

The Existence of God

Nearly everyone, at one time or another, has an incredible experience that profoundly alters his or her life's journey. At such times most of us turn to the divine, to God, and wonder about the hidden presence we have sensed in our hearts. Such experiences force us to ask questions about the meaning of life and the mystery of death.

Does God exist?

CCC 31–32; 34–35; 47

St. Paul and the Church assert that humans are able to discover the hidden God through rational thought because “ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind’s understanding of created things” (Romans 1:20). Belief in God is not unreasonable.

What does personal experience tell us about God?

CCC 27–30; 33; 46

Experience can guide us to God. Our feelings of dependency; our sense of wonder, awe, and joy; our openness to truth and beauty; and our feelings of being invited to do greater things than we are doing all speak of a God who has made us to discover and love him. Traditional arguments for God’s existence include the following:

An unquenchable thirst for happiness. Did a creator make us with a hunger for happiness which nothing can completely satisfy? Might it be that God implanted in us a kind of homing device causing restlessness until we find him?

This yearning for total happiness points to a God who made us this way.

Sense of justice. We have a fundamental sense of moral goodness, a feeling that things will be reversed someday, that there is a power that will right all wrongs, if not in this life, then in the next.

Love. Love is a spiritual reality that is not explained by materiality. It must come from somewhere, ultimately from Love itself, the being we call God.

What does human history tell us about God?

CCC 51–53

Human history is a powerful argument for the existence of God. There seems to be an intelligence behind our evolving history. From the earliest times human beings have testified to the existence of God. An overwhelming majority of cultures have believed in some being who is greater than any of its members. We know *someone* is there, but God's true identity is not clear. We need divine help to know God as God really is.

What do demonstrations based on reason tell us about God?

CCC 31–32; 46

St. Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval theologian, summed up five so-called proofs for the existence of God. A key proof is the logical conclusion that all creatures must ultimately come from a cause that itself was not caused. This "Uncaused Cause" is God. Besides philosophical arguments, our own personal reflection on creation's beauty, immensity, and power can give us an awareness of a God who made all things and keeps them in existence.

Does God communicate with us?

CCC 51

God not only exists, but he freely chooses to communicate himself and the divine plan for salvation to us. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) taught:

In His goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature.

—*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, 2

What is divine revelation?

CCC 50–54

Christians believe God freely chose to communicate himself and the divine plan of salvation to us. God did this gradually by deeds and words inherently connected to each other. This free gift of God’s self-communication is known as supernatural or divine revelation. God’s self-disclosure and invitation to a deeper life of love are purely gifts on God’s part.

At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the final days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages.

—*Hebrews* 1:1–2

The story of God’s self-disclosure, God’s saving action in history, is known as *salvation history*. Salvation history reached its high point in the coming of Jesus, the fullness of God’s revelation. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, the

Son of God who lived among us, taught us in human words and deeds about his Father, and completed the Father's work of salvation.

What is the Bible's role in salvation history?

CCC 74–87; 101–114; 121–125; 134–141

The story of salvation history continues on in our encounter with the Bible and in the Tradition of the Christian community. The Old Testament records God's teaching to the Jewish people and God's interactions in their history. The New Testament chronicles the life and teachings of Jesus and announces the Good News of God's plan of salvation for all people.

How does God help us respond to revelation?

CCC 25; 91–100; 142–144; 1813

We need to respond to God's self-communication and the revelation of God's plan for us. This response is known as *faith*. Faith, like revelation, is a free gift from God that gives us the conviction, commitment, and trust to believe in realities that we can neither see nor clearly prove.

Through this unearned gift of faith received at Baptism, we join a community of believers in the Lord Jesus who lives in our midst. Faith, hope, and charity make up the theological virtues.

- *Faith*, cooperating with divine grace, enables us to know God and believe what God reveals through the teaching of the Church. Through faith, we commit our whole person—intellect, will, words, and actions—to the God who reveals.

- *Hope* creates in us a desire for God. It enables us to trust firmly in God's loving plan for our salvation and that God will give us all that we need to attain it.
- *Charity* is God's own grace-filled life in us. It beckons us to live Christ's life of caring concern and service for others.