father, nor receiving liberty through the Son, as He does Himself declare: If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8:36 But, being ignorant of Him who from the Virgin is Emmanuel, they are deprived of His gift, which is eternal life; Romans 6:23 and not receiving the incorruptible Word, they remain in mortal flesh, and are debtors to death, not obtaining the antidote of life. To whom the Word says, mentioning His own gift of grace: I said, You are all the sons of the Highest, and gods; but you shall die like men. He speaks undoubtedly these words to those who have not received the gift of adoption, but who despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God, defraud human nature of promotion into God, and prove themselves ungrateful to the Word of God, who became flesh for them. For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God.

For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?

Deeper Focus Resource: January 8



The Sacraments: Catechism of the Catholic Church

CHAPTER ONE ARTICLE 2 THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE CHURCH'S SACRAMENTS

1113 The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments.²⁹ There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.³⁰ This article will discuss what is common to the Church's seven sacraments from a doctrinal point of view. What is common to them in terms of their celebration will be presented in the second chapter, and what is distinctive about each will be the topic of the *Section Two*.

I. THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRIST

1114 "Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consensus . . . of the Fathers," we profess that "the sacraments of the new law were . . . all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord."³¹

1115 Jesus' words and actions during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of his Paschal mystery. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the Church when all was accomplished. The mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church, for "what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries."³²

1116 Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ,³³ which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant.

II. THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

1117 As she has done for the canon of Sacred Scripture and for the doctrine of the faith, the Church, by the power of the Spirit who guides her "into all truth," has gradually recognized this treasure received from Christ and, as the faithful steward of God's mysteries, has determined its "dispensation."³⁴ Thus the Church has discerned over the centuries that among liturgical

celebrations there are seven that are, in the strict sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord.

1118 The sacraments are "of the Church" in the double sense that they are "by her" and "for her." They are "by the Church," for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are "for the Church" in the sense that "the sacraments make the Church,"³⁵ since they manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons.

1119 Forming "as it were, one mystical person" with Christ the head, the Church acts in the sacraments as "an organically structured priestly community."³⁶ Through Baptism and Confirmation the priestly people is enabled to celebrate the liturgy, while those of the faithful "who have received Holy Orders, are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ."³⁷

1120 The ordained ministry or *ministerial* priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood.³⁸ The ordained priesthood guarantees that it really is Christ who acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son was committed to the apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person.³⁹ The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments.

1121 The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental *character* or "seal" by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible,⁴⁰ it remains for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated.

III. THE SACRAMENTS OF FAITH

1122 Christ sent his apostles so that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations."⁴¹ "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."⁴² The mission to baptize, and so the sacramental mission, is implied in the mission to evangelize, because the sacrament is prepared for by *the word of God and by the faith* which is assent to this word:

The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God. . . .
The preaching of the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word.⁴³

1123 "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only

presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called 'sacraments of *faith*.'"⁴⁴

1124 The Church's faith precedes the faith of the believer who is invited to adhere to it. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles - whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* (or: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, according to Prosper of Aquitaine [5th cent.]).⁴⁵ The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.⁴⁶

1125 For this reason no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.

1126 Likewise, since the sacraments express and develop the communion of faith in the Church, the *lex orandi* is one of the essential criteria of the dialogue that seeks to restore the unity of Christians.⁴⁷

IV. THE SACRAMENTS OF SALVATION

1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.⁴⁸ They are *efficacious* because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

1128 This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation⁴⁹ that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God."⁵⁰ From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*.⁵¹ "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature⁵² by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

V. THE SACRAMENTS OF ETERNAL LIFE

1130 The Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord "until he comes," when God will be "everything to everyone."⁵³ Since the apostolic age the liturgy has been drawn toward its goal by

the Spirit's groaning in the Church: *Marana tha!*⁵⁴ The liturgy thus shares in Jesus' desire: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you . . . until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."⁵⁵ In the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life, while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus."⁵⁶ The "Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come . . . Come, Lord Jesus!'"⁵⁷

St. Thomas sums up the various aspects of sacramental signs: "Therefore a sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it - Christ's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's Passion - grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us - future glory."⁵⁸

IN BRIEF

1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

1132 The Church celebrates the sacraments as a priestly community structured by the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of ordained ministers.

1133 The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it.

1134 The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.

29 Cf. *SC* 6.

30 Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274) DS 860; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1310; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1601.

31 Council of Trent (1547): DS 1600-1601.

32 St. Leo the Great, *Sermo*. 74,2:PL 54,398.

33 Cf. *Lk* 5:17; 6:19; 8:46.

34 *Jn* 16:13; cf. *Mt* 13:52; *I Cor* 4:1.

35 St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 22,17:PL 41,779; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III,64,2 *ad* 3.

36 *LG* 11; cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943).

37 *LG* 11 § 2.

38 Cf. *LG* 10 § 2.

39 Cf. *Jn* 20:21-23; *Lk* 24:47; *Mt* 28:18-20.

40 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609.

41 *Lk* 24:47.

42 *Mt* 28:19.

43 *PO* 4 §§ 1,2.

44 *SC* 59.

45 *Ep.* 8.

46 Cf. *DV* 8.

47 Cf. *UR* 2; 15.

48 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1605; DS 1606.

49 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1608.

Deeper Focus Resource: January 15

On Baptism – Excerpts from The Fathers of the Church

HERMAS

“‘I have heard, sir,’ said I [to the Shepherd], ‘from some teacher, that there is no other repentance except that which took place when we went down into the water and obtained the remission of our former sins.’ He said to me, ‘You have heard rightly, for so it is’” (*The Shepherd* 4:3:1–2 [A.D. 80]).

JUSTIN MARTYR

“As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly . . . are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, ‘Except you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ [John 3:3]” (*First Apology* 61 [A.D. 151]).

TERTULLIAN

“Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. . . . [But] a viper of the [Gnostic] Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism—which is quite in accordance with nature, for vipers and asps . . . themselves generally do live in arid and waterless places. But we, little fishes after the example of our [Great] Fish, Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water. So that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew full well how to kill the little fishes—by taking them away from the water!” (*Baptism* 1 [A.D. 203]).

“Without baptism, salvation is attainable by none” (*ibid.*, 12).

“We have, indeed, a second [baptismal] font which is one with the former [water baptism]: namely, that of blood, of which the Lord says: ‘I am to be baptized with a baptism’ [Luke 12:50], when he had already been baptized. He had come through water and blood, as John wrote [1 John 5:6], so that he might be baptized with water and glorified with blood. . . . This is the baptism which replaces that of the fountain, when it has not been received, and restores it when it has been lost” (*ibid.*, 16).

HIPPOLYTUS

“[P]erhaps someone will ask, ‘What does it conduce unto piety to be baptized?’ In the first place, that you may do what has seemed good to God; in the next place, being born again by water unto God so that you change your first birth, which was from concupiscence, and are able to attain salvation, which would otherwise be impossible. For thus the [prophet] has sworn to us: ‘Amen, I say to you, unless you are born again with living water, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ Therefore, fly to the water, for this alone can extinguish the fire. He who will not come to the water still carries around with him the spirit of insanity for the sake of which he will not come to the living water for his own salvation” (*Homilies* 11:26 [A.D. 217]).

ORIGEN

“It is not possible to receive forgiveness of sins without baptism” (*Exhortation to the Martyrs* 30 [A.D. 235]).

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

“[T]he baptism of public witness and of blood cannot profit a heretic unto salvation, because there is no salvation outside the Church.” (*Letters* 72[73]:21 [A.D. 253]).

“[Catechumens who suffer martyrdom] are not deprived of the sacrament of baptism. Rather, they are baptized with the most glorious and greatest baptism of blood, concerning which the Lord said that he had another baptism with which he himself was to be baptized [Luke 12:50]” (*ibid.*, 72[73]:22).

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

“If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who even without water will receive the kingdom. . . . For the Savior calls martyrdom a baptism, saying, ‘Can you drink the cup which I drink and be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized [Mark 10:38]?’ Indeed, the martyrs too confess, by being made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men [1 Cor. 4:9]” (*Catechetical Lectures* 3:10 [A.D. 350]).

GREGORY NAZIANZ

“[Besides the baptisms associated with Moses, John, and Jesus] I know also a fourth baptism, that by martyrdom and blood, by which also Christ himself was baptized. This one is far more august than the others, since it cannot be defiled by later sins” (*Oration on the Holy Lights* 39:17 [A.D. 381]).

POPE SIRICIUS

“It would tend to the ruin of our souls if, from our refusal of the saving font of baptism to those who seek it, any of them should depart this life and lose the kingdom and eternal life” (*Letter to Himerius* 3 [A.D. 385]).

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

“Do not be surprised that I call martyrdom a baptism, for here too the Spirit comes in great haste and there is the taking away of sins and a wonderful and marvelous cleansing of the soul, and just as those being baptized are washed in water, so too those being martyred are washed in their own blood” (*Panegyric on St. Lucian* 2 [A.D. 387]).

AMBROSE OF MILAN

“But I hear you lamenting because he [the Emperor Valentinian] had not received the sacraments of baptism. Tell me, what else could we have, except the will to it, the asking for it? He too had just now this desire, and after he came into Italy it was begun, and a short time ago he signified that he wished to be baptized by me. Did he, then, not have the grace which he desired? Did he not have what he eagerly sought? Certainly, because he sought it, he received it. What else does it mean: ‘Whatever just man shall be overtaken by death, his soul shall be at rest [Wis. 4:7]’?” (*Sympathy at the Death of Valentinian* [A.D. 392]).

AUGUSTINE

“There are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptism, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance; yet God does not forgive sins except to the baptized” (*Sermons to Catechumens on the Creed* 7:15 [A.D. 395]).

“I do not hesitate to put the Catholic catechumen, burning with divine love, before a baptized heretic. Even within the Catholic Church herself we put the good catechumen ahead of the wicked baptized person. . . . For Cornelius, even before his baptism, was filled up with the Holy Spirit [Acts 10:44–48], while Simon [Magus], even after his baptism, was puffed up with an unclean spirit [Acts 8:13–19]” (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 4:21:28 [A.D. 400]).

“That the place of baptism is sometimes supplied by suffering is supported by a substantial argument which the same blessed Cyprian draws from the circumstance of the thief, to whom, although not baptized, it was said, ‘Today you shall be with me in paradise’ [Luke 23:43]. Considering this over and over again, I find that not only suffering for the name of Christ can supply for that which is lacking by way of baptism, but even faith and conversion of heart [i.e., baptism of desire] if, perhaps, because of the circumstances of the time, recourse cannot be had to the celebration of the mystery of baptism” (*ibid.*, 4:22:29).

“When we speak of within and without in relation to the Church, it is the position of the heart that we must consider, not that of the body. . . . All who are within [the Church] in heart are saved in the unity of the ark [by baptism of desire]” (ibid., 5:28:39).

“[According to] apostolic tradition . . . the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal. This is the witness of Scripture too” (*Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 1:24:34 [A.D. 412]).

“Those who, though they have not received the washing of regeneration, die for the confession of Christ—it avails them just as much for the forgiveness of their sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of baptism. For he that said, ‘If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven’ [John 3:5], made an exception for them in that other statement in which he says no less generally, ‘Whoever confesses me before men, I too will confess him before my Father, who is in heaven’ [Matt. 10:32]” (*The City of God* 13:7 [A.D. 419]).

POPE ST. LEO I

“And because of the transgression of the first man, the whole stock of the human race was tainted; no one can be set free from the state of the old Adam save through Christ’s sacrament of baptism, in which there are no distinctions between the reborn, as the apostle [Paul] says, ‘For as many of you as were baptized in Christ did put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . ‘ [Gal. 3:27–28]” (*Letters* 15:10[11] [A.D. 445]).

Deeper Focus Resource: January 22

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

1536 Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.

(On the institution and mission of the apostolic ministry by Christ, see above, no. 874 ff. Here only the sacramental means by which this ministry is handed on will be treated.)

I. WHY IS THIS SACRAMENT CALLED "ORDERS"?

1537 The word *order* in Roman antiquity designated an established civil body, especially a governing body. *Ordinatio* means incorporation into an *ordo*. In the Church there are established bodies which Tradition, not without a basis in Sacred Scripture,⁴ has since ancient times called *taxeis* (Greek) or *ordines*. And so the liturgy speaks of the *ordo episcoporum*, the *ordo presbyterorum*, the *ordo diaconorum*. Other groups also receive this name of *ordo*: catechumens, virgins, spouses, widows, . . .

1538 Integration into one of these bodies in the Church was accomplished by a rite called *ordinatio*, a religious and liturgical act which was a consecration, a blessing or a sacrament. Today the word "*ordination*" is reserved for the sacramental act which integrates a man into the order of bishops, presbyters, or deacons, and goes beyond a simple *election*, *designation*, *delegation*, or *institution* by the community, for it confers a gift of the Holy Spirit that permits the exercise of a "sacred power" (*sacra potestas*)⁵ which can come only from Christ himself through his Church. Ordination is also called *consecratio*, for it is a setting apart and an investiture by Christ himself for his Church. The *laying on of hands* by the bishop, with the consecratory prayer, constitutes the visible sign of this ordination.

II. THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

The priesthood of the Old Covenant

1539 The chosen people was constituted by God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."⁶ But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance.⁷ A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."⁸

1540 Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer,⁹ this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to

repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish.¹⁰

1541 The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders,¹¹ a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant. Thus in the Latin Rite the Church prays in the consecratory preface of the ordination of bishops:

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .
by your gracious word
you have established the plan of your Church.

From the beginning,
you chose the descendants of Abraham to be your holy nation.
You established rulers and priests
and did not leave your sanctuary without ministers to serve you. . . .¹²

1542 At the ordination of priests, the Church prays:

Lord, holy Father, . . .
when you had appointed high priests to rule your people,
you chose other men next to them in rank and dignity
to be with them and to help them in their task. . . .

you extended the spirit of Moses to seventy wise men. . . .
You shared among the sons of Aaron
the fullness of their father's power.¹³

1543 In the consecratory prayer for ordination of deacons, the Church confesses:

Almighty God . . .,
You make the Church, Christ's body,
grow to its full stature as a new and greater temple.
You enrich it with every kind of grace
and perfect it with a diversity of members
to serve the whole body in a wonderful pattern of unity.

You established a threefold ministry of worship and service,
for the glory of your name.
As ministers of your tabernacle you chose the sons of Levi
and gave them your blessing as their everlasting inheritance.¹⁴

The one priesthood of Christ

1544 Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men."¹⁵ The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek";¹⁶ "holy, blameless, unstained,"¹⁷ "by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified,"¹⁸ that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross.

1545 The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers."¹⁹

Two participations in the one priesthood of Christ

1546 Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father."²⁰ The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood."²¹

1547 The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, "each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ." While being "ordered one to another," they differ essentially.²² In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace --a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit--, the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a *means* by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

In the person of Christ the Head . . .

1548 In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*:²³

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*).²⁴

Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.²⁵

1549 Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers.²⁶ In the

beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.²⁷

1550 This presence of Christ in the minister is not to be understood as if the latter were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error, even sin. The power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all acts of ministers in the same way. While this guarantee extends to the sacraments, so that even the minister's sin cannot impede the fruit of grace, in many other acts the minister leaves human traces that are not always signs of fidelity to the Gospel and consequently can harm the apostolic fruitfulness of the Church.

1551 This priesthood is ministerial. "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a *service*."²⁸ It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all.²⁹ "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him."³⁰

. . . "in the name of the whole Church"

1552 The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ - Head of the Church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice.³¹

1553 "In the name of the *whole* Church" does not mean that priests are the delegates of the community. The prayer and offering of the Church are inseparable from the prayer and offering of Christ, her head; it is always the case that Christ worships in and through his Church. The whole Church, the Body of Christ, prays and offers herself "through him, with him, in him," in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to God the Father. The whole Body, *caput et membra*, prays and offers itself, and therefore those who in the Body are especially his ministers are called ministers not only of Christ, but also of the Church. It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church.

III. THE THREE DEGREES OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

1554 "The divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests, and deacons."³² Catholic doctrine, expressed in the liturgy, the Magisterium, and the constant practice of the Church, recognizes that there are two degrees of ministerial participation in the priesthood of Christ: the episcopacy and the presbyterate . The diaconate is intended to help and serve them. For this reason the term *sacerdos* in current usage denotes bishops and priests but not deacons. Yet Catholic doctrine teaches that the degrees of priestly participation (episcopate and presbyterate) and the degree of service (diaconate) are all three conferred by a sacramental act called "ordination," that is, by the sacrament of Holy Orders:

Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church.³³

Episcopal ordination - fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders

1555 "Amongst those various offices which have been exercised in the Church from the earliest times the chief place, according to the witness of tradition, is held by the function of those who, through their appointment to the dignity and responsibility of bishop, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession going back to the beginning, are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line."³⁴

1556 To fulfill their exalted mission, "the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, and by the imposition of hands they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration."³⁵

1557 The Second Vatican Council "teaches . . . that *the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders* is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness namely which, both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and the language of the Fathers of the Church, is called the high priesthood, the acme (*summa*) of the sacred ministry."³⁶

1558 "Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, also the offices of teaching and ruling. . . . In fact . . . by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his representative (*in Eius persona agant*)."³⁷ "By virtue, therefore, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith and have been made pontiffs and pastors."³⁸

1559 "One is constituted a member of the episcopal body in virtue of the sacramental consecration and by the hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college."³⁹ The character and *collegial nature* of the episcopal order are evidenced among other ways by the Church's ancient practice which calls for several bishops to participate in the consecration of a new bishop.⁴⁰ In our day, the lawful ordination of a bishop requires a special intervention of the Bishop of Rome, because he is the supreme visible bond of the communion of the particular Churches in the one Church and the guarantor of their freedom.

1560 As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the *solicitude for all the Churches*: "Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church."⁴¹

1561 The above considerations explain why the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop has a quite special significance as an expression of the Church gathered around the altar, with the one who represents Christ, the Good Shepherd and Head of his Church, presiding.⁴²

The ordination of priests - co-workers of the bishops

1562 "Christ, whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world, has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of their ministry."⁴³ "The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be *co-workers of the episcopal order* for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ."⁴⁴

1563 "Because it is joined with the episcopal order the office of priests shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body. Hence the priesthood of priests, while presupposing the sacraments of initiation, is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head."⁴⁵

1564 "Whilst not having the supreme degree of the pontifical office, and notwithstanding the fact that they depend on the bishops in the exercise of their own proper power, the priests are for all that associated with them by reason of their sacerdotal dignity; and in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest, they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship *as true priests of the New Testament*."⁴⁶

1565 Through the sacrament of Holy Orders priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission, "but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation 'to the end of the earth,'"⁴⁷ "prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere."⁴⁸

1566 "It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the *Eucharistic assembly* of the faithful (*synaxis*) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father."⁴⁹ From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength.⁵⁰

1567 "The priests, prudent cooperators of the episcopal college and its support and instrument, called to the service of the People of God, constitute, together with their bishop, a unique sacerdotal college (*presbyterium*) dedicated, it is true, to a variety of distinct duties. In each local assembly of the faithful they represent, in a certain sense, the bishop, with whom they are

associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils discharge them."⁵¹ priests can exercise their ministry only in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him. The promise of obedience they make to the bishop at the moment of ordination and the kiss of peace from him at the end of the ordination liturgy mean that the bishop considers them his co-workers, his sons, his brothers and his friends, and that they in return owe him love and obedience.

1568 "All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop. . . ." ⁵² The unity of the presbyterium finds liturgical expression in the custom of the presbyters' imposing hands, after the bishop, during the rite of ordination.

The ordination of deacons - "in order to serve"

1569 "At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons, who receive the imposition of hands 'not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry.'" ⁵³ At an ordination to the diaconate only the bishop lays hands on the candidate, thus signifying the deacon's special attachment to the bishop in the tasks of his "diakonia."⁵⁴

1570 Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way.⁵⁵ The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an *imprint* ("character") which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the "deacon" or servant of all.⁵⁶ Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.⁵⁷

1571 Since the Second Vatican Council the Latin Church has restored the diaconate "as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy,"⁵⁸ while the Churches of the East had always maintained it. This permanent diaconate, which can be conferred on married men, constitutes an important enrichment for the Church's mission. Indeed it is appropriate and useful that men who carry out a truly diaconal ministry in the Church, whether in its liturgical and pastoral life or whether in its social and charitable works, should "be strengthened by the imposition of hands which has come down from the apostles. They would be more closely bound to the altar and their ministry would be made more fruitful through the sacramental grace of the diaconate."⁵⁹

IV. THE CELEBRATION OF THIS SACRAMENT

1572 Given the importance that the ordination of a bishop, a priest, or a deacon has for the life of the particular Church, its celebration calls for as many of the faithful as possible to take part. It should take place preferably on Sunday, in the cathedral, with solemnity appropriate to the occasion. All three ordinations, of the bishop, of the priest, and of the deacon, follow the same movement. Their proper place is within the Eucharistic liturgy.

1573 The *essential rite* of the sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees consists in the bishop's imposition of hands on the head of the ordinand and in the bishop's specific consecratory prayer asking God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts proper to the ministry to which the candidate is being ordained.⁶⁰

1574 As in all the sacraments additional rites surround the celebration. Varying greatly among the different liturgical traditions, these rites have in common the expression of the multiple aspects of sacramental grace. Thus in the Latin Church, the initial rites - presentation and election of the ordinand, instruction by the bishop, examination of the candidate, litany of the saints - attest that the choice of the candidate is made in keeping with the practice of the Church and prepare for the solemn act of consecration, after which several rites symbolically express and complete the mystery accomplished: for bishop and priest, an anointing with holy chrism, a sign of the special anointing of the Holy Spirit who makes their ministry fruitful; giving the book of the Gospels, the ring, the miter, and the crozier to the bishop as the sign of his apostolic mission to proclaim the Word of God, of his fidelity to the Church, the bride of Christ, and his office as shepherd of the Lord's flock; presentation to the priest of the paten and chalice, "the offering of the holy people" which he is called to present to God; giving the book of the Gospels to the deacon who has just received the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

V. WHO CAN CONFER THIS SACRAMENT?

1575 Christ himself chose the apostles and gave them a share in his mission and authority. Raised to the Father's right hand, he has not forsaken his flock but he keeps it under his constant protection through the apostles, and guides it still through these same pastors who continue his work today.⁶¹ Thus, it is Christ whose gift it is that some be apostles, others pastors. He continues to act through the bishops.⁶²

1576 Since the sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament of the apostolic ministry, it is for the bishops as the successors of the apostles to hand on the "gift of the Spirit,"⁶³ the "apostolic line."⁶⁴ Validly ordained bishops, i.e., those who are in the line of apostolic succession, validly confer the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders.⁶⁵

VI. WHO CAN RECEIVE THIS SACRAMENT?

1577 "Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination."⁶⁶ The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry.⁶⁷ The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.⁶⁸

1578 No one has a *right* to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God.⁶⁹ Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be *received* only as an unmerited gift.

1579 All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain *celibate* "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."⁷⁰ Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord,"⁷¹ they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.⁷²

1580 In the Eastern Churches a different discipline has been in force for many centuries: while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. This practice has long been considered legitimate; these priests exercise a fruitful ministry within their communities.⁷³ Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.

VII. THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

The indelible character

1581 This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.

1582 As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. The sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an *indelible spiritual character* and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.⁷⁴

1583 It is true that someone validly ordained can, for grave reasons, be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to ordination, or can be forbidden to exercise them; but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense,⁷⁵ because the character imprinted by ordination is for ever. The vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination mark him permanently.

1584 Since it is ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister, the unworthiness of the latter does not prevent Christ from acting.⁷⁶ St. Augustine states this forcefully:

As for the proud minister, he is to be ranked with the devil. Christ's gift is not thereby profaned: what flows through him keeps its purity, and what passes through him remains dear and reaches the fertile earth. . . . The spiritual power of the sacrament is indeed comparable to light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it should pass through defiled beings, it is not itself defiled.⁷⁷

The grace of the Holy Spirit

1585 The grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this sacrament is configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister.

1586 For the bishop, this is first of all a grace of strength ("the governing spirit": Prayer of Episcopal Consecration in the Latin rite):⁷⁸ the grace to guide and defend his Church with strength and prudence as a father and pastor, with gratuitous love for all and a preferential love for the poor, the sick, and the needy. This grace impels him to proclaim the Gospel to all, to be the model for his flock, to go before it on the way of sanctification by identifying himself in the Eucharist with Christ the priest and victim, not fearing to give his life for his sheep:

Father, you know all hearts.
You have chosen your servant for the office of bishop.
May he be a shepherd to your holy flock,
and a high priest blameless in your sight,
ministering to you night and day;
may he always gain the blessing of your favor
and offer the gifts of your holy Church.
Through the Spirit who gives the grace of high priesthood
grant him the power
to forgive sins as you have commanded
to assign ministries as you have decreed
and to loose from every bond by the authority which you
gave to your apostles. May he be pleasing to you by his gentleness and purity of heart,
presenting a fragrant offering to you,
through Jesus Christ, your Son. . . .⁷⁹

1587 The spiritual gift conferred by presbyteral ordination is expressed by this prayer of the Byzantine Rite. The bishop, while laying on his hand, says among other things:

Lord, fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit
him whom you have deigned to raise to the rank of the priesthood,
that he may be worthy to stand without reproach before your altar
to proclaim the Gospel of your kingdom,
to fulfill the ministry of your word of truth,
to offer you spiritual gifts and sacrifices,
to renew your people by the bath of rebirth;
so that he may go out to meet
our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, your only Son,
on the day of his second coming,
and may receive from your vast goodness
the recompense for a faithful administration of his order.⁸⁰

1588 With regard to deacons, "strengthened by sacramental grace they are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service (*diakonia*) of the liturgy, of the Gospel, and of works of charity."⁸¹

1589 Before the grandeur of the priestly grace and office, the holy doctors felt an urgent call to conversion in order to conform their whole lives to him whose sacrament had made them ministers. Thus St. Gregory of Nazianzus, as a very young priest, exclaimed:

We must begin by purifying ourselves before purifying others; we must be instructed to be able to instruct, become light to illuminate, draw close to God to bring him close to others, be sanctified to sanctify, lead by the hand and counsel prudently. I know whose ministers we are, where we find ourselves and to where we strive. I know God's greatness and man's weakness, but also his potential. [Who then is the priest? He is] the defender of truth, who stands with angels, gives glory with archangels, causes sacrifices to rise to the altar on high, shares Christ's priesthood, refashions creation, restores it in God's image, recreates it for the world on high and, even greater, is divinized and divinizes.⁸² And the holy Cure of Ars: "The priest continues the work of redemption on earth. . . . If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die not of fright but of love. . . . The Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus."⁸³

IN BRIEF

1590 St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (*2 Tim* 1:6), and "If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task." (*1 Tim* 3:1) To Titus he said: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you amend what was defective, and appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed you" (*Titus* 1:5).

1591 The whole Church is a priestly people. Through Baptism all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ. This participation is called the "common priesthood of the faithful." Based on this common priesthood and ordered to its service, there exists another participation in the mission of Christ: the ministry conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders, where the task is to serve in the name and in the person of Christ the Head in the midst of the community.

1592 The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*).

1593 Since the beginning, the ordained ministry has been conferred and exercised in three degrees: that of bishops, that of presbyters, and that of deacons. The ministries conferred by ordination are irreplaceable for the organic structure of the Church: without the bishop, presbyters, and deacons, one cannot speak of the Church (cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Trall.* 3,1).

1594 The bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, which integrates him into the episcopal college and makes him the visible head of the particular Church entrusted to him. As successors of the apostles and members of the college, the bishops share in the apostolic responsibility and mission of the whole Church under the authority of the Pope, successor of St. Peter.

1595 Priests are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity and at the same time depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions; they are called to be the bishops' prudent co-workers. They form around their bishop the presbyterium which bears responsibility with him for the particular Church. They receive from the bishop the charge of a parish community or a determinate ecclesial office.

1596 Deacons are ministers ordained for tasks of service of the Church; they do not receive the ministerial priesthood, but ordination confers on them important functions in the ministry of the word, divine worship, pastoral governance, and the service of charity, tasks which they must carry out under the pastoral authority of their bishop.

1597 The sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by the laying on of hands followed by a solemn prayer of consecration asking God to grant the ordinand the graces of the Holy Spirit required for his ministry. Ordination imprints an indelible sacramental character.

1598 The Church confers the sacrament of Holy Orders only on baptized men (*viri*), whose suitability for the exercise of the ministry has been duly recognized. Church authority alone has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

1599 In the Latin Church the sacrament of Holy Orders for the presbyterate is normally conferred only on candidates who are ready to embrace celibacy freely and who publicly manifest their intention of staying celibate for the love of God's kingdom and the service of men.

1600 It is bishops who confer the sacrament of Holy Orders in the three degrees.

Deeper Focus Resource: January 29

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Introduction from Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizen

Introductory Letter

As Catholics, we bring the richness of our faith to the public square. We draw from both faith and reason as we seek to affirm the dignity of the human person and the common good of all. With renewed hope, we, the Catholic Bishops of the United States, are re-issuing Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics, which provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens. Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good.¹ In Rejoice and Be Glad [Gaudete et Exsultate], Pope Francis writes: Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. . . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor.² The call to holiness, he writes, requires a “firm and passionate” defense of “the innocent unborn.” “Equally sacred,” he further states, are “the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”³ Our approach to contemporary issues is first and foremost rooted in our identity as followers of Christ and as brothers and sisters to all who are made in God’s image. For all Catholics, including those seeking public office, our participation in political parties or other groups to which we may belong should be influenced by our faith, not the other way around.

Our 2015 statement, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, sought to help Catholics form their consciences, apply a consistent moral framework to issues facing the nation and world, and shape their choices in elections in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. In choosing to re-issue this statement, we recognize that the thrust of the document and the challenges it addresses remain relevant today. At the same time, some challenges have become even more pronounced. Pope Francis has continued to draw attention to important issues such as migration, xenophobia, racism, abortion, global conflict, and care for creation. In the United States and around the world, many challenges demand our attention. The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself,⁴ because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and ⁷ dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty.⁵ Our efforts to protect the unborn remain as important as ever, for just as the Supreme Court may allow greater latitude for state laws restricting abortion, state legislators have passed statutes not only keeping abortion legal through all nine months of pregnancy but opening the door to infanticide. Additionally, abortion contaminates many other important issues by being inserted into legislation regarding immigration, care for the poor, and health care reform.

At our border, many arriving families endure separation, inhumane treatment, and lack of due process, while those fleeing persecution and violence face heightened barriers to seeking refuge

*and asylum. Within our borders, Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and mixed-status and undocumented families face continued fear and anxiety as political solutions fail to materialize. Lawmakers' inability to pass comprehensive immigration reform which acknowledges the family as the basic unit of society has contributed to the deterioration of conditions at the border. As we seek solutions, we must ensure that we receive refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church while assuring the security of our citizens. The wound of racism continues to fester; the bishops of the United States drew attention to this important topic in the recent pastoral letter, *Open Wide Our Hearts*.*

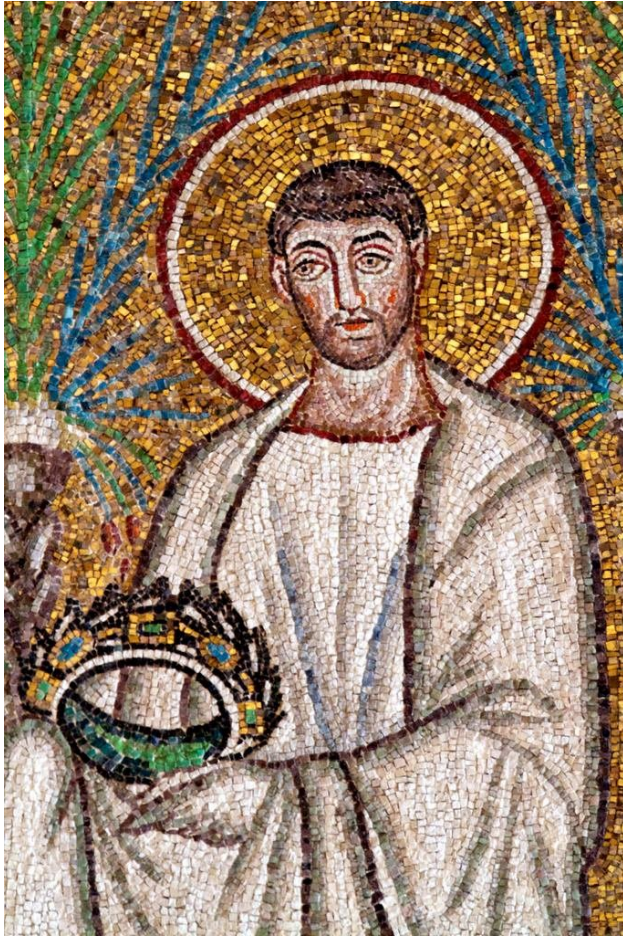
Religious freedom problems continue to intensify abroad and in the United States have moved beyond the federal to state and local levels. As international conflicts proliferate, addressing poverty and building global peace remain pressing concerns, as does the need to assist persons and families in our own country who continue to struggle to make ends meet. We must work to address gun violence, xenophobia, capital punishment, and other issues that affect human life and dignity. It is also essential to affirm the nature of the human person as male and female, to protect the family based on marriage between a man and a woman, and to uphold the rights of children in that regard. Finally, we must urgently find ways to care better for God's creation, especially those most impacted by climate change—the poor—and protect our common home. We must resist the throw-away culture and seek integral development for all. With these and other serious challenges facing both the nation and the Church, we are called to walk with those who suffer and to work toward justice and healing. At all levels of society, we are aware of a great need for leadership that models love for righteousness (Wisdom 1:1) as well as the virtues of justice, prudence, courage, and temperance.

Our commitment as people of faith to imitate Christ's love and compassion should challenge us to serve as models of civil dialogue, especially in a context where discourse is eroding at all levels of society. Where we live, work, and worship, we strive to understand before seeking to be understood, to treat with respect those with whom we disagree, to dismantle stereotypes, and to build productive conversation in place of vitriol. Catholics from every walk of life can bring their faith and our consistent moral framework to contribute to important work in our communities, nation, and world on an ongoing basis, not just during election season. In this coming year and beyond, we urge leaders and all Catholics to respond in prayer and action to the call to faithful citizenship. In doing so, we live out the call to holiness and work with Christ as he builds his kingdom of love.

Merciful Father, Thank you for inviting each of us to join in your work of building the kingdom of love, justice, and peace. Draw us close to you in prayer as we discern your call in our families and communities. Send us forth to encounter all whom you love: those not yet born, those in poverty, those in need of welcome. Inspire us to respond to the call to faithful citizenship, during election season and beyond. Help us to imitate your charity and compassion and to serve as models of loving dialogue. Teach us to treat others with respect, even when we disagree, and seek to share your love and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Deeper Focus Resource: February 5

St. Cyprian of Carthage, c. 251, Excerpt from *On the Unity of the Church*, in which he notes that St. Peter was given charge of the Church, and authority for “binding and loosing” flows only through his office.



St. Cyprian of Carthage

“He can no longer have God for his father, who has not the Church as his mother.”

“The Lord said to Peter: ‘I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; to thee I will give the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and what you have bound on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you have loosed shall be loosed in heaven.’ Upon one He builds His Church, and though to all His Apostles after His resurrection He give an equal power and says: ‘As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Ghost, whosoever sins you shall have remitted they shall be remitted unto them, and whosoever sins you shall have retained they shall be retained,’ yet that He might make unity manifest, He disposed the origin of that unity beginning from one...the other Apostles were indeed what Peter was, endowed with a like fellowship both of honor and power, but the commencement proceeds from one, that the Church may be shown to be one. This once Church of the Holy Ghost in the person of the Lord designates in the Canticle of Canticles, and says: One is My Dove, My perfect one, one is she to her mother, one to that bore her...He that holds not this unity of the Church, does he believe that he holds the Faith? He who strives against and resists the Church, is he confident that he is in the Church?”

Deeper Focus Resource: February 12

Miracle of Lanciano (Therealpresence.org)

Read more about the many Eucharistic miracles at this website.

Ancient Anxanum, the city of the Frentanese, has contained for over twelve centuries the first and greatest Eucharistic Miracle of the Catholic Church. This wondrous Event took place in the 8th century A.D. in the little Church of St. Legontian, as a divine response to a Basilian monk's doubt about Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist. During Holy Mass, after the two-fold consecration, the host was changed into live Flesh and the wine was changed into live Blood, which coagulated into five globules, irregular and differing in shape and size.

The Host-Flesh, as can be very distinctly observed today, has the same dimensions as the large host used today in the Latin church; it is light brown and appears rose-colored when lighted from the back. The Blood is coagulated and has an earthy color resembling the yellow of ochre. Various ecclesiastical investigation ("Recognitions") were conducted since 1574.

In 1970-'71 and taken up again partly in 1981 there took place a scientific investigation by the most illustrious scientist Prof. Odoardo Linoli, eminent Professor in Anatomy and Pathological Histology and in Chemistry and Clinical Microscopy. He was assisted by Prof. Ruggero Bertelli of the University of Siena.

The analyses were conducted with absolute and unquestionable scientific precision and they were documented with a series of microscopic photographs. These analyses sustained the following conclusions:

- The Flesh is real Flesh. The Blood is real Blood.
- The Flesh and the Blood belong to the human species.
- The Flesh consists of the muscular tissue of the heart.
- In the Flesh we see present in section: the myocardium, the endocardium, the vagus nerve and also the left ventricle of the heart for the large thickness of the myocardium.
- The Flesh is a "HEART" complete in its essential structure.
- The Flesh and the Blood have the same blood-type: AB (Blood-type identical to that which Prof. Baima Bollone uncovered in the Holy Shroud of Turin).
- In the Blood there were found proteins in the same normal proportions (percentage-wise) as are found in the sero-proteic make-up of the fresh normal blood.
- In the Blood there were also found these minerals: chlorides, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sodium and calcium.

- The preservation of the Flesh and of the Blood, which were left in their natural state for twelve centuries and exposed to the action of atmospheric and biological agents, remains an extraordinary phenomenon.

Deeper Focus Resource: March 5

St. Anselm of Canterbury, Excerpts from *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became a Man) c. 1103



*“Does not the reason why God ought to do the things we speak of seem absolute enough when we consider that the human race, that work of his so very precious, was wholly ruined, and that it was not seemly that the purpose which God had made concerning man should fall to the ground; and, moreover, that **His purpose could not be carried into effect unless the human race were delivered by their Creator himself?**”*

*Do you not perceive that, **if any other being should rescue man from eternal death, man would rightly be adjudged as the servant of that being?** Now if this be so, he would in no wise be restored to that dignity which would have been his had he never sinned. For he, who was to be through eternity only the servant of God and an equal with the holy angels, would now be the servant of a being who was not God, and whom the angels did not serve.”*

Deeper Focus Resource: March 12

From Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Council of Nicaea*, 325



You have probably had some intimation, beloved, of the transactions of the great council convened at Nicæa, in relation to the faith of the Church, inasmuch as rumor generally outruns true account of that which has really taken place. But lest from such report alone you might form an incorrect estimate of the matter, we have deemed it necessary to submit to you, in the first place, an exposition of the faith proposed by us inand then a second which has been promulgated, consisting of ours with certain additions to its expression. The declaration of faith set forth by us, which when read in the presence of our most pious emperor, seemed to meet with universal approbation, was thus expressed: “According as we received from the bishops who preceded us, both in our instruction [in the knowledge of the truth], and when we were baptized; as also we have ourselves learned from the sacred Scriptures: and in accordance with what we have both believed and taught while discharging the duties of presbyter and the episcopal office itself, so now we believe and present to you the distinct avowal of our faith.

It is this: We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible:—and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of God, Light of light, Life of life, the only-begotten Son, born before all creation, begotten of God the Father, before all ages, by whom also all things were made; who on account of our salvation became incarnate, and lived among men; and who suffered and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the Father, and shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. We believe also in one Holy Spirit. We believe in the existence and subsistence of each of these [persons]: that the Father is truly Father, the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit; even as our Lord also, when he sent forth his disciples to preach the Gospel, said, ‘Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ Concerning these doctrines we steadfastly maintain their truth, and avow our full confidence in them; such also have been our sentiments hitherto, and such we shall continue to hold until death and in an unshaken adherence to this faith, we anathematize every impious heresy. In the presence of God

Almighty, and of our Lord Jesus Christ we testify, that thus we have believed and thought from our heart and soul, since we have possessed a right estimate of ourselves; and that we now think and speak what is perfectly in accordance with the truth. We are moreover prepared to prove to you by undeniable evidences, and to convince you that in time past we have thus believed, and so preached.”

When these articles of faith were proposed, there seemed to be no ground of opposition: nay, our most pious emperor himself was the first to admit that they were perfectly correct, and that he himself had entertained the sentiments contained in them; exhorting all present to give them their assent, and subscribe to these very articles, thus agreeing in a unanimous profession of them, with the insertion, however, of that single word “homoousios” (consubstantial), an expression which the emperor himself explained, as not indicating corporeal affections or properties; and consequently that the Son did not subsist from the Father either by division or abscission: for said he, a nature which is immaterial and incorporeal cannot possibly be subject to any corporeal affection; hence our conception of such things can only be in divine and mysterious terms. Such was the philosophical view of the subject taken by our most wise and pious sovereign; and the bishops on account of the word homoousios, drew up this formula of faith.

The Creed.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible:—and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father; God of God, Light of light, true God of true God; begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made both which are in heaven and on earth; who for the sake of us men, and on account of our salvation, descended, became incarnate, was made man, suffered and rose again on the third day; he ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead. [We believe] also in the Holy Spirit. But those who say ‘There was a time when he was not,’ or ‘He did not exist before he was begotten,’ or ‘He was made of nothing’ or assert that ‘He is of other substance or essence than the Father,’ or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or susceptible of change, the Catholic and apostolic Church of God anathematizes.”

Deeper Focus Resource: March 19

APOSTOLIC LETTER

Misericordia et misera

OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

Francis
to all who read this Apostolic Letter
mercy and peace

Misericordia et misera is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus' meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. *Jn* 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God's love when it touches the sinner: "the two of them alone remained: *mercy with misery*".^[1] What great mercy and divine justice shine forth in this narrative! Its teaching serves not only to throw light on the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, but also to point out the path that we are called to follow in the future.

1. This page of the Gospel could easily serve as an icon of what we have celebrated during the Holy Year, a time rich in mercy, which must continue to be *celebrated* and *lived out* in our communities. Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father.

A woman and Jesus meet. She is an adulteress and, in the eyes of the Law, liable to be stoned. Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. This Gospel account, however, is not an encounter of sin and judgement in the abstract, but of a sinner and her Saviour. Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus' only judgement is one filled with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. To those who wished to judge and condemn her to death, Jesus replies with a lengthy silence. His purpose was to let God's voice be heard in the consciences not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers, who drop their stones and one by one leave the scene (cf. *Jn* 8:9). Jesus then says: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go your

way and from now on do not sin again” (vv. 10-11). Jesus helps the woman to look to the future with hope and to make a new start in life. Henceforth, if she so desires, she can “walk in charity” (*Eph* 5:2). Once clothed in mercy, even if the inclination to sin remains, it is overcome by the love that makes it possible for her to look ahead and to live her life differently.

2. Jesus had taught this clearly on another occasion, when he had been invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee and a woman, known by everyone to be a sinner, approached him (cf. *Lk* 7:36-50). She poured perfume over his feet, bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair (cf. vv. 37-38). To the scandalized reaction of the Pharisee, Jesus replied: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little” (v. 47).

Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father’s love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. Even at the last moment of his earthly life, as he was being nailed to the cross, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (*Lk* 23:34).

Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God’s mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional.

Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and unmerited act of love. Consequently, we cannot risk opposing the full freedom of the love with which God enters into the life of every person. Mercy is this concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives. In this way, the divine mystery of mercy is made manifest. God is merciful (cf. *Ex* 34:6); his mercy lasts for ever (cf. *Pss* 136). From generation to generation, it embraces all those who trust in him and it changes them, by bestowing a share in his very life.

3. What great joy welled up in the heart of these two women: the adulteress and the sinner! Forgiveness made them feel free at last and happy as never before. Their tears of shame and pain turned into the smile of a person who knows that he or she is loved. Mercy gives rise to *joy*, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life. The joy of forgiveness is inexpressible, yet it radiates all around us whenever we experience forgiveness. Its source is in the love with which God comes to meet us, breaking through walls of selfishness that surround us, in order to make us in turn instruments of mercy.

How meaningful in this regard for us too are the ancient words which guided the first Christians: “Clothe yourselves in joy, which always is agreeable and acceptable to God, and rejoice in it. For all who are joyful do what is good, think what is good, and despise sadness... All who put aside sadness and put on joy will live in God”.^[2] The experience of mercy brings joy. May we never allow this joy to be robbed from us by our troubles and concerns. May it remain rooted in our hearts and enable us to approach with serenity the events of our daily lives.

In a culture often dominated by technology, sadness and loneliness appear to be on the rise, not least among young people. The future seems prey to an uncertainty that does not make for stability. This often gives rise to depression, sadness and boredom, which can gradually lead to

despair. We need witnesses to hope and true joy if we are to dispel the illusions that promise quick and easy happiness through artificial paradises. The profound sense of emptiness felt by so many people can be overcome by the hope we bear in our hearts and by the joy that it gives. We need to acknowledge the joy that rises up in a heart touched by mercy. Let us keep in mind, then, the words of the Apostle: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (*Phil* 4:4; cf. *1 Thess* 5:16)

4. We have celebrated an intense Jubilee Year in which we have received the grace of mercy in abundance. Like a gusting but wholesome wind, the Lord’s goodness and mercy have been poured out upon the entire world. Because each of us has experienced at length this loving gaze of God, we cannot remain unaffected, for it changes our lives.

We feel the need above all to thank the Lord and to tell him: “Lord, you have been favourable to your land... You have forgiven the iniquity of your people” (*Psalms* 85:1-2). So it is. God has subdued our iniquities and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (cf. *Micah* 7:19). He no longer remembers them, since he has cast them behind his back (cf. *Isaiah* 38:17). As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (cf. *Psalms* 103:12).

In this Holy Year, the Church listened attentively and experienced intensely the presence and closeness of the Father, who with the Holy Spirit has enabled her to see with greater clarity the gift and mandate of Jesus Christ regarding forgiveness. It has truly been like a new visitation of the Lord among us. We have felt his life-giving breath poured out upon the Church and, once again, his words have pointed out our mission: “Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (*John* 20:22-23).

5. Now, at the conclusion of this Jubilee, it is time to look to the future and to understand how best to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of divine mercy. Our communities can remain alive and active in the work of the new evangelization in the measure that the “pastoral conversion” to which we are called^[3] will be shaped daily by the renewing force of mercy. Let us not limit its action; let us not sadden the Spirit, who constantly points out new paths to take in bringing to everyone the Gospel of salvation.

First, we are called to *celebrate* mercy. What great richness is present in the Church’s prayer when she invokes God as the Father of mercies! In the liturgy, mercy is not only repeatedly evoked, but is truly received and experienced. From the beginning to the end of the *Eucharistic celebration*, mercy constantly appears in the dialogue between the assembly at prayer and the heart of the Father, who rejoices to bestow his merciful love. After first pleading for forgiveness with the invocation “Lord have mercy”, we are immediately reassured: “May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life”. With this confidence, the community gathers in the presence of the Lord, particularly on the holy day of the resurrection. Many of the “Collect” prayers are meant to remind us of the great gift of mercy. In Lent, for example, we pray: “O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy”.^[4] We are then immersed in the great Eucharistic Prayer with the Preface that proclaims: “For you so loved the world that in your mercy you sent us the Redeemer, to live like us in all things but sin”.^[5] The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer is a hymn to God’s mercy: “For you came in

mercy to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find you”. “Have mercy on us all”[6] is the insistent plea made by the priest in the Eucharistic Prayer to implore a share in eternal life. After the *Our Father*, the priest continues the prayer by invoking peace and liberation from sin by the “help of your mercy”. And before the sign of peace, exchanged as an expression of fraternity and mutual love in the light of forgiveness received, the priest prays: “Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church”. [7] By these words, with humble trust we beseech the gift of unity and peace for Holy Mother Church. The celebration of divine mercy culminates in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of Christ’s paschal mystery, the source of salvation for every human being, for history and for the whole world. In a word, each moment of the Eucharistic celebration refers to God’s mercy.

In the sacramental life, mercy is granted us in abundance. It is not without significance that the Church mentions mercy explicitly in the formulae of the two “sacraments of healing”, namely, the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In the first, the formula of absolution reads: “God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace”. [8] In the second, the formula of anointing reads:

“Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit”. [9] In the Church’s prayer, then, references to mercy, far from being merely exhortative, are highly *performative*, which is to say that as we invoke mercy with faith, it is granted to us, and as we confess it to be vital and real, it truly transforms us. This is a fundamental element of our faith, and we must keep it constantly in mind. Even before the revelation of sin, there is the revelation of the love by which God created the world and mankind. Love is the first act whereby God makes himself known to us and comes to meet us. So let us open our hearts and trust in God’s love for us. His love always precedes us, accompanies us and remains with us, despite our sin.

6. In this context, *hearing the word of God* takes on particular significance. Each Sunday, God’s word is proclaimed in the Christian community so that the Lord’s Day may be illuminated by the paschal mystery. [10] In the Eucharistic celebration, we seem to witness a true dialogue between God and his people. In the biblical readings, we retrace the history of our salvation through the proclamation of God’s tireless work of mercy. The Lord continues to speak to us today as to friends; he dwells in our midst, [11] in order to accompany us and show us the path of life. His word gives a voice to our inmost needs and worries, and offers a fruitful response, so that we can concretely experience his closeness to us. Hence the importance of the *homily*, in which “truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness” [12] so that the hearts of believers may thrill before the grandeur of mercy! I strongly encourage that great care be given to preparing the homily and to preaching in general. A priest’s preaching will be fruitful to the extent that he himself has experienced the merciful goodness of the Lord. Communicating the certainty that God loves us is not an exercise in rhetoric, but a condition for the credibility of one’s priesthood. The personal experience of mercy is the best way to make it a true message of consolation and conversion in the pastoral ministry. Both homiletics and catechesis need to be sustained by this pulsing heart of the Christian life.

7. The *Bible* is the great story of the marvels of God's mercy. Every one of its pages is steeped in the love of the Father who from the moment of creation wished to impress the signs of his love on the universe. Through the words of the prophets and the wisdom writings, the Holy Spirit shaped the history of Israel as a recognition of God's tenderness and closeness, despite the people's infidelity. Jesus' life and preaching decisively marked the history of the Christian community, which has viewed its mission in terms of Christ's command to be a permanent instrument of his mercy and forgiveness (cf. *Jn* 20:23). Through Sacred Scripture, kept alive by the faith of the Church, the Lord continues to speak to his Bride, showing her the path she must take to enable the Gospel of salvation to reach everyone. I greatly desire that God's word be increasingly celebrated, known and disseminated, so that the mystery of love streaming from this font of mercy may be ever better understood. As the Apostle tells us clearly: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 *Tim* 3:16).

It would be beneficial if every Christian community, on one Sunday of the liturgical year, could renew its efforts to make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused. It would be a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people. Creative initiatives can help make this an opportunity for the faithful to become living vessels for the transmission of God's word. Initiatives of this sort would certainly include the practice of *lectio divina*, so that the prayerful reading of the sacred text will help support and strengthen the spiritual life. Such a reading, centred on themes relating to mercy, will enable a personal experience of the great fruitfulness of the biblical text – read in the light of the Church's spiritual tradition – and thus give rise to concrete gestures and works of charity.^[13]

8. The celebration of mercy takes place in a very particular way in the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation*. Here we feel the embrace of the Father, who comes forth to meet us and grant us the grace of being once more his sons and daughters. We are sinners and we bear the burden of contradiction between what we wish to do and what we do in fact (cf. *Rom* 7:14-21). Yet grace always precedes us and takes on the face of the mercy that effects our reconciliation and pardon. God makes us understand his great love for us precisely when we recognize that we are sinners. Grace is stronger than sin: it overcomes every possible form of resistance, because love conquers all (cf. 1 *Cor* 13:7).

In the sacrament of Forgiveness God shows us the way to turn back to him and invites us to experience his closeness anew. This pardon can be obtained by beginning, first of all, to *live in charity*. The Apostle Peter tells us this when he writes that "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 *Pet* 4:8). Only God forgives sins, but he asks that we be ready to forgive others even as he forgives us: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (*Mt* 6:12). How sad it is when our hearts are closed and unable to forgive! Resentment, anger and revenge gain the upper hand, making our lives miserable and blocking a joyful commitment to mercy.

9. An experience of grace lived out by the Church with great effectiveness in the Jubilee Year has certainly been the service of the *Missionaries of Mercy*. Their pastoral activity sought to emphasize that God places no obstacles in the way of those who seek him with a contrite heart, because he goes out to meet everyone like a father. I have received many testimonies of joy from

those who encountered the Lord once more in the sacrament of Confession. Let us not miss the opportunity to live our faith also as an experience of reconciliation. Today too, the Apostle urges us: “Be reconciled to God” (2 *Cor* 5:20), so that all who believe can discover the power of love which makes us “a new creation” (2 *Cor* 5:17).

I thank every Missionary of Mercy for this valuable service aimed at rendering effective the grace of forgiveness. This extraordinary ministry does not end with the closing of the Holy Door. I wish it to continue until further notice as a concrete sign that the grace of the Jubilee remains alive and effective the world over. As a direct expression of my concern and closeness to the Missionaries of Mercy in this period, the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization will supervise them and find the most suitable forms for the exercise of this valuable ministry.

10. I invite priests once more to prepare carefully for the ministry of Confession, which is a true priestly mission. I thank all of you from the heart for your ministry, and I ask you to be *welcoming* to all, *witnesses* of fatherly tenderness whatever the gravity of the sin involved, *attentive* in helping penitents to reflect on the wrong they have done, *clear* in presenting moral principles, *willing* to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, *far-sighted* in discerning individual cases and *generous* in dispensing God’s forgiveness. Just as Jesus chose to remain silent in order to save the woman caught in adultery from the sentence of death, so every priest in the confessional should be open-hearted, since every penitent is a reminder that he himself is a sinner, but also a minister of mercy.

11. I would like us all to meditate upon the words of the Apostle, written towards the end of his life, when he confesses to Timothy that he was the greatest of sinners, “but for this reason I received mercy” (1 *Tim* 1:16). Paul’s words, powerful as they are, make us reflect on our lives and see God’s mercy at work in changing, converting and transforming our hearts. “I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy” (1 *Tim* 1:12-13).

Let us recall with renewed pastoral zeal another saying of the Apostle: “God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation” (2 *Cor* 5:18). We were the first to be forgiven in view of this ministry, made witnesses at first hand of the universality of God’s forgiveness. No law or precept can prevent God from once more embracing the son who returns to him, admitting that he has done wrong but intending to start his life anew. Remaining only at the level of the law is equivalent to thwarting faith and divine mercy. The law has an educational value (cf. *Gal* 3:24) with charity as its goal (cf. 1 *Tim* 1:5). Nonetheless, Christians are called to experience the newness of the Gospel, the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (*Rom* 8:2). Even in the most complex cases, where there is a temptation to apply a form of justice derived from rules alone, we must believe in the power flowing from divine grace.

We confessors have experienced many conversions that took place before our very eyes. We feel responsible, then, for actions and words that can touch the heart of penitents and enable them to discover the closeness and tenderness of the Father who forgives. Let us not lose such occasions

by acting in a way that can contradict the experience of mercy that the penitent seeks. Rather, let us help light up the space of personal conscience with God's infinite love (cf. 1 *Jn* 3:20).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life. This requires priests capable of putting their lives at the service of the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 *Cor* 5:18), in such a way that, while no sincerely repentant sinner is prevented from drawing near to the love of the Father who awaits his return, everyone is afforded the opportunity of experiencing the liberating power of forgiveness.

A favourable occasion for this could be the *24 Hours for the Lord*, a celebration held in proximity to the Fourth Sunday of Lent. This initiative, already in place in many dioceses, has great pastoral value in encouraging a more fervent experience of the sacrament of Confession.

12. Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God's forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion. The provision I had made in this regard, limited to the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year,^[14] is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary. I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father. May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.

For the Jubilee Year I had also granted that those faithful who, for various reasons, attend churches officiated by the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, can validly and licitly receive the sacramental absolution of their sins.^[15] For the pastoral benefit of these faithful, and trusting in the good will of their priests to strive with God's help for the recovery of full communion in the Catholic Church, I have personally decided to extend this faculty beyond the Jubilee Year, until further provisions are made, lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the Church's pardon.

13. Another face of mercy is *consolation*. "Comfort, comfort my people" (Is 40:1) is the heartfelt plea that the prophet continues to make today, so that a word of hope may come to all those who experience suffering and pain. Let us never allow ourselves to be robbed of the hope born of faith in the Risen Lord. True, we are often sorely tested, but we must never lose our certainty of the Lord's love for us. His mercy finds expression also in the closeness, affection and support that many of our brothers and sisters can offer us at times of sadness and affliction. The drying of tears is one way to break the vicious circle of solitude in which we often find ourselves trapped.

All of us need consolation because no one is spared suffering, pain and misunderstanding. How much pain can be caused by a spiteful remark born of envy, jealousy or anger! What great suffering is caused by the experience of betrayal, violence and abandonment! How much sorrow in the face of the death of a loved one! And yet God is never far from us at these moments of sadness and trouble. A reassuring word, an embrace that makes us feel understood, a caress that makes us experience love, a prayer that makes us stronger... all these things express God's closeness through the consolation offered by our brothers and sisters.

Sometimes too, *silence* can be helpful, especially when we cannot find words in response to the questions of those who suffer. A lack of words, however, can be made up for by the compassion of a person who stays at our side, who loves us and who holds out a hand. It is not true that silence is an act of surrender; on the contrary, it is a moment of strength and love. Silence too belongs to our language of consolation, because it becomes a concrete way of sharing in the suffering of a brother or sister.

14. At a time like our own, marked by many crises, including that of the family, it is important to offer a word of comfort and strength to our families. The gift of matrimony is a great calling to which spouses, by the grace of Christ, respond with a love that is generous, faithful and patient. The beauty of the family endures unchanged, despite so many problems and alternative proposals: “The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church”.^[16] The journey of life that leads a man and a woman to meet one other, to love one another and to promise mutual fidelity before God, is often interrupted by suffering, betrayal and loneliness. Joy at the gift of children is accompanied by concern about their growth and education, and their prospects for happiness and fulfilment in life.

The grace of the sacrament of Matrimony not only strengthens the family to be a privileged place for practising mercy, but also commits the Christian community and all its pastoral activity to uphold the great positive value of the family. This Jubilee Year cannot overlook the complexity of the current realities of family life. The experience of mercy enables us to regard all human problems from the standpoint of God’s love, which never tires of welcoming and accompanying.^[17]

We have to remember each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history; this is what makes us different from everyone else. Our life, with its joys and sorrows, is something unique and unrepeatable that takes place under the merciful gaze of God. This demands, especially of priests, a careful, profound and far-sighted spiritual discernment, so that everyone, none excluded, no matter the situation a person is living in, can feel accepted by God, participate actively in the life of the community and be part of that People of God which journeys tirelessly towards the fullness of his kingdom of justice, love, forgiveness and mercy.

15. Here too, we see the particular importance of *the moment of death*. The Church has always experienced this dramatic passage in the light of Christ’s resurrection, which opened the way to the certainty of the life to come. We have a great challenge to face, especially in contemporary culture, which often tends to trivialize death to the point of treating it as an illusion or hiding it from sight. Yet death must be faced and prepared for as a painful and inescapable passage, yet one charged with immense meaning, for it is the ultimate act of love towards those we leave behind and towards God whom we go forth to meet. In all religions, the moment of death, like that of birth, is accompanied by a religious presence. As Christians, we celebrate the funeral liturgy as a hope-filled prayer for the soul of the deceased and for the consolation of those who suffer the loss of their loved one.

I am convinced that our faith-filled pastoral activity should lead to a direct experience of how the liturgical signs and our prayers are an expression of the Lord’s mercy. It is the Lord himself who offers words of hope, since nothing and no one can ever separate us from his love (cf. *Rom* 8:35).

The priest's sharing in this moment is an important form of pastoral care, for it enables the closeness of the Christian community at a moment of helplessness, solitude, uncertainty and grief.

16. The Jubilee now ends and the Holy Door is closed. But the door of mercy of our heart continues to remain wide open. We have learned that God bends down to us (cf. *Hos* 11:4) so that we may imitate him in bending down to our brothers and sisters. The yearning of so many people to turn back to the house of the Father, who awaits their return, has also been awakened by heartfelt and generous testimonies to God's tenderness. The Holy Door that we have crossed in this Jubilee Year has set us on *the path of charity*, which we are called to travel daily with fidelity and joy. It is the road of mercy, on which we meet so many of our brothers and sisters who reach out for someone to take their hand and become a companion on the way.

The desire for closeness to Christ requires us to draw near to our brothers and sisters, for nothing is more pleasing to the Father than a true sign of mercy. By its very nature, mercy becomes visible and tangible in specific and powerful acts. Once mercy has been truly experienced, it is impossible to turn back. It grows constantly and it changes our lives. It is an authentic new creation: it brings about a new heart, capable of loving to the full, and it purifies our eyes to perceive hidden needs. How true are the words of the Church's prayer at the Easter Vigil, after the reading of the creation account: "O God, who wonderfully created human nature and still more wonderfully redeemed it".^[18]

Mercy *renews and redeems* because it is the meeting of two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet the human heart. The latter is warmed and healed by the former. Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh (cf. *Ezek* 36:26) capable of love despite our sinfulness. I come to realize that I am truly a "new creation" (*Gal* 6:15): I am loved, therefore I exist; I am forgiven, therefore I am reborn; I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy.

17. During the Holy Year, especially on the "Fridays of Mercy", I was able to experience in a tangible way the goodness present in our world. Often it remains hidden, since it is daily expressed in discreet and quiet gestures. Even if rarely publicized, many concrete acts of goodness and tenderness are shown to the weak and the vulnerable, to those most lonely and abandoned. There are true champions of charity who show constant solidarity with the poor and the unhappy. Let us thank the Lord for these precious gifts that invite us to discover the joy of drawing near to the woundedness of human weakness. I also think with gratitude of the many volunteers who daily devote their time and efforts to showing God's presence and closeness. Their service is a genuine work of mercy, one that helps many people draw closer to the Church.

18. Now is the time to unleash the creativity of mercy, to bring about new undertakings, the fruit of grace. The Church today needs to tell of those "many other signs" that Jesus worked, which "are not written" (*Jn* 20:30), so that they too may be an eloquent expression of the fruitfulness of the love of Christ and of the community that draws its life from him. Two thousand years have passed, yet works of mercy continue to make God's goodness visible.

In our own day, whole peoples suffer hunger and thirst, and we are haunted by pictures of children with nothing to eat. Throngs of people continue to migrate from one country to another

in search of food, work, shelter and peace. Disease in its various forms is a constant cause of suffering that cries out for assistance, comfort and support. Prisons are often places where confinement is accompanied by serious hardships due to inhumane living conditions. Illiteracy remains widespread, preventing children from developing their potential and exposing them to new forms of slavery. The culture of extreme individualism, especially in the West, has led to a loss of a sense of solidarity with and responsibility for others. Today many people have no experience of God himself, and this represents the greatest poverty and the major obstacle to recognizing the inviolable dignity of human life.

To conclude, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy continue in our own day to be proof of mercy's immense positive influence as a *social value*. Mercy impels us to roll up our sleeves and set about restoring dignity to millions of people; they are our brothers and sisters who, with us, are called to build a "city which is reliable".^[19]

19. Many concrete signs of mercy have been performed during this Holy Year. Communities, families and individuals have rediscovered the joy of sharing and the beauty of solidarity. But this is not enough. Our world continues to promote new forms of spiritual and material poverty that assault human dignity. For this reason, the Church must always be vigilant and ready to identify new works of mercy and to practise them with generosity and enthusiasm.

Let us make every effort, then, to devise specific and insightful ways of practising charity and the works of mercy. Mercy is inclusive and tends to spread like wildfire in a way that knows no limits. Hence we are called to give new expression to the traditional works of mercy. For mercy overflows, keeps moving forward, bears rich fruit. It is like the leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt* 13:33), or the mustard seed that grows into a tree (cf. *Lk* 13:19).

We need but think of one corporal work of mercy: "to clothe the naked" (cf. *Mt* 25:36, 38,43,44). This takes us back to the beginning, to the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve realized that they were naked and, hearing the Lord approaching, felt shame and hid themselves (*Gen* 3:7-8). We know that God punished them, yet he also "made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (*Gen* 3:21). He covered their shame and restored their dignity.

Let us think too of Jesus on Golgotha. The Son of God hangs naked on the cross; the soldiers took his tunic and cast lots for it (cf. *Jn* 19:23-24). He has nothing left. The cross is the extreme revelation of Jesus' sharing the lot of those who have lost their dignity for lack of the necessities of life. Just as the Church is called to be the "tunic of Christ"^[20] and to clothe her Lord once more, so She is committed to solidarity with the naked of the world, to help them recover the dignity of which they have been stripped. Jesus' words, "I was naked and you clothed me" (*Mt* 25:36), oblige us not to turn our backs on the new forms of poverty and marginalization that prevent people from living a life of dignity.

Being unemployed or not receiving a sufficient salary; not being able to have a home or a land in which to live; experiencing discrimination on account of one's faith, race or social status: these are just a few examples of many situations that attack the dignity of the person. In the face of such attacks, Christian mercy responds above all with vigilance and solidarity. How many situations exist today where we can restore dignity to individuals and make possible a truly

humane life! Let us think only about the many children who suffer from forms of violence that rob them of the joy of life. I keep thinking of their sorrowful and bewildered faces. They are pleading for our help to be set free from the slavery of the contemporary world. These children are the young adults of tomorrow. How are we preparing them to live with dignity and responsibility? With what hope can they face their present or their future?

The *social character* of mercy demands that we not simply stand by and do nothing. It requires us to banish indifference and hypocrisy, lest our plans and projects remain a dead letter. May the Holy Spirit help us to contribute actively and selflessly to making justice and a dignified life not simply clichés but a concrete commitment of those who seek to bear witness to the presence of God's Kingdom.

20. We are called to promote a *culture of mercy* based on the rediscovery of encounter with others, a culture in which no one looks at another with indifference or turns away from the suffering of our brothers and sisters. *The works of mercy are "handcrafted"*, in the sense that none of them is alike. Our hands can craft them in a thousand different ways, and even though the one God inspires them, and they are all fashioned from the same "material", mercy itself, each one takes on a different form.

The works of mercy affect a person's entire life. For this reason, we can set in motion a real cultural revolution, beginning with simple gestures capable of reaching body and spirit, people's very lives. This is a commitment that the Christian community should take up, in the knowledge that God's word constantly calls us to leave behind the temptation to hide behind indifference and individualism in order to lead a comfortable life free of problems. Jesus tells his disciples: "The poor you always have with you" (Jn 12:8). There is no alibi to justify not engaging with the poor when Jesus has identified himself with each of them.

The culture of mercy is shaped in assiduous prayer, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit, in knowing the lives of the saints and in being close to the poor. It urges us not to overlook situations that call for our involvement. The temptation to theorize "about" mercy can be overcome to the extent that our daily life becomes one of participation and sharing. Nor should we ever forget what the Apostle Paul tells us about his meeting with Peter, James and John after his conversion. His words highlight an essential aspect of his own mission and of the Christian life as a whole: "Only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do" (*Gal 2:10*). We cannot forget the poor: this is an injunction as relevant today as ever, and one that compels by its evangelical warrant.

21. The Jubilee impresses upon us the words of the Apostle Peter: "Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (*1 Pet 2:10*). Let us not hold on jealously to what we have received, but share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, so that they can be sustained by the power of the Father's mercy. May our communities reach out to all who live in their midst, so that God's caress may reach everyone through the witness of believers.

This is the time of mercy. Each day of our journey is marked by God's presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving. *It is the time of mercy* for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off

from God's closeness and the power of his tender love. *It is the time of mercy* because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. *It is the time of mercy* because the poor should feel that they are regarded with respect and concern by others who have overcome indifference and discovered what is essential in life. *It is the time of mercy* because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father.

During the "Jubilee for Socially Excluded People", as the Holy Doors of Mercy were being closed in all the cathedrals and shrines of the world, I had the idea that, as yet another tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year, the entire Church might celebrate, on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, the *World Day of the Poor*. This would be the worthiest way to prepare for the celebration of the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, who identified with the little ones and the poor and who will judge us on our works of mercy (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*). It would be a day to help communities and each of the baptized to reflect on how poverty is at the very heart of the Gospel and that, as long as Lazarus lies at the door of our homes (cf. *Lk 16:19-21*), there can be no justice or social peace. This Day will also represent a genuine form of new evangelization (cf. *Mt 11:5*) which can renew the face of the Church as She perseveres in her perennial activity of pastoral conversion and witness to mercy.

22. The Holy Mother of God always looks upon us with her eyes of mercy. She is the first to show us the way and to accompany us in our witness of love. As she is often shown in works of art, the Mother of Mercy gathers us all under the protection of her mantle. Let us trust in her maternal assistance and follow her perennial counsel to look to Jesus, the radiant face of God's mercy.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's Basilica, on 20 November, the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, in the year 2016, the fourth of my Pontificate.

FRANCISCUS

Deeper Focus Resource: March 26

Reflection by St. Augustine of Hippo:

This reading on the sufferings and passion of Jesus Christ and his whole body, the church, is taken from St. Augustine's Commentary on the Psalms and is found in the Office of Readings for Tuesday of the Second (2nd) week in Lent.

Lord, I have cried to you, hear me. (Psalm 141:1) This is a prayer we can all say. This is not my prayer, but that of the whole Christ. Rather, it is said in the name of his body. When Christ was on earth he prayed in his human nature, and prayed to the Father in the name of his body, and when he prayed drops of blood flowed from his whole body. So it is written in the Gospel: Jesus prayed with earnest prayer, and sweated blood (Luke 22:44). What is this blood streaming from his whole body but the martyrdom of the whole Church?

PASSION OF THE WHOLE BODY

Lord, I have cried to you, hear me; listen to the sound of my prayer, when I call upon you. Did you imagine that crying was over when you said: I have cried to you? You have cried out, but do not as yet feel free from care. If anguish is at an end, crying is at an end; but if the Church, the body of Christ, must suffer anguish until the end of time, it must not say only: I have cried to you, hear me; it must also say: Listen to the sound of my prayer, when I call upon you. Let my prayer rise like incense in your sight; let the raising of my hands be an evening sacrifice. (Ps. 141:2)

THE EVENING SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

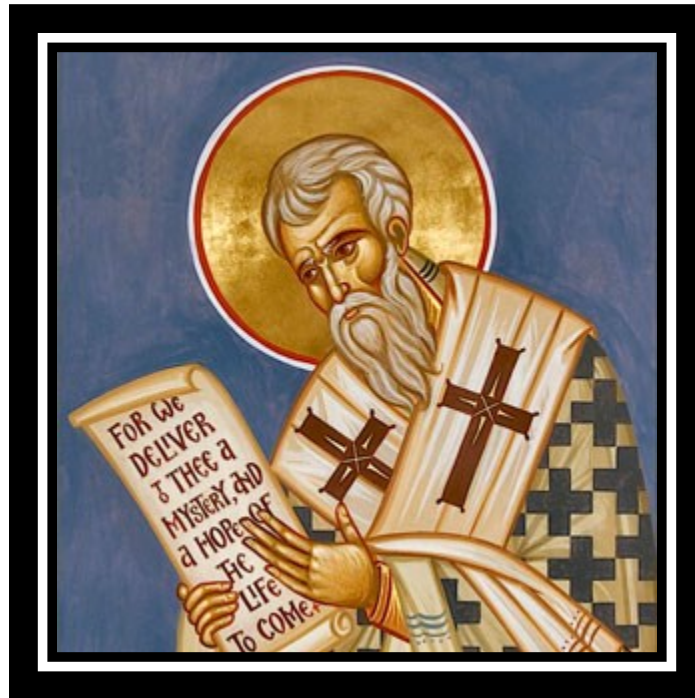
This is generally understood of Christ, the head, as every Christian acknowledges. When day was fading into evening, the Lord laid down his life on the cross, to take it up again; he did not lose his life against his will. Here, too, we are symbolized. What part of him hung on the cross if not the part he had received from us? How could God the Father ever cast off and abandon his only Son, who is indeed one God with him? Yet Christ, nailing our weakness to the cross (where, as the Apostle says: Our old nature was nailed to the cross with him), cried out with the very voice of humanity: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mark 15:34).

THE FRAGRANCE OF PRAYER RISING LIKE INCENSE

The evening sacrifice is then the passion of the Lord, the cross of the Lord, the oblation of the victim that brings salvation, the holocaust acceptable to God. In his resurrection he made this evening sacrifice a morning sacrifice. Prayer offered in holiness from a faithful heart rises like incense from a holy altar. Nothing is more fragrant than the fragrance of the Lord. May all who believe share in this fragrance. Therefore, our old nature in the words of the Apostle, was nailed to the cross with him, in order, as he says, to destroy our sinful body, so that we may be slaves to sin no longer.

Deeper Focus Resource: April 15

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *First Lecture on Mystagogy*, (Excerpt) c. 370



With a Lesson from the First General Epistle of Peter, beginning at Be sober, be vigilant, to the end of the Epistle.

I have long been wishing, O true-born and dearly beloved children of the Church, to discourse to you concerning these spiritual and heavenly Mysteries; but since I well knew that seeing is far more persuasive than hearing, I waited for the present season; that finding you more open to the influence of my words from your present experience, I might lead you by the hand into the brighter and more fragrant meadow of the Paradise before us; especially as you have been made fit to receive the more sacred Mysteries, after having been found worthy of divine and life-giving Baptism. Since therefore it remains to set before you a table of the more perfect instructions, let us now teach you these things exactly, that you may know the effect wrought upon you on that evening of your baptism.

First ye entered into the vestibule of the Baptistery, and there facing towards the West ye listened to the command to stretch forth your hand, and as in the presence of Satan ye renounced him. Now ye must know that this figure is found in ancient history. For when Pharaoh, that most bitter and cruel tyrant, was oppressing the free and high-born people of the Hebrews, God sent Moses to bring them out of the evil bondage of the Egyptians. Then the door posts were anointed with the blood of a lamb, that the destroyer might flee from the houses which had the sign of the blood; and the Hebrew people was marvellously delivered. The enemy, however, after their rescue, pursued after them Exodus 14:9, 23, and saw the sea wondrously parted for them; nevertheless he went on, following close in their footsteps, and was all at once overwhelmed and gulphed in the Red Sea.

Now turn from the old to the new, from the figure to the reality. There we have Moses sent from God to Egypt; here, Christ, sent forth from His Father into the world: there, that Moses might lead forth an afflicted people out of Egypt; here, that Christ might rescue those who are oppressed in the world under sin: there, the blood of a lamb was the spell against the destroyer; here, the blood of the Lamb without blemish Jesus Christ is made the charm to scare evil spirits: there, the tyrant was pursuing that ancient people even to the sea; and here the daring and shameless spirit, the author of evil, was following you even to the very streams of salvation. The tyrant of old was drowned in the sea; and this present one disappears in the water of salvation. But nevertheless you are bidden to say, with arm outstretched towards him as though he were present, I renounce you, Satan. I wish also to say wherefore ye stand facing to the West; for it is necessary. Since the West is the region of sensible darkness, and he being darkness has his dominion also in darkness, therefore, looking with a symbolic meaning towards the West, you renounce that dark and gloomy potentate. What then did each of you stand up and say? I renounce you, Satan,— you wicked and most cruel tyrant! Meaning, I fear your might no longer; for that Christ has overthrown, having partaken with me of flesh and blood, that through these He might by death destroy death Hebrews 2:14-15, that I might not be made subject to bondage forever. I renounce you,— you crafty and most subtle serpent. I renounce you,— plotter as you are, who under the guise of friendship contrived all disobedience, and work apostasy in our first parents. I renounce you, Satan,— the artificer and abettor of all wickedness. Then in a second sentence you are taught to say, and all your works. Now the works of Satan are all sin, which also you must renounce — just as one who has escaped a tyrant has surely escaped his weapons also. All sin therefore, of every kind, is included in the works of the devil. Only know this; that all that you say, especially at that most thrilling hour, is written in God's books; when therefore you do anything contrary to these promises, you shall be judged as a transgressor. Galatians 2:18 You renounce therefore the works of Satan; I mean, all deeds and thoughts which are contrary to reason...

Guarded therefore by these discourses, be sober. For our adversary the devil, as was just now read, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:9 But though in former times death was mighty and devoured, at the holy Laver of regeneration God has wiped away every tear from off all faces. For you shall no more mourn, now that you have put off the old man; but you shall keep holy-day, clothed in the garment of salvation Isaiah 61:10, even Jesus Christ.

11. And these things were done in the outer chamber. But if God will, when in the succeeding lectures on the Mysteries we have entered into the Holy of Holies, we shall there know the symbolic meaning of the things which are there performed. Now to God the Father, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be glory, and power, and majesty, forever and ever. Amen.

Deeper Focus: April 23



Painting at the Museo del Palazzo del Buonconsiglio, Trent

Bull Closing of The Council of Trent (1545-1563) Pope Pius IV:

BULL OF OUR MOST HOLY LORD PIUS IV., BY PROVIDENCE OF GOD, POPE, TOUCHING THE CONFIRMATION OF THE OECUMENICAL (AND) GENERAL COUNCIL OF TRENT.

Pius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, for the perpetual memory hereof.

Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who hath vouchsafed to look down upon His holy Church, agitated and tossed by so many storms and tempests, and, whilst it was day by day more sorely distressed, hath at length brought relief thereunto by a suitable and wished-for remedy. To extirpate very many and most pernicious heresies, to correct manners, and to restore ecclesiastical discipline, to procure time peace and concord of the Christian people, an oecumenical and general Council had been, a long time previously, indicted by our predecessor, Paul III., of pious memory, and had been begun by holding several Sessions. Having been, by his successor, recalled to the same city, the Council, after several Sessions had been celebrated, could not, on account of various impediments and

difficulties which supervened, be even then brought to a conclusion: it was, therefore, for a long time interrupted, not without the greatest grief on the part of all persons of piety, whilst the Church daily more and more implored that remedy. But we, upon having entered upon the government of the Apostolic See, undertook to accomplish so necessary and salutary a work, even as our pastoral solicitude admonished us; trusting in the Divine Mercy, and aided by the pious zeal of our most beloved son in Christ, Ferdinand, Emperor elect of the Romans, and by that of other Christian kings, republics, and princes, we have at length attained to that which we have not ceased to labour after by daily and nightly watchfulness, and which we have assiduously besought of the Father of lights. For whereas a most numerous assembly of bishops and of other distinguished prelates, and one worthy of an oecumenical Council, had, upon being convoked by our letters, and impelled also by their own piety, been gathered together from all sides out of the nations of Christendom, at the said city; together with whom were very many other persons of piety, pre-eminent for skill in sacred letters, and knowledge of divine and human law; the Legates of the Apostolic See presiding in the said Synod; ourselves so favourable to the liberty of the Council, as even to have, by letters written to our Legates, voluntarily left the said Council free to determine concerning matters properly reserved to the Apostolic See; such things as remained to be treated of, defined, and ordained, touching the sacraments and other matters, which seemed to be necessary for confuting heresies, removing abuses, and amending morals, were by the sacred and holy Synod with the most perfect liberty and diligence, treated of, and accurately and most deliberately defined, explained, and ordained, which being completed, the Council was brought to a close with so great unanimity on the part of all who assisted thereat, that it was plain that such agreement was the Lord's doing, and it was very wonderful in our eyes, and those of all. For which so singular a bounty, We at once appointed solemn processions in this good city, which were assisted at with great piety by the clergy and people; and We made it our care that the thanksgivings so justly due should be paid to the divine majesty; forasmuch as the issue of that Council has brought with it a great and well nigh assured hope that greater fruits will day by day be derived unto the Church from the decrees and constitutions thereof.

And whereas the said holy Synod, in its reverence towards the Apostolic See, and following also in the traces of the ancient Councils, has, in a decree made thereon in public Session, requested of us the confirmation of all Its decrees, passed in our time and that of our predecessors; We, being made acquainted with the request of the said Synod, first by the letters of our Legates, then, upon their return, by what they diligently reported in the name of the Synod; after mature deliberation had thereon with our venerable brethren the cardinals of the holy Roman Church, and, above all, having invoked the assistance of the Holy Spirit; after that we had ascertained that all those decrees were Catholic, and useful and salutary to the Christian people, We, to the praise of Almighty God, with the advice and assent of our brethren aforesaid, have this day, in our secret consistory, confirmed by Apostolic authority all and singular those decrees, and have ordained that the same be received and observed by all the faithful of Christ; as also, for the clearer information of all men, We do, by the tenour of this letter, confirm them, and ordain that they be received and observed.

And, in virtue of holy obedience, and under the penalties by the sacred canons appointed, and others more grievous, even those of deprivation, to be inflicted at our discretion, We do also command all and each of our venerable brethren, the patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and all

other prelates whatsoever of the churches, of what estate, grade, order and dignity soever, they may be, even though distinguished with the honour of the cardinalate, diligently to observe the said decrees and statutes in their own churches, cities, and dioceses, both in their courts of justice and elsewhere, and to cause the same to be inviolably observed, each by his own subjects, in so far as they are in any way concerned therein; silencing gainsayers, and the refractory, by means of judicial sentences, and by the censures also and ecclesiastical penalties contained in the said decrees; calling in also, if need be, the help of the secular arm. And, by the bowels of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, We admonish and conjure our said most beloved son the emperor elect, and the Christian kings, republics, and princes, with that piety with which they assisted, by their ambassadors, at the Council, with the same piety and equal zeal, for the sake of God's honour, and the salvation of their people, in reverence also towards the Apostolic See, and the sacred Synod, to support, when needful, with their assistance and countenance, the prelates in executing and observing the decrees of the said Council ; and not to permit opinions adverse to the sound and salutary doctrine of the Council to be received by the people who are under their sway, but utterly to interdict such.

Furthermore, in order to avoid the perversion and confusion which might arise, if each one were allowed, as he might think fit, to publish his own commentaries and interpretations on the decrees of the Council ; We, by apostolic authority, forbid all men, as well ecclesiastics, of whatsoever order, condition, and rank they may be, as also laymen, with whatsoever honor and power invested ; prelates, to wit, under pain of being interdicted from entering the church, and all others whomsoever they be, under pain of excommunication incurred by the fact, to presume, without our authority to publish, in any form, any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any kind of interpretation whatsoever of the decrees of the said Council ; or to settle anything in regard thereof, under any plea whatsoever, even under pretext of greater corroboration of the decrees, or the more perfect execution thereof, or under any other colour whatsoever. But if anything therein shall seem to any one to have been expressed and ordained in an obscure manner, and it shall appear to stand in need on that account of an interpretation or decision, let him Go up to the place which the Lord hath chosen; to wit, to the Apostolic See, the mistress of all the faithful, whose authority the holy Synod also has so reverently acknowledged. For, if any difficulties and controversies shall arise in regard of the said decrees, We reserve them to be by Us cleared up and decided, even as the holy Synod has Itself in like manner decreed ; being prepared, as that Synod has justly expressed Its confidence in regard to Us, to provide for the necessities of all the provinces, in such manner as shall seem to Us most suitable; declaring that whatsoever may be attempted to the contrary in this matter, whether wittingly or unwittingly, by any one, by what authority soever, is, notwithstanding, null and void. And that these things may come to the knowledge of all men, and that no one may use the excuse of ignorance; We will and ordain, that, in the Vatican Basilica of the prince of the apostles, and in the Lateran church, at the time when the people is wont to assemble there to be present at the solemnization of masses, this letter be publicly read in a loud voice by certain officers of our court; and that, after having been read, it be affixed to the doors of those churches, and also to the gates of the Apostolic Chancery, and to the usual place in the Campo di Fiore; and be there left for some time, to be read by and to come to the knowledge of all men. And when removed thence, copies being, according to custom, left in those same places, it shall be committed to the press in our good city, that so it may be more conveniently made known throughout the provinces and kingdoms of the Christian name. And we ordain and decree, that, without any doubt, faith be given to copies thereof written

or subscribed by the hand of a public notary, and guaranteed by the seal and signature of some person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity. Let no one, therefore, infringe this our letter of confirmation, monition, inhibition, reservation, will, mandate, and decree, or with rash daring go contrary thereunto. But if any one shall presume to attempt this, let him know that he will incur the indignation of Almighty God, and of His blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul. Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, in the year of the Lord's Incarnation One thousand five hundred and sixty-four, on the seventh of the calends of February, in the fifth year of our pontificate.

THE FOUR MARIAN DOGMAS



Her Divine Motherhood

Early Church; Upheld by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

Mary is properly called the Mother of God (Theotokos) because her son, Jesus Christ, is both true God and true Man. Never did Christ give up any of His two natures since His Incarnation.



Her Perpetual Virginity

Early Church; Upheld by the Church Fathers

The Incarnation of Jesus did not spoil the virginity of Mary. God preserved her virginity before (*ante partum*), during (*in partum*), and after (*post partum*) the birth of Christ. She remained a virgin for life.



Her Immaculate Conception

Early Church; Formally defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854

In Mary, God prepared a dwelling place for the Incarnation of Jesus. At the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, St. Anne, Mary was preserved free from all stain of original sin.



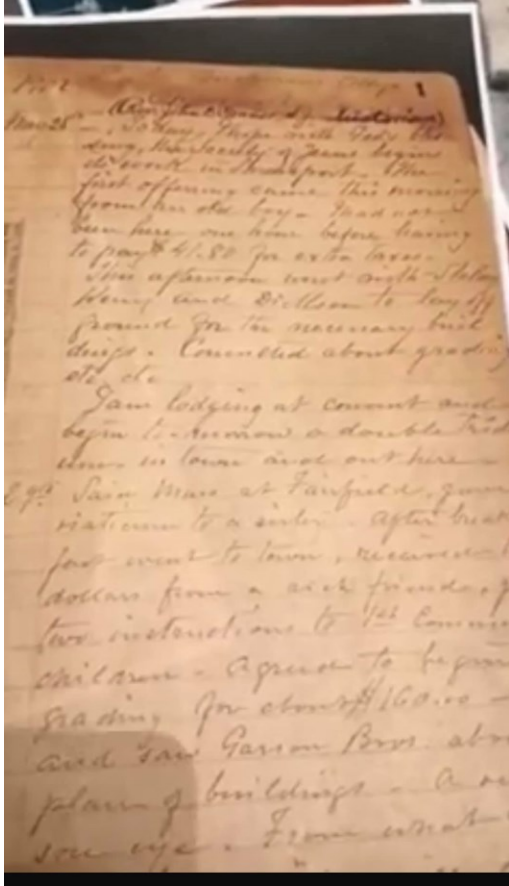
Her Assumption, Body & Soul

Early Church; Formally defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950

Mary, being the immaculate, ever-virgin Mother of God, after finishing the course of her life on earth, was taken up body and soul to heaven. Free from the stain of original sin, her body was not subject to decay.

Deeper Focus Resource: May 7

History of St. John Berchmans in Shreveport



May 28, 1902:

Jesuit Father John F. O'Connor made his first entry into a diary that chronicles the building of the first St. John Berchmans Church and School on Texas Avenue. It is now marked as a Louisiana state historic site following its excavation in 2017.

“Today, I hope with God’s blessing, the Society of Jesus begins its work in Shreveport...”



About our Patron: St. John Berchmans



In the quiet Belgian town of Diest, near the frontiers of Holland, there lived at the close of the sixteenth century an honest, hardworking shoemaker, by name, John Charles Berchmans. He dwelt with his wife and family in an ordinary two-story building, of the plainest kind, which is still standing.

Were you to visit this quaint town, still guarded by its double earthen ramparts with grassy mounds, you would not be alone as you passed through the trench-like gates that lead to the city; for daily many visitors go to Diest, to see the old house, which has become the chief attraction of the place.

But why do memories cluster round this old house? Because here a son was born to John Charles Berchmans and his wife Elizabeth, and that son is a saint.

The saint was born here on March 13, 1599. At Baptism he was named John in honor of St. John the Baptist. The child had a quick temper, but, under the careful religious training of his mother, grew up as gentle as a lamb. At a great sacrifice, his father placed him, when still very young, under the direction of Father Peter Emmerich, a monk of the Premonstratensian Order, who was in charge of the Church of Our Lady of Diest, and who had in his house a kind of seminary for the training of boys who wished to become priests.

During the three years Berchmans spent in this school he won the admiration of all by his mature judgment, good conduct and love of prayer. In fact, his whole time was taken up with study and prayers, which he knew well how to combine. He did not take part in the games in which boys of his age usually engaged, but it must not be imagined that he was therefore sad or disagreeable in disposition; on the contrary, he was always cheerful. He sacrificed the sports in order to have more time to study and to pray.

We are told by his teacher, Canon Emmerich, that he went to Communion twice a month which is now one of the recommendations in the St. John Berchmans Sanctuary Society as also on the feasts of our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. He always prepared himself for this holy duty by many and fervent prayers. In his great love for the God of the Eucharist he resembled strikingly the angelic youth St. Aloysius. When in the act of receiving Holy Communion there was something heavenly in his countenance. His deep recollection, the modesty of his downcast eyes and his sweet devotion were subjects of admiration for all who chanced to see him. His love for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was remarkable even from his earliest years.

When only seven years of age, he worked hard to master the rudiments of learning. He was sometimes known to leave his bed before daybreak, and when his grandmother asked him why he did so, the little fellow answered with great simplicity: "I want to have the blessing of God on my lessons and so I serve two or three Masses before I go to school." His greatest pleasure was to serve Mass. In priests, he saw the representatives of Jesus Christ and always conducted himself towards them with religious veneration. Even in the coldest winter weather he could hardly be induced to wear his hat in their presence.

Financial difficulties pressed upon John's father, who felt that he could no longer afford to send the boy to school. The expense was considerable; besides, he needed John's assistance. The family was growing and the mother was an invalid. This was a great trial to John, who begged to be permitted to pursue his studies that he might accomplish his desire of becoming a priest. Just at this juncture news came from Mechlin that one of the officials of the Cathedral wanted a servant boy to wait upon him and the boarders he had in his house; the boy was to have the privilege of attending school. At the age of fifteen John went to Mechlin to fill the position, and Canon Froymont soon discovered that he possessed a treasure in John.

In 1615, when the Fathers of the Society of Jesus opened a college in Mechlin, John was sent with the other boys from the Cathedral to attend the classes. John was admitted at once to the highest class, and soon distinguished himself by success in his studies, and much more by his unusual piety. He was enrolled among the members of the Sodality of our Lady and became a model Sodalist. Brought into contact with the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, he became acquainted with their mode of life, and found that it corresponded with all his own aspirations.

On reading the life of St. Aloysius, just published at the time, he felt a strong impulse to apply for admission into the Society. First, however, he had recourse to prayer, and asked the advice of his confessor. He had Masses said, and gave in alms, whatever little pocket-money he had, that he might receive light from Heaven to decide the important matter of his vocation. At length it was clear to him that God called him to the Society of Jesus, and he wrote a beautiful letter to his parents, in which he tells them "how for three or four months our Lord has been knocking at the door of my heart. At first I would not open to Him. But seeing that, at my studies and on my walks, no matter what I might be doing, I always have felt myself impelled to settle my future state of life, after many Communion and many good works, I have come to the conclusion yes, I am resolved to serve our dear Lord, with His grace, in the religious life. "It is not easy, I admit, for parents and friends to give up their children. But what would they do if our dear Lord long may He spare them were to call them to Himself? Sometimes, too, I keep thinking in my heart, if I saw before me, on the one hand, father, mother, sister, etc., and, on the other, God our Lord,

with His and as I trust, my own Blessed Mother, and the former were saying to me: Dear child, stay with us, we beg of you, by the weariness and fatigues we have borne for you, etc., and Jesus Christ, on His side, were to say to me: I have been born and scourged, and crowned with thorns; and, last of all, have died on a cross for you. See here My five holy wounds ! Have I not endured all this for you? Do you not know that I have fed your soul with My Sacred Body, and slaked its thirst with My Precious Blood? And now will you prove so ungrateful to Me? When I think of this, my dear parents, my heart is set on fire, and were it possible, I would this very moment fly to religion. My heart and my soul will never be at rest till they have found their beloved Master. “But you will say: It is too soon. Wait till you have taken your degrees. I ask you, if a poor man were to come begging at your door, and you were quite willing to give him something, and he were to say, I will come for it in a year or two; he would not be sure you would give it to him then would you not think him a fool and a madman ? Are we not all beggars in God’s sight? He is pleased now, after much prayer, out of His goodness, to give me the best of alms, a vocation to religion and to the Society of Jesus, the hammer of all heresies, the vessel of virtue and perfection; and shall I tread under foot this grace of my dear Lord and condemn it? It is doubtful whether our Lord would allow it to last for two years more. And perhaps I should hear from Him: I know you not. “So now, with my whole heart, I offer myself to Jesus Christ to fight under His colors. I hope you will not be so unreasonable as to oppose Him; I have read in history that the Egyptians offered their children to the crocodile, which they looked on as a god, and that while it was eating them, the parents made high festival, in the same way, I hope, you will rejoice, and praise God, and thank Him that your son should be found worthy, not to be given to God, for he does not belong to you, but to be restored to Him. I commend myself to your good prayers, that our dear Lord may grant to me perseverance to the end of my life, and to you with me, hereafter, eternal life.”

John’s father went at once to Mechlin to dissuade him from entering religion. When the father failed to move John, he roundly rated John’s confessor for having put the idea into the boy’s head. The good priest answered the father so well that the latter seemed satisfied. The storm, however, was not yet over. John was sent to the Franciscan convent in Mechlin, where a Franciscan friar, a relative of John’s, was to do all he could to make the boy change his mind.

To all the objections against his vocation, John gave clear replies, and when his relative still persisted in repeated attacks, John finally one day took the friar by the arm and showed him politely to the door. His parents made a fresh appeal for delay, but John wrote his determination to go to the novitiate in two weeks time. As a last resort his father told him that he would not give him a penny to enable him to carry out his purpose. “See, father,” was John’s answer, “if the very clothes I have on kept me back, I would strip them off, and follow Christ like the young man who cast away his linen cloth.”

On the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, September 24, 1616, a good lay brother, who was busy working in the garden around the old palace of Charles V, which was now the noviceship for the Society of Jesus at Mechlin, was surprised to receive two youthful and voluntary assistants. They were Berchmans and his companion on their way to the novitiate. On seeing the good brother at work, John suggested that they could not better begin than by the practice of charity and humility, and so set to work with the brother until the Father Rector came out to welcome them.

In the novitiate Berchmans was a model for all; his progress, no doubt, being due to the principle which ruled his life and which he thus expressed: "Not so much the doing of great things, as doing well what one is told to do." On September 25, 1618, he took the first vows of the Society of Jesus. During his novitiate his mother died and his father became a secular priest. It was now determined to send John to the Roman College to make his studies. Anxious to bid his father good-bye, he wrote, asking him to call and see him.

The answer he received was, that his father had died one week before. This was a severe trial, which he bore well. To reach Rome he set out in October and had to travel on foot a long journey through France and Italy. One incident in this journey was remembered with deep devotion by our Saint. On Christmas eve the pilgrim caught the first view of the dome and towers of Loretto, and it was his privilege to assist at the midnight Mass, beneath the same roof that sheltered Mary and the child Jesus. The recollection of the young religious, who knelt through the long service, deeply impressed the pilgrims, who were attracted by his devotion. On the last night of the year the pilgrims were welcomed at Rome by the Father General of the Society, and they were just in time to join in the Te Deum, which is sung at the close of each year in the Church of the Gesu' in Rome.

On January 2, John took up his quarters in the Roman College, in a room once occupied by St. Aloysius, about 25 years before, and such was the life he led that many remarked that Aloysius had come again to live amongst them. In the college, as in the novitiate, he had the charge of preparing the lamps. He loved this occupation because the same task had been performed by St. Aloysius. He had a special devotion to the Mother of God, and vowed to defend her Immaculate Conception. This vow he signed with his blood. To him we owe the little Rosary of the Immaculate Conception, now approved and indulgenced by the Church. Here, as elsewhere, he showed his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and his love of serving Mass. It was then the custom in the Roman College for the students of philosophy to serve a Mass every morning. The one which fell to Berchmans was unusually long, and occupied a great deal of the time which was valuable to him for study. Yet he never thought of asking to have it changed; and when, after some time, a change was made, it was only to have him serve the Mass of a Father whose infirmities made him unable to fix any special hour for the purpose; so that our Saint was liable to be called at any hour of the morning, a thing which seriously interfered with his time of study. The sacristan expressed his sorrow at the great inconvenience, but Berchmans only replied with his usual composure: "Obedience can never be troublesome, dear brother; especially when it gives one the privilege of serving at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

Early in August, 1621, he was attacked by the insidious Roman fever and was obliged to go to the infirmary. On the feast of St. Lawrence, inflammation of the lungs set in and his strength rapidly gave way. He prepared most carefully for the reception of the last Sacraments. When the Rector came to give him Holy Communion he rose from his couch, dressed in his habit, and threw himself on his knees. Two lay brothers supported him, and as he knelt he made the following act of faith: "I declare that there is here really present the Son of God, the Father Almighty, and of the most Blessed Mary, ever Virgin; I protest that I wish to live and die a true son of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Apostolic, Roman Church, a true son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a son of the Society." He then received Viaticum and Extreme Unction. At eight o'clock

on Friday morning, August 13, 1621, with his eyes on his crucifix and with the holy names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, he went to his reward.

His death was followed by an outburst of devotion in Rome, and an immense throng crowded around his remains and sought to secure some relic of the saint. Many miracles were wrought in Belgium and in Rome and crowned heads petitioned for his beatification. Pius IX published the decree on May 3, 1865. On the eleventh his relics were solemnly translated to their present resting place beneath the altar of our Lady in the Church of the Roman College, opposite the splendid shrine of St. Aloysius. On January 15, 1888, Leo XIII, amid the festivities of his Sacerdotal Jubilee, solemnly canonized the Belgian student.

One of the miracles used in the canonization of St. John Berchmans was wrought in the United States. On September 20, 1866, Miss Mary Wilson arrived at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, La. Driven from her home in London, Canada, by her Protestant parents, who were displeased on account of her conversion, she sought refuge as a postulant in the convent at Grand Coteau. After a month of preparation, and on the eve of her reception among the novices, she was suddenly seized with a violent sickness.

At last it became evident that there was no hope of recovery by natural means. A novena was at once begun in honor of Bl. John Berchmans. On December 14, the last day of the novena, the condition of the patient was most pitiable. For 40 days she had not taken an ounce of food; she took only a little tea or coffee, and the last eight days she had not been able to take even this. She was expected to die at any moment. Her limbs were cold and contracted, her mouth and tongue were raw and covered with clots of black blood; with the greatest difficulty the Holy Viaticum was administered by giving her a small piece of the host. All the Sisters then retired to hear Mass except the infirmarian, who, seeing the patient calm, left her for a moment to attend the sick in the adjoining room. In less than one hour after the reception of the Viaticum, the patient was entirely cured, restored to health, as she said, by St. John Berchmans, who appeared to her. Every symptom of the disease had passed away, and the next day she was going through the ordinary duty of Community – life; she would have done so on the day of her cure, but the Mother Superior thought it more prudent for her to remain in bed. The two doctors who attended her attributed her cure to supernatural agency, for, they said, she was beyond the reach of natural remedies. The entire Community and many visitors who had seen and known the patient attested the truth of the cure, so that its authenticity is beyond the shadow of a doubt.

At the time of the Saint's death at Rome in 1621, his heart was returned to his beloved province in Belgium, and it is kept in the church at Louvain. It is at a side altar, in a silver reliquary, and on his feast day, and at other times, is presented to the faithful for veneration. The case which contains it is heart-shaped, arranged so that all that remains of the heart is visible. The stairs leading to the room which the Saint occupied at Diest are encased in a cover of wood. In the centre of each step is a diamond-shaped piece of glass, through which the wood of the original staircase is visible. In memory of the Saint who had so often mounted these stairs, pilgrims are wont to ascend these steps on their knees. The room in which the Saint lived is almost bare. There is in it an altar where Mass is said, and the little four-paned window has been enriched with stained glass.

St. John is called the “Saint of the Common Life,” but Pius IX gave him the title of “Patron of Altar-Boys.” He is the model the Church holds up to altar-boys. By following St. John Berchmans in his devotion to the altar and in the simple and faithful discharge of their ordinary duties at home, in school and in the church, they may be sure to obtain graces like to those which made him such a great Saint.

Catholic Prayers

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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.*

Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,*

*the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with 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.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection
of the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.*

The Confiteor

I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael, the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you, Father, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve! To you do we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping, in this vale of tears! Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us; and after

this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus! O clement. O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

The Fatima Prayer

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy.

Act of Contrition

*O my God, I am heartily sorry
for having offended Thee,
and I detest all my sins
because I dread the loss of Heaven
and the pains of hell;
but most of all because they offend Thee, my God,
Who art all-good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace,
to confess my sins, to do penance
and to amend my life.
Amen*

Grace Before Meals

*Bless Us O Lord,
and these thy gifts
which we are about to receive
from Thy bounty;
Through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.*

St. Michael

*St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle
be our protection against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray.
Oh prince of heavenly hosts,
by the power of God, thrust into Hell
Satan and all evil spirits who wander
through the world for the ruin of souls.
Amen.*

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, protect me.

Blood of Christ, fill me.

Water from Christ's side, purify me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within your wounds hide me;

Never permit me to leave thee.

From the evil one defend me.

In my last hour, call me.

And bid me come to thee,

And with your saints and angels

Praise thee,

Throughout eternity.

Amen.

