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SECTION ONE
"I BELIEVE"—"WE BELIEVE"



This illumination presents the complete cycle of the six days of creation up to the temptation of our first parents (cf. Genesis 1-3).

"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, which teems with things innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it. These all look to thee, to give them their food in due season. When thou givest to them, they gather it up; when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things. . . . Bless the LORD, O my soul!" (Psalm 104:24-28, 35).

The Church at the Easter vigil praises the Lord for the even more wonderful work of the redemption of mankind and the cosmos:

"Almighty and eternal God, you created all things
in wonderful beauty and order. Help us now to
perceive how still more wonderful is the new
creation by which in the fullness of time you
redeemed your people through the sacrifice of
our Passover, Jesus Christ."

Bible of Souvigny, *Illumination on the Days of Creation*, Moulins, Municipal Library. (Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.)

1. What is the plan of God for man?

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. In the fullness of time, God the Father sent his Son as the Redeemer and Savior of mankind, fallen into sin, thus calling all into his Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of his eternal happiness. 1-25

CHAPTER ONE

Man's Capacity for God

"You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised [. . .] You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you." 30
(Saint Augustine)

2. Why does man have a desire for God?

God himself, in creating man in his own image, has written upon his heart the desire to see him. Even if this desire is often ignored, God never ceases to draw man to himself because only in God will he find and live the fullness of truth and happiness for which he never stops searching. By nature and by vocation, therefore, man is a religious being, capable of entering into communion with God. This intimate and vital bond with God confers on man his fundamental dignity. 27-30 44-45

3. How is it possible to know God with only the light of human reason?

Starting from creation, that is from the world and from the human person, through reason alone one can know God with certainty as the origin and end of the universe, as the highest good and as infinite truth and beauty. 27-30 46-47

4. Is the light of reason alone sufficient to know the mystery of God?

In coming to a knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man experiences many difficulties. Indeed, on his own he is unable to 37-38

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

5. How can we speak about God?

- 39-43 By taking as our starting point the perfections of man and of the other
48-49 creatures which are a reflection, albeit a limited one, of the infinite perfection of God, we are able to speak about God with all people. We must, however, continually purify our language insofar as it is image-bound and imperfect, realizing that we can never fully express the infinite mystery of God.

CHAPTER TWO

God Comes to Meet Man

THE REVELATION OF GOD

6. What does God reveal to man?

- 50-53 God in his goodness and wisdom reveals himself. With deeds and
68-69 words, he reveals himself and his plan of loving goodness which he decreed from all eternity in Christ. According to this plan, all people by the grace of the Holy Spirit are to share in the divine life as adopted "sons" in the only begotten Son of God.

7. What are the first stages of God's Revelation?

- 54-58 From the very beginning, God manifested himself to our first parents,
70-71 Adam and Eve, and invited them to intimate communion with himself. After their fall, he did not cease his revelation to them but promised salvation for all their descendants. After the flood, he made a covenant with Noah, a covenant between himself and all living beings.

8. What are the next stages of God's Revelation?

God chose Abram, calling him out of his country, making him "the father of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5), and promising to bless in him "all the families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the divine promise made to the patriarchs. God formed Israel as his chosen people, freeing them from slavery in Egypt, establishing with them the covenant of Mount Sinai, and, through Moses, giving them his law. The prophets proclaimed a radical redemption of the people and a salvation which would include all nations in a new and everlasting covenant. From the people of Israel and from the house of King David, would be born the Messiah, Jesus. 59-64 72

9. What is the full and definitive stage of God's Revelation?

The full and definitive stage of God's revelation is accomplished in his Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, the mediator and fullness of Revelation. He, being the only-begotten Son of God made man, is the perfect and definitive Word of the Father. In the sending of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, Revelation is now fully complete, although the faith of the Church must gradually grasp its full significance over the course of centuries. 65-66 73

"In giving us his Son, his only and definitive Word, God spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word, and he has no more to say." (Saint John of the Cross)

10. What is the value of private revelations?

While not belonging to the deposit of faith, private revelations may help a person to live the faith as long as they lead us to Christ. The Magisterium of the Church, which has the duty of evaluating such private revelations, cannot accept those which claim to surpass or correct that definitive Revelation which is Christ. 67

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

11. Why and in what way is divine revelation transmitted?

- 74 God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), that is, of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christ must be proclaimed to all according to his own command, "Go forth and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). And this is brought about by Apostolic Tradition.

12. What is Apostolic Tradition?

- 75-79 Apostolic Tradition is the transmission of the message of Christ,
83 brought about from the very beginnings of Christianity by means
96, 98 of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship, and inspired writings. The apostles transmitted all they received from Christ and learned from the Holy Spirit to their successors, the bishops, and through them to all generations until the end of the world.

13. In what ways does Apostolic Tradition occur?

- 76 Apostolic Tradition occurs in two ways: through the living transmission of the word of God (also simply called Tradition) and through Sacred Scripture which is the same proclamation of salvation in written form.

14. What is the relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture?

- 80-82 Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out of the same divine well-spring and together make up one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation.

15. To whom is the deposit of faith entrusted?

- 84, 91 The Apostles entrusted the deposit of faith to the whole of the Church.
94, 99 Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith the people of God as a whole, assisted by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Magisterium of the Church, never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine revelation.

16. To whom is given the task of authentically interpreting the deposit of faith?

85-90
100

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone, that is, to the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and to the bishops in communion with him. To this Magisterium, which in the service of the Word of God enjoys the certain charism of truth, belongs also the task of defining dogmas which are formulations of the truths contained in divine Revelation. This authority of the Magisterium also extends to those truths necessarily connected with Revelation.

17. What is the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium?

95

Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium are so closely united with each other that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

SACRED SCRIPTURE

18. Why does Sacred Scripture teach the truth?

105-108
135-136

Because God himself is the author of Sacred Scripture. For this reason it is said to be inspired and to teach without error those truths which are necessary for our salvation. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors who wrote what he wanted to teach us. The Christian faith, however, is not a "religion of the Book," but of the Word of God—"not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living" (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux).

19. How is Sacred Scripture to be read?

109-119
137

Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church according to three criteria: (1) it must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture; (2) it must be read within the living Tradition of the Church; (3) it must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves.

20. What is the *Canon* of Scripture?

- 120 The *Canon* of Scripture is the complete list of the sacred writings which
138 the Church has come to recognize through Apostolic Tradition. The *Canon* consists of 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New.

21. What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?

- 121-123 Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true word of God. All of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value. They bear witness to the divine pedagogy of God's saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of Christ the Savior of the universe.

22. What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?

- 124-127 The New Testament, whose central object is Jesus Christ, conveys to
139 us the ultimate truth of divine Revelation. Within the New Testament the four Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are the principle witness to the life and teaching of Jesus. As such, they hold a unique place in the Church.

23. What is the unity that exists between the Old and the New Testaments?

- 128-130 Scripture is one insofar as the Word of God is one. God's plan of sal-
140 vation is one, and the divine inspiration of both Testaments is one. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfills the Old; the two shed light on each other.

24. What role does Sacred Scripture play in the life of the Church?

- 131-133 Sacred Scripture gives support and vigor to the life of the Church. For
141-142 the children of the Church, it is a confirmation of the faith, food for the soul and the fount of the spiritual life. Sacred Scripture is the soul of theology and of pastoral preaching. The Psalmist says that it is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Church, therefore, exhorts all to read Sacred Scripture frequently because "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (Saint Jerome).

CHAPTER THREE

Man's Response to God

I BELIEVE

25. How does man respond to God who reveals himself?

Sustained by divine grace, we respond to God with the obedience of faith, which means the full surrender of ourselves to God and the acceptance of his truth insofar as it is guaranteed by the One who is Truth itself. 142-143

26. Who are the principal witnesses of the obedience of faith in the Sacred Scriptures?

There are many such witnesses, two in particular: One is *Abraham* 144-149 who when put to the test "believed God" (Romans 4:3) and always obeyed his call. For this reason he is called "the father of all who believe" (Romans 4:11). The other is the *Virgin Mary* who, throughout her entire life, embodied in a perfect way the obedience of faith: "*Let it be done to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38).

27. What does it mean in practice for a person to believe in God?

It means to adhere to God himself, entrusting oneself to him and giving assent to all the truths which God has revealed because God is Truth. It means to believe in one God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 150-152
176-178

28. What are the characteristics of faith?

Faith is the supernatural virtue which is *necessary* for salvation. It is a *free gift* of God and is accessible to all who humbly seek it. The act of faith is a *human act*, that is, an act of the intellect of a person— 153-165
179-180
183-184
prompted by the will moved by God—who freely assents to divine truth. Faith is also *certain* because it is founded on the Word of God; it *works* "through charity" (Galatians 5:6); and it *continually grows* through listening to the Word of God and through prayer. It is, even now, a *foretaste* of the joys of heaven.

29. Why is there no contradiction between faith and science?

- 159 Though faith is above reason, there can never be a contradiction between faith and science because both originate in God. It is God himself who gives to us the light both of reason and of faith.

"I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe." (Saint Augustine)

WE BELIEVE

30. Why is faith a personal act, and at the same time ecclesial?

- 166-169 Faith is a personal act insofar as it is the free response of the human person to God who reveals himself. But at the same time it is an ecclesial act which expresses itself in the proclamation, "We believe." It is in fact the Church that believes: and thus by the grace of the Holy Spirit precedes, engenders and nourishes the faith of each Christian. For this reason the Church is Mother and Teacher.

"No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother." (Saint Cyprian)

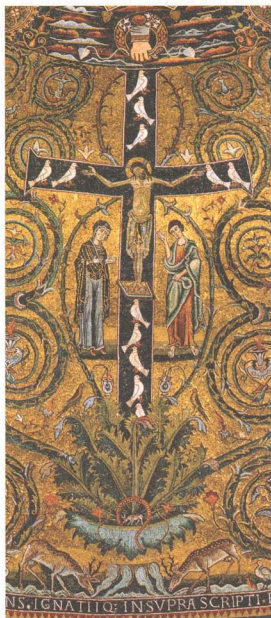
31. Why are the formulas of faith important?

- 170-171 The formulas of faith are important because they permit one to express, assimilate, celebrate, and share together with others the truths of the faith through a common language.

32. In what way is the faith of the Church one faith alone?

- 172-175 The Church, although made up of persons who have diverse languages, cultures, and rites, nonetheless professes with a united voice the one faith that was received from the one Lord and that was passed on by the one Apostolic Tradition. She confesses one God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and points to one way of salvation. Therefore we believe with one heart and one soul all that is contained in the Word of God, handed down or written, and which is proposed by the Church as divinely revealed.

SECTION TWO
THE PROFESSION OF
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



This ancient mosaic found in the Roman basilica of Saint Clement celebrates the triumph of the cross, the central mystery of the Christian faith. One can observe the luxuriant embellishment of a tuft of acanthus leaves from which come forth so many circlets going out in all directions with their flowers and fruits. This plant takes its vitality from the cross of Jesus whose sacrifice is the re-creation of mankind and the cosmos. Jesus is the new Adam who by the mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection brings about the rebirth of mankind and its reconciliation with the Father.

Around the suffering Christ are twelve white doves who represent the twelve apostles. At the foot of the cross are Mary and John, the beloved disciple:

"When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (John 19:26-27).

Above the cross the Father's hand is extended, offering a crown of glory to his Son who by his paschal mystery is the victor over death.

At the base of the plant there is a little stag who does battle with the evil serpent.

From this plant which stands for the tree of redemption, there comes forth a spring of gushing water giving life to the four rivulets, symbols of the four gospels, at which the faithful quench their thirst like deer at the springs of living water. The Church is here pictured as a heavenly garden given life by Christ, the true tree of life.

Basilica of Saint Clement, Mosaic in the Apse, Rome. (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

THE CREED

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our
Lord, Who was conceived by the
Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sits at
the right hand of God the Father
almighty, from thence He shall
come 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 life
everlasting. Amen.

Symbolum Apostolicum

Credo in Deum, Patrem
omnipoténtem,
Creatórem caeli et terrae,
et in Iesum Christum, Filium
Eius únicum,
Dóminum nostrum,
qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto,
natus ex María Virgine,
passus sub Póntio Piláto,
crucifixus, mórtuus, et sepúltus,
descendit ad ínferos,
tértia die resurréxit a mórtuis,
ascéndit ad caelos, sedet ad
déteram Dei
Patris omnipoténtis, inde ventúrus est
iudicáre vivos et mórtuos.

Et in Spíritum Sanctum,
sanctam Ecclésiám cathólicam,
sanctórum comuniónem,
remissiónem peccatórum,
carnis resurrectiόnem,
vitam aetérnam.
Amen.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

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

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

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

On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Symbolum Nicaenum-Constantinopolitanum

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
Factorem caeli et terrae,
visibílium ómnium et invisibílium.

Et in unum Dóminum Iesum

Christum,
Filium Dei unigénitum
et ex Patre natum ante ómnia saécula:
Deum de Deo,
Lumen de Lúmine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
génitum, non factum,
consubstantiálem Patri:
per quem ómnia facta sunt;
qui propter nos hómines et

proper nostram
salútem, descéndit de caelis,
et incarnátus est de Spíritu Sancto ex
María Virgine et homo factus est,
crucifixus etiam pro nobis
sub Póntio Piláto,
passus et sepúltus est,
et resurréxit tértia die secúndum

Scriptúras,
et dexteram Patris, et íterum
ventúrus est
cum glória, iudicáre vivos et mórtuos,
cuius regni non erit finis.
Credo in Spíritum Sanctum,
Dóminum et vivificántem,
qui ex Patre Filióque procedít,
qui cum Patre et Filio simul adorátur
et conglorificátur, qui locútus
est per Prophétas.

Et unam sanctam cathólicam et apos-
tolicam Ecclésiam.

Confíteor unum Baptísma in remis-
sionem peccatórum.

Et expécto resurrectionem
mortuórum,
et vitam ventúri saéculi.
Amen.

CHAPTER ONE

I Believe in God the Father

THE SYMBOLS OF FAITH

33. What are the symbols of faith?

The symbols of faith are composite formulas, also called "professions of faith" or "Creeds," with which the Church from her very beginning has set forth synthetically and handed on her own faith in a language that is normative and common to all the faithful. 185-188 192, 197

34. What are the most ancient symbols (professions) of faith?

The most ancient symbols of faith are the *baptismal* creeds. Because Baptism is conferred "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), the truths of faith professed at Baptism are articulated in reference to the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. 189-191

35. What are the most important symbols of the faith?

They are the *Apostles' Creed* which is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome and the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* which stems from the first two ecumenical Councils, that of Nicea (A.D. 325) and that of Constantinople (A.D. 381) and which even to this day are common to all the great Churches of the East and the West. 193-195

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

36. Why does the Profession of Faith begin with the words, "I believe in God"?

The Profession of Faith begins with these words because the affirmation "I believe in God" is the most important, the source of all the other truths about man and about the world, and about the entire life of everyone who believes in God. 198-199

37. Why does one profess belief that there is only one God?

- 200-202 Belief in the one God is professed because he has revealed himself
 228 to the people of Israel as the only One when he said, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4) and "there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). Jesus himself confirmed that God is "the one Lord" (Mark 12:29). To confess that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also God and Lord does not introduce any division into the one God.

38. With what name does God reveal Himself?

- 203-205 God revealed himself to Moses as the living God, "the God of
 230-231 Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). God also revealed to Moses his mysterious name "I Am Who I Am (YHWH)." Already in Old Testament times this ineffable name of God was replaced by the divine title *Lord*. Thus in the New Testament, Jesus who was called *Lord* is seen as true God.

39. Is God the only One who "is"?

- 212-213 Since creatures have received everything they are and have from God, only God in himself is the fullness of being and of every perfection. God is "He who is" without origin and without end. Jesus also reveals that he bears the divine name "I AM" (John 8:28).

40. Why is the revelation of God's name important?

- 206-213 In revealing his name, God makes known the riches contained in the ineffable mystery of his being. He alone is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the One who transcends the world and history. It is he who made heaven and earth. He is the faithful God, always close to his people, in order to save them. He is the highest holiness, "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4), always ready to forgive. He is the One who is spiritual, transcendent, omnipotent, eternal, personal, and perfect. He is truth and love.

*"God is the infinitely perfect being who is the most Holy Trinity."
 (Saint Turibius of Montenegro)*

41. In what way is God the truth?

God is Truth itself and as such he can neither deceive nor be deceived. 214-217
He is "light, and in him there is no darkness" (1 John 1:5). The eternal 231
Son of God, the incarnation of wisdom, was sent into the world "to
bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37).

42. In what way does God reveal that he is love?

God revealed himself to Israel as the One who has a stronger love 218-221
than that of parents for their children or of husbands and wives for
their spouses. God in himself "is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), who gives
himself completely and gratuitously, who "so loved the world that he
gave his only Son [so] that the world might be saved through him"
(John 3:16-17). By sending his Son and the Holy Spirit, God reveals
that he himself is an eternal exchange of love.

43. What does it mean to believe in only one God?

To believe in the one and only God involves coming to know his 222-227
greatness and majesty. It involves living in thanksgiving and trust- 229
ing always in him, even in adversity. It involves knowing the unity
and true dignity of all human beings, created in his image. It involves
making good use of the things which he has created.

44. What is the central mystery of Christian faith and life?

The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the 232-237
Most Blessed Trinity. Christians are baptized in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

45. Can the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity be known by the light of human reason alone?

God has left some traces of his trinitarian being in creation and in the 237
Old Testament but his inmost being as the Holy Trinity is a mystery
which is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before
the Incarnation of the Son of God and the sending of the Holy Spirit.
This mystery was revealed by Jesus Christ and it is the source of all
the other mysteries.

46. What did Jesus Christ reveal to us about the mystery of the Father?

- 240-242 Jesus Christ revealed to us that God is "Father," not only insofar as he created the universe and the mankind, but above all because he eternally generated in his bosom the Son who is his Word, "the radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3).

47. Who is the Holy Spirit revealed to us by Jesus Christ?

- 243-248 The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. He is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son. He "proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26) who is the principle without a principle and the origin of all trinitarian life. He proceeds also from the Son (*Filioque*) by the eternal Gift which the Father makes of him to the Son. Sent by the Father and the Incarnate Son, the Holy Spirit guides the Church "to know all truth" (John 16:13).

48. How does the Church express her trinitarian faith?

- 249-256 The Church expresses her trinitarian faith by professing a belief in the oneness of God in whom there are three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three divine Persons are only one God because each of them equally possesses the fullness of the one and indivisible divine nature. They are really distinct from each other by reason of the relations which place them in correspondence to each other. The Father generates the Son; the Son is generated by the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

49. How do the three divine Persons work?

- 257-260 Inseparable in their one substance, the three divine Persons are also inseparable in their activity. The Trinity has one operation, sole and the same. In this one divine action, however, each Person is present according to the mode which is proper to him in the Trinity.

"O my God, Trinity whom I adore . . . grant my soul peace; make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling, and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action." (Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity)