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SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (NOS. 1-100)

Session Objective

To give study participants an understanding of the origin, destination, path, and purpose of their lives as described in the *Catechism*. In addition, they will learn how the *Catechism* is a "roadmap" to their journey of faith.

Leaders may find the following points helpful in guiding participants through this session.

Recap of Key Points of the Previous Session

- Catechesis seeks to bring Christians into the "... fullness of Christian life"³ (No. 5)
- The *Catechism* is comprised of **four parts**, or "**pillars**":
 1. **The profession of faith**, represented by the Creed (see No. 14)
 2. **The sacraments** of faith (see No. 15)
 3. **The life of faith** (the moral life), represented by the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments (see No. 16)
 4. **Prayer in the life of faith**, represented by the Our Father (see No. 17)
- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is the foundation of the *Pillars* program, is an "... **organic presentation** of the Catholic faith in its entirety" (No. 18).

Key Points of Focus in Session Two

- "The **desire for God** is ... written in the human heart ..." (No. 27); man finds his ultimate truth and happiness only in God.
- **Happiness** is the purpose of our journey of faith (see No. 30).
- The pillars of the *Catechism* teach us that an **integrated Catholic life** will bring about our perfection, happiness, and salvation.
- The four pillars can be seen as **four rungs of a ladder of ascent** back to God, our supreme happiness.
- The working out of God's plan in history is called the "... **divine economy** ..." (No. 56) of salvation.

³ CT 18

- God comes to meet us in **revelation**—the Bible and Tradition—and reveals his “plan of loving goodness” (No. 50).
- The Church’s **life of faith** must be seen as part of history, as part of the economy of salvation.

The *Part 3: Presentation Outlines* for this session appear on Page 5.

The *Part B: Group Discussion Answer Key* for this session is on Page 3.



SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (NOS. 1-100)



SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, you should ...

- Recognize the origin, destination, path, and purpose of human life.
- Understand how the “pillars” of the *Catechism* form a “ladder of faith.”
- See the *Catechism* as a map for the journey of faith.

GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself" (No. 27).

As explained in Session One, the first "pillar" of this four-part *Pillars* program looks at the first section of the *Catechism*, "The Profession of Faith" or the Creed. The Creed, we have said, is the story of our journey in miniature. It is also a doctrinal outline that provides the "grammar" of the larger story.

While laying out the basic Christian beliefs about the three divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the Creed also recalls the three phases of the economy, which is the working out of God's saving plan in history: the age of the Old Covenant can be seen as the Age of the Father, the Gospel period as the Age of the Son, and the period of the Church, beginning in the Acts of the Apostles, as the Age of the Spirit.

INTO FOCUS

Two Orders of Knowledge: Reason and Revelation

The *Catechism* teaches that there are two orders of knowledge: natural reason and divine revelation. Both help us develop a relationship with God (see No. 36).

Creation sets the table for revelation, the second order of knowledge. For example, hints or "fingerprints" of God are detected within the wonders of creation. Yet an infinite God cannot be fully known by created things alone. Creation is like God's business card. It makes known what God does in his work, but it does not fully reveal God personally. That takes *revelation*—God-imparted knowledge (see No. 53).

God discloses himself to humanity over time (see No. 53). The term *revelation* means, "lifting the veil." As a groom lifts the veil to see his beloved, the Old Testament Scriptures slowly unveil God himself until he appears as "... *the first-born of all creation* ..." the God-man, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15).

Revelation makes known a God who desires a relationship with his creatures. God reveals himself and his plan of loving goodness (see No. 51). Our reason may strive "upwards" toward knowledge of God, but revelation moves in the opposite direction. Theologians describe God's action of coming "down" to meet us as "condescension." God lowers himself to take human form as a parent stoops to help a child.



Statue of Saint Peter at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

The Creed offers a summary of the story and shows how that story (or economy) is to be read rightly; it is story and doctrine together.

In this session, you will see that the path of the journey from Blessing to Blessing is described in Scripture and Tradition as the working out of God's plan of loving goodness, his plan for our salvation. Together, these two sources of divine Revelation are God's way of communicating his will for us (see No. 80). God has also given the Church a special ability to teach with authority what God has revealed; this is called the Magisterium of the Church (see No. 85). God's revelation is the very content of the Catholic Faith and the thing in which we make our act of faith as Catholics. But, as you will see, the content of revelation is not just words; it is a whole way of living and of giving ourselves wholly to God.

As we study the *Catechism*, we will come to see and appreciate in a new way the plan of the blessing that God employs to invite us to return to him. It might seem at first that phrases such as "act of faith" and "content of faith" are abstract and removed from your daily experience, but as you read, you will find that these concepts are very much the matter of our daily walk of faith. At every point, the details are grounded in the Scripture story (the economy of salvation, from which they spring) and referred to the experience of the saints, both those who are enjoying their reward in heaven and those who continue on the Christian journey here below.



BEGIN WITH PRAYER

The Catechism is saturated with Scripture, the living Word of God. Therefore, to fully understand the Catechism, we must continually study Scripture and apply it to our lives. This week, read Wisdom 13:1-9. Consider making a few of the verses in that passage the subject of a short prayer each day this week.

MYTH BUSTER

***Myth:* Catholics don't "get" the Bible.**

Sometimes Catholics are accused of not having a strong relationship with the Bible. Some people have gone so far as to scoff at the Catholic Church, saying it is not a "Bible-believing" Church! Yet the Liturgy of the Word—proclaimed directly from the Old and New Testaments that make up the Bible—makes up half of the Mass, and many of the prayers of the Roman Missal are biblically based.

The teaching of the *Catechism* is strongly based on the Bible. It could be said that the *Catechism* represents the Catholic Church's two-thousand-plus years of meditation on Sacred Scripture. Indeed, the Bible is the most frequently quoted primary source within the *Catechism*; more than ninety percent of the Old Testament books are referenced in some way, and all of the New Testament books are cited.

If Catholics spend time reading and studying the *Catechism*, their love for Scripture will grow as they reflect upon the abundant biblical texts that are explained or footnoted within it.

Now turn to *Part Two: Questions to Guide Your Reading* for this session, beginning on Page 3.



SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (NOS. 1-100)



"Through this revelation [Christ], therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself."

-Dei Verbum, 2

READING THE CATECHISM

The presentation for Session Two covers *Catechism* Nos. 1–100. Please read those paragraphs to prepare for the presentation. Of course, the idea of reading a hundred paragraphs might sound daunting—and it is no small assignment. However, many of these “paragraphs” are actually only a few sentences, so give it a try.

If you do not have the time to get through all of the paragraphs, or if you find that the *Catechism* is a little more difficult to get through than you had thought, don't become discouraged. You are not alone if, at first, you find the *Catechism* difficult to read. If you grew up with the question-and-answer format of the *Baltimore Catechism*, you may prefer to start with the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is a shorter catechism that employs the more traditional format. It is available online, or you can purchase a copy at your local Catholic bookstore.

This said, you will derive the greatest benefit from this course if you read the actual text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. To assist you, we have selected paragraphs for each lesson that are the most important in the lecture presentation. Try reading these first if your time is limited or if you find it too difficult to get through all the paragraphs.

The essential paragraphs for this first session are: 1, 4, 5, 7, 14–18, 26–28, 30–36, 50, 53, 66, 74, 78, 80, 84, 95, and 98.

If you are reading along in the *Compendium*, these paragraphs correspond to questions 1–24.

GLOSSARY TERMS

During your reading, if you come across unfamiliar words or phrases (after all, it has been a *few* years since you attended Catholic school or religious-education classes!), the *Catechism* contains a wonderful glossary of terms at the end, which you can use to brush up.

So if you come across a term you don't recognize, fear not. Key terms will be included in a glossary at the beginning of each lesson, and they will be explained throughout the text.

Here are the terms for Session Two:

- **Catechesis**—The systematic teaching of the Catholic Faith to people of all ages to aid them in entering into, or growing in, the life of faith (see No. 5). Instructors are usually called “catechists.”
- **Catechism**—A book used in catechesis that contains a summary of what Catholics believe. When the word is used in a general sense, it is sometimes lowercase. When it is capitalized (“the *Catechism*”), it always refers specifically to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“Where the bishop is, there let the people gather,
just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

—St. Ignatius of Antioch,
Letter to the Smyrnaeans

GOING TO THE DOCTOR

St. John Chrysostom

What's in a name? If your name is St. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), your Greek-speaking buddies would know! John was the patriarch of Constantinople, an early Church father living in a time when he had to stand up against the abuse of authority by Church and political leaders. But St. John's abilities at winning people over to the gospel earned him the nickname *chrysostomos*, meaning "golden-mouthed." This doctor of the Church is renowned for the eloquence and power of his preaching and public speaking.

- **Divine Revelation**—God's way of telling us about and showing us himself and his plan for our salvation. We find it in the Church's oral and written Tradition, especially in the Bible. The fullest expression of divine revelation is found in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Economy of Salvation** (Divine Economy)—The way in which God creates and governs the world, arranging the events of history to accomplish his plan of salvation in Christ and through the life and sacraments of the Church. (From the Greek words *oikos* and *nomos*, meaning "house" and "rule" or "law." *Oikonomia*, then, means God's way of governing his house.)
- **Magisterium**—From the Latin *magister*, meaning "teacher," this term refers to the Church's teaching office, held by the bishops in union with the pope. The Magisterium interprets Sacred Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, ensuring the Church's fidelity to the teachings of the apostles in matters of faith and morals (see No. 85).
- **Pedagogy**—A method or way of teaching. Our English word *pedagogue*, or teacher, is from a Greek word that literally means "child leader."
- **Sacred Scripture**—The Bible, made up of the forty-six books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.
- **Sacred Tradition**—The oral teaching of the Church containing the Whole word of God, received from Christ and his Spirit through the first apostles, which has been passed down through generations in her doctrine, life, and worship, taught by the bishops and popes (see Nos. 75–82).

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING

The questions in these sections are intended to help you identify the key concepts. It may help you to read them before you begin to read the paragraphs indicated at the top of each set of questions. You can "grade yourself" by looking at the Answer Key at the end of the lesson. Please complete this section in preparation for the upcoming presentation and the discussion that will follow.

From the *Catechism* Nos. 1-25

1. "God, infinitely perfect and _____ in himself, in a _____ of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own _____ life."
2. "He [God] calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the _____ (choose one)."
 - a. Natural universe
 - b. Synagogue of free men
 - c. Church
 - d. House of Nazareth
3. What are the four major parts in the structure of the *Catechism*? Fill in the blanks.
 - a. "Part One: The Profession of _____."
 - b. "Part Two: The _____ (s) of faith."
 - c. "Part Three: The _____ of faith."
 - d. "Part Four: _____ in the life of faith."
4. "The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the _____ that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the _____ of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from _____ and have no other objective than to arrive at _____."

What word is missing in all four places? _____

From the *Catechism* Nos. 26-100

5. "_____ is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man ..."

How has God revealed himself to you? _____
6. Name two creations that provide "points of departure" that enable us to argue for God's existence: _____ and _____.

Finding happiness in God is not an effortless endeavor (see Nos. 27 and 30). Do the ways people can come to know God, described in Nos. 31-38, reflect your own experience or that of others you know?

7. "The proofs of God's existence ... can predispose one to _____ and help one to see that faith is not opposed to _____."

8. T or F _____ God can be known with certainty without faith.

Fortunately, we are not left entirely to our own devices when it comes to knowing God; he has also made himself known to us. Why did God reveal himself to mankind (see Nos. 51-52)?

9. Name the biblical figures whom the *Catechism* associates with the five stages of revelation described in Nos. 53-65.

1. _____ (two people)
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

10. Who were some of the holy women that kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation?
-
-

11. "Sacred _____ and Sacred _____, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out of the same divine well-spring [the God who reveals, and] come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal."

12. Who has been entrusted with the task of authentically interpreting the Word of God?
-

13. How does the *Catechism* describe the connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas?
-

14. How does understanding of "the heritage of faith" grow in the life of the Church?
-

GOING DEEPER

How would you describe the relationship between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture? How do you experience each of these channels of God's revelation in your life?

ANSWER KEY

1. "Blessed"; "plan"; "blessed" (No. 1).
2. Church (see No. 1).
3. Faith; sacraments; life; prayer (see Nos. 13–17).
4. "Love" (No. 25).
5. "Faith" (No. 26); answers will vary.
6. The physical world and the human person (see No. 31); answers will vary.
7. "Faith"; "reason" (No. 35).
8. True (see Nos. 36, 50); out of love, to make us capable of responding to him, knowing him, and loving him.
9. Our first parents, Adam and Eve (see No. 54); Noah (see No. 56); Abraham (see No. 59); Moses (see No. 62); the Son of God (see No. 65).
10. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith, Esther, and Mary (see No. 64).
11. "Tradition" and "Scripture" (No. 80).
12. The Magisterium, or the living, teaching office of the Church (see Nos. 85–86).
13. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith (see No. 89).
14. Through the contemplation and study of believers, through their experience of the realities spoken of in Scripture, and from the teaching of the Magisterium (see No. 94).

This session will continue in class with *Part 3: Presentation Outlines* on Page 5.



SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (NOS. 1-100)

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

I. Review: Catechesis and the Life of Faith

- A. Catechesis aims at initiating and nurturing a person into the Christian life
- B. The *Catechism* as a journey from Blessing to Blessing
- C. The four pillars (divisions) of the *Catechism*
- D. The essential elements of the journey
 - 1. Starting point (our origin)—God
 - 2. Destination—God
 - 3. Path—God's plan in the economy of salvation
 - 4. Purpose (Intention)
- E. The journey has two possible endings

II. The Journey's Purpose and Path

A. Happiness

1. Philosophers = "happiness is that for which everything else is sought"
2. "The desire for God is written in the human heart" (No. 27)
3. The search requires "... every effort of intellect, a sound will, 'an upright heart' ..." (No. 30)
4. *Catechism* stresses "heart" and connects it with memory (see Nos. 1162, 2697)
5. God constantly draws us to himself; never ceases to call us to seek him

B. The four "pillars" of *Catechism* provide everything we need to achieve happiness (see "The Ladder of Ascent" image)

C. The threefold gift of grace—faith, hope, and charity—makes the journey possible

D. Intellect, will, and memory (or "heart") make us human and form our "capacity" for God (see No. 36)

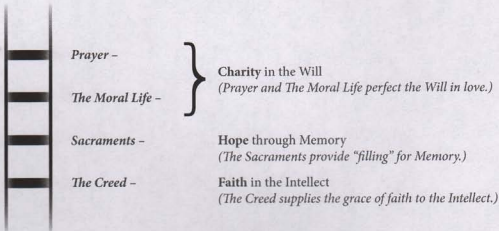
E. Happiness as the fullest development of the highest human powers over a lifetime (Aristotle)

F. Intellect ordered toward truth, the will toward goodness

G. Trinity of powers images God's Triune nature (Augustine)

THE "LADDER OF ASCENT" IN THE CATECHISM

Eternal Beatitude with God in Heaven



III. How God Makes Himself Known

A. God is engaged in human history:

1. "God Comes to Meet Man" (No. 50)
2. History has a purpose; it is directed by a divine plan
3. Divine plan disclosed in revelation
4. "Divine pedagogy" of deeds and words (No. 53)
5. God tells his story in stages (see No. 54-64)

6. Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation (see No. 65)

B. The transmission of divine revelation:

1. "One common source" in "two distinct modes" (No. 80):

a. "*Sacred Scripture*" (No. 81)

b. "[Holy] *Tradition*" (No. 81)

c. Transmitted "*orally*" and "*in writing*" (see No. 76)

2. Canon of Scripture assembled over time; grew out of apostolic (oral) Tradition (see No. 83)

C. Magisterium, the "teaching office" of the Church (see No. 85)

1. The bishops in union with the pope

2. Interprets revelation in both its written and oral forms (see No. 85)

D. The "three-legged stool" of Tradition, Scripture, and Magisterium (see Nos. 84, 95)

This session continues with *Part 4: Group Discussion Questions* on Page 3.



SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (NOS. 1-100)



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed to aid your comprehension of both the written material and the audiovisual presentation.

1. What aspects of catechesis listed in No. 6 do you think are most needed today?
2. As we have mentioned, the Church takes these four parts, or "pillars," of the *Catechism* (see Nos. 13–17) from Acts 2:42. How do you see the activities described in this passage reflected in your own life? How can the *Catechism* pillars contribute to these activities in your life?
3. The relationship between the various teachings of the Church is sometimes known as the 'hierarchy' of truths¹ (No. 90). Can you think of an example of one Church dogma "building" on another?
4. In light of *Catechism* No. 95, how would you respond to a friend who insists that, because the Holy Spirit guides us to all truth, we don't need anyone to interpret the Scriptures for us?
5. Approaching God with the faculty of reason, and responding to him with faith, allows us to go from knowing *about* God to actually *knowing* him. Has there been a time in your life when you went from knowing *about* God to knowing him more personally?
6. Can you think of any examples of how the teachings of the Church have guided you in your journey of faith?

¹ UR 11.



CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for having come to meet us in history, for disclosing yourself as our origin and end, and for having inscribed in our hearts a desire to return to you. Help us by your grace to follow the path you have laid out for us in Scripture and Tradition, and thank you for the gift of the Church as our teacher and guide along the way. May Christ and your Holy Spirit be our constant companions on this journey back to you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



SESSION TWO

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

(Nos. 1–100)

Group Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of catechesis listed in No. 6 do you think are most needed today?

The six aspects of catechesis listed in paragraph six of the *Catechism* are: "... the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness."¹

Facilitators may want to focus participants' reflections by asking:

- Which of these aspects inspires your own life personally the most right now?
- Which aspect will most help revitalize your parish right now?
- Looking back over your life, when has catechesis changed you for the better and why?

2. As we have mentioned, the Church takes these four parts or "pillars" of the Catechism (see Nos. 13–17) from Acts 2:42. How do you see the activities described in this passage reflected in your life?

In Acts 2:42, we read that the early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Facilitators can encourage participants to share their thoughts about the importance of being faithful to the teachings of the Church (the Creed); their relationship with their parish community; their participation in the Eucharist and the other sacraments; or the importance of prayer to their faith.

How can the Catechism "pillars" contribute to these activities in your life?

- They can help Catholics develop stronger spiritual lives by drawing them deeper into prayer and the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) through a more complete knowledge of Christ and his Church.
- They can foster a sense of unity with the universal church, with fellow Catholics throughout the world.
- They can be aids to equipping one's heart and mind for future evangelism and catechesis in one's family, parish, community, and workplace.

¹ CT 18.

3. *The relationship between the various teachings of the Church is sometimes known as the "hierarchy of truths"² (No. 90). Can you think of an example of one Church dogma "building" on another?*

Leaders should be aware that the phrase "hierarchy of truths" is frequently misunderstood. It is not meant to imply that certain Church teachings are "more true" than others, or that some doctrines are open to debate. First used by the Second Vatican Council, this phrase conveys the idea that there are varying ways that particular teachings of the Church relate to one another as elements of Christian revelation.

As the Vatican II document on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, states, "When comparing doctrines with one another, [theologians] should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith"³ (No. 11). In other words, **there are foundational doctrines upon which other truths are built.**

Here are several examples. Encourage discussion of any others that may be raised by participants.

- Baptism is the foundation of all the other sacraments (see No. 1213).
 - Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross is the foundation upon which the redemptive suffering of every human person is built. Only in light of the cross of Christ can suffering have merit and value, ultimately achieving our salvation if we join our "daily cross" with that of Calvary.
 - The Assumption of Mary is a logical consequence of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. Since bodily death is the consequence of original sin, and Mary—"... by singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ ..."⁴ (see No. 491)—was conceived without the stain of the sin of Adam, then it would be fitting that she be spared the decay of her body and be assumed into heaven.
4. *In light of the Catechism No. 95, how would you respond to a friend who insists that, because the Holy Spirit guides us to all truth, we don't need anyone to interpret the Scriptures for us?*

As No. 95 teaches, "... sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others."⁵

As Catholics, then, we must always interpret Scripture with the mind of the Church, recalling that the Church preceded the Scriptures; it preceded the New Testament both historically and canonically, the Old Testament canonically. In essence, the Bible flows from the Church, not the other way around. It was the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit and with the authority given it by Christ, that ultimately determined which sacred writings were inspired and canonical. Therefore, we need to be guided in our reading of the Bible by the Church's teachings, by Sacred Tradition and the guidance of the Magisterium (the pope and bishops).

We need to remember that we are sinful, and our particular sins can blind us to the truth of a passage of Scripture. This is where the Church's Magisterium can prove helpful. The key here is that the Holy Spirit guides us to all truth ... that is the corporate "we" ... we are meant to be part of the Church. An individualistic interpretation of the Bible, one in which you or I claim that the Holy Spirit gave us the definitive meaning of a passage, is not an authentically Catholic interpretation.

² UR 11.

³ UR 11.

⁴ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854: DS 2803.

⁵ DV 10 § 3.

5. *Approaching God with the faculty of reason, and responding to him with faith, allows us to go from knowing about God to actually knowing him. Has there been a time in your life when you went from knowing about God to knowing him more personally?*

If group members seem stuck on this question, you might ask them to think about any turning points in their faith, and what triggered them. You may also ask them if there ever was an "Aha!" moment when the journey "from the head to the heart" was clear to them?

6. *Can you think of any examples of how the teachings of the Church have guided you in your journey of faith?*

Answers may vary. Participants may recall the Golden Rule or the Ten Commandments as the basis of their ethics or values. They may talk about getting their marriages blessed in the Church, or having an adult "conversion" via RCIA, or "reversion" to the Faith with a return to sacramental practice.

They may talk about how learning about the Faith with their children brought them back to the Church, or how they came to learn about the Theology of the Body, Natural Family Planning, or something similar, and this changed how they looked at life and the dignity of the human person. It is also common for people to talk about struggles or crises and to share how their Catholic Faith gave them hope or courage or saved them from despair.



CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for having come to meet us in history, for disclosing yourself as our origin and end, and for having inscribed in our hearts a desire to return to you. Help us by your grace to follow the path you have laid out for us in Scripture and Tradition, and thank you for the gift of the Church as our teacher and guide along the way. May Christ and your Holy Spirit be our constant companions on this journey back to you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
