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## 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)

PART TWO



*"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
  - c. Church
  - b. Synagogue of free men
  - 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)?

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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?
- 
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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?
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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?
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## 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?



## 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)

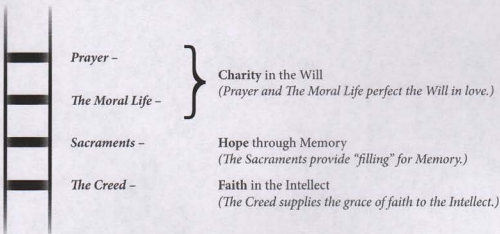
E. Happiness as the fullest development of the highest human powers over a lifetime (Aristotle)

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.

<sup>1</sup> DV9.



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 truths"<sup>1</sup> (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?

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<sup>1</sup> 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.*

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