

foreword

On that terrible 9/11 day, when terrorists controlled airplanes, brought down the Twin Towers, smashed into the Pentagon, and were forced to a crash landing in Pennsylvania, most Americans reacted in identical fashion. They immediately sought to connect with the persons closest to them—spouses, children, parents, relatives, and friends. For at least a short period of time, people in the United States placed a higher priority on relationships than usual.

This textbook, *Marriage and Holy Orders: Your Call to Love and Service*, following the example and words of Jesus, centers upon that topic—relationships with God, others, and the world around us.

Christ's teachings guide us along the path to perfection in these relationships with a reminder of the two great commandments, love of God and love of neighbor, but he also calls us to even greater heights in his teachings of the Beatitudes, the necessity for forgiveness, and the importance of responding to any person in need.

The challenge of perfection is given to every person, regardless of his or her age or state in life. Some of you will, for various reasons, never marry. Single persons are free to be either self-giving or self-seeking. Still, as Pope John Paul II often stated, the human heart will not be content unless it is self-giving.

Most of you will marry, ministering to your spouse in the Sacrament of Matrimony, thus receiving special graces from God to develop a rich relationship with one another and to become model parents.

Over the past dozen years, I have celebrated hundreds of weddings. During their preparation, I asked the engaged couples why they wished to marry. Their universal response was friendship:

“He is my best friend.” “And she is mine.” That great start to a marriage relationship will, with God's help, grow through mutual giving, open communication, and ready forgiveness.

Recently I visited three couples, each married for about five years, and each with two children under three years of age. The joy that the little ones—the fruit of the love of husband and wife—have brought these couples was obvious. As parents, they can likewise count on God's grace to assist them in becoming the first and best teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

More than a half-century ago, I received the Sacrament of Holy Orders at my ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood. It has been an incredibly rich and rewarding life—preaching and teaching, celebrating Mass and the other sacraments, leading and caring for God's people.

When my treatable, but incurable, rare form of cancer recently became public, I soon received more than 2,500 letters and cards of love, prayers, and support. Many of the people specifically mentioned ways in which I had helped them in the past as a priest—some citing incidents which took place more than three decades earlier! Few persons in other professions have their life's work so uniquely remembered and affirmed.

As you work through this text and course, keep in mind that God's call to love and serve others is essentially the same for all, whether you are a single person, religious, married, or ordained. My prayers and best wishes for success go out to you.

FATHER JOSEPH CHAMPLIN
Priest of the Diocese of Syracuse

Author of *Together for Life*,
which has been used by over nine million couples
to prepare for their Catholic wedding

introduction



◆ Look Back, Look Ahead

Since you probably don't remember, imagine yourself at nine months old.

Wearing only a diaper, you are sitting in a high chair waiting for your dinner. Here it comes! Mom puts on the bib to cover your tummy and offers you a spoonful of carrots, then a spoonful of ham. Both of these delicacies come from a jar. Yum!

Your meal nearly finished, you keep smacking your lips. You want some more. Mom thinks that's enough, but Dad comes through for you. He always does. He returns from the freezer with a container of chocolate ice cream. In spite of Mom's protests, he gives you a few tastes. Now you don't just smack your lips. You literally squeal with pleasure.

Dad and Mom both are enthralled with your excitement. They are enthralled with you, period. The love they have for you, and you for them, just oozes from this little scene in the kitchen.

Most parents would do just about anything for their children. You probably already know and experience that on a regular basis. Nowadays, it's not spoonfuls of baby food your parents are offering, but rather support at your games or activities, advice on your academics, and rules for your social life. Not to mention continuing to provide you with food, clothing, shelter—and school tuition.

If you ask parents why they love their children in such a boundless way and what they expect from the years of ongoing care for their children, most are able to articulate in some way that they “only want what's best for them.” Delving further, you might find that what a parent means by “what's best” is very similar to the designs that God, too,



has for each person—that he or she achieve lasting peace, joy, happiness, and love.

Wanting “what is best” for another is the essence of being a husband, wife, mother, or father. Not that an individual’s dreams, goals, and personal happiness are completely overlooked, but the real pleasure of a marriage and family life comes when each member is at the service of the others.

The relationship between a man who receives Holy Orders and the entire People of God is similar. A bishop’s, priest’s, and deacon’s work is to “feed the Church by the word and grace of God.” His spouse is the Church. He wants “what is best” for everyone: our salvation in Jesus Christ.

This text and course are intended to explore how your personal life’s calling, or vocation, is linked with marriage, Holy Orders, and service. These vocations are celebrated with individual sacraments—Matrimony and Holy Orders—called “Sacraments at the Service of Communion” because the focus for those who receive them is on the salvation of others, not of themselves. Salvation is “what is best” for all of us.

You may wonder why it is important to focus so much attention on Marriage and Holy Orders. Approaching the milestone of high school graduation and the start of college is a key time to consider your future life. If you have recently applied, or are about to apply, to college, or are debating an academic major or career, you have experience with the type of discernment that will be necessary as you consider a deeper life’s calling.

There is a good chance that you will eventually marry. As the time for marriage moves from remote to proximate, it is important to consider the history, expectations, and blessings of Catholic marriage.

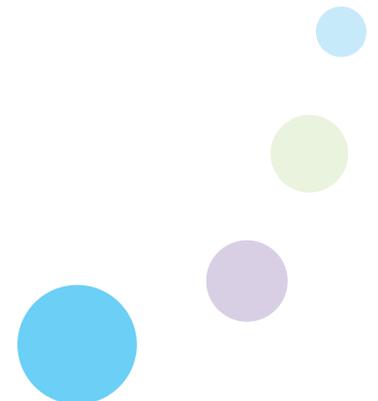
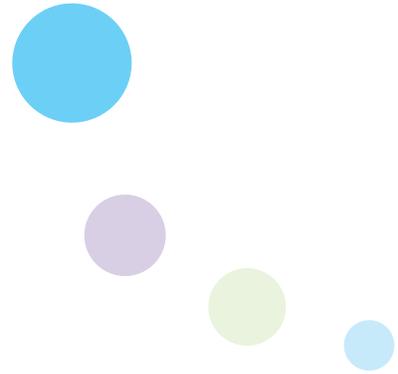
Likewise, the ministerial priesthood is essential to the Church. Bishops, and by extension, priests, extend the line of succession in the Church that is traced to the Apostles. Besides providing governance, bishops and priests minister the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Deacons likewise assist at liturgy and serve the needs of the Church in many other ministries. Vocations to Holy Orders are also fostered in Christian families. You may know someone your own age who would make a good priest. If you are male, you may explore this vocation in more depth in the years ahead.

Everyone is called to holiness and happiness. The sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—consecrate us to share the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone. The Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders consecrate in unique ways those who receive them to work toward the salvation of others—spouse, children, or the Church herself.

May God’s grace be with you in these exciting but anxious final semesters of high school. May the Holy Spirit guide you along the way of the Lord so that you may forever achieve all that is best for you.





◆ Finding the Way

“What are your plans?”

Get used to the question. As the days before high school graduation approach, you will be asked more and more often what you plan to do next.

Do you have an answer in mind? Which of these responses is closest to describing how you might respond:

- “I am choosing between Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.”
- “I am going to take a year off school and go to work.”
- “I am going to the state college and have already decided on my field of study.”
- “I am planning to take a few courses at the community college.”
- “I have no clue.”

There is little doubt that this time in your life is one of the most anxious and exciting that you will ever experience. Whatever you decide to do after high school graduation, your life will be different than it is now. Your school days won't be governed by homeroom, ringing bells, or horns to separate school periods and daily assignments. Your social life will be different, too. Even if you are not going away to college, some of your friends probably are. Your relationship with your parents is likely to change as well. If you do move away, you will communicate with your mom and dad differently: primarily by phone, e-mail, or instant message. When you come home for holidays and the summer, it may take

some time to re-establish yourself in the rhythm of the family.

Now, back up a bit. What if in answering the question “What are your plans?” you said, “I am going to be a good Catholic.” Or, “I am going to be a better disciple of Jesus Christ.” If these are goals you have for your life, why not answer these ways? It would surely make for a unique response.

Thomas Merton, a Catholic priest, Trappist monk, and one of the great spiritual writers of the twentieth century, was constantly trying to answer what he would do next with his life. Thomas had lived a Bohemian lifestyle around Europe and the United States as a child. Orphaned at age fifteen, he eventually settled in New York City, where he studied and taught English at Columbia University. With images of Catholicism from his earlier days spent in France, Merton began instruction and was then baptized into the Catholic Church at a parish near Columbia. Even before his Baptism, he felt he had a vocation to the religious life.

Merton decided to make a retreat to the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Kentucky. One of his friends warned him as he was leaving, “Don't let them change you.” Thomas answered, “It would be a good thing if they changed me.”

In 1941, Merton entered the Abbey for good. When he was allowed by his superior to write, Merton was prolific. His autobiography of his spiritual journey, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, with the many twists and turns that led him to Catholicism and the monastery, became a best-seller and brought him lasting renown.

Unit 1 reminds you of your own baptismal call to holiness and happiness. It offers you a plan to discern your life's calling as you are introduced to the vocations of marriage, Holy Orders, consecrated

God Is Calling You

religious life, and committed single life. As you approach this new stage in your life, it is important to remember that God is with you. Don't forget this! As you begin your study, pray the words of Thomas Merton's famous prayer:

The Road Ahead

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that I am following
your will does not mean that I am actually
doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road

though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost

and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me,

and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Amen.



chapteroutline

◆ Be Perfect

Living perfect in a Christian sense *means seeking an intimate, closer relationship with Jesus.*

◆ We Are Created in God's Image

We are unique in all earthly creation, *created to know and love God.*

◆ The Mystery of God's Love

The mystery of our own lives can bring us peace *if situated in the mystery of God's love.*

◆ Our Desire for God

We are made for God, by God *and will not be satisfied until we rest in him.*

◆ Sharing the Divine Life

To share in the divine life *is to participate in the life of the Holy Trinity.*



chapterone



Called to Holiness

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and unjust.”

Matthew 5:43–45



◆ Be Perfect

“What do you mean you ‘forgot to take out the trash’?”

“You should never strike out. You should hit the ball every time.”

“An A-minus isn’t good enough.”



sanctification

A word that means holiness or blessing. To sanctify means to consecrate or set apart for sacred use.

grace

The supernatural gift of God’s friendship and life. Grace allows us to respond to God and share in his nature and eternal life.

Can you imagine a parent, coach, or teacher talking to a kid in these ways? Our sensibilities would be challenged. Maybe because many of us have grown up in the friendlier world of youth sports where everyone’s efforts—good or bad—are met with words like “Nice try. Good game. You’ll get ’em next time.” Or, in a school where everyone is rewarded publicly (or no one is rewarded) in order not to hurt anyone’s feelings.

While the words at the top of the page may seem extreme and we may feel the need to reprimand the adult who would speak them to a child, one thing can be said about these state-

ments: they do demand perfection. Unfortunately, perfection is something few of us ever achieve in challenges like hitting a baseball or getting a straight-A report card. But there is one area where perfection is really the only acceptable goal and result. This is the area of Christian holiness.

Jesus himself said as much. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about the requirements for Christian charity, or love. He preached that love for neighbor was not enough. He challenged his disciples to “love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” He further challenged: “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:44, 48).

“Being holy” can be described as living a Christ-like life of charity and perfection. Another word for holiness is **sanctification**, from which the word “saint” evolved. This type of perfection is different from hitting the ball every time up to bat or washing every spot on the kitchen window or acing every test. Being “perfect” in the Christian sense means seeking a closer, more intimate union with Christ. This is accomplished through the **grace** of the sacraments and through service to our neighbor and to our enemy. The way of perfection also involves sharing the cross of Christ.

No Christian is given a free pass to avoid this challenge of perfection and the call to holiness. The challenge isn’t reserved for the official saints of the Church, nor is it only for priests or nuns. Older, grandparent-types don’t hold exclusive rights to this challenge either. All Christians, no matter their state or walk in life, are called to holiness, called to be saints. The good news is that we don’t take up this challenge alone. Jesus said, “I



am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). Anything that God asks of us he makes possible by his grace.

Chapter 1 traces the origins of the call to holiness and the mystery of God’s love that calls humans to share in his life and to pick up and share the cross of Christ. It will help you to learn that, no matter which course you choose for your life in the areas of career and vocation, you have an overarching vocation to Christian holiness or beatitude. It is a call to seek out and ultimately discover a reward of eternal joy lived in the presence of God.



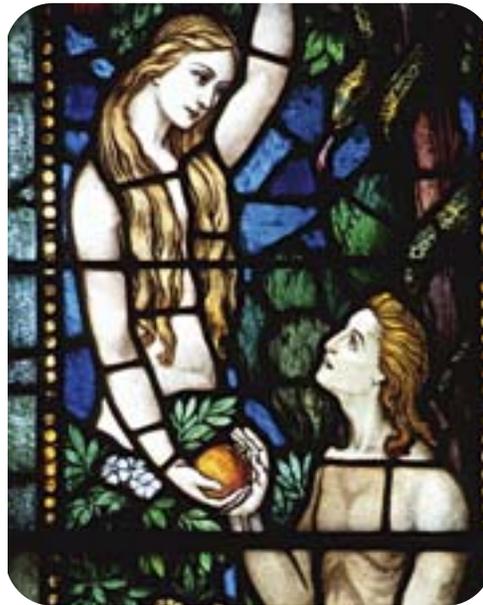
- Recount a time when someone asked you to be perfect. Explain what happened.

◆ We Are Created in God’s Image

Holiness is not something that is foreign to human nature. Of all visible creatures (that is, excluding angels), only we are “able to know and love our creator.”¹ Not only that, our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created in a state of original holiness and justice in which they were meant to share in the life of God (see CCC, 375). God created *everything* for mankind, intending only that we would serve and love God and offer all of creation back to him. God wanted us to use all of his gifts according to his will as a means for reaching eternal destiny.

Needless to say, the gift of original holiness and justice was lost by the sin of Adam. This **Original Sin** was an abuse of the freedom God gave created persons. Freedom is God’s precious gift that makes us “capable of loving him and loving one another” (CCC, 387). Tempted by the devil, Adam sinned by preferring himself to God. He went against his status as *creature*, trying instead to take on the role of creator. In the original state of holiness, man was destined to be **divinized** by God in glory. After the Original Sin, man would want to be like God, but often lived, in the words of Saint Maximus the Confessor, “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.”

The effect of Original Sin was devastating for Adam and Eve and for all



of humanity. Their disobedience alienated Adam and Eve from God, from each other, from themselves, and from all of God’s creation. The effects of Original Sin have harmed all of their descendants through the ages. Original Sin deprives us of the original holiness and justice that God

Original Sin

The first sin of Adam and Eve, in which they disobeyed the Commandment of God, choosing to follow their own will rather than God’s will. The effects of Original Sin are shared among humanity ever since.

divinized

In the Christian sense, sharing or partaking in the nature of God.



Augustine Answers Pelagius

In the fifth century, Pelagius, a monk from the British Isles, taught against the doctrine of Original Sin. While he upheld the freedom of the human will—that man was born with the ability to choose or not choose a life of sin—he also taught that human beings could reach God on their own merits.

Saint Augustine had already lived a remarkable life by the time he answered Pelagius. He had resisted his mother Saint Monica's prayers and prodding to be baptized until he was well into adulthood, and he had already spent years studying rhetoric which was opposed to Church teaching. Additionally, he had fathered a child out of wedlock. By the time of his conversion, he was well convinced about the power of divine grace that had allowed him to overcome his sins.

Augustine stressed to Pelagius the absolute necessity of God's grace to free a person from Original Sin and to enable him to reach God. Since the Church believes that grace is first given at Baptism, the corollary, as Augustine taught, was that Baptism was essential for salvation. It was at this time that infant Baptisms became the norm, since parents feared the dangers of a newborn dying while still in Original Sin.

intended for us. Instead, we are born with a human nature, though not fully corrupted, that is:

- wounded,
- ignorant,
- prone to suffering,
- subject to death, and
- inclined to sin.

The doctrine of Original Sin is closely related to the redemption offered by Christ. In Baptism, Original Sin is erased and we are turned back toward God. But the other effects of Original Sin remain. Life is a hard spiritual battle in which we work to choose God and avoid evil in all that we do.

It is helpful to understand the nuances of this battle between good and evil through exploring in more detail God's intentions for us humans, his most prized creations, and the eternal prize that awaits those who are faithful.

“Male and Female He Created Them”

If we are to appreciate the meaning of Christian vocation, it is important to understand the complementary but respective roles of man and woman. Man and woman have been created in perfect equality as human persons, yet in their particular beings as male and female. Both man

and woman are created with the same dignity and in the image of God, though God is neither man nor woman. (God is pure Spirit.) God created man and woman together and for each other. They are to be a community of persons and complementary as masculine and feminine who image God's power and tenderness in different ways.

In marriage, God unites man and woman so that they can celebrate their love and share the gift of life.

In God's plan, man and woman are intended to be stewards of God's resources on the earth. The first creation story of the Book of Genesis concludes:

God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.” (Gn 1:28)

The state of original holiness and justice was one of intimacy. Adam and Eve each possessed an inner harmony and shared a beautiful harmony with one another, with creation, and with God. This was all lost by the Original Sin.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more: “We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin” (CCC, 388).



Today, one of the ways God's grace is offered to us is in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the loving community of a man and a woman. This love is witnessed concretely in the love between a husband and a wife and likewise experienced by children raised in a Christian family.



Nature Haiku

World like a dewdrop
though it's only a dewdrop
even so, even so.

ISSA



The word haiku refers to a traditional Japanese lyric verse that references an aspect of nature or the four seasons. Use the following rules to write your own haiku focusing on God's creation of the world or an aspect of nature that helps you to meet and know God:

- Choose a topic related to the assignment above.
- The first line of the haiku has exactly five syllables.
The second line of the haiku has exactly seven syllables.
The third and final line of the haiku has exactly five syllables.
- Haiku have no rhyming words.
- It doesn't matter how many words are in each line, just how many syllables.

The Unity of Body and Soul

The second creation story says that "the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" (Gn 2:7). This passage tells us that human beings are created with a body and a soul. The soul is the innermost part of man that makes us spiritual people in the image of God. The spiritual soul is not produced by our human parents. It is created immediately by God and is immortal.

However, the body shares in the dignity and image of God, as well. The body is intended to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. God created the body



and it will rise on the last day. For these reasons, we are to regard our bodies as good and honor them.

“Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul” (CCC, 2332). Sexuality does not just mean the sex act. Being sexual means appreciating our identity as either male or female and living our lives as such.

Obviously, sexuality is linked to our bodies because we show affection with gestures like handshakes, smiles, hugs, or kisses.

Our sexuality is more than just a series of bodily responses.

It is also deeply connected to our passions and emotions. Specifically, it involves our capacity to love and to procreate. In a more general way, it affects our skill at forming friendships and bonds with many other people.

Every person is called to acknowledge his or her sexual identity—remembering that God gives both males and females equal personal dignity. In this acknowledgement of our sexual identity as male or female, we are better able to align our lives toward a good and productive marriage and family life. Even if you personally will never ultimately be married and raise a family, the acknowledgment of the importance of marriage and family life is crucial, because this is where humans are born and all vocations are cultivated.

One of the ways you support marriage and family life at your current age is through the practice of **chastity**. Chastity comes under the virtue of temperance, a cardinal virtue that regulates our attraction to pleasure and helps us use God’s created goods in a balanced way.

Chastity helps us control our sexual desires and use them appropriately according to our state in life. It means a successful integration of sexuality within a person that brings about an inner unity of body and soul.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke out against duplicity. He said, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No’” (Mt 5:37). The type of integrity that Jesus directs us to unifies the powers of our body with those of our soul. Chastity helps us to master our passions and find peace. The alternative is letting ourselves be ruled by our passions and being unhappy.

This outlook contrasts with one that is often practiced today. Today, sex outside of marriage is touted as routine and acceptable. Among teenagers, random and impersonal sexual acts are boasted about, but later regretted. Certainly the popular media—especially in television programming geared to teens and young adults—promotes sex outside of marriage as normal.

Chapter 3 will develop the benefits of the virtue of chastity in more detail. For now, be clear about the teaching of the Church that calls all the baptized to chastity. The basic principle for sexual morality is that God intends sexual intercourse and all actions leading up to it to be shared exclusively by a man and woman in the union of marriage. This union in marriage is a way for a man and woman to imitate in the flesh God’s generosity and fruitfulness.

In Union with Christ



Christ calls you to be “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The flip side of this charge is that only in



chastity

The virtue by which a person integrates his or her sexuality into his or her whole self, body, and spirit, according to the vocation or state in life.



union with Jesus can the disciple attain the perfection of charity, or love, which is holiness. There is no way to be holy apart from Jesus Christ.

Union with Christ takes the form of **discipleship**. The word disciple means “follower.” As disciples of Christ, our goal is to follow and learn

from Jesus. This relationship is deepened through prayer, participation in the sacraments, and practicing the Christian virtues. Practicing the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance and the theological virtues faith, hope, and charity deepen our discipleship.

Entering the final years of high school and transitioning to college, career, and vocation is a crucial time for Christian discipleship. You may have occasionally become blasé or inattentive in your relationship with Jesus. To this point, your relationship with Jesus has been mostly rote. For example, you may be in the concluding courses after years of religious formation and education and at a stage where you have tuned out much of the information that is being presented, maybe because you tell yourself “I’ve learned this many times before.”

It is in Christ that our highest calling or most exalted vocation is brought to light. When we believe in Christ we become children of God the Father. This adoption makes us capable of acting rightly and doing good. As the *Catechism* teaches:

In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven. (CCC, 1709)

Before examining several Christian vocations in later chapters, this chapter is intended to remind you of and situate you in the mystery of God’s love. Hopefully it will awaken a built-in desire to truly know God and share in his divine life. It is in this grace that you can then seek out the Christian beatitude or happiness, which is the goal of eternal life in God’s kingdom.

discipleship

From the word “learner,” the undertaking of learning and following Jesus Christ.





Running for Christ



Spend some time working out and getting in shape to run a 5K race (3.1 miles). As you train, offer the physical exertion to God. Remember the call of Jesus to “pick up your cross and follow” him. When you feel you can complete the course, check the local newspaper and sign up for a 5K race in your area. Ask family and friends to contribute some money based on your finish time. For example, \$5 (thirty-five minutes and above), \$10 (twenty-five to thirty-five minutes), \$15 (twenty to twenty-five minutes), \$20 (below twenty minutes). Collect all of the donations and contribute them to your local parish or a charity that helps those in need.



Would You Be A Saint If You Could?

If you had asked Aloysius Gonzaga the question above, no doubt he would have answered “yes.” Born in 1568 to a wealthy family in Italy, Aloysius resisted his father’s wishes that he be a great soldier. Growing up, he spent most of his time praying and reading books about the lives of saints. On his summer holidays, he spent his time instructing poor boys in the Catholic catechism. During the winter months, Aloysius began to practice the habits of a monk: he fasted three times a week on bread and water, whipped himself with a dog chain, and rose at midnight to pray on his knees on a stone floor in a room without heat.

Aloysius’ father eventually permitted him to enter the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. It wasn’t long before he had a vision in which he knew he would die at a young age. A plague struck Rome in 1591, and Aloysius fell victim to its fever while ministering to the suffering. Eventually, the plague would claim Aloysius. On his death bed, he occasionally whispered the words “Into thy hands,” in imitation of Christ. He died between June 20 and 21, 1591. This young man who died at the age of twenty-three was canonized a saint in 1726.

How would you describe the desire of Aloysius Gonzaga? Worthy? Courageous? Strange? Difficult? Impossible? The Church has canonized teenage and young adult saints in every era. What would it take for you to be a saint?

martyrdom

Giving one’s life for one’s faith. A martyr is willing to die in support of the Christian faith and doctrine.

Certainly, there are many places in the world today where a young Christian may be called to die for his or her faith. **Martyrdom** is a clear path to sainthood. But what if you were to construct a plan to be a saint around the life you are leading now in this time and place. Consider how you might apply the following “ways to become a saint”:



1. **Know Jesus.** Yes, really know him. Not the perfunctory kind of relationship that may have crept in since the time of your First Communion. Make an effort to learn about Christ through reading Scripture, reading the lives of saints, and through prayer. Spend some time alone before the Blessed Sacrament.
2. **Forgive Your Enemy.** Don't prolong a grudge. Don't live in hate (or even dislike) over a trivial matter. Seek out a person with whom you have been at odds. Share a gesture of goodwill as a first effort at reconciliation. Eventually, tell the person you are sorry.
3. **Love Others.** You no doubt love your family members and friends. Make an effort to love others. Who are some "others" in your sphere: homeless people in your community, special education students in your school, classmates experiencing family problems, hungry children in another land? Think of some ways you can reach out to these people. Act on these ways.
4. **Show Courage.** Don't always "go with the flow." Assert your independence when it comes to moral living. Avoid promiscuity. Treat your body with respect. Speak about and pray to God in public.
5. **Serve.** There are many opportunities for service at your school or parish. Participate, for sure. Better yet, direct your own service project. For example, get together with some friends and work on a song or skit you can share at a local retirement home or hospital. Call the social director and arrange a date on which you can perform for the guests.
6. **Go to Mass.** Do you know someone who is a "daily Mass-goer," that is, a person who tries to go to Mass on the weekdays besides Sundays? Could this person be you? In addition, participate in a liturgical ministry. Train to be a lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, or altar server. In addition to Mass, celebrate the Sacrament of Penance often.

Finally, pray to a saint to intercede for you on your behalf. Begin with Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, the patron of youth. Pray this prayer of Saint Aloysius to the Blessed Mother:

My Mother

Holy Mary, my Queen,
I recommend myself
to your blessed protection and
special keeping,
and to the bosom of your mercy,
today and every day and
at the hour of my death.
My soul and my body I recommend to you.
I entrust to you my hope
and consolation,
my distress and my misery,
my life and its termination.
Through your most holy intercession
and through your merits
may all my actions
be directed according to your will
and that of your Son.
Amen.





studyquestions

1. What were God's first intentions for man?
2. Name the effects of Original Sin.
3. Explain the respective roles God intends for man and woman.
4. How do we share in the dignity and image of God in body and soul?
5. In what ways can practicing chastity now help you to support marriage and family life?
6. How is the experience of Christian discipleship practiced?



journaldiscussion

- What does God love about you?
- Write a profile of yourself telling how you think God intends for you to be "perfect."

◆ The Mystery of God's Love

Christ's whole life is mystery, the *Catechism* teaches. This includes not only the mysteries of Christ's Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery covered in the creed, but the mysteries of his hidden life in Nazareth and a great deal of his public life that is not covered in the Gospels.

The term **mystery** refers first of all to the infinite incomprehensibility of God. God is not just unknown, he is unknowable. Our knowledge of God is entirely dependent on how much he wishes to reveal.

Our own lives are also filled with mystery. An old joke goes like this: "Do you want to make God laugh? Just tell him your plans." Not only is the future unknown to us, but in God's providence, our lives, too, are filled with infinite, often surprising, possibilities.

Consider these true stories about what happened to these college students when they were just slightly older than you are now:

- Marc grew up just outside of Milwaukee. He went to Marquette University High School. He applied to a few colleges but easily had Georgetown University and Boston College at the top of his list. "I wanted to get away from Milwaukee," Marc recalled.

Marc's mother had different ideas. She wanted her oldest son to stay near to home. Reluctantly, Marc applied and registered at Marquette University, just blocks from his high school. Several surprises were in store for Marc in his four years at Marquette.

"First, I loved Marquette U," Marc said. "The family atmosphere was great. Second, I met my wife at Marquette. We wouldn't be together if I had gone off to school."

Marc's career plans changed, as well. An English major, he hoped to go to law school upon graduation. Instead, a mission trip to Central America sparked an interest in social justice ministry. Today, Marc is a parish youth minister near Milwaukee. He has led teenagers on several mission trips around the United States and to Mexico.

mystery

In a religious sense, a truth that is incomprehensible to reason and knowable only through God's Revelation.



- In July, after graduating from high school in Southern California, Kara was working on a landscaping crew in local city parks with the intention of saving some spending money before starting college in the fall. Wearing work boots, she developed a sore between two of the toes on her right foot. For a couple of weeks, Kara ignored the pain and continued to work through the days, cutting shrubbery and picking up litter.

Finally, Kara went to a foot doctor. He lanced the sore and bandaged it up. Kara went back to work. A few weeks later the “sore” came back, bigger and more painful than before.

This time Kara went to see her regular doctor. The diagnosis was devastating. She had stage 2 melanoma, a dangerous form of cancer. Months of treatment followed, and Kara was forced to miss the entire fall semester. College had to wait, but Kara was so thankful to be on the road to recovery.

- Andy was on the sidelines on the athletic fields at the University of Notre Dame watching a pick-up football game. He was surprised to see one of his dorm mates running across the field telling him, “Come quick! Your mom has been taken to



the hospital. Your parish priest wants to meet you by the library.”

Several thoughts raced through Andy’s head. His mom had never been seriously

ill. Certainly everything had to be okay. When he met up with his pastor at the designated place, Father Bernard motioned him to get inside the car. Andy could tell then that the priest wanted to tell him the news in the quiet of the car.

The priest put his hand on Andy’s shoulder. “It’s serious. Your mom may not make it.”

Andy recalled the experience later, months after his mother’s death. “I still can’t believe he took the time to drive to Notre Dame to be with me. His comfort and compassion at that moment was beyond belief.”

After graduation and a series of unfulfilling jobs, Andy entered his local diocesan seminary to study for the priesthood. He looked back at this experience with of his pastor as the moment when he first consciously made a decision that he wanted to be a priest.

Everyone’s life is filled with surprises and many unexpected twists and turns. Will you be the parent of a large family? Will you be successful in your career and be able to travel the world and own a vacation home? Will you grow in awareness of worldwide poverty and work tirelessly to help the poor? Will your parents be chronically sick and require you to be their caretaker? Will you get sick? What direction will your life take?

These questions, while part of the mystery of our own lives, can bring us peace when they are situated in the mystery of God’s love. God has revealed himself as a God of love, who himself is “an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (CCC, 221). God’s love is everlasting. A firm plan for our lives is that we have been destined to share in this love of God.

God Gradually Reveals His Mystery

God’s mystery is gradually revealed through history. God reveals himself and the mystery of his will over time in order to make us “capable of responding to him, and of knowing him, and of loving him



far beyond [our] own natural capacity” (CCC, 52). God’s revelation began to Adam and Eve, and he did not withdraw from doing so even when they sinned. God later made a covenant with Noah, and then a covenant with Abraham promising that his descendants would be a chosen people, the people of Israel.

An essential revelation came when God revealed his name to Moses in the burning bush:

“I am the God of your father,” he continued, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. . . . I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain.” (Ex 3:6, 12)

This revelation of God’s mysterious name—Yahweh, “I am who I am”—shares the news that God’s faithfulness is everlasting: Yahweh is the God of the past (Abraham), the present (Moses), and the future (“I will be with you”).

God *fully* revealed himself by sending his son, Jesus Christ:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe. (Heb 1:1–2)

There is no further Revelation after Christ. God’s Revelation is entrusted to the Church through two distinct modes: the Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture. From the earliest days of the Church, Apostolic Tradition is the sharing of the message of Christ through preaching, witness, institutions, worship, and inspired writings. The Apostles shared all they received from Christ and learned from the Holy Spirit to their successors, the bishops. Apostolic Tradition includes the living transmission of the entire Word of God found in Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate with one another. Together they make up one “Sacred Deposit of Faith.” The Apostles entrusted this Sacred Deposit (Tradition and Sacred Scripture) to the whole Church while the task of authentically interpreting Tradition and Sacred Scripture is entrusted to the Church’s





Magisterium, the living, teaching office of the Church. Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium are so closely linked that one of them cannot stand without the other.

It is up to us as Christians to continue to grasp the full significance of God’s Revelation in Jesus Christ. This is truly a life’s work as we look for ways our personal life is intertwined with the life of our Savior.



The Holy Trinity: Central Mystery of Faith

Christians are baptized in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—not in their *names*. There is only one God but in three Persons: the almighty Father, his only Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the Most Holy Trinity, the central mystery of our faith. The Trinity is a mystery in the strict sense because it is impossible for humans to figure out or reason on our own. This mystery was inaccessible even to the Chosen People of the Old Covenant.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity was only revealed at the coming of Christ. Jesus called God “Father” and revealed himself as being eternally begotten of the Father. Jesus revealed two great mysteries about the Holy Spirit: that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person in relation to the Father and the Son and that he is sent to the Apostles and the Church by both the Father and the Son.

The mystery of the Trinity is a very difficult one to explain and understand. Some of the Church’s **dogmas** about the Trinity can help. For example:

- *The Trinity is one.* The Trinity does not mean there are three Gods, but one God in three Persons. The three Persons do not share their divinity among themselves, but each one of them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is God whole and entire. There are not three separate consciousnesses, intelligences, or wills in God. There is one God.
- *The three Persons are distinct from one another.* This means that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Holy Spirit. Rather, the Father is eternally in relation to the Son, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son.
- *The divine Persons are related to one another.* The Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son. Because they are intimately related to one another, the three Persons have one nature or substance.

The relationship of community among the three Persons of the Holy Trinity helps to model the love we are to have for ourselves, for others, and for God. The divine economy, or economy of salvation, is the work of the Holy Trinity. The ultimate goal of this economy, of our lives, is entry into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. As Jesus said, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and

Magisterium

The teaching office of the Church. It was given by Jesus to Peter and the other Apostles and it extends to the Pope and the bishops.

dogmas

Central truths of Revelation that Catholics are obliged to believe.



make our dwelling with him” (Jn 14:23). As humans, we are built to seek out God and share the divine life. In the liturgy, the blessings of the Trinity are fully revealed and communicated. The Father is the source of all blessings of creation and salvation. In Christ he fills us with his blessings in order to pour into our hearts the gift of the Holy Spirit. From God’s blessings at liturgy, our discipleship is ultimately modeled in our words and our actions.




study questions

1. What does the term mystery mean in reference to God?
2. Name and explain the two ways that God’s Revelation is entrusted to the Church.
3. How is the Holy Trinity a mystery in the strictest sense?
4. Name three of the Church’s dogmas about the Trinity.



journal discussion

- In what ways has your life been surprising and full of mystery so far?
- Explain your own way of understanding the Holy Trinity.

◆ Our Desire for God

Imagine that in a few years—maybe just as you are about to graduate from college—you begin a serious dating relationship. You have very strong romantic feelings for this person and you definitely share a close bond of friendship. It is looking more and more like this person may turn out to be your future spouse.

A few question marks remain. You haven’t met the parents of this special friend. Finally, a meeting is arranged. You will visit with them on Easter Sunday and share a meal with the family.

It turns out to be a delicious meal. But after dinner you share a private talk with the parents. In the course of the conversation you discover that these people are not religious at all. Though they had been raised Catholic, they haven’t been to Church in years. They didn’t go to Mass on this Easter Sunday. Your eyes wander around the house. You now notice that there are plenty of bunny rabbits and flowers and candies—but no crucifixes or other religious articles.

To top it off, the father tells, you: “While we support our children if they want to believe in a ‘higher power,’ my wife and I really have moved well beyond that stage in our lives. We believe humans have the power to create their own destiny. We really have no use for any superstitious rituals that involve worship in a God we don’t believe in.”

How would you feel if you heard this kind of talk? How would it effect your opinion of your beloved’s parents? Of your beloved? You may know plenty of people who do not practice religion for reasons that range from laziness to feelings of unworthiness over a past sin. But how would you react to adults who have consciously made a decision *not to believe in God*?

Contrast this story of people who have seemingly turned their backs on God to the experience of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. He observed:

My many years of ministry have convinced me that in the heart of every



human being there wells up an irrepressible desire to be united with God. I do not mean to imply that every person is able to *identify* this phenomenon as a longing for God. Some may seek fulfillment of it in some other way or may simply be aware of a kind of human emptiness. God has put this desire in our hearts, and not even sin cancels it.²

Saint Augustine, writing in the late fourth century, famously expressed the human desire for God:

Despite everything, man, though but a small part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.³

Additionally, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* adds:

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. (CCC, 27)

The experience described by Cardinal Bernardin and Saint Augustine is more typical of human behavior than of the parents who have made a conscious choice to ignore God. What does your personal experience tell you about a “longing for God”? Often, a person may not put stock in this longing until a personal need for God arises. For example, a person faced with a serious illness is often more inclined to seek out God in prayer. Or, maybe you have called on God when challenged by a relationship, worried about a test, or even thankful for a special favor. Can you think of a recent time when you called out to God?

Ways to Know God

God’s self-revelation is pure gift. God has fully revealed himself and his divine plan by sending us his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. However, even with natural reason man can know God with certainty based on his works. This is the inborn desire and longing human beings have for God of which Saint Augustine wrote.

These ways of approaching God are also called proofs for God’s existence. Primarily, we can know God through examining the gift of creation, using two points of departure: the physical world and the human person. Consider some of the following ways which are contained in both categories:

Nature Imagine yourself on a mostly empty ocean beach at dusk. The salt air wisps through your lungs as you breathe slowly in and out. The rhythm of the crashing waves keeps a steady cadence. Sea gulls dive into the surf looking for an evening meal. Past the breakers the ocean looks like tinted blue glass for miles out to sea. The horizon and ocean meet at a splash of orange and blue. The setting sun is gone but its reflection remains as a fiery tunnel that appears to pass out into the other side of the world, to eternity, really.



Passion Your gaze to the horizon is interrupted. A man comes to the shore with a young child, probably not more than a year old. She is barefoot and wearing only a T-shirt and a diaper. Her father swings her by her arms and her toes glide atop the white foam. She giggles merrily and you can tell how much her dad enjoys being with her. Unassumingly, a man and woman walk across your view. They look to be in their late twenties. The man has his arm around the



woman’s shoulders. They are oblivious to you and the frolicking father and daughter. They are in love.

Reflection The light is completely gone now. The father has dried his daughter’s toes and headed for the car. The twilight sky reveals its first stars. The moon is out casting its beam in a straight line right at you. You adjust your iPod to a sample of your favorite songs, close your eyes, and begin to think. You remember your mother who first exposed you to music and all of the arts. Naturally, your thoughts take you to your father who passed away suddenly only months before. You wonder about yourself and what direction your life will take. You feel peace about your chosen profession. But you are still hoping to find a special someone to share your life with. A flash of lightning dots the horizon and you can faintly hear the sound of thunder over the beautiful music. You brush the sand from your clothes, get up, and head home.

How does this scenario resonate with your experience of coming to know God? Are there particular natural scenes that awaken thoughts of God? Or do you feel God’s presence enthralled in a relationship? How much time do you spend in prayer and reflection on God’s presence in your life? Do you realize that the Sacred Scripture, the liturgy, and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer? In addition, how aware are you of God’s providence in every event of your life? As you reach for these goals,

more and more of God’s mystery will be revealed to you.

Remember, Christ is God himself in human flesh. Exploring his life and words in detail is the fullest way to uncover God’s presence. Coming to Christ will lead you to love more deeply and fully. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux wrote that “love is surely the best path leading to God. . . . Love appeared to be the hinge for my vocation.”⁴

What It Means to Believe



The Catholic creeds (see page 306 of the Catholic Handbook for Faith) begin with the words “I believe” or “We believe.” Saying that we believe in something relates to the theological virtue of **faith**. The virtue of faith enables us to believe in God and all that he has said and revealed to us. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables us to commit ourselves to God totally, both our intellects and our wills. Faith has been described as our “lifeline” to God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that “believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life” (CCC, 222). The *Catechism* goes on to list several implications for a person with faith:

A faithful person comes to know God’s greatness and majesty. In the book of Job, Elihu was angry at Job for considering himself to be right over God. Elihu said:

Behold, God is sublime in his power. What teacher is there like him?



faith

One of the theological virtues. Faith is an acknowledgment of and allegiance to God.



Who prescribes for him his conduct, or who can say, “You have done wrong?”

Remember, you should extol his work, which men have praised in song.

All men contemplate it; man beholds it from afar.

Lo, God is great beyond our knowledge; the number of his years is past searching out. (Jb 36:22–26)

A faithful person is thankful to God. Our life and everything we receive each day—for example, our breath, food, health, friendships, talents—are all gifts from the one God in whom we profess our belief.

A faithful person knows the unity of the human community and the dignity of every individual. As the first creation story in the book of Genesis proclaims, we are all made in the image and likeness of God. This is the reason we are to love and respect every person as a son or daughter of our loving Father.

A faithful person makes good use of created things. When we have faith in God, we detach ourselves from things that separate us from him and only use what can bring us closer to him. We are also good stewards of creation, protecting the environment both for our generation and those to come.

A faithful person trusts God in every circumstance, including hardship and adversity. When we pray in the Lord’s Prayer for “our daily bread,” we count on the Father to give us all the appropriate goods and blessings, both material and spiritual, that we will need.

Though we can discover God on our own, our life of holiness as children of God is done in communion with others, in imitation of the community of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity.



studyquestions

1. What did Saint Augustine say about man’s inner desire for God?
2. Name and explain three ways man can discover God with natural reason?
3. Define faith.
4. Name and explain two implications for a person with faith.



journaldiscussion

- When do you long for God in your life? Be specific.
- Tell about a time when you experienced God’s presence.

✦ Sharing the Divine Life

God is holy, eternal, and true. What does it mean to share the life of God? God in the Persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—freely wills to communicate the way to holiness to all. This plan of God’s “loving kindness” was conceived by the Father before the foundation of the world in his Son. It continues on through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the Church. To share in the life of God is to participate in the life of the Trinity. The *Catechism* teaches:

The whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him. (CCC, 259)

Since there is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the unity we are to establish with others, the way we should go



Church

The Church is the community of people who profess faith in Jesus Christ and who are guided by the Holy Spirit. The Roman Catholic Church is guided by the Pope and his bishops. The Nicene Creed describes the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

about loving God and growing in his holiness is very clear: “Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God” (CCC, 1878). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus acknowledges the Ten Commandments as the source for loving God and loving neighbor, but adds an admonition to avoid anger and work toward reconciliation with our neighbor as a way to show love. He said:

“I say to you whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Mt 5:22–24)

The Aramaic word Jesus used, *Raca*, is equated with a term like “blockhead” or “imbecile.” The message is clear: We are not to name-call. We are not to slander or gossip. We are to live in harmony with other people. We are not to lash out in any way. We are to settle our differences with

other people. The fruits of reconciliation are immense. Achieving peace, harmony, and love with others is the way we achieve this same kind of relationship with God.

The People of God

We share God’s life by our participation in the **Church**. At creation, God intended for the world to be in communion with his divine life. This communion brought about the Church, a gathering of all people in Christ. From the time of the Original Sin, God, in his providence, ordained a plan of salvation through Christ and the Church as the way to restore holiness and to bring us salvation. The importance of the Church is that God wants “to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness.”⁵ We share God’s life in our relationships with one another.

Christ loves the Church. He gave up his life for the Church, and he has remained present in the Church in all the days since. The Church is the sign of Christ’s loyalty to us, his people. Like Christ, the Church is a sacrament, a sign of our inner union with





Choosing to Be Catholic

The Catholic Church has two rites for initiation. The most common is the baptism of children. The Rite of Baptism for Children provides for the **catechesis** of parents and godparents and includes the rite for baptizing children. Later, as the children grow, they, too, are taught the lessons of faith. Eventually they receive the other two sacraments of initiation: Confirmation and Eucharist.

The other is the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) for anyone who wants to be Catholic and has reached the age of reason (approximately seven years old). In this rite, the person is catechized before receiving all three sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—during the Easter vigil liturgy. Many times a parish celebration of the vigil will include the initiation of people from childhood to adulthood.

A few years ago at Saint Clement of Rome Church in New Orleans, a group of teenagers participated in the RCIA process through the parish's Life Teen program, a Eucharist-based youth ministry program. They learned more about the faith from and with other teens their own age. Nicholas, one of the teen sponsors, said "We thought they would relate to teens better. Especially when they see other teens living out their baptismal promises."

Some of the stories of teens seeking initiation into the Church were dramatic. One girl

said, "I was struggling with my mom. I like the Eucharist and confession, the fact that sins are wiped away."

Another boy, Blake, was a junior in high school when he decided to become Catholic. He recalled that his life had been "in a slump" and that a turning point came when he stole his grandmother's car when he was in ninth grade.

"That was the first time I ever saw my grandma cry over something I did," he said. "I felt terrible. I was depressed and I couldn't do anything." It was his grandmother who first suggested that Blake attend a Life Teen Mass at Saint Clement's. He liked the homilies that were geared to teenagers. After two months of attending Mass, he went on a retreat where he experienced a conversion.

"I was on a Jesus high for a week," he said. "I started going to church every weekend. I went from doing nothing but bad stuff to going to church and not hanging out with my old friends."

Blake's grades improved and his aunt and uncle asked him to be the godfather for their yet-to-be-born baby. Because he wasn't yet Catholic he couldn't be the child's godfather. But that situation would change when Blake and the others came into the Church at the Easter vigil.

catechesis

The process of religious instruction and formation in the Christian faith.

God. The Church is an *efficacious symbol*. This means that the Church is a symbol that not only points to a reality—in this case, our salvation—but she also causes it. We come to know God through the Church.

The Seven Sacraments are one way Catholics share in the divine life of Christ. This is why the Church affirms that the sacraments are necessary for salvation. The sacraments renew the mystery of God's love. They pour out the blessings of the Father in his Son and through the Holy Spirit and

communicate the fruits of Christ's **Paschal Mystery**. They help us share in eternal life even now while we live on earth and await the second coming of Christ. The Second Vatican Council document *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)* explains the purpose of the sacraments:

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally to give worship to God. Because they are signs

Paschal Mystery

The way our salvation is made known through the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. The Paschal Mystery is made present in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.



they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do, indeed, confer grace, but in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace to their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity. (59)

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation. They ground us in our common vocation to holiness and in the mission of sharing the Gospel with others. Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit: “Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, and are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (CCC, 1213). Two other sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony—which are the primary subject of this text—are directed to the salvation of others; if they contribute to the salvation of those who receive them, it is because of their service to others.



Our Vocation to Beatitude

If you randomly asked ten of your classmates to name just one thing they want out of life, there is a good chance that more than a few would say “To be happy.” God has made us with a natural desire for happiness. As Saint Augustine put it,

We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated.⁶

Jesus offered a formula for happiness at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3–12; also in the Sermon on the Plain in Lk 6:20–26). These are the Beatitudes, the heart of Jesus’ preaching. The word *beatitude* means happiness, though if you read the Beatitudes you may wonder how so. The Beatitudes explain clearly how we should love God and love our neighbor in a Christ-like way. This is often a difficult thing to do and not what the world might associate with happiness—for example, the accumulation of goods, popularity, and sensory pleasures of all kinds. Rather, the Beatitudes teach us how we should live in order to reach our eternal destiny.

Supreme happiness is described in several ways in the New Testament, but most typically as “the coming of the Kingdom (or reign) of God.” Other expressions to characterize the beatitude to which we are called are:

- the vision of God,
- entering into the joy of the Lord,
- entering into God’s rest.

This desire for happiness comes from God and is placed in our hearts in order to draw us to God, the only one who can ever fulfill this desire. The Beatitudes make us like God and able to share eternal life. The Second Letter of Peter explains:

His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so



that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. (2 Pt 1:3–4)

The Beatitudes teach us to be dependent on God alone for our happiness and contentment. In the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” the poor are associated with their Hebrew name, *anawim* (ah-nah-weem). These were people without material possessions who nevertheless kept a positive attitude, realized their helplessness, and sought God for all their needs, material and spiritual. Most importantly, they trusted that God would take care of all their needs.



The Beatitudes form the core of our Christian vocation to holiness. They teach us that true happiness is not connected with monetary riches, human fame, or any human achievement, for that matter. The Beatitudes ask us to “purify our hearts of bad instincts and seek the love of God above all else” (CCC, 1723).

No matter which directions our particular vocations (marriage, religious life, holy orders, dedicated single life) and careers lead us, our common Christian vocation, begun at Baptism, is to the love of God.

Chapter 2—Discerning God’s Will—offers a plan to seek out particular ways to follow God’s providence and to determine which state of life God intends for you. A plan for discerning life choices is offered as well as ways to apply the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience to your personal Christian vocation.

Saint Josephine Bakhita: Modeling Beatitudes



Born to a wealthy Sudanese family in 1868, Bakhita was kidnapped at a young age and eventually taken to Italy. She worked for a rich family as a nanny and grew to love the country and Catholicism. She converted in 1893 and joined the Institute of Canossian Daughters of Charity, taking the name Josephine and serving as a sister for more than fifty years. She performed any menial task that was asked of her, and she was especially a comfort to the poor and suffering who came to the convent.

Pope John Paul II canonized Saint Josephine on October 1, 2000. He said of her:

“In our time, in which the unbridled race for power, money, and pleasure is the cause of so much distrust, violence, and loneliness, Sister Bakhita has been given to us once more by the Lord as a universal sister, so that she can reveal to us the secret of true happiness: the Beatitudes. Here is a message of heroic goodness modeled on the goodness of the Heavenly Father.”

- Write a short report on the life of Saint Josephine Bakhita. See her biography at the Vatican website: www.vatican.va.
- Choose a second saint who models one or more of the Beatitudes. Explain how. Include some of the saint’s own words or words spoken about him or her in your report.



study questions

1. Why is our participation in the Church necessary for sharing in God's life?
2. How do the sacraments help us to share in the divine life?
3. What are the ways that supreme happiness is described in the Old Testament?
4. What do the Beatitudes teach us about happiness?



journal discussion

- Name the things that make you happy.
- Write a profile of a holy person.



summary points

◆ Be Perfect

- ◆ We are called to holiness, that is, living “perfect” in a Christian sense by seeking a closer, more intimate union with Jesus Christ.

◆ We Are Created in God's Image

- ◆ Our first parents were created in a state of original holiness and justice in which they were meant to share the life of God. Original Sin caused a loss of this gift and permanently affected humanity.
- ◆ Jesus Christ is the source of grace and redemption, opposite from Adam and Eve, who were the source of sin and the fall of mankind.
- ◆ God created man and woman in perfect equality, each in the image of God, and for each other. In marriage, man and woman are united to celebrate their love and share the gift of life.

- ◆ The soul is the innermost part of man that makes us spiritual people in the image of God.
- ◆ Our body likewise shares in the dignity and image of God.
- ◆ Sexuality affects every aspect of the human person in the unity of body and soul.
- ◆ The virtue of chastity helps us to integrate our sexuality and bring unity to body and soul.
- ◆ Being a disciple of Christ is our highest calling and most exalted vocation.

◆ The Mystery of God's Love

- ◆ God has revealed himself as a God of love—in community with a Trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, God remains an incomprehensible mystery of faith.
- ◆ God's mystery is gradually revealed through history.
- ◆ In the Old Testament, he revealed himself in covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. To Moses, God revealed his name: Yahweh.
- ◆ God fully revealed himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. There is no further revelation after Christ.
- ◆ Christ revealed the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the central mystery of the Christian faith. The mystery of the Holy Trinity does reveal that there is only one God but in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

◆ Our Desire for God

- ◆ Human beings are created with a deep-felt desire to know God.
- ◆ While God's Revelation is pure gift, humans are created with a natural reason that allows us to know God with certainty based on his works.
- ◆ We can know God through our experience of nature, our feelings or passions, and through personal reflection.
- ◆ The virtue of faith enables us to believe in God and all that he has said and revealed to us.
- ◆ Believing in God has enormous consequences for our whole life.



◆ Sharing the Divine Life

- ◆ Our relationships with other people resemble the unity of the divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ◆ We share in the divine life by loving God and loving our neighbor.
- ◆ We share in God's life through the Church. We also share in God's life in our relationships with others.
- ◆ Participating in the sacraments and receiving their graces is another way we share in the divine life.
- ◆ Our primary Christian vocation is to beatitude, that is, "supreme happiness."
- ◆ Supreme happiness is most often described in the New Testament as "the coming of the Kingdom of God."

assignments applications

1. Research and report on the human understanding of perfection. For example, make a list of consumer products and businesses that advertise and promote perfection. What is the difference between these human understandings of

perfection and the Christian understanding of perfection?

2. Read and compare the first story of Creation (Gn 1:1–31) and the second story of Creation (2:4–25).
3. Listen to Haydn's *The Creation* or Beethoven's Symphony no. 9. Write a short essay or poem describing the images that came to mind from these pieces.
4. Attend a workshop, retreat, symposium, or lecture having to do with Scripture, faith, or religion. Report on what it taught you about Christian discipleship.
5. Read and report on the main sections of chapter 1, using "The Dignity of the Human Person" from the Second Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*. The document can be accessed at the Vatican website (www.vatican.va).
6. Write a profile of someone you know who, in the twists and turns of life, has come to know God.
7. Look up and define *immanent Trinity* and *salvific or economic Trinity*.
8. Make a list of twenty-five ways a person can come to know God.
9. "The Church is necessary for salvation." Use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to explain and defend this statement. Use the search function at: www.scborromeo.org/ccs.htm.
10. Make a collage or notebook with photos that express each of the Beatitudes.

Notes

1. Quoted from *Gaudium et spes*, 12.
2. From the program "Jesus: The Way, the Truth, and the Life," 1984.
3. Quoted from the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, 1, 1, 1: PL: 32, 659–661.
4. Quoted from *The Storey of A Soul* by Thomas Merton.
5. Quoted from *Lumen Gentium*, 9.
6. Quoted from *De moribus ecc.* 1, 3, 4: PL 32, 1312.

