

# FROM THE PASTOR'S



Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 21, 2008 A

## INTRODUCTION TO ARTICLES ON THE CATECHISM

Since the invention of the printing press in 1450, the Catholic Church has written catechisms as a way to present to the faithful a summary of Catholic beliefs. The word *Catechism* comes from a Greek word that means “to echo”. Knowledge of the Catechism helps us to “echo” forth the church’s beliefs.

The most recent universal Catechism called the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was promulgated by the late John Paul II in 1992. This 800 pages book was written primarily for bishops whose task it is to teach the faith in their dioceses.

When issuing the universal Catechism, the late Holy Father encouraged countries to write a *National Catechism* which would speak more directly to local situations and cultures. Responding to this exhortation, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops produced in 2006 the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. This 600+ page book is easier to read than the universal Catechism. In addition to being a faithful summary of Catholic beliefs it also has the following features.

- **Stories of Outstanding Catholics.** Most of the 36 chapters begin with a biographical sketch of American Saints or other outstanding Catholics who represent the variety of racial and ethnic witnesses to the Catholic way of life.
- **Sidebars.** This doctrinal section in each chapter consists of three questions with answers taken from the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- **Relating Catholic Teaching to the Culture.** This section seeks to relate church teaching to our diverse U.S. society.
- **Questions for Personal & Group Reflection**
- **Meditation & Prayer.** A catechism needs to be more than a summary of teachings. Prayer leads us to a deeper understanding of our faith.

- **Glossary.** Finally, an alphabetized glossary of many terms appears at the end of the book

## A CATECHISM IN FOUR PARTS.

The Catechism is divided into four parts.

**Part 1.** The Creed: The Faith Professed

**Part 2.** The Sacraments: The Faith Celebrated

**Part 3.** Christian Morality: The Faith Lived

**Part 4.** The Creed: The Faith Prayed.

## PART 1 - THE CREED: THE FAITH PROFESSED

I have written eleven articles on the Creed. The following is a summary of the eleven articles.

**Article One: Divine Revelation & Our Faith Response.** How has our great and awesome God revealed himself to us and how are we called to respond to his divine revelation.

**Article Two: Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Church.** How is divine revelation (the truths of our faith) transmitted from one generation to another? Our Protestant brothers and sisters would answer through the Bible (“sola scriptura” - scripture alone was a great phrase of Martin Luther). The Catholic Church holds that divine truth, the truths of our faith are transmitted by Scripture *and* Tradition and are guarded (from erroneous interpretation) by the church. Most Catholics and Protestants do not understand what the church means by Sacred Tradition. Article two will look at a) the Catholic approach to scripture interpretation b) Sacred Tradition c) the role of the lay faithful, the theologian and the magisterium (bishops and the Pope) in guarding and interpreting divine revelation.

**Article Three - The Mystery of God:** This article will look at the awesome mystery of God—a God of truth and love, a God who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit a summary of the five ‘proofs’ for God’s existence offered by St. Thomas Aquinas.

**Article Four: Creation of All That is Seen and Unseen**

This looks at creation and evolution, creation of man and woman, creation of angels/demons (the unseen part of creation), the Fall, Original Sin (how we are born with a wounded human nature). This article will also address the problem of evil—how a loving God allows evil

**Article Five: Jesus 1, Son of God, Son of Mary, fully human, fully divine.** This article will look at the Public Ministry of Jesus as teacher and healer, the humanity and divinity of Christ.

**Article Six: Jesus 2, Our Salvation in Christ, his death, resurrection and ascension.** Was it God's will for Jesus to die a cruel death on the cross? What does his death, resurrection and ascension mean in our lives? Are you saved? A Catholic response.

**Article Seven: The Holy Spirit—Our Divine Guide and Strength.** The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament and in the early church, gifts and fruits of the Spirit. Images and symbols of the Spirit. How to develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

**Article Eight: The Church 1—The Sacrament of God's Love and Salvation.** This article will look at how the church was planned by God, founded by Jesus and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, four images of the church, membership and leadership in the church.

**Article Nine: The Church 2—The Four Marks of the Church—One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.** How the church lives and fails to live the Four Marks of the church. This article also responds to questions of the salvation of other Christians, non-Christians and even the unbeliever.

**Article Ten: Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church.** Mary in scripture. Mary woman of faith and model disciple. Mary Mother of the Church, Four Marian doctrines (Immaculate Conception, Assumption into heaven, Mary Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity), Veneration of Mary, Statues and Medals.

**Article Eleven: What Happens After Death. The Last Things.** Preparing for death, Particular Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and the Last Judgment.

Each article is four pages long and ends with questions for personal reflection, a suggestion for action and a meditation.

In the Catechism sessions, we will read one article each week, have an opportunity for questions and comments.

If you carefully study these articles you will be a very informed about the Catholic faith.

Non-Catholics are welcome and needless to say there will be absolutely no pressure on you to convert to Catholicism.

I am presently writing articles on Part 2 of the Catechism which is on the *Sacraments: the Faith Celebrated*.

*Time and place of Two New Catechism Study Groups*

**Meditation**

In the life of faith there are always two movements: God in search of us and we in search of God. The poet Francis Thompson described God's attempts to reach us in terms of his being the "Hound of Heaven." Thompson said he felt God coming after him and yearning to give him love. But the poet was not ready:

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind . . . I hid from him.

At the same time, God has stamped in our souls a longing for himself. We are born with a longing for the divine that cannot be satisfied by anyone or anything short of God. We are created to be seekers for the absolute love, which is God. Thompson not only experienced God as the hound pursuing him; he also felt his own hunger and thirst for God. One day he stopped running, turned, and rushed toward God:

Naked, I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!  
My harness, piece by piece, Thou hast hewn  
from me, . . . . .  
I am defenseless, utterly.

And God, the other seeker, in this spiritual drama says:

"Rise, clasp my hand, and come!"

The Holy Spirit presided over this spiritual adventure. It is the mission of the Spirit to help us draw near to God. When the Holy Spirit is present and active in our lives, we can have an experience of his presence.

U.S. Catechism p. 109

Have a blessed week,

