

The *New* Catholic Vision

Correlated with the
Catechism of the Catholic Church

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ROMAN
MISSAL
THIRD EDITION



Will McIntyre/TONY STONE IMAGES

The New Catholic Vision presents the Good News in a way that is faithful to

- ✦ the Scriptures,
- ✦ the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and
- ✦ the storytelling style of Jesus.

The goal of **The New Catholic Vision** is to communicate the *basics* of our Catholic faith within a consistent *vision* of the faith that emerges step-by-step in the course of the RCIA process.

New Features

- ✦ Extensive referencing to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- ✦ Photo caption meditations.
- ✦ Thought-provoking questions and answers presented as dialogues.
- ✦ Completely revised group interaction process.
- ✦ Humorous cartoons to connect content to daily life.



Cincinnati, Ohio

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About The New Catholic Vision

The **New Catholic Vision** presents the Good News in a way that is faithful to

- ✦ the Scriptures,
- ✦ the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and
- ✦ the storytelling style of Jesus.

The thirty-one chapters have been purposely kept brief to keep the focus on the "big picture" without blurring it with premature details and nuances.

The chapters have been put in loose-leaf form to permit maximum flexibility, an essential factor in the RCIA process. The chapters stand by themselves. Therefore, they can be handed out one at a time in their original sequence. Or they can be mixed and matched to harmonize with the liturgical spirit of the Sunday Lectionary. At the same time, sequential order is preserved, as the candidates assemble them in a binder for future reference.

The goal of **The New Catholic Vision** is to communicate the "basics of the faith" within a consistent "vision of the faith" that emerges step-by-step in the course of the RCIA process.

The author envisions the loose-leaf chapters to be read prayerfully, highlighted, and marked up in advance of each RCIA session.

At the group meeting, the author envisions a twofold follow-up to each chapter: (1) an underscoring and a fleshing out of its key points, and (2) a faith sharing of the content.

To facilitate the "underscoring and fleshing out" process, a concise *Manual for Presenting The New Catholic Vision* is available. The catechist's role in this process is more that of a witness than that of an instructor. A clarification of the catechist's role will emerge from a reading of the manual.

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The *New* Catholic Vision

The Faith J O U R N E Y



Dennis Full

Journey to God

Every faith journey begins
with God knocking at the door of the heart—
ever so gently.

The knock may be
a spiritual hunger in the soul,
a call to love in the heart,
an illness that invades the body.

If we open the door,
God will take us by the hand
and lead us into the unknown—
ever so gently.

Then at some memorable moment
God will surprise and bless us
beyond our wildest dream.

Complete these two sentences:

✝ One milestone in my faith journey to God thus far was

✝ One feeling I have as I embark upon this phase of my faith journey is

TOMMY

Father John Powell was watching students file into his classroom on the first day of his theology course. That's when he saw Tommy for the first time. Tommy turned out to be his "atheist in residence." At the end of the course, Tommy asked Father cynically, "Do you think I'll ever find God?" Father decided on a little shock therapy and said, "No, Tommy, but I'm certain God will find you."

God finds Tommy

About a year later, Father Powell learned that Tommy had terminal cancer. Before Father could get in touch with Tommy, Tommy got in touch with him. Father writes:

When he walked into my office, his body was badly wasted. . . . "Tommy, I've thought about you so often . . .," I blurted out. . . . "Can you talk about it?" "Sure, what would you like to know?" "What's it like to be only twenty-four and know you are dying?" "Well, it could be worse." "Like what?" "Well, like being fifty and having no values. . . . But what I really came to see you about is something you said to me the last day of class."

Tommy went on to say that after the doctors removed a malignant lump from his groin, he got serious about God. But when God didn't seem to be anywhere, he decided to quit looking. That's when he thought about something else Father Powell said in class:

"The essential sadness is to go through life without loving. But it would be almost equally sad to leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you loved them."
 So I began with the hardest one: my dad. . . .
 He cried and hugged me. And we talked all night, even though he had to go to work the next morning. It was easier with my mother and little brother."

Tommy then shared with Father Powell what happened next. It was something he had not anticipated. Tommy said, "I turned around and God was there. . . . You were right. God found me."

Can you explain?



DISCIPLE: Old Wise One, when people cease to believe in God, do they cease to believe in anything?

WISE ONE: Dear disciple, it is exactly the opposite. When people cease to believe in God, they start to believe in anything.
 Can you explain my point?

Tommy discovered that God had always been there waiting for him. While he was "banging against the bronze doors of heaven," God had been patiently knocking at the door of Tommy's heart. And so when Tommy opened the door of his heart to love, God was there, ready to embrace him.¹

The faith journey takes place by three stages

Tommy's beautiful story illustrates an important point about the faith journey. It takes place in stages:

- + the childhood stage faith by birth,
- + the adolescent stage faith in transition,
- + the adult stage faith by choice.

Of these three stages, the adolescent stage is normally the most critical and most painful.

It is the most critical stage because at this time in our lives we begin the important transition from being a

Christian by *culture* (physical birth) to being a Christian by *conviction* (personal choice).

Likewise, the adolescent stage is the most painful stage because during this stage our childhood faith must die before our adult faith can be born. The dying of our childhood faith is what causes the pain.

John Kirvan's book *The Restless Believers* contains a moving description of how the death of our childhood faith affects us. He quotes a young person as saying:

"I don't know what's going wrong, but I just don't believe like I used to. When I was in grade school and for the first couple of years of high school I was real religious, and now I just don't seem to care."

The death of our childhood faith makes us feel sick at heart—even guilty. This is unfortunate, for our faith is simply going through an important transitional stage.

The transitional stage involves three human levels

The transition from being a Christian by *culture* (birth) to being a Christian by *conviction* (choice) is a gradual process. Moreover, it is a process that is never fully complete. It goes on all of our lives and involves three human levels:

- + mind level opening to truth,
- + heart level opening to love, and
- + soul level opening to grace.

At the *mind* level, we often find ourselves questioning what we once took for granted. For example, we ask, "Is there really a God?" This questioning is necessary, for often our childhood idea of God is incomplete, even inaccurate. Tolstoy observes:

"When a savage ceases to believe in his wooden God, this does not mean there is no God, but only that the true God is not made of wood."

At the *heart* level, we find ourselves making the transition from an almost exclusive, selfish concern for our own enjoyment and needs to a more responsible concern for other people's enjoyment and needs as well. We find ourselves opening to love. In Father Powell's words, this is "the surest way to find God." Why?

God is love, and those who live in love live in union with God and God lives in union with them. 1 John 4:16

And so when we open our heart to another, we open it to God as well. As in Tommy's case, an inability to find God is often the result of an inability to open our heart to love.

The faith level is the most difficult

Of the three levels the soul level is the hardest to understand. This is because faith involves gift on God's part and freedom on our part. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it this way:

When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood," but from "my Father who is in heaven."² Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. . . .

Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit [gift]. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act [free]. . . . In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace:

"Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace."³

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe "because of the authority of God . . . who reveals them."⁴ CCC, 193-196

To help us respond to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit, God has given us external signs, such as the miracles of Jesus. "They are 'motives of credibility' . . . which show that the assent of faith is 'by no means a blind impulse of the mind'"⁵ (CCC, 156).

This leads us to a final and extremely important dimension of the faith journey. It involves

- ✦ loving trust,
- ✦ ongoing effort,
- ✦ periods of darkness.

The faith journey involves loving trust

A good example of what we mean by "loving trust" is marriage. When two people join hands and promise to journey together on the road of life, neither is totally sure the other will remain faithful should a crisis arise.

In other words, they have no absolute certainty how the other will respond in some mutual crisis. This is where loving trust comes in.

Faith is something like that. It too involves risk and, therefore, loving trust—not in the sense that God is unfaithful (God is always faithful). Rather it involves loving trust in the sense that we are not sure where a faith response to God will lead us.

Group interaction

Reflect Imagine you are the person described below. Experience what the person did and share your feelings with the group.

*Many a morning after sitting all night in taverns . . .
I went to early Mass at St. Joseph's Church
on Sixth Avenue.
It was just around the corner from where I lived,
and seeing people going to an early weekday Mass
attracted me. What were they finding there?
I longed for their faith.
My own life was sordid
and yet I had occasional glimpses
of the true and the beautiful. So I used to go
and kneel in the back pew of St. Joseph's.⁶*



Share After pondering the following briefly, share your thoughts with the group.

- ✦ "I never discarded beliefs deliberately. I have left them in the drawer, and, after a while when I opened it, there was nothing there at all." William Graham Sumner
- ✦ "If you believe in the Gospel that you like, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe in, but yourself." Saint Augustine of Hippo
- ✦ "Come to the edge. / No, we will fall. / Come to the edge. / No, we will fall. / They came to the edge. / He pushed them, and they flew." Guillaume Apollinaire



Read After reading the following, briefly share your thoughts with the group.

- ✦ Hebrews 11:1-39 Faith ancestors
- ✦ Luke 5:1-11 Faith invitation
- ✦ CCC,⁷ 153-162 Faith dynamic

¹ Adapted from John Powell, *Unconditional Love* (Allen, Texas: Tabor Publishing, 1978), pp. 117-25.

² Mt 16:17; cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25.

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh II-II*, 2, 9, cf. *De Fide* 3: DS 3010.

⁴ *De Fide* 3: DS 3008.

⁵ *De Fide* 3: DS 3008-10; cf. Mk 16:20; Heb 2:4.

⁶ Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome* (Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co. Pubs.).

⁷ CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The faith journey involves ongoing effort

This brings us to one of the biggest mistakes we can make on our faith journey to God. It is the false idea that once we "get the faith" we will never have to worry about it again. Consider these words of a young person:

*One day I decided to commit my life to Jesus.
This decision gave me unbelievable peace and joy.
But two days later, I found myself doing something
that no Christian would ever do. I concluded
that I had not really committed my life to Jesus at all.
I had only psyched myself into thinking I had.*

*But then I realized something important.
I realized that when we commit our lives to Jesus,
we commit only that part of ourselves
that we are conscious of at the moment.
That's all we can do.*

This person's experience illustrates what psychologists tell us: the greater part of ourselves lies below our consciousness. It surfaces only slowly and gradually with each new experience.

This explains why faith involves *ongoing effort*. It is because we are constantly evolving and changing as persons. As a result, we must constantly recommit ourselves to God as we change and evolve. Our faith can never be a one-time decision. It must always remain an ongoing effort.

The faith journey involves periods of darkness

Finally, faith has a way of going in and out of focus. What was once clear to us becomes fuzzy for a while. Worse yet, there are times when our faith seems to go behind a cloud and disappear in darkness. This darkness is usually traceable to one of three sources—our human nature, our individual selves, or God.

First, it may be caused by our human nature, which is vulnerable to "highs" and "lows." In other words, the

darkness simply reflects the natural mood swings of everyday human life. Some days are great and we wonder why we ever thought life was hard. On other days, nothing goes right and it's hard to know why we ever thought life was beautiful. Our faith has similar mood swings. These mood swings simply go with the territory of being human.

Second, the periods of darkness may be traceable to our individual selves. We can cause them by neglecting our faith. That is, we can let our faith grow weak from sin or from lack of spiritual nourishment. In other words, just as our body grows weak from abuse or lack of physical nourishment, so our soul grows weak from sin and lack of spiritual nourishment.

Third and finally, the periods of darkness may be trials traceable to God, who allows them to happen to strengthen and deepen our faith. In other words, God uses trials to help us grow in our faith.

Take the case of Abraham. When he was told to prepare to sacrifice his son Isaac, his mind was cast into darkness. How could Isaac give him many descendants if he was sacrificed? Suddenly Abraham's faith was challenged as never before. Had he relied on the light of reason rather than the darkness of faith in God, his faith would have been snuffed out. Instead, he trusted God and his faith was greatly strengthened and deepened (Genesis 22:1-16).

Regardless of the source of our darkness, the agony it can generate is great. In his novel *The Devil's Advocate*, Morris West describes the agony caused by a period of darkness.

How does one come back to belief?

I tried to reason myself back to . . . a parent. . . .

All children have parents. . . .

I groped for God and could not find God.

I prayed to God . . . and God did not answer.

I wept at night for the loss of God.

Lost tears and fruitless grief.

Then one day, God was there again. . . .

I had a parent and God knew me. . . .

I had never understood till this moment

the meaning of the words "gift of faith." Slightly adapted

Mark Link, S.J.



ART BY KAREN McDONALD AND LARRY DASTE

The *New* Catholic Vision

Divine R E V E L A T I O N



Dennis Full

Signpost

Sometimes,
on dark nights or overcast days,
Native Americans
became temporarily confused
about the direction they were traveling.
So they would walk over to a tree
to see on which side
the branches were better developed
and parallel to the ground.

This indicated
the side of the tree that was exposed
to the longest period of sunlight and,
therefore, was the south side.
As Native Americans studied trees
to keep from losing their way,
so we study revelation
to keep from losing our way
on our journey to God.

Complete these two sentences:

✚ One thing that makes me think the Bible is truly the inspired word of God is _____

✚ One thing about the Bible that I sometimes wonder about is _____

GLOVED SAILOR

A sailor was assigned to an artillery gun on a small ship. He was given heat-resistant gloves and told to catch the foot-long shell casings that ejected from the gun after each firing. This was to keep them from rolling around the gun pit and endangering the gun crew. The reason for the heat-resistant gloves was that the casings were very hot.

Suppose we see a sailor with gloves holding a casing. What are three ways we can learn if it is very hot? First, we can touch it and *experience* the heat ourselves. Second, we can spit on it and, if it sizzles, *reason* that it is indeed very hot. Finally, we can ask (and *believe*) the sailor.

This raises a question. How do these three ways apply to God? In other words, is it possible to know God by each of these three ways: experience, reason, and belief?

Experience points to God

The famous British author Bede Griffiths recalls this childhood experience. One summer evening he was walking alone outside. Suddenly he noticed how beautiful everything was. He wondered why he hadn't noticed this beauty before. He writes in his book *The Golden String*:

*Everything grew still as the sunset faded. . . .
I remember now the feeling of awe
that came over me. I felt inclined to kneel. . . .
I was suddenly made aware
of another world of beauty and mystery
such as I had never imagined existed. . . .
Now that I look back on it, it seems to have been
one of the decisive events of my life.*

Griffiths says that it was as if God reached out and touched him at that moment. It was an *experience of God* that he would never forget.

Like Griffiths, other people have had similar experiences. And like Griffiths, they too believe that it was an authentic experience of God. This brings us to the second way of knowing.

How do you understand it?



DISCIPLE: Old Wise One, how are the Old Testament and the New Testament linked?

WISE ONE: "In the Old Testament the New lies hidden; in the New Testament the Old lies revealed." Dear disciple, how do you understand Augustine's words?

Reason points to God

Whittaker Chambers was a famous American Communist and a staunch atheist. One day something happened to change all this. He writes in his book *Witness*:

*I was sitting in our apartment. . . .
My daughter was in her high chair.
I was watching her eat.
She was the most miraculous thing
that ever happened in my life.
I liked to watch her even when
she smeared porridge on her face
and dropped it meditatively on the floor.
My eyes came to rest on the delicate convolutions
of her ear—those intricate perfect ears.*

Suddenly the thought came to Chambers that those ears could never be the product of chance. The thought was "involuntary and unwanted." He tried to crowd it out of his mind. For if he completed it, he would have to conclude that design presupposed a designer. Chambers

said later, "I did not know it then but, at that moment, the finger of God was laid on my forehead."

Eventually Chambers reasoned that the beauty of the universe demanded an intelligent God. Chance could not explain it. It was this same order and beauty in the universe that convinced Paul that we could know God from reason alone.

*Ever since God created the world,
his invisible qualities,
both his eternal power and his divine nature,
have been clearly seen; they are perceived
in the things that God has made. Romans 1:20*

This brings us to the third and final way of knowing.

Faith reveals God and God's plan

Although many people are convinced we can arrive at a knowledge of God through experience and reason, others are not so sure. For such people the only way to know anything for sure about God is to open themselves to God's *revelation*.

The word *revelation* comes from the Latin word meaning "to unveil." By revelation we mean God's own "unveiling" of divine truth. Revelation is a gift from God. It gives us a share in God's *divine knowledge*. Its goal is to prepare us for an even greater gift: a share in God's *divine life*. Revelation, therefore, is the first step of a larger plan.

Revelation took place gradually over centuries

Revelation began with God's self-disclosure through loving deeds. It began with creation and "was not broken off by our first parents' sin" (ccc, 55). It continued through such Old Testament figures as Abraham, Moses, the Israelites, and the prophets.

Revelation continued in New Testament times, reaching its fullness of expression in Jesus. The apostles were the privileged witness of this revelation. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, their *apostolic witness* became the *foundation and norm* for our own Catholic faith. It is this revelation that the apostles entrusted to the bishops, their successors.

*"No new public revelation is to be expected before
the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹
Yet even if Revelation is already complete,
it has not been made completely explicit;
it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp
its full significance over the course of the centuries.*

Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. CCC, 66-67

Revelation is handed on in two ways: Tradition and Scripture

Many people are surprised to learn that large sections of the Bible began as oral tradition. In other words, these sections were handed on by word of mouth for years before they were written down.

Take the Gospel. Passages in the text itself suggest that it was passed on orally for a long time before it was recorded. For example, Matthew says that after Jesus rose from the dead, the guards at the tomb were paid to say that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body while they were asleep. Matthew then adds: "That is the report spread around by the Jews to this very day" (Matthew 28:15). The words "to this very day" indicate the lapse of a considerable period of time between the original event and Matthew's recording of it. A similar reference occurs in Matthew 27:8.

This brings us to an important point. Only a portion of oral tradition was recorded in the Bible. Take the Gospel again. John concludes his Gospel, saying, "In his disciples' presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book" (John 20:30).

This is important because it shows that an oral tradition about Jesus continued in the Church after the Gospel was recorded.

Concerning the transmission of revelation, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "The Gospel was handed on in two ways" (CCC, 76):

- ✦ orally called Tradition,
- ✦ in writing called Scripture.

These two modes of transmission "are bound closely together and communicate one with the other."² They flow from the same source and move toward the same goal (CCC, 80). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes them this way:

"Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."³

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching."⁴

Group interaction

Reflect Imagine you are the person described below. Experience what the person did and share your feelings with the group.

[I was a nonbeliever. Out of curiosity,
I picked up a Bible and began to read it.
After a while, I put it down, because it made no sense.
Then one night I decided to pick it up again.
Again, it made absolutely no sense to me.
Once again, I picked it up.
This time something remarkable happened.]
When I read the words of Jesus . . .
I knew he was there [in the room with me],
even though I could not hear or see anything.
Jesus was real, more real
than anything around me. . . . I was no longer alone.
My life was no longer a dead-end street.⁵



Share After pondering the following briefly, share your thoughts with the group.

✦ Suppose members of a TV crew get into a time machine, fly back to Jesus' time, and film Jesus' entire life from his birth to his ascension. Suppose they program the film into a computer so that we can call it up on a screen and see and hear exactly what the apostles saw and heard. Now suppose we are given this choice: You can have either the computerized film or the printed Gospels. But if we choose the film, future generations will no longer have the printed Gospels. They will have only the film. Why would or wouldn't you choose the film?

✦ "You can understand the Bible only on your knees." Maurice Zundel



Read After reading the following, briefly share your thoughts with the group.

- ✦ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 Tradition
- ✦ 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 Scripture
- ✦ CCC,⁶ 44-49, 134-141 Revelation in brief

¹ DV 4; cf. 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13.

² DV 9.

³ DV 9.

⁴ DV 9.

⁵ Margaret Mehran, "A Nun in South Africa," *International Christian Digest* (June 1987), pp. 19-20.

⁶ CCC = *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

⁷ DV 9.

⁸ DV 10 § 2.

⁹ Cf. DV 8 § 3.

¹⁰ Cf. DS 179; 1334-1336; 1501-1504.

As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." CCC, 81-82

The responsibility of interpreting Tradition and Scripture "has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church [magisterium]⁸ . . . the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome" (CCC, 85).

Let us now take a brief look at Scripture, the primary vehicle of God's revelation, as communicated to us today.

All Scripture is inspired

We speak of Scripture as being *inspired*. Thus Paul writes, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). To understand what he means, we need to recall something Jesus said to his disciples:

"When . . . the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth." John 16:13

By these words, Jesus assured his disciples that the Holy Spirit would assist them in understanding and in communicating God's revelation to future generations.

And so the word *inspiration* means the Holy Spirit enlightened and assisted the biblical writers so that they wrote *all and only* what God wanted them to write.

Because Sacred Scripture is inspired, we may draw an important conclusion: It is free from error in matters that relate to our salvation. This does not mean that the Spirit also protected the biblical writers from scientific and

historical error. God never intended them to compose books on science and history.

Nor is the Bible free from these errors. For example, Deuteronomy 14:7 lists the hare among those animals that chew cud, a statement that is scientifically inaccurate. Nor is the Bible free from historical error. For example, 1 Samuel 31:4 says Saul killed himself, while 2 Samuel 1:9-10 says someone else did.

What books belong to Scripture?

It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.⁹ This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.¹⁰ CCC, 120

Catholics include seven books that Protestants do not. These books are Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch. Catholics also include the longer versions of Daniel and Esther. The disagreement stems from early times when Jews themselves could not agree on an "official" canon.

Many Jews who converted to Christianity had been using a larger collection, called the Septuagint. It was translated from Hebrew into Greek almost three centuries before Jesus' birth. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the other New Testament authors quoted directly from this translation over three hundred times.

When later Jews finally agreed on a canon (about a century after Jesus' birth), they omitted the above seven books. Sixteenth-century Protestants followed the later canon.

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