

Saint Joseph

NEW AMERICAN CATECHISM

No. 3

According to the
“BASIC TEACHINGS FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION”

(Issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

VATICAN II DOCUMENTS

and

HOLY SCRIPTURE

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FOREWORD

In religious education certain basic teachings are necessary for doctrinal substance and stability. Therefore the American Bishops have set down the principal elements of the Christian message in their statement, "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education," issued January 11, 1973. The statement reads: "It is necessary that these basic teachings be central in all Catholic religious instruction, be never overlooked or minimized, and be given adequate and frequent emphasis. . . . It is necessary that the authentic teachings of the Church, and those only, be presented in religious instruction as official Catholic doctrine. Religion texts or classroom teachers should never present merely subjective theorizing as the Church's teaching." (Introduction)

In order to help to carry out this directive of the Bishops, the text of this catechism was prepared in closest harmony with the text of their statement. The question and answer presentation has much merit. It does not mean that the answers must be memorized, but that the essential elements of the doctrine can be emphasized and discussed in an orderly way, and perhaps retained with greater ease and clarity. A simplified edition of the catechism is also available for use of children.

May this *New American Catechism* help at least in some way to fulfill the desire and prayer of our Bishops—"for a laity transformed by the gospel message, who put the gospel to work in every action of their daily lives, whose joy and simplicity and concern for others are so radiant that all men recognize them as Christ's disciples by the love they have for one another."

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SUMMARY OF BASIC DOCTRINES

I. GOD

CHAPTER 1 — Meeting with the Triune God occurs especially when we acknowledge the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the authors of the plan of salvation, which is completed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The life of believers consists in developing a familiarity with the Three Divine Persons through faith, hope and love.

CHAPTER 2 — Many people today consider God as remote or even absent. True worship of God requires that we carry out his will.

CHAPTER 3 — The faithful can help an atheistic world by the witness of a life which reflects Christ's love.

II. JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER 4 — The incarnation is the greatest of God's works. Having become obedient to death, Christ is exalted as Lord of all. Through his resurrection he is manifested to us as God's Son in power.

CHAPTER 5 — Creation is not a truth set apart, but ordered to the salvation accomplished by Christ.

CHAPTER 6 — Each Christian has a role in Christ's saving work so that creation will give glory to God.

CHAPTER 7 — Jesus was a true man and lived among men with a human mind, will, and heart. We shall be able to acknowledge his divinity if we become aware of his marvelous humanity.

CHAPTER 8 — The mystery of Christ is also the mystery of salvation. By his holy death and resurrection he redeemed mankind from the slavery of sin.

CHAPTER 9 — The Holy Spirit carries out Christ's work in the world. He is present in a special way in the community of those who acknowledge Christ as Lord.

III. THE SACRAMENTS

CHAPTER 10 — The mystery of Christ is contained in the Church through the sacraments—the signs he instituted. The Church herself is in some way the universal sacrament.

CHAPTER 11 — While the sacraments express the efficacious will of Christ, they demand that men be properly disposed. The life of grace of the faithful should in some way be related to the sacraments.



Part One – GOD

Chapter 1

THE MYSTERY OF THE ONE GOD —FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT—

1. What is the history of salvation?

The history of salvation is the story of God's dealing with men. Through it, the one true God in three Persons—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—(1) reveals himself to man (2) and saves man from sin.

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▲ Through divine revelation God chose to show forth and communicate himself and the eternal decisions of his will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, he chose “to share those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind” (Vatican I). (*Divine Revelation*, 6)

The plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. (*Divine Revelation*, 2)

EXPLANATION . . .

● (1) The history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the plan by which God, true and one, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men, and reconciles and unites with himself those turned away from sin.

(2) We worship God by keeping his commandments as obedient children. The purpose of our life is to answer our Father's invitation to know him and to love him and to give ourselves to him and also to serve others. We fulfill the purpose of our life when we do God's will. It will be finally fulfilled when we give ourselves completely over to God at our death.



We worship God especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

12. What graces can we expect from God's goodness?

From God's goodness we receive the graces needed (1) to profess the truth in love (2) and to bring forth the fruits of love, justice and peace, all to his glory.

THE BIBLE . . .

✠ *Rather, guided by truth and love, we will in all things grow into him who is the head, Christ. (Eph 4:15)*

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▲ Man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to his Creator. (*Church in the Modern World*, 19)



Chapter 3

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

15. Can man come to know God through created things?

(1) Sacred Scripture shows that man can come to know God through the things God has made. (2) The Church teaches that from reflection on created things human reason can come to a knowledge of God as the beginning and end of all that is.

THE BIBLE . . .

✠ *Ever since the creation of the world the invisible attributes of God's eternal power and divine nature have been clearly understood and perceived through the things he has made. Therefore, the conduct of these people is inexcusable. (Rom 1:20)*

"After this I will return and rebuild the fallen tent of David. From its ruins I will rebuild it and raise it up again, so that the rest of mankind may seek out the Lord, as well as all the Gentiles whom I have claimed as my own." (Acts 15:16-17)

The heavens proclaim the glory of God; the firmament shows forth the work of his hands. (Ps 19:2)

For all people were inherently foolish who remained in ignorance of God and did not come to know him who is even while observing the good things around them nor recognize the artisan while studying his works. To their way of thinking, either fire or

salvation God fulfills his plan, and thus the People of God, that is, “the whole Christ,” is being perfected in time.

Jesus Christ gave himself for us in his passion that he might redeem us from sin and cleanse for himself a people pleasing to God. He then poured out on his people the spirit of adoption by making them children of God. In this way he made in himself a new people, filled with the grace of God. United with Jesus, the new People of God are “the whole Christ.” He offers them to his Father and gives him glory. This is the aim of his Father’s plan for the salvation of all men.



Jesus appears to the apostles after his resurrection. United with Jesus, the new People of God are “the whole Christ.”

32. What is the appointed task of the Christian in regard to God’s plan of salvation?

The Christian dedicates himself to his appointed task of making creation give glory to God to the full extent of his abilities and opportunities through the power of Jesus the Savior.



Part Three –THE SACRAMENTS

Chapter 10

THE SACRAMENTS, ACTIONS OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

48. How is the saving work of Christ continued in the Church?

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit the Church enjoys the presence of Christ and carries on his ministry and saving mission.

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▲ To accomplish this [the salvation of mankind], Christ sent from the Father his Holy Spirit, who was to carry on inwardly his saving work and prompt the Church to spread out. (*Mission Activity of the Church*, 4)

EXPLANATION . . .

● Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave his apostles a command to teach all nations and to baptize them. He said, “[Teach] them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the world” (Mt 28:20). Christ is with his Church also through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He promised this the night before he died. “It is much better for you that I depart. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, whereas if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. . . . When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. . . . He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and make it known to you” (Jn 16:7-14).