

CBCP

**Catholic Bishops' Conference
of the Philippines**

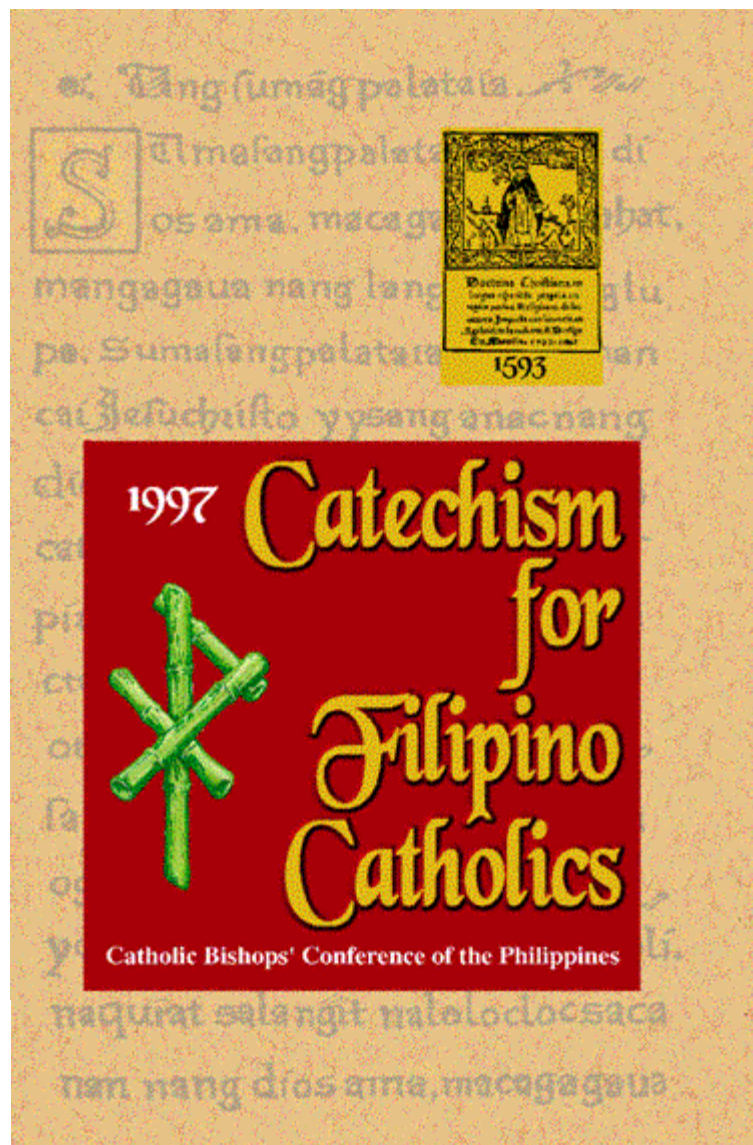
Catechism for Filipino Catholics

**New Edition
with expanded Subject Index
and Primer**

**ECCCE
WORD & LIFE PUBLICATIONS
MANILA
PHILIPPINES**



1593



**From the beginning of the
Christianization**

**of the Philippines to the end of
the 20th Century:**

*Four Centuries of Catechesis in our
Country. One uninterrupted effort to
remain faithful to God, to Man, to the
Church. One continuous endeavor
to make the Catholic Faith relevant
to the culture and the lives
of our Filipino People.*

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Vatican City, 6 March 1997

Prot. N. 97000707

Your Excellency,

The Episcopal Conference of the Philippines, at the appropriate time, sent to this Dicastery the Catechism for Filipino Catholics developed by the same Episcopal Conference, requesting the approval of the Holy See.

The Congregation for the Clergy, after having examined the text and obtained on the first day of March, 1997 the positive opinion (Prot. N. 64/94-03884) rendered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, does hereby grant the requested approbation, according to the requirements of canon 775 § 2.

This Dicastery wishes to congratulate the Bishops of the Philippines for providing an instrument that is truly suitable for transmitting the faith among Catholic Filipinos and hopes that the Catechism will have the widest possible circulation.

I take this opportunity to express to Your Excellency and to the entire Episcopal Conference my sentiments of esteem and with every best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

His Excellency
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Preface

1. This is the official Vatican approved National Catholic Catechism for the Philippines, entitled **Catechism for Filipino Catholics [CFC]**. As a national catechism, one major function of the CFC has been to draw together *two major current sources* for our “renewed catechesis.” The first is the official Catholic teaching of the universal Church as proposed in the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]***, promulgated by the Holy Father in 1992. The second is the ***Acts and Decrees of the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP II]***, with its supplement, the ***National Pastoral Plan [NPP]***, which together present a comprehensive view of the national culture and specific catechetical situation of the Philippine Church.

2. This officially approved edition of the *CFC* is offered by the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines [*CBCP*] as a major effort in implementing PCP II’s urgent call for a triple renewal: a renewed “Catechesis” which in turn will contribute substantially to a renewed “Worship” and “Social Apostolate.”

Why a New Catechism?

3. The most basic reason for this new Catechism is simply the mission which the Risen Christ entrusted to His apostles. “Make disciples of all the nations Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you” (*Mt 28:19-20*). The practical goal of this Catechism, then, is to provide an effective instrument for creatively handing on the Catholic Faith to Filipinos. It thus aims to contribute effectively “Toward a Renewed Integral Evangelization,” developed in *PCP II’s National Pastoral Plan [NPP]*.

4. The *CFC* was actually developed according to the *NPP*’s flow chart. It was conceived in response to the call for catechetical renewal experienced in the ***Church of the Poor***. It was formed by following *NCDP*’s orientational principles for Philippine catechesis. It presents the operational principles and content for an ***integral renewed catechesis***. And it envisions the same goal of a ***Community of Disciples of the Lord***.

5. Actually there are *many catechisms* in circulation throughout the Philippines today. In addition, various religion textbook series have been published for different levels of school religious instruction. Nevertheless, *PCP II*'s call for a renewed integral catechesis has intensified the widely-felt need for a new, up-to-date, officially approved, exposition of the Catholic Faith. We need a catechism that is specifically written for Filipinos, in our actual, concrete Philippine situation. In many parts of our country there are no easily available Catholic catechisms. Even where some do exist, they are frequently out-of-date, or partial, one-sided accounts, or foreign works, not written for Filipinos. Even the Vatican's *Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, "a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine," needs to be translated into our Filipino context for a truly inculturated catechesis.

6. Thus there is an urgent demand, *first* of all, for a catechism that addresses itself to our Philippine context, with its particular needs, characteristics and crises. The *NCDP* places great stress on a truly ***inculturated catechesis*** which responds to the concrete situation and culture of Filipino Catholics and families today, in terms of our own Filipino culture and values. At the same time, the local and regional contexts must be seen in terms of the whole Philippine Church, and its catechetical content constantly related to the *CCC*'s authoritative presentation of the universal doctrine, morals, and worship of the Catholic Faith.

7. The nature and conditions of the Filipino family, and of Filipino value and belief systems, are undergoing radical changes, amidst our growing modernization with its economic and political upheavals. This radically affects the proclamation of Christ's Good News to today's Filipino. A ***national catechism***, therefore, prepared by the CBCP and officially approved by the proper Vatican Congregations, represents a significant advance over the many partial, regionally-limited expositions of the Faith.

8. A *second* demand arises from the situation of wide diversity and pluralism in the post-Vatican II era. Bible study, liturgical changes, value education, the thrust for justice — all have shaped this new "climate." The sheer number of different groups, often urging conflicting doctrines and actions, has confused many regarding even the *essentials* of the Faith. Some have retreated to a basically *fundamentalist* position, in fear of losing their Catholic Faith. Others have been enticed by new prayer or charismatic sects to abandon the Catholic Church for more "personable," warmer socio-religious groups. Many others are simply disturbed, seeking how they should react to these new challenges (*cf. PCP II 216-28*).

9. In such a situation, shared by Catholics all over the world, this new, up-to-date *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* responds to **three basic needs**. The *first* is, that in the face of all the proselytizing and pressure propaganda, Filipino Catholics look for the **reliable Catholic word**, especially in family and youth catechesis. *Second*, to reject today's common pursuit of self-centered freedom and ever richer lifestyles, Catholics seek a clear sense of **Christian moral values** and responsibility. Today's morality must be inspired by the Gospel priority of *service*, especially to the poor. *Third*, amidst the anxious search for new prayer forms and novel faith-experiences, Catholics seek their roots in the **Catholic tradition of community worship** (cf. NCDP 54).

Characteristics of This Catechism

10. Given these three basic needs, the mission of the Church to proclaim Christ's Gospel calls today for a new type of catechism, adapted to our times. This new catechism stresses *four characteristics*.

Focus on the Essentials

11. The *first* is its focus on the **Essentials of the Faith**. The Catechism can not possibly offer a complete, comprehensive account of all aspects and elements of the Faith. Rather, it aims at presenting the basics of the Church's faith in Christ by drawing directly on the Creed, the Commandments, and the Sacraments, not on any particular theological school or trend.

This Faith is proposed in the CCC. Filipino Catholics professed this Faith in proclaiming the Creed at Sunday Mass. They live out this Catholic commitment to Christ by obeying the Commandments in their Christian moral service. And they celebrate it in Catholic sacramental worship. Thus they express in daily life the greatest of the Christian virtues — Faith, Hope, and Love.

12. These essentials of Faith in Christ must be expressed in an *organic* and *systematic* manner, which is both concentrated yet attractive (cf. PCP II 163; CCC 5). This involves an *integrated* approach, which constitutes the *first methodological principle* of our catechesis (cf. NCDP 75, 414-25). Catholic Faith is a living integrated whole both in its *objective content* — *Doctrine, Morals, and Worship*, as well as in every *subject, every believer*. To respond to Christ's personal call to discipleship means to believe, act, and worship with all the energies of one's head, will, and heart, in Christ's own community, the Church.

Experiential/Filipino

13. *Second*, believing in Christ must be related directly to the daily Filipino human experience of living as Christ's disciple. Such human experience is found on every page of the Bible, in Church teaching, in the signs of the times. But it is especially the typical personal experience, culture, and values of today's Filipino Catholic that must be evident in the Catechism. This follows the *second catechetical principle* of stressing **experience** and **inculturation** (cf. NCDP 401-4; 426-33).

Catholic

14. *Third*, this is to be an explicitly Catholic catechism. This is meant not in any negative sense of questioning the sincerity or value of other faiths, but positively in terms of its sources, content and goal. Its **sources** are *Sacred Scripture*, *Catholic tradition*, especially as presented in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the *human experience of Filipinos* in their Catholic community. Its **content** for a Renewed Integral Evangelization includes the *doctrinal truths*, *moral principles and values*, and *liturgical life* of that community. Its **goal** is to *build up* the Community of Disciples of the Lord. This constitutes the *third basic methodological principle* of our catechetical ministry (cf. NPP; NCDP 434-50).

Practical

15. *Fourth*, this Catechism is a book to be used, a source to be consulted in practical questions about the Faith. Thus it consciously works at integrating *Doctrine* (orthodoxy) with *Catholic Moral conduct and attitudes*, as well as with *Catholic Worship* (orthopraxis). But beyond illuminating the Faith, this Catechism aims at inspiring and motivating its readers to actual personal commitment to Jesus Christ, within our Catholic community. It invites and challenges the reader to "come and see" (*Jn 1:39*), and experience the life of Faith, Love, and Hope to which Jesus calls every one who listens to his voice (cf. *Lk 11:28*).

For Whom the Catechism Is Intended

16. The *CFC* is expressly directed to all who are actively engaged in communicating or studying the Faith: **priests, religious, catechists, religion teachers**—and perhaps most of all, **parents**. It is an *adult catechism* in the

sense that it provides a *source book* for those who address the typical Sunday Mass congregation of an ordinary Filipino parish. Therefore, this is not a parish or school religion textbook. It is intended to serve as a *proximate source* for parish catechesis, and for creating religion textbooks suited to the primary, secondary or college levels.

17. This Catechism is addressed primarily to ***committed Filipino Catholics***, rather than to winning new converts to the Catholic Faith. Nevertheless, it can be very useful for anyone desiring to know more about the Catholic Faith. Because of its *Scripturally* based exposition of the Faith, and its *Creedal* structure, the Catechism can foster fruitful ecumenical dialogue with other Christians. Because of its stress on the living Tradition of the local Catholic Church, it highlights both the basics of the CCC, especially the teaching of Vatican II, and the pronouncements of the Catholic Philippine hierarchy [CBCP].

Thus the Catechism provides Filipino Catholics with a *sound apologetic* by giving “the reason for the hope” that Faith instills in them (*cf. 1 Pt 3:15*). It encourages its readers to “hold fast to the authentic message, so that [they] will be able both to encourage men to follow sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it” (*Ti 1:9*).

Basic Structure of the Catechism

18. The *CFC* is structured according to a ***Trinitarian*** vision of the Faith that is at the same time truly ***Christ-centered***. Moreover, the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, Mother of our Savior and his perfect disciple, has served as its inspirational model, just as she has done for countless Filipino Catholics through the ages. Most important, however, is the need to understand *CFC*’s basic structure — both *WHAT* is its structure, and *WHY* this structure was chosen.

Like the Vatican’s CCC, the *CFC* is based on “*four pillars*”: the baptismal profession of Faith (the *Creed*), the Sacraments of faith, the life of Faith (the *commandments*), and the prayer of the believer (the *Lord’s prayer*). (*cf. CCC 13*)

Unlike the CCC, however, which simply arranges the four pillars one after another [1) Creed, 2) Sacraments, 3) Commandments, and 4) Prayer], ***the CFC structures the WHOLE Catechism on the Creed***. It inserts Christian Moral Life (Commandments) following the Creedal section on Jesus Christ, and combines Prayer with Sacraments immediately after the Creedal truths on the Holy Spirit and the Church. The *CFC*’s exposition of

the Lord's Prayer, then, serves as the Epilogue integrating the whole Catechism.

19. This arrangement offers *two advantages*:

- it directly links “keeping the Commandments” with the “following of Christ,” and
- it integrates Sacraments with Prayer, and both as flowing from the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Thus this arrangement responds to the *NCDP*'s call to strengthen moral catechesis by linking it directly with Catholic doctrine and worship. It also takes up *PCP II*'s challenge for a renewed catechesis by pushing beyond mere “head knowledge” of doctrinal formulas on one side, or pious devotional ritualism on the other, to foster a truly integrated Faith of loving Christian service and worship.

20. The *CFC*, then, is structured in **three main Parts**, introduced by a **Preface** and **Foundations**, and concluding with an **Epilogue** that summarizes the whole Catechism.

Preface Foundations

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The Filipino Catholic | 3. Our Response: Faith |
| 2. God's Call: Revelation | 4. Our Unbelief |

***Part I* Christ, Our Truth (Doctrine)**

5. Catholic Doctrine
6. God, Father Almighty
7. Creator of All
8. The Fall from Glory
9. God Promises a Savior
10. Jesus Christ: Mission/Person
11. Christ Has Died
12. Christ Is Risen and Will Come Again

Part II

Christ, Our Way (Moral Life)

- 13. Living as Disciples of Christ
- 14. Following Christ
- 15. Christian Law
- 16. Love the Lord Your God
- 17. Love One Another
- 18. Respect Life
- 19. Respect Human Sexuality
- 20. Building Justice
- 21. Respecting Truth

***Part III* Christ, Our Life (Worship)**

- 22. The Holy Spirit
- 23. The Catholic Church
- 24. Catholic Prayer and Worship
- 25. Baptism/Confirmation
- 26. Eucharist
- 27. Healing Sacraments
- 28. Vocation Sacraments
- 29. Resurrection and Life Everlasting
- 30. **Epilogue:** The Lord's Prayer

21. The three parts of *Doctrine*, *Moral Life* and *Worship* thus present the **Trinity** — *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Spirit*, while at the same time focussing on **Christ** as our *Truth*, our *Way* and our *Life* (cf. *Jn 14:16*). They call for our Spirit-inspired response of *Faith*, *Love* and *Hope*, as members of Christ's Body, our Catholic community, the Church. Finally, the three Parts respond to the three most basic human questions: *Doctrine* answers "*What can I know?*", *Moral* teaching illumines "*What should I do?*", and the *Sacrament/Worship* celebrate "*What may I hope for?*"

Thus the *CFC*'s structure reproduces in an integrative manner the Catholic Faith's threefold *objective* structure of *Doctrine* (Creed), *Morals* (Commandments) and *Worship* (Sacraments), and its holistic *subjective*

structure in all believers of *Head* (believing), *Hands* (acting/doing), and *Heart* (prayerful trusting).

Using This Catechism

22. To find any particular topic of the Catholic Faith in this Catechism, first consult the *Table of Contents* which outlines the whole book. For more precise location, an *Index* of all the topics treated in the Catechism is provided in the back.

23. In order to facilitate consultation and use of this Catechism, the *format* of each chapter follows the same pattern. Each chapter begins with some quote from the Scriptures or the Magisterium and a brief ***Opening*** which identifies the topic to be treated and relates it to other pertinent topics in the Catechism. This is followed immediately by the ***Context*** which focuses the topic within our specific Filipino situation, with its particular problems, attitudes, values, and weaknesses. Thus contextualized, the topic is then developed in the ***Exposition*** which presents the essential content drawn from Scripture and Church teaching, and related directly to the concrete human experience of today's Filipino Catholic.

24. The Exposition is the main part of each chapter and is followed by a brief section entitled ***Integration***. This offers *one* explicit example of interrelating the doctrinal, moral and worship dimensions of the chapter's topic. Thus, the *Integration* responds to a key directive of the *NCDP* which proposes the constant interrelating of Doctrine, Morals and Worship to bring out Faith's *experiential* reality more intensely and more vividly. But only *one* example is usually presented, precisely as an invitation to compose *many* other examples of basic interrelationships of the three dimensions.

25. Finally, each chapter concludes with a series of ***Questions and Answers*** summarizing the basic content of the chapter. The style of the Answers is simple, often arranging the context in schematic form, in order to facilitate its comprehension and retention.

26. The *Question-Answer* section of each chapter is intended to respond to a *double need*. *First*, the need to have clear answers to specific questions on points of the Faith that are under attack from non-Catholics, or are widely misunderstood even among the faithful. The Question-Answer section of this Catechism attempts to deal with such real, genuine questions of adult

Filipino Catholics today. *Second*, the Question-Answer section aims at presenting what is most important and central to each chapter, summarizing its essential matter. Thus the Questions-Answers offer what is recommended for learning by heart through memorization.

27. Synthesis. This Catechism, then, can be described in summary terms as follows:

What? A *National Catechism* presenting the *essentials* of the Catholic Faith, prepared by the CBCP, following the guidelines of the *NCDP*, and drawing on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]* and the *2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP II]* with its *National Pastoral Plan [NPP]*;

Why? in order to present the *essentials* of the Catholic Faith, in an up-to-date, inculturated, organic, and systematic exposition;

How? by *grounding* its message firmly and consistently *on Scripture* and *Church Teaching*, in unceasing interplay with *Filipino experience* and culture, both personal and social;

For? *Filipino Catholics* engaged in communicating the Faith, and all who wish to know more about the Catholic Faith today;

In What Shape?

- structured according to the *Trinitarian* exposition of the Faith, that is *Christ-centered* by focusing directly on Jesus Christ, our Truth, our Way and our Life; and calling for a *life-response of Faith, Hope and Love*, animated by the *example of Mary*, the mother of our Savior and his perfect disciple.
- organized in 29 chapters, each with an *Opening*, a *Context*, a detailed *Exposition*, a specific example of *Integration*, and concluding with a synthesis in *Question-Answer* form.
- with a concluding chapter, the *Epilogue*, which synthesizes the whole work.

Catechism for Filipino Catholics

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Chapter 1

Who is the Filipino Catholic?

The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only Son, coming from the Father, filled with enduring love.

(Jn 1:14)

We Filipinos are followers of Christ, his disciples. To trace his footsteps in our times means to utter his word to others, to love with his love, to live with his life; . . . To cease following him is to betray our very identity.

(PCP II 34)



OPENING

28. This is a book about life in Christ, life lived according to the Gospel. The “Good News” is that God has become man in Jesus Christ our Lord, who came to save us from sin and bring us to fullness of life. This is the Gospel which we Filipinos have accepted. As *PCP II* proudly declares: “For us Filipinos, the first century of the coming millennium will mark the 500th year since we as a people accepted the Faith” (*PCP II 3*). It makes us the only Christian nation among our Asian brethren. There are deep affinities between Christ’s message and the Filipino’s inmost ways of thinking and

acting. “Much of the Gospel has become part of us — compassion, forgiveness, caring, piety — and makes of us a basically decent people (*PCP II 15*). Through the past centuries, right up to our present critical times, growing more mature in the following of Christ has meant becoming more truly and authentically *Filipino*.

29. Vatican II teaches that Catholics “must give expression to this newness of [Christian] life in their own society and culture and in a manner that is in keeping with the traditions of their own land.” As addressed to us Filipino Catholics, therefore, the Council declares that we

must be familiar with our culture, we must purify and guard it, develop it in accordance with present-day conditions. We must perfect it in Christ so that the faith of Christ and the life of the Church will not be something foreign to the society in which we live, but will begin to transform and permeate it. (*AG 21*)

30. *PCP II* insisted on the mutual interaction between Christian Faith and Filipino culture. “Hence we must take a closer look at how the values that we have from our Christian Faith can strengthen the good in our cultural values and correct what is excessive in them and supply for their deficiencies” (*PCP II 22*). Likewise,

for Faith to mature in love, it must be interiorized. Church teachings and practices must be personally appreciated and appropriated by us, as a people with our own particular culture, with our own ways of thinking and valuing. Faith must take root in the matrix of our Filipino being so that we may truly believe and love as Filipinos (*PCP II 72*).



CONTEXT

31. We Filipinos have had a long history of very sharp and colorful religious experiences: From our pre-Christian times, through the centuries of Spanish Christian evangelization, to the American Protestant influx in the Commonwealth era, and the Japanese occupation during World War II, right

up past Vatican II's "Second Pentecost," to "People Power" and today's "Basic Christian Communities," and the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [*PCP II*]. Our understanding and love of Jesus Christ has been colored by our personal and national historical experiences of pain and struggle, of victory and celebration. Our faith in Jesus is marked by our deep devotion to *Mary*, his Mother, and our Mother and Model. All these experiences have somehow defined and clarified our unique identity as *persons*, as *Christians*, as *Filipinos*, as a *nation*.

32. *PCP II* was held "to take stock of where we are; to look where we are going; to reanimate our life in Christ; to unite all things in Him (*PCP II* 7). Our *Catholic* Faith, therefore, must be "inculturated" within our specific and unique Filipino character which has in part shaped our faith-experiences through the years. This Catechism represents a serious effort at just such an inculturated presentation of the essentials of the Faith to the Catholic Filipino of today.



EXPOSITION

33. To identify what it means to be a "Filipino Catholic" we ask: From whom do we naturally draw our *self-identity*? Where do we find the deepest *meaning* in our lives? How do we react to *suffering*? How do we *commit* ourselves to our ideals in life? What is our *view of the world* in all its depth and hidden reality? Brief answers to these questions can be sketched by selecting a series of *five* predominant Filipino *characteristics*, together with five essential traits of Jesus Christ, both assumed within the typical "Filipino way" to Jesus. This will at once define the Filipino Catholic as well as show that in our country, to become more deeply *Christian* is to become more truly and authentically *Filipino*.

A. Self-identity

34. First, we Filipinos are *family-oriented*. The *anak-magulang* relationship is of primary importance to us Filipinos. *Ama*, *ina*, and *anak* are culturally and emotionally significant to us Filipinos who cherish our filial attachment not only to our immediate family, but also to our extended family (*ninongs*, *ninangs*, etc.). This family-centeredness supplies a basic sense of belonging, stability and security. It is from our families that we Filipinos naturally draw our sense of self-identity.

35. Jesus as both the *Son of God* (*Anak ng Amang Diyos*) and the *Son of Man* (*Anak ng Tao*) endears himself naturally to us family-oriented Filipinos. As Son of Man, Jesus leads us to his Mother Mary (*Ina ng Diyos*) whom he shares with us (cf. *Jn 19:26-27*). He thus welcomes us into his own household, offers himself as our brother (*kapatid*), and draws us through the Sacrament of Baptism to a new identity and into the family life of his heavenly Father (cf. *Jn 3:5-7*).

36. What can better remind us Filipinos of our early childhood, or respond more directly to our traditional love for children, than *Jesus, the Sto. Niño*? At twelve, Jesus was a discerning and daring child, who nonetheless remained obedient to his parents (cf. *Lk 2:41-51*). In his public life, Jesus embraced little children and admonished his disciples to become child-like in openness and simplicity (cf. *Mt 18:2-4*). In our family-orientedness, then, we Filipinos are naturally attracted to Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Man. Thus, *PCP II* 46-48 stress the exceptional importance of our Filipino family as both subject and object of evangelization.

B. Meaning in Life

37. Second, we Filipinos are *meal-oriented* (*salu-salo*, *kainan*). Because Filipinos consider almost everyone as part of their family (*parang pamilya*), we are known for being gracious hosts and grateful guests. Serving our guests with the best we have is an inborn value to Filipinos, rich and poor alike. We love to celebrate any and all events with a special meal. Even with unexpected guests, we Filipinos try our best to offer something, meager as it may be, with the traditional greeting: “Come and eat with us.” (*Tuloy po kayo at kumain muna tayo.*)

38. Jesus as *Eucharist* is not only the *host* of the new Paschal Meal (cf. *1 Cor 11:23-26*), and the *food*, the bread of life (cf. *Jn 6:48-58*), but even the *guest* in every gathering (cf. *Mt 18:20*; *Rev 3:20*). The New Testament refers more than twenty-five times to eating (*kainan*). Eating together in table fellowship with the presence of the risen Christ (cf. *1 Cor 10:17*), “*Communion*,” in other words, constitutes the core-

witness of the early Church as a Eucharistic community. So we Filipinos feel naturally “at home” in breaking bread together with Jesus. *PCP II*’s “spirituality of social transformation finds in the Eucharist not only its full nourishment but also its total prayerful communion with the Lord of salvation and liberation” (*PCP II* 281).

C. Sufferings in Life

39. *Third*, we Filipinos are ***kundiman-oriented***. The *kundiman* is a sad Filipino song about wounded love. Filipinos are naturally attracted to heroes sacrificing everything for love. We are patient and forgiving to a fault (“*magpapaka-alipin ako nang dahil sa iyo*”). This acceptance of suffering manifests a deep, positive spiritual value of Filipinos’ *kalooban*.

40. *Jesus*, the *Suffering Servant* of the prophet Isaiah, is portrayed through our favorite Filipino images of *Padre Hesus Nazareno*, the *Santo Entierro* or the Sacred Heart. Through these images, Jesus appears as one of “the least of our brethren”: the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick, the lonely stranger and the prisoner (*cf. Mt 25:31-46*). Jesus the Suffering Servant can thus reach out to us Filipinos as a healing and forgiving Savior who understands our weaknesses, our failures, our feelings of depression, fear and loneliness. He has been through it all himself! To us Filipinos who can even celebrate the sufferings and hardships of life in song, Jesus Christ calls: “Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you” (*Mt 11:28*).

D. Life-Commitment

41. *Fourth*, we Filipinos are ***bayani-oriented***. A *bayani* is a hero. We Filipinos are natural hero-followers. For all our patience and tolerance, we will not accept ultimate failure and defeat. We tend instinctively to always personalize any good cause in terms of a leader, especially when its object is to defend the weak and the oppressed. To protect this innate sense of human dignity, Filipinos are prepared to lay down even their lives.

42. *Jesus as Christ the King (Cristo Rey)* responds well to the *bayani-oriented* Filipino. As born social critics, organizers and martyrs, we Filipinos see Jesus Christ as the Conqueror of the world by his mission as *prophet, king* and *priest* (*cf. PCP II* 57-61). Jesus came as one sent by the Father, to do the Father’s will (*cf. Jn 5:30*). He was “to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to

prisoners” (*Lk 4:18*). Although a “sign of contradiction” himself (*Lk 2:34*), Jesus made the Kingdom of God present among his people by his teaching (*cf. Mt 7:29*) and signs. “The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (*Lk 7:22*). So as *bayani*-oriented, we Filipinos enthrone our image of *Cristo Rey*. He assures us that everything will be alright in the end. Christ the King has won the ultimate victory over evil.

E. World View

43. *Fifth*, we Filipinos are *spirit-oriented*. We are often said to be naturally psychic. We have a deep-seated belief in the supernatural and in all kinds of spirits dwelling in individual persons, places and things. Even in today’s world of science and technology, Filipinos continue to invoke the spirits in various undertakings, especially in faith-healings and exorcisms.

44. *Jesus* the “*miracle-worker*” who promised to send his Spirit to his disciples to give them new life (*cf. Jn 15:26; 16:7; 13-14*), is thus very appealing to us Filipinos. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Risen Christ, draws us Filipinos into a community wherein superstition and enslaving magic are overcome by authentic worship of the Father “in spirit and truth” (*cf. Jn 4:23*). In Christ’s community, the Church, “to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (*1 Cor 12:7*). This same Spirit, which empowered Jesus the miracle worker, is active in his disciples, uniting them in the teaching of the apostles, and in community fellowship of the breaking of bread and prayer through Christ their Lord (*LG 13*).

F. The Filipino Way

45. But accepting Jesus Christ as responding to these essential Filipino traits has historically come about and continued in a typical “Filipino” manner. The outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be a “*pueblo amante de Maria*” – a people in love with Mary. Even before the coming of the Spanish missionaries, there was a small dark image of the Blessed Virgin, known only as coming “from the sea,” venerated on the shores of Manila Bay. Thus originated the devotion to *Nuestra Señora de Guia*, Our Lady, Guide of the Way, the oldest extant image of Mary in the Philippines (*PCP II 153*).

46. The typically “Filipino” approach to Christ, therefore, is *with and through Mary*. Devotion to Mary has always been intimately intertwined with Christ. The two central mysteries of our Faith in Christ: the mystery of the Incarnation celebrated at Christmas, and of Redemption celebrated during Holy Week, are deeply marked by the veneration of Mary. This is portrayed graphically in the *Simbang Gabi* (*Misa de Gallo* or *de Aguinaldo*) and the *panunuluyan* at Christmas time, and the *Salubong* in Easter Sunday morning (NCDP 242).

47. Marian devotion and piety seem co-natural to us Filipinos. Mary is deeply involved in each of the five Filipino characteristics leading us to Christ. The “family altar” in so many Filipino homes witnesses to *Mary* as *mother of Jesus* and *our spiritual mother*. Thus she is at the center of our *family-orientedness*. As *celebration* and *meal-oriented*, Mary’s month of May is noted for the *fiestas* in her honor and pilgrimages to her shrines. For *suffering in life*, Mary is venerated as the *Mater Dolorosa*, the Sorrowful Mother, whose “*Perpetual Help*,” compassion and love is sought through popular novenas and devotions.

As *bayani-oriented*, we have Mary as our *Queen*, the loving mother of Christ our King. Moreover, she is the young maiden whose *life commitment*: “Be it done to me according to your word,” is repeated thrice everyday in the *Angelus*. Finally, as *spirit-oriented*, Mary is venerated precisely as the woman upon whom the Holy Spirit came, that her offspring would be called Son of God (*cf. Lk 1:35*). The many Lourdes “grottos” throughout our country testify to our Filipino attraction to her many apparitions.

48. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*, has greatly helped many simple Filipinos to remain Catholics. Their deep devotion to the Mother of God has been the strongest force keeping their faith alive (*cf. AMB 67*). Mary has been and remains the central inspiring force in bringing about a deeper evangelization of the masses of our people, “the safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization” (*AMB 72-73*).

G. The Filipino Catholic

49. From this Marian approach to the series of five Filipino characteristics inter-related with essential traits of Jesus Christ, a rough sketch of us Filipino Catholics can be drawn. We are *first* of all family-centered Filipinos who can easily talk to God the Father through His only begotten Son-made-man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our devotion to the *Sto. Niño* and the *Mahal na*

Birhen reveals fundamental depths of our own self-identity. *Secondly*, we find meaning in our lives and learn to face the hunger and poverty around us in encountering Jesus as Eucharist in our parish community. “Around the table of the Lord,” we Filipino Catholics are drawn by prayer to share our time, energy and very lives, for the service of our needy brethren and for the building-up of truly Christian communities of justice, love and healing.

50. *Third*, as Filipino Catholics, because we have met Christ the Suffering Servant in his Passion, we can pray about sin and forgiveness, about justice and reconciliation, about the suffering and Passion of our own Filipino people today. We have the strength to offer ourselves as “bread broken for the world,” together with Jesus, because we believe with unshakeable hope that the Crucified One is Risen from the dead, victorious over sin, death and the world.

51. *Fourth*, we Catholic Filipinos, resilient as the bamboo (*kawayan*) and sturdy as the *narra*, commit ourselves to Christ, our hero-king, in deep gratitude for the gift of faith and for being Filipino. *Lastly*, our world vision as Catholic Filipinos is gradually transformed by Christ’s Spirit-in-the-world in our Church community.

In the depths of the Filipino spirit is a longing for *kaayusan*, for order out of chaos, a longing for the life that the creative Spirit of Jesus gives as a gift, a gift which is likewise a challenge (*cf. PCP II 257*). Through sacramental encounters with the Risen Lord, we experience his Spirit’s healing and strengthening power. In Christ’s Spirit, we Catholic Filipinos, inspired by *Mary*, the Holy Virgin, our Mother, are confirmed in our witness to Jesus by our service of our brethren, and our persevering prayer for our beloved dead.

52. Who, then, are Filipino Catholics? We are a people who have experienced in one way or another that our Filipino *identity, meaning, suffering, commitment* and *world-view* are all *tied to Jesus Christ*. Like a diamond with a thousand facets, Christ is able to reveal to every person and nation, their very own unity, truth and value. Thus we Filipino Catholics are people who:

- as baptized into discipleship of Jesus Christ, discover our *identity* as adopted children of our Father and as members of Christ’s Body, the Church, inspired by Mary our Mother;

- in the breaking of bread around the table of the Lord, find *meaning* in sharing ecclesial fellowship with one another and with Christ, their Priest and Eucharist;
- in meeting the Crucified Savior are sustained in the *sufferings* and hardships of life, and receive forgiveness for their sins through his Sacraments;
- *commit* ourselves to our Risen Lord and his mission through the gift of *Faith*, celebrated in great *Hope* in the Sacraments, and lived out in *Love* and service of their fellowmen;
- form our *world-vision* led by the *Spirit of the Risen Christ*, experienced in the *Christian community, the Church*, which sustains us in our pilgrimage of life-in-Christ; and
- approach and live out this Christian life within the powerful inspiring presence of *Mary*, our Mother and Model.



INTEGRATION

53. This “*doctrine*” about the *identity, meaning, suffering, commitment* and *world view* of Filipino Catholics is lived out according to Christian **morality**, especially Christ’s basic commandment of love. We Filipinos are by nature person-centered, spontaneously giving priority to personal feelings, emotions, relationships, beyond any legal demands or impersonal tasks. Christ’s message and Spirit continue to purify this natural personalism of undue family-centeredness and elitist tendencies. For while our natural environment as Filipinos is always the family, the *barkada*, relatives and friends, Christian social morality leads us beyond these limited groups to the larger community’s common good.

54. Even more striking is our *love for celebrating*. Our Christian identity as Filipinos is naturally bound up with **Christian worship** in our celebration of *Christmas, Holy Week, fiestas* and *Marian Feasts* — each in a very special Filipino manner. Again, Christ’s Spirit works from within to purify the warm piety of Catholic Filipino devotions from all superstitious practices and magical faith-healers. Authentic Spirit-inspired Christian prayer helps direct these simple expressions of heartfelt love through Christ to the Father.

Of particular importance are the traditional Filipino *Marian devotions* which draw on and express the deep yearnings of the Catholic Filipino.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

55. *Who are Christians?*

Christians are men and women who are baptized in the faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man to be Savior of all. United in the Church as Christ's "people of God," they live out this faith in personal conviction, committed witness, and Spirit-inspired worship of God their Father.

56. *How can we become more truly Filipino by becoming more truly Christian?*

By discovering and proclaiming Jesus Christ in our personal and national Filipino culture, we Filipino Catholics invite Christ to purify and heal us, and enrich us with fuller life in his Spirit in the Church.

57. *How does the Church relate "being Christian" with our Filipino culture?*

There is a mutual relationship:

- "being Christian" is part of our Filipino identity,
- maturing in Christian Faith comes only from personally interiorizing Jesus' message in our Filipino ways of thinking, loving and valuing.

The Church teaches that we Filipino Christians must know our own culture, and by our Christian Faith in Christ, purify, guard, develop, and perfect it.

Likewise, we must "inculturate" our Catholic Faith into our Filipino ways. (*Cf. AG 21; PCP II 202-11.*)

58. *What are some of the basic characteristics of the Filipino?*

Filipinos are family-oriented, meal-oriented, patient and long-suffering, hero-followers, and firm believers in the spiritual world.

59. *How does Jesus Christ as presented in Catholic teaching correspond to Filipino character traits?*

Jesus Christ as Son of God and Son of Man:

- brings us into the family of God our Father;
- nourishes us as Eucharist;
- redeems us as Suffering Servant;
- calls us to personal commitment to Him as our Risen Hero-King;
- is experienced in his community, the Church;
- gives us his Mother Mary to be our Mother in grace.

60. *What is our vocation as Catholic Filipinos in Asia?*

We are called both personally, as individual believers, and ecclesially, as members of the Church, to share Jesus Christ with our Asian brethren by word and witness, through active commitment to truth, justice, freedom and universal Christian love.

This means “going forth in-spirited to renew the face of the world — the wider world of Asia and beyond, giving of ourselves unto the renewal and unity of God’s whole creation” (*PCP II 7*).

Our vocation is to move from being truly “Church of the Poor,” through “Renewed Integral Evangelization,” toward becoming a real “Community of Disciples of Christ” before the world (*cf. NPP*).

Chapter 2

God’s Call: Revelation

Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.

(Jn 17:3)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens! God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of

time: namely, to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship. In Him you too were chosen.

(Eph 1:3,9-10,13)



OPENING

61. “It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom to reveal Himself . . . By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of His love, addresses men as His friends, and moves among them in order to invite and receive them in His own company” (*DV 2*). Christian life is based on the conviction that God has spoken to us and that the central truths of our Faith are given in this revelation. The Christian Scriptures attest that “in times past God spoke in varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, He has spoken to us through His Son” (*Heb 1:1-2*).



CONTEXT

62. But how does this idea of “revelation” relate to ordinary Filipino life? The answer is in our personal relationships. One of the best things you can say about a Filipino is: “*Marami siyang kakilala*” (He knows many people), or “*Maraming nakakakilala sa kanya*” (Many people know him). On the other hand, one of the worst things to say about a Filipino is “*Wala siyang kakilala*” (Nobody knows him), or “*Walang kumikilala sa kanya*” (No one gives him recognition). So in our family relationships and friendships we reveal our personal selves to others, and openly receive their self-giving to us. This is what uplifts the Filipino.

63. Now the first one to know us, the first one to show us recognition and reach out to establish a personal relationship with us — to become our *kakilala* — is God. Only in relation to God do we become our full selves. Only in coming to know God do we grow to the full stature of our true selves. But how do we come to know the one true God?

64. Perhaps few countries in the world can compare to the Philippines when it comes to trying to make God known. Newspapers, radio, TV and movies are filled with new preachers, religious celebrations, public devotions, and never-ending appeals for new chapels and churches. Faith healers abound in every community. Self-proclaimed *mediums* claim to lead their gullible devotees in mysterious ways to supposedly closer contact with God, or the Sto. Niño, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. With so many different people claiming to reveal God, who can we believe? How does the one true God actually reveal Himself to us today?



EXPOSITION

I. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

A. In Creation

65. The *first* way God reveals Himself to us is through *creation*. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork” (*Ps 19:1*). In creation, man holds a special place. God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (*Gn 1:26*). God even gives us a share in His own creativity: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (*Gn 1:28*). God creates the whole world for us, to support us in life and reveals Himself to us through His handiwork. “Since the creation of the world. . . God’s eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the things He has made” (*Rom 1:20*).

66. Our *Fourth Eucharistic Prayer* clearly expresses this recognition of God’s Self-revelation through creation:

Father in heaven, You are the one God, living and true . . .

Source of life and goodness,
You have created all things
To fill Your creatures with every blessing
And lead all men to the joyful vision of Your light . . .
Father, we acknowledge Your greatness:
All Your actions show Your wisdom and love,
You formed man in Your own likeness,
 and set him over the whole world
To serve You, his Creator, and to rule over all creatures.

Natural Signs

67. For us Filipinos, then, the world and everything in it are natural signs of God — the initial way God makes Himself known to us. Yet in our everyday experience, we meet not only love, friendship, the good and the beautiful, but also suffering, temptation and evil. All creation has become affected by sin — “sin entered the world, and with sin death” (*Rom 5:12*). The “natural signs” of the Creator have thus become disfigured by pollution, exploitation, injustice, oppression and suffering. So God chose to reveal Himself in a second, more intimate way, by entering into the history of the human race He had created.

B. In Scripture, through Salvation History

68. The *Bible* records God’s entering into a special *covenant* relationship with His chosen people, the race of Abraham, the people of Israel. “I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites and will be their God” (*Ex 29:45*). Again, we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer IV:

Even when man disobeyed you and lost your friendship,
You did not abandon him to the power of death,
But helped all men to seek and find you.
Again and again you offered a covenant to man,
 and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation.

Biblical Signs

69. God revealed Himself in stages. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself through *biblical signs* made up of both *deeds* and *words*. He made covenants with *Noah*, with *Abraham*, and with *Moses*. He performed great

works for His Chosen People, and proclaimed their saving power and truth through the *prophets' words* (cf. *DV* 2; *CCC* 56-64). Through chosen men and women — kings, judges, prophets, priests and wisemen, God led, liberated, and corrected His people. He forgave their sins. He thus revealed Himself as Yahweh, He-who-is-with His people. He is “the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity” (*Ex* 34:6). Today, through His inspired word in the Old Testament, God still reveals Himself to us, and inspires us to respond to His covenant.

70. Yet, even God’s revelation in history was weakened by the infidelities and hardness of heart of His Chosen People. But God so loved the world, that in the fullness of time, He sent His only Son to be our Savior, like us in all things except sin (cf. *Jn* 3:16; *Gal* 4:4; *Heb* 4:15; *CCC* 65). Jesus Christ “completed and perfected God’s revelation by words and works, signs and miracles, but above all by his death and glorious resurrection from the dead” (*DV* 4). Thus the Risen Christ, prefigured in the Old Testament and proclaimed by the apostles, is the unique, irrevocable and definitive revelation of God.

C. In the Church

71. But God’s definitive revelation in Jesus Christ did not stop with Christ’s ascension to his Father. Jesus himself had gathered around him a group of disciples who would form the nucleus of his *Church*. In this Church, the “Good News” of Jesus Christ would be proclaimed and spread to the ends of the earth by the power of the *Holy Spirit*, sent down upon the apostles at Pentecost (cf. *Acts* 1:8). “What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes” (*DV* 8; cf. *CCC* 77-79). *PCP II* summarizes this by stating that Sacred Scripture and the living tradition of the Church transmit to us the teachings of Jesus” (*PCP II* 65).

Liturgical/Ecclesial Signs

72. God continues to manifest Himself today through the Holy Spirit in the Church. He is present in the Church’s preaching the *truth* of Scripture, in its witness of loving *service*, and through *the celebration* of its Christ-given Sacraments. Christ’s revelation in the Church is “the new and definitive

covenant [which] will never pass away. No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ (*1 Tim 6:14; Ti 2:13*)” (*DV 4*).

73. In summary, then, Filipino Catholics experience God’s Self-revelation today. *First*, God shows Himself in the *natural signs* of the beauty and abundance of our natural resources and our rich Filipino culture. *Second*, the *biblical signs* in God’s inspired Word in Scripture, the book of the Church, reveal Him. *Third*, through the Church’s *liturgical signs*, we encounter the Risen Christ in the Sacraments. *Finally*, God makes Himself known to us through the *ecclesial signs* of the Church’s proclamation of the *Creed* and in her *moral teachings* and *commitment to service*.

D. In Other Religions

74. But many Filipino Catholics ask if non-Christians receive God’s revelation. The Church, in her prophetic mission of “reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*GS 4*), discerns the *seeds of the Word* in the history and culture of *all* men of good will. Thus, even non-Christians “who do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience, may achieve eternal salvation” (*LG 16*).

75. For whatever is true and holy in non-Christian cultures and religions is accepted by the Catholic Church since it “often reflect[s] a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.” Filipino Catholics, therefore, should “acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture” (*NA 2*).

PCP II provides guidelines for this inter-religious dialogue. It must be based firmly on the fact that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to all, and that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation since she possesses the fullness of the means to salvation (*cf. UR 3*). This makes possible “openness in understanding the religious convictions of others. [For] ‘dialogue based on hope and love will bear fruit in the Spirit’ (*RMi 56*)” [*PCP II 112-13*].

II. JESUS CHRIST: AGENT, CONTENT AND GOAL OF REVELATION

76. Nevertheless we Catholics must “witness to [our] own faith and way of life” in the *Catholic Church* which “proclaims, and is duty-bound to proclaim, without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life” (*NA 2*). Jesus Christ is “himself both the mediator and the fullness of all Revelation” (*DV 2*; cf. *CCC 65*).

PCP II puts it sharply: “We are followers of Christ, his disciples. We trace his footsteps in our times, to utter his word to others. To love with his love. To live with his life . . . To cease following him is to betray our very identity” (*PCP II 34*). Filipino Catholics, therefore, recognize in Jesus Christ the *goal*, the *content*, and the *agent* of God’s Self-revelation.

A. Goal

77. As *goal*, Jesus is “the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of man’s history” (*GS 10*), in whose image we all are to be conformed (cf. *Rom 8:29*). For it is through the Risen Christ that we shall share the Trinitarian divine life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore our present earthly life is a challenge to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” as St. Paul admonishes us (cf. *Rm 13:14*).

B. Content

78. But Christ is not only the goal of God’s revelation, He is also its *content*, the *Revealed One*. In himself, Jesus reveals both God and ourselves. “Christ, the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of His love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” (*GS 22*). Our Faith centers on Christ precisely because we believe we “are called to union with him, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and towards whom our whole life is directed” (*LG 3*).

C. Agent

79. Finally, besides being the goal and content of Revelation, Christ is also its *agent*, the mediator (cf. *DV 2*). “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (*1 Tim 2:5-6*). Christ is revealer through his part in creation, through his becoming man, through his hidden and public life, and especially through his passion, death and resurrection. After his resurrection, the Risen

Christ continues his revelation by sending us his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (*cf. DV 4*).

80. But how does the revealing Christ touch the Filipino Catholic today? Clearly, *through his Church*, the people of God, united in his name. “The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men” (*LG 8*). The Church herself receives Christ’s revelation. She regards “the Scriptures, taken together with sacred Tradition, as the supreme rule of her faith.” For they present “God’s own Word in an unalterable form, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit sound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles” (*DV 21*).

III. WHERE WE FIND GOD’S REVELATION

A. Scripture and Tradition

81. The Sacred Scriptures, collected in the Bible, are the inspired record of how God dealt with His people, and how they responded to, remembered, and interpreted that experience. The Scriptures arose, then, as the expression of the people’s experience of God, and as a response to their needs. Collectively, the Scriptures form “The Book of the People of God” — the book of the Church. The Bible was written by persons *from* the people of God, *for* the people of God, about the God-experience *of* the people of God” (*NCDP 131*).

82. The Scriptures, then, are never to be separated from the people of God whose life and history (Tradition) formed the context of their writing and development. This is best shown in the *three stages of how the Gospels were formed*.

First stage, the life and teaching of Jesus — what Jesus, while he lived among us, really did and taught for our eternal salvation, until the day he was taken up. *Second stage, oral tradition*. After Jesus’ Ascension, the apostles handed on to their hearers what Jesus had said and done. *Third stage, the written Gospels*. “The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain elements that had been handed on orally or already in written form, others they synthesized or explained in view of the situation of their churches, while preserving the form of proclamation. But always in such a way that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus” (*DV 19; cf. CCC 126*).

This shows how the written Gospels grew out of oral tradition, and were composed in view of the concrete “people of God” of the early Christian communities. Through His inspired Word in Scripture, God continues to reveal Himself to us today.

83. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together. . . flowing out from the same divine well spring, moving towards the same goal and making up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God (*cf. DV 9, 10*). *Tradition* can be taken either as the *process* by which divine revelation, coming from Jesus Christ through the apostles, is communicated and unfolded in the community of the Church, or as the *content* of the revelation so communicated. Thus the living Tradition of the Church, which includes the inspired word of God in Sacred Scripture, is the channel through which God’s self-revelation comes to us.

84. As Sacred Scripture grew *from* Tradition, so it is interpreted *by* Tradition — the life, worship, and teaching of the Church. Tradition depends on Scripture as its normative record of Christian origins and identity, while Scripture requires the living Tradition of the Church to bring its Scriptural message to the fresh challenges and changing contexts confronting Christians in every age.

Biblical Inspiration

85. The Sacred Scriptures are said to be “*inspired*” in a special sense — *not* just as some artist or author may be “inspired” to paint or compose. Rather, *biblical inspiration* means that the sacred and canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that we can call God their “author” and the Bible “the Word of God” (*cf. DV 11; CCC 105-6*). God chose certain human authors, who as true authors made full use of their human powers and faculties, yet were so guided by the Holy Spirit who so enlightened their minds and moved their wills, that they put down in writing what God wanted written.

86. Biblical inspiration, then, is a charism referring to the *special divine activity, communicated to individual authors, editors, and compilers belonging to the community, for the sake of the community*. It produced the sacred texts both of the Old Testament and the New. These texts ground the apostolic Church which remains uniquely authoritative for us and for all generations of Christians.

87. But the Holy Spirit's work in Scripture touches more than its human authors: in some fashion it also touches both the *proclaimers* and the *hearers* of the word. "In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet His children, and talks with them" (*DV 21*). Scripture thus supports and invigorates the Church (*cf. CCC 131-33*). It strengthens our faith, offers food for our souls, and remains a pure and lasting fount for our spiritual lives. Through the Spirit "God's word is living and effective" (*Heb 4:12*). But we realize that what was written in the Spirit must be proclaimed and heard *in the Spirit*.

The Canon of Scripture

88. Because of disputes, the Church found it necessary to make a definitive list, a "*canon*" of the books which have been truly inspired by God and thus have God for their author (*cf. CCC 120*). The Canon of Scripture is divided into the books written before Jesus' life (the Old Testament) and those written after (the New Testament). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church determined the inspired and normative NT books in terms of their apostolic origin, coherence with the essential Gospel message, and constant use in the Church's liturgy. After a long development, the Church finally accepted as inspired, sacred, and canonical, the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament that we find in our Catholic Bible.

Inerrant Saving Truth

89. Since all of Scripture was written, compiled and edited under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and *without error*, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures" (*DV 11; cf. CCC 107*). In recognizing the Bible as normative, the Church confesses that when properly used, Scripture imparts saving truth that can be relied upon to bring us into deeper communion with God.

90. But we must recognize that the Bible is a collection of historical accounts, doctrinal teachings, poems, parables, ethical exhortations, apocalyptic visions and many other forms. It was written over a period of more than a thousand years, separated from us by almost twenty centuries. Therefore, it is not easy to determine precisely what is the "saving truth"

which God wills to impart to us through a particular book or text of Scripture.

In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that

the Christian Faith is *not* a ‘religion of the Book.’ Christianity is the religion of the Word of God, ‘not a written word unable to speak, but the incarnate and living Word.’ So that the Scriptures do not remain a dead letter, it is necessary that Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, by the Holy Spirit, opens our minds to understand them (*CCC 108*).

B. Interpreting Scripture

91. St. Paul tells us that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching — for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work” (*2 Tim 3:16-17*). But the problem, of course, is *how* to faithfully and accurately interpret Scripture. For the Filipino Catholic, the answer is clear. “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone” (*DV 10*).

Four Factors

92. At least *four factors* play a significant part in interpreting Scripture: (1) the inspired *human author’s intention*; (2) the *text* itself; (3) the *reader* of the text; and (4) the *common horizon* connecting the original community context of the text with our Christian community reading it today.

93. *First*, the *human author*. Common sense tells us to find out what the inspired human author had in mind when interpreting a text. This involves some basic idea of the social, economic, and religious conditions of the authors in their particular historical situations (*cf. DV 12; CCC 110*).

94. *Second*, the *text* itself. We have to look at its *literary form* (e.g., historical narratives, prophetic oracles, poems or parables) which the author is using (*cf. DV 12*.)

In addition, the text must be viewed within the *unity* of the whole Bible (*cf. CCC 112*). Both Old and New Testaments are read by Christians in the light of the Risen Crucified Christ. The New Testament’s own use of Old Testament events, persons and things as “types” foreshadowing its own, exemplifies this *dynamic unity* of the two Testaments. For example, Adam and Melchisedek are types of Christ (*cf. Heb 6:20-28*);

the flood foreshadows Baptism (*cf. 1 Pt 3:20-21*); manna in the desert is the “type” of the Eucharist (*cf. Jn 6:48-51, CCC 128-30*).

Something of the history of the text’s interpretations, especially its use in the Church’s liturgy, can be very helpful.*

95. *Third*, the *readers/hearers*. We are constantly asking Scripture new questions and problems, drawn from our own experience. Every Filipino Catholic wants to know what the Scripture means “to me/us.” At the same time we recognize that the Bible brings its own culture of meanings and framework of attitudes that help form, reform and transform us, the readers, into the image of Christ. We must let the Bible “form” us, even while conscious that we are reading it in the light of our own contemporary experience.

In seeking what the Scripture text means “for me/us,” we need to consider the witness offered in the lives of holy men and women in the Church through the centuries. Any authentic interpretation of the text for the Christian community today must be in continuity and harmonize with this tradition of meaning that has grown out of the text’s impact on Christian communities through the ages (*cf. DV 21; CCC 131-33*).

96. *Fourth*, is the *common horizon* which first unites all the books of the Bible into a basic unity, and second, links together the context of the Scriptural text and its tradition with our present reading context today. This horizon is the *new and eternal covenant God has established* with us in *His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ*. In interpreting Scripture, we seek the truth that God wishes to communicate to us today, through Scripture. In this we are guided by the living teaching office of the Church which “exercises its authority in the name of Jesus Christ, not as superior to the Word of God, but as its servant” (*DV 10*).

97. Thus we see that “in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching office (Magisterium) of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to our salvation” (*DV 10*).



INTEGRATION

98. The *danger* is that all this “doctrine” about Revelation and its sources in Scripture and Tradition will remain only as “*head knowledge*,” left behind in our daily living. But God is touching us, calling us to relate to Him in thought, word and deed. It is in and through our *daily life-experiences* – our everyday dealings in family, work and recreation – as well as in *prayer* and *the Sacraments*, that God is close to us. Scripture and Tradition illumine our experiences in two ways: 1) by showing us *how to act* as disciples of Jesus Christ, and 2) by helping us *discern* God’s action in our daily lives.

99. “Showing us how to *act* as believers in Jesus Christ” is the goal of Catholic ***moral teaching***. The Filipino Catholic’s *conscience* is gradually formed through Scripture and the Church’s living tradition. We are drawn to the lifestyle of a son/daughter of the heavenly *Father*, following Jesus Christ, the Incarnate *Son*, strengthened and inspired by the indwelling *Spirit*, and living in *the Church*, Christ’s own community. The Commandments of God and Christ’s Beatitudes do not impose burdensome obligations that restrict our genuine freedom. Rather, they reveal and protect our inalienable dignity as human persons by specifying the moral duties of each and everyone. God’s call to justice and honesty creates our authentic freedom.

100. “To *discern* God’s action in our daily lives” demands a spiritual sensitivity that comes only from authentic Christian ***prayer*** and ***worship***. This means that our personal prayer is grounded in God’s revelation in Scripture and the Church’s living tradition. Only then are we sure to worship “in Spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:24*). All the typical Filipino devotions and forms of religiosity must ultimately be viewed in the light of the Gospel. For Jesus Christ taught us to pray “Our Father” (*cf. Mt 6:9-13*) and gave us the sacrament of his love to be our sacrificial worship of his Father in the Holy Spirit.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

101. *What is “Revelation”?*

Revelation is God’s personal loving communication to us of *who He* is and *His plan to save us all* in His love. It is God’s reaching out to us in friendship, so we get to know and love Him.

102. *How does God reveal Himself?*

God reveals Himself in:

- *Creating* us and everything we see, hear and touch — from the beginning till *now* [*natural signs*];
- His words and deeds in *Sacred Scripture’s* record of salvation history, completed and perfected in His Son-made-man, *Jesus Christ* [*Biblical signs*];
- His continuing *presence* by the *Holy Spirit* in His people, the *Church*; [*ecclesial signs*];
- The prayer and sacramental worship, doctrine, and moral service of the Church; [*liturgical signs*];
- His interior presence (*Grace*) in our *conscience* and in all the events of our daily lives, world events, recognized in the “signs of the times.”

103. *How can the Infinite, Pure Spirit, God, communicate Himself to us in this life?*

God reveals Himself to us through the *deeds* He performed in history and the *words* which proclaim the deeds and clarify their true meaning (*cf. DV 2.*). These words and deeds show God’s presence among us and His saving purpose for us.

104. *How important is Jesus Christ in God’s Revelation?*

For Christians, it is Jesus who is:

- the Revealer of God our Father,
- himself the Image and Word of God; and
- the Final Goal of God’s revelation, our ultimate destiny.

105. *How does Christ reveal God to us today?*

Christ reveals God to us primarily through the *Church*, its *Sacred Scripture* and living *Tradition*, through which the *Holy Spirit* comes to us.

106. *To whom does God reveal Himself?*

God “wants *all* men to be saved and come to know the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*), and in ways both hidden and clear, calls *all* to Christ, who is the goal, the object, and the agent of God’s Self-revelation, and “the real light which enlightens every man” (*Jn 1:9*).

107. *How are we to understand God’s inspired Word in Scripture?*

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Scripture grew from the life, worship and teaching of the early Church. So the Church is its authentic interpreter, under the active help of the same Holy Spirit.

108. *What do we mean by the Bible’s inerrant saving truth?*

Through the Holy Spirit’s charism of *inspiration*, the human authors of the Bible set down faithfully and without error the truth God wished to convey for our salvation (*cf. DV 11; 2 Tim 3:16-17*).

109. *How do we Catholics get to know Sacred Scripture/the Bible?*

Catholics hear the Bible proclaimed at every Mass. Readings from both Old and New Testaments are carefully selected and arranged according to the Church’s liturgical year.

In addition, parishes sponsor Bible study groups and encourage a Catholic Bible in every home for family reading and prayer.

110. *How were the Gospels formed?*

The Gospels were formed in *three stages*: *first*, Jesus’ own teaching in his earthly lifetime; *second*, the oral tradition in which the apostles passed on what Jesus had said and done; and *third*, the putting into writing of the Gospels that we have till this day.

111. *How do we Catholics interpret Scripture?*

In interpreting Sacred Scripture, we search out: (1) the human *author’s* meaning; (2) the *context* of the text in relation to the whole Bible; (3) within our own search for meaning; (4) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the authentic interpretation of the Magisterium, the teaching Church.

112. *How important is Sacred Scripture in our daily lives?*

God continues to speak to us personally through His inspired Word in Scripture, thereby

- helping us to understand the *true meaning* of the daily happenings in our lives,

- guiding our *moral behavior* toward authentic freedom and loving service of others, and
- drawing us into *prayerful union* with Christ, our Way, our Truth and our Life, in his Church.

113. *How has the Bible come to us?*

“Bible” comes from the Greek word “*Biblia*”, meaning “books.” So the Bible is really a *collection of “books.”* The content was first passed on by *oral tradition* over a long period of time before it was put in written form.

The Old Testament was composed in Hebrew and translated into Greek around the *2nd* and *3rd* centuries before Christ. The New Testament was composed in Greek during the 2nd half of the *1st* century A.D.

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- * Traditionally four ‘*senses*’ of Scripture have been distinguished: *literal*: the meaning intended by the original author, providing the basis for all other senses; *allegorical*: a point by point interpretation of the text’s series of actions as symbolic of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated; *moral*: the meaning for our instruction, “as a lesson to us” (*1 Cor 10:11*); *anagogic*: the mystical meaning, interpreted in the light of its eternal significance. The four senses were summarized: the *literal*, teaches what happened; the *allegorical*, what is to be believed; the *moral*, what is to be done, the *anagogic*, towards what we must strain (*cf. CCC 115-19*).

Chapter 3

Our Response: We Believe

Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.

(Heb 11:1)

Faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and through him, with the Father, through the Holy Spirit, a decision to commit oneself to Christ, follow

him, strive to know and accept the truths he continues to teach through his Church.

(Cf. PCP II 64-65)



OPENING

114. For most people, *faith* simply means “believing in God.” *Christian Faith* is believing in the God revealed by Jesus Christ. *Catholic Christian Faith* means believing that Christ reveals God to us in and through the Catholic Church, the body of Christ, united in the Holy Spirit. “Believing” here means realizing that God is calling us to share His divine life — that is His *pagpapakilala* to us. Faith is our personal response as “disciples of Christ” of accepting him “as Lord and Savior.” “It is our ‘Please come in!’ to Christ who stands at the door and knocks (*Rv 3:20*)” (*PCP II 64*). But how do we come to know the way to respond to Him? What is this response we call “faith”?

115. We use “faith” today to mean different things. Sometimes it means our *total response* to God’s revelation. “It is to know, to love, to follow Christ in the Church he founded” (*PCP II 36*). Or we can use “faith” to mean the *virtue* (believing) as distinct from hoping and loving. *Faith* in this sense means our *personal knowledge* of God in Christ, expressed in particular *beliefs* in specific *truths* by which we adhere to Christ. In this chapter we take *faith* to mean **our whole life in Christ**, but with primary focus on *personally knowing* Christ as our **Truth**. The moral activity of *love* will be the focus of Part II of this Catechism, Christ our **Way**, while our Christian *hope* will be developed especially in Part III, Christ our **Life**.



CONTEXT

116. The Philippines is noted for being the only Christian country in Asia. Christian Faith is one of the distinguishing characteristics of our people. Yet today it is common to hear Filipino Catholics acknowledging how little they know of their Christian Faith. Many admit they take their Christian Faith for granted. It enters their lives mostly through religious ceremonies attached to *family celebrations* such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, and house blessings. It is a faith of *traditional pious practices*, and sometimes even of *superstitions*, drawn from our Filipino social, religious, and cultural environment. Such a faith is dangerously open to proselytizing by other religious sects of all kinds, or corrupted by the attractions of worldly secularism (*cf. Mt 13:4-9, 18-23*).

117. *PCP II* describes this situation:

For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom. And we say it is because the ‘unchurched,’ the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith (*PCP II 13*).

Often this is called “*Folk Catholicism*.”

118. Today many Filipino Catholics yearn for a more mature Catholic faith and prayer life. But certain divisive trends and attitudes are also widespread. Some preach Christian doctrine in such a *fundamentalist* way that they ignore the wider demands of Christian charity and service. Others so stress active *ideological commitment* to “justice and the poor” as to practically deny all value to prayer and worship. Finally, still others’ faith is marked by an *individualistic piety*, often accompanied by an exaggerated *bahala na* fatalism. These excesses or distortions give a false picture of authentic Catholic Faith. They also show how important it is to understand what Catholic Faith really is, and how it should operate in our daily lives.



EXPOSITION

I. FAITH IN HUMAN RELATIONS

119. Faith in its broadest sense is a central reality in Filipino life. It is an everyday “natural” factor in all our human relationships and daily actions. For example, in accepting the word of others, we already show our faith (*paniniwala*) in them. We readily obey the directions of those over us, at home, at work, in our communities (*pagsunod*). We even entrust ourselves and our welfare to others: doctors, teachers, judges, civic leaders, not to mention cooks, jeepney drivers, etc. Without such basic *human* faith which includes believing acceptance, obedient action and personal entrusting, human life would be impossible. *Faith* as a human reality, therefore, *is central to our daily lives*.

120. For Filipinos, this can be seen most clearly in our *family life* and *friendships*. We grow up, nurtured and supported by the trust, love and fidelity of our family. We mature through a process of forming personal friendships, first as children, then as teenagers, finally as adults. But in each case, there is a gradual revelation of our own inner self to our friend, and a free acceptance of our friend’s self-revelation. If this friendship is to grow and mature, it must include a “turning toward” the other, a conversion. We acknowledge our need and trust in the other’s friendship by listening to and identifying with our friend.

121. Filipinos do all this spontaneously, naturally, but not without difficulty. Sometimes we turn away, or refuse to listen, or are rejected by the other. But genuine friendships create *mutual loving knowledge* of each other. In them we experience something that liberates us from our own narrowness, and opens us to fuller life and love. We realize that friendship *freely offered* us by another, also demands our *free response*. It is a response that is never just one act, but a long *process* of growing intimacy with our friend. Inevitably, others among our families and associates are eventually involved. Especially God.

II. FAITH IN GOD

122. Faith in God is grounded in God’s own revelation through his words and deeds in salvation history. It is confirmed by the many reasons for believing that have been worked out throughout the centuries, responding to the biblical challenge: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (*1 Pt 3:15*).

A. Characteristics of Christian Faith

Total and Absolute

123. Already the Old Testament contrasted faith “in man in whom there is no salvation” with faith in “the Lord who made heaven and earth . . . who shall reign forever” (*cf. Ps 146:3,5-6,10; Jer 17:5-8*). Only Faith in God calls for a ***total*** and ***absolute*** adherence (*cf. CCC 150*). Christ himself provides, especially in his Passion, Death and Resurrection, the best example of this total and absolute commitment to God.

Trinitarian

124. For us Christians, *Faith is our adherence to the Triune God revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord*. It is our ***friendship with Christ and through Christ with the Father, in their Holy Spirit***. Through Christ’s witness to his Father in his teaching, preaching, miracles, and especially in his Passion, Death and Resurrection, we come to believe in Christ our Savior, in the Father, and in the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts. Our Faith as Catholics, then, consists in our personal *conviction and belief* in God our Father, revealed by Jesus Christ, His own divine Son-made-man, and their presence to us through the Holy Spirit, in the Church (*cf. PCP II 64; CCC 151-52*).

Loving, Maturing and Missionary

125. Our Christian Faith is truly life-giving and mature only through love, for “the man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love” (*1 Jn 4:8*). And to be Christian, ***this love must be inseparably love of God and love of neighbor, like Christ’s***. It thus impels us to mission, to evangelize, by bringing others the Good News (*cf. 1 Cor 9:16*). Such a *missionary spirit* is the *test of authentic Faith* because it is unthinkable that a person should believe in Christ’s Word and Kingdom without bearing witness and proclaiming it in his turn (*cf. EN 24; PCP II 67-71, 402*). This means we are all called to share in Christ’s own three-fold mission as priest, prophet and king (*cf. PCP II 116-21; LG 10-13*).

Informed and Communitarian

126. *PCP II* insists that Catholic Faith must be ***“informed,”*** that is “believing Jesus’ words, and accepting his teachings, trusting that he has “the words of eternal life” (*cf. Jn 6:68; NCDP 147*). It must be

“communitarian” since it is the Church that transmits to us Christ’s revelation through Sacred Scripture and its living Tradition, and alone makes possible for us an adequate faith-response (*cf. PCP II 65*).

Inculturated

127. This Catholic faith in God and in Jesus Christ *is never separated from the typical Filipino faith in family and friends*. On the one hand, we live out our faith in God precisely in our daily relationships with family, friends, fellow workers, etc. On the other hand, each of these is radically affected by our Catholic Faith in God our Father, in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Savior, and in their Holy Spirit dwelling within us in grace. “This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another” (*Jn 13:35; cf. PCP II 72-73, 162, 202-11*).

B. The Three Essential Dimensions of Faith

128. Vatican II explains this faith-response as follows: “By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,’ and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by Him” (*DV 5*). Christian Faith, then, touches every part of us: our minds (*believing*), our wills (*doing*), and our hearts (*trusting*). Let us briefly examine each aspect in turn.

Believing

129. Faith involves our ***basic convictions*** as Christians. “For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead; you will be saved” (*Rom 10:9*). John sums up his Gospel with: “These things have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name” (*Jn 20: 31*).

Faith, then, is ***knowing***, but not mere “head knowledge” of some abstract truths. It is like the deep knowledge we have of our parents, or of anyone we love dearly. *Christian Faith*, then, is ***personal knowledge*** of Jesus Christ as “my Lord and my God” (*Jn 20:28*). Christ solemnly assures each of us: “Here I stand knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house, and have supper with him, and he with me” (*Rv 3:20*).

Doing

130. But besides believing, faith is also *doing*. As St. James writes: “My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without *practicing* it?” (*Jas 2:14*). Christ himself taught: “None of those who cry out ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who *does* the will of my Father in heaven” (*Mt 7:21*). Faith, then, is a *commitment* to follow (obey) God’s will for us. This we see exemplified in Mary’s “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say” (*Lk 1:38*).

PCP II brings out this “doing” dimension of faith as “witnessing” through “loving service” of our needy neighbors. In our concrete situation, particularly urgent is the call for: 1) deeds of justice and love; and 2) for protecting and caring for our endangered earth’s environment (*cf. PCP II 78-80*).

131. Of course, we realize that we often do *not* do what we affirm in faith. But this awareness of our failures emphasizes all the more the essential place of behavior in authentic Christian Faith. It also makes us more conscious of our need for Christ’s Spirit to live out our faith in our actions. “For apart from me you can do nothing” (*Jn 15:5*). “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God” (*DV 5*).

Entrusting/Worshipping

132. Beyond believing and doing, faith is also *entrusting* oneself into God’s hands. *Abraham*, our father in faith, at God’s command left everything to set out for a foreign land. Against all human odds *Moses* trusted Yahweh to free the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, *Jesus* worked signs and cures only with those who trusted in him. He promised the possessed boy’s father: “Everything is possible to a man who trusts” (*Mk 9:23*).

133. *Faith*, then, is *from the heart* — the loving, trusting, and hoping in the Lord that comes from God’s own love flooding our hearts. This trusting Faith “lives and grows through prayer and worship” — personal heartfelt conversation with God that is the opposite of mindless, mechanical repetition of memorized formulas. *Genuine personal prayer* and *group*

prayer find both their *inspirational source* and *summit* of perfection in the **Liturgy**, the Catholic community's official public Trinitarian worship of the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit (*cf. PCP II 74-77*).

C. Faith and Three Classic Questions

134. These *three aspects* of our Christian Faith — *believing, doing, prayerful trusting* — respond to the three classical questions posed to every person in life, and to St. Augustine's famous triple definition of faith. To the question "***What can I know?***" Christian faith responds that *we can know God as Our Father and Christ as Our Lord (credere Deum/Christum)*. "Know that we belong to God . . . that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to recognize the One who is true" (*1 Jn 5:19-20*). *Pagkilala sa Ama, sa Anak at sa Espiritu Santo*.

135. "***What should I do?***" is answered curtly by "Keep His commandments" (*1 Jn 2:3*), which means to "love in deed and truth and not merely talk about it" (*1 Jn 3:18*). This demands acting on the credibility of God's teachings in Christ as true and dependable (*credere Deo/Christo*).

136. Finally, to the question "***What may we hope for?***" Christian Faith celebrates in prayer and sacrament the unshakeable hope that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers; neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom 8:38-39*). In brief, this hope means to believe in God "with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind" (*Mt 22:37*), entrusting ourselves to Him in love (*credere in Deum/Christum*).

D. Faith and Salvation

137. But faith is not some "answer box" — it is not some "thing" we have, keep, and own. Rather, real ***faith is a force within us that by the power of Christ's Holy Spirit gradually works a transformation in our daily thoughts, hopes, attitudes and values.***

In *religious* terms, we know that *faith is necessary for salvation* — it is the "beginning of our salvation" (*cf. Trent, ND 1935; CCC 161*). For "without faith it is impossible to please God" (*Heb 11:6*). From *experience*

we realize that faith brings us *fuller life* which can be described by *three basic values*: genuine personal *maturity*, *freedom* and *happiness*.

Maturity

138. Faith is a growth in *personal maturity* because it helps us “put childish ways aside” (*1 Cor 13:11*). It develops a basic honesty in us before God and man by making us aware of the sacrifices demanded by authentic human love. It grounds our own self-identity in the fact that we are sons and daughters of the Father, redeemed by the Blood of Christ our Savior, and inspired by their indwelling Holy Spirit.

Freedom

139. Faith in Christ *frees us* from preferring “darkness rather than light” (*Jn 3:19*), “the praise of men to the glory of God” (*Jn 12:43*). Without faith in God, we are at the mercy of “carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show” so that “the Father’s love has no place in us” (*1 Jn 2:15-16*). As Scripture warns us: “the world with its seductions is passing away, but the man who does God’s will endures forever” (*1 Jn 2:17*).

Spiritual Joy

140. In so liberating us, faith in Christ fosters the value of *spiritual joy*. So Mary proclaimed: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices* in God my Savior” (*Lk 1:46-47*). John the Baptist was “overjoyed” to hear Christ’s voice — “that is my joy, and it is complete” (*Jn 3:29*). Christ himself taught his disciples “so that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete” (*Jn 15:11*), a “joy no one can take from you” (*Jn 16:22*). For Christian Faith is our response to Christ’s “Good News,” lived in the Spirit whose fruits are “love, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity” (*Gal 5:22*).

III. PARADOXICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

141. Christian Faith presents us with a number of paradoxes that help us grasp its complex reality.

A. Certain, Yet Obscure

142. The *first* is that ***Faith is both most certain yet obscure*** (cf. CCC 157-58, 164). In common usage we speak of “taking things on faith” when we are *not* sure. We live in a secular age where “to be sure” means being able to prove it by experiment and “scientific” means. But this is a rationalistic illusion. We have been “brainwashed” by our own creation of today’s scientific technology.

143. As Filipinos, we realize that none of our major personal decisions, nor our basic ideals and attitudes towards life, freedom, love, etc. could ever be “proven” by scientific experiment. Our family, our friends, our community, our vocation in life — all depend on the vision, inspiration and strength we call “faith”. It is the most “certain” of all we know because it is the foundation upon which we build our lives. But how are we sure of this “faith-foundation”?

144. Such a sure foundation could never come from ourselves, or from other limited men or women. It could never arise from some self-evident truth, or some logical deduction that compels assent (CCC 156). All these need to be, themselves, grounded on some unshakeable foundation. Only the very Word of God could possibly offer such a foundation. Faith is certain because it rests on God who reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, present to us in His Spirit. We are certain of our Faith because it is our *personally committed loving knowledge* based on the *convincing signs* of God revealing Himself in Jesus Christ, and present to us in His Church through word, service, fellowship, and sacrament.

145. But this *certainty* of Faith *does not mean everything is clear and obvious*. On the contrary, we believe God is “*Mystery*”, that is, He is always *more* than we can ever fully comprehend. St. Paul teaches us: “Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror” (1 Cor 13:12). “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). But this obscurity which we experience even in our deepest human relations does not destroy faith’s firmness. We instinctively recognize that persons, and especially the all-personal God, can never be reduced to being “proven” by scientific experiment.

B. Free, Yet Morally Obliging

146. Faith’s *second paradox* is that it is both ***free*** and ***morally obliging*** (cf. CCC 160). Our Christian Faith is a *free* response. No one, not even God, forces us to believe.

God calls men to serve Him in Spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to Him in conscience but not coerced. God has regard for the dignity of the human person which He himself created: the human person is to be guided by his own judgment and to enjoy freedom (*DH 11*).

We Filipinos experience this paradoxical combination of freedom and obligation in our family relationships and friendships. Persons who love us the most have the most claim on us, yet force us the least. We naturally respond to them in love. God, who by loving us the most has the greatest claim on us, leaves and keeps us most free.

C. Reasonable, Yet Beyond Natural Reason

147. A *third paradox* is that Christian Faith is both ***reasonable***, yet ***more than natural reason*** (*cf. CCC 155-56*). Christian Faith is in no conflict with our reason. On the contrary, only rational creatures can believe. Yet faith itself is a grace that enlightens our minds. “Unless you believe, you will not understand” (*Augustine’s quote of Is 7:9*). Our faith in Christ illumines our reason because we believe him who claims “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (*Jn 8:12; cf. Vatican I, ND 135*).

D. An Act, Yet a Process

148. A *fourth paradox* highlights Faith as both ***a particular act***, yet perseverance in ***a life-long process*** that is the beginning of eternal life (*cf. CCC 162-63*). John’s Gospel declares: “Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.” (*Jn 17:3*). But this faith in Christ is much more than a single, personal *decision* for Christ. It is an enduring ***way of life*** within the Christian community, the Church. In fact it is the *principle* of our new life in Christ, which gives us a foretaste of life-with-him in heaven. St. Paul wrote: “The life that I now live is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). Faith as “following Christ” must be gradually and perseveringly developed so that it comes to touch every aspect of our lives, throughout our whole lives.

E. A Gift, Yet Our Doing

149. Faith’s *fifth paradox* is that it is both ***a gift***, a grace from God, yet ***something we do*** (*cf. PCP II 68; CCC 153-55*). It is a gift because “No one

can come to me,” Jesus said, “unless the Father who sent me draws him” (*Jn* 6:44). St. Paul confirms this: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor* 12:3). Our Christian Faith, then, is not merely of our own doing. It depends upon God for two things: first, God’s free gift of *revealing* Himself throughout salvation history; second, for the *grace* of the Holy Spirit’s interior illumination and inspiration which “gives to all joy in assenting to the truth and believing in it” (*Vat. I, DS* 3010; *ND* 120).

150. But God’s “gift” of faith demands our *free cooperation* with others. St. Paul explains this: “Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ” (*Rom* 10:17). Our hearing of Christ’s word today depends on the preaching and teaching just as it did in the time of the Apostles (*cf. Mt* 28:20; *Acts* 2:42; 4:25). This “hearing” means not only *listening* to the Word of God in Scripture and to Church teaching. It also involves *discerning* God’s presence to us through events in our lives, our companions, our inner thoughts, yearnings and fears, etc. In brief, faith is also our active response to the witness to Christ and the Gospel given us by others. This active response is motivated and inspired by the prayer and worship we share with our fellow members of Christ’s Church.

F. Personal, Yet Ecclesial

151. Faith’s *sixth* paradox is its *personal* yet *ecclesial* nature. It is first of all the Church who believes and thus supports and nourishes our faith (*cf. CCC* 168-69). We received the grace of faith when we were baptized and received into the Christian community, the Church. Within our Christian families and our parish community, the faith implanted in Baptism grows and matures. Through catechesis, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, through the Word of God preached and explained, and especially through the Eucharistic celebration of Christ’s Paschal sacrifice, we grow in faith.

Our personal faith in Christ is supported and intensified by our fellow members in the parish or BCC, according to God’s own plan. For “He has willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people” (*LG* 9).

152. Christian faith has many different adherents and forms, even in our country. But a central feature of *Catholic* Faith is its *ecclesial structure*. God always revealed Himself in the Old and New Testaments in terms of a community. Moreover, this revelation has been handed down through the Church’s tradition to us today. It is in the Church that we Catholics

experience the power of the Risen Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is in the Church, the body of Christ, that the Catholic Filipino meets Christ in God's Word in Scripture, in Church teaching, in the liturgical, sacramental praise and worship of God, and in the ministry of service of one another.

153. Christ is personal Savior to Filipino Catholics not as private individuals, but as *members* of a *community* of salvation wherein we meet Jesus and experience his saving power. *Faith is never just something private or individualistic, but a sharing in the Christian community's faith.* This faith is in living continuity with the Apostolic Church, as well as being united to all the Catholic communities today the world over. Vatican II well describes the origins of this ecclesial dimension of faith:

154. "As the firstborn of many brethren, and by the gift of his Spirit, Christ established, after his Death and Resurrection, a new brotherly communion among all who received him in faith and love; this is the communion of his own body, the Church, in which everyone as members would render mutual service in the measure of the different gifts bestowed on each" (*GS 32*).

IV. MARY: MODEL OF FAITH

155. Many Filipino Catholics probably learn more about Faith from their devotion to the Virgin Mary than any other way. This is perfectly grounded in Scripture which portrays Mary as *the* exemplar of faith. Through her "Yes" at the Annunciation, Mary "becomes the model of faith" (*AMB 35; cf. CCC 148*). Luke stresses the contrast between Mary's faith and the disbelief of Zachary by Elizabeth's greeting. "Blest is she who trusted that Lord's words to her would be fulfilled" (*Lk 1:20, 45*). John Paul II writes that "in the expression 'Blest are you who believed' we can rightly find a *kind of 'key'* which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as 'full of grace' " (*cf. RMa 19*).

156. Mary perfectly exemplified the common definitions of faith as "full submission of intellect and will" and the "obedience of faith" (*Rom 16:26; 1:5; cf. DV 5*). But she did it *personally*,

with all her human and feminine "I", and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with the "grace of God that precedes and assists," and perfect

openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts (*DV* 5; *cf.* *LG* 56).

Luke carries this theme of Mary's faith into his second inspired book where he describes her presence among "those who believed" in the apostolic community after the Resurrection (*cf.* *Acts* 1:14).

157. Mary is truly an effective inspiration to us because she constantly exercised faith in all the realities of ordinary, daily living, even in family crises. Luke's account of the "finding in the Temple" offers a perfect example (*cf.* *Lk* 2:41-52). There is the *first* stage of *astonishment* at seeing Jesus in the temple, in the midst of the teachers. Astonishment is often the beginning of faith, the sign and condition to break beyond our "mind-set" and learn something new. Mary and Joseph learned something from Jesus that day.

158. *Second*, there is *distress* and worry, real anguish and suffering. As with the prophets, God's Word brings good and bad fortune. Mary was already "taking up the Cross" of the disciple of Christ. *Third*, there is often a *lack of understanding*. Both Mary and Joseph, and later "the Twelve," could not understand what Jesus meant. Faith is not "clear insight" but "seeing indistinctly, as in a mirror" (*1 Cor* 13:12).

Finally, there is the *fourth* stage of *search* wherein Mary did not drop the incident from her mind, but rather "kept all these things in her heart." Faith is a continual search for meaning, for making sense of what is happening by uncovering what links them together. Like the "scribe who is learned in the reign of God" Mary acted like "the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old" (*Mt* 13:52).

159. Since faith is the key to Mary's whole life, from her divine motherhood to her "falling asleep in the Lord," her life is a real "*pilgrimage of faith*" (*LG* 58). That makes her our model and support in faith. But beyond our individual 'faith lives,' John Paul II has brought out its wider significance.

I wish to draw on the 'pilgrimage of faith' on which the Blessed Virgin advanced . . . This is not just a question of the Virgin Mother's life-story, of her personal journey of faith . . . It is also a question of the history of the whole people of God, of all who take part in the same 'pilgrimage of faith' (*RMa* 5; *cf.* 14-18).



INTEGRATION

160. Faith is a reality touching our *whole selves* — our *minds* (convictions), our *hands* and *will* (committed action) and our *hearts* (trust). The *objective* aspects of Christian faith, exemplified in doctrine (the Creed), morals (the Commandments) and worship (the Sacraments), also manifest faith as an *integral* whole. *Christian Faith*, then, *is not something fragmented*. It is a living way of life that integrates our minds, wills, and hearts with its doctrine, morals, and worship, within a sustaining community of fellow disciples of Christ.

161. To understand the “*doctrine*” or truth of what faith is, then, demands recognizing its *moral* and *worship dimensions* (doing and praying). Scripture constantly insists on this. “The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Christ is to keep his commandments” (*1 Jn 2:3*). And the way to pray is “through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. Amen.”



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

162. *What does “faith” mean in daily life?*

Faith in general means the way we know, accept, and relate positively to others, especially the mutual trust, love, and fidelity we experience in family and friendships.

163. *What is meant by “Catholic faith”?*

Catholic Faith is “to know, love, and follow Jesus Christ in his Body, the Church” (*PCP II 36*).

It is that attitude, activity, and process by which we, empowered by God’s grace:

- freely commit our entire selves to God,

- offer our liberty, our understanding and our whole will to God who reveals Himself and His plan, and
- willingly assent to His Revelation (*cf. DV 5*).

164. *What does faith as “committing our entire selves to God” entail?*

Faith as a living response to God includes:

- our *minds*, *believing* in God who calls us to salvation in Jesus;
- our *will* and *hands*, *doing* God’s will, and
- our *hearts*, *entrusting* ourselves to God in prayer and worship.

165. *What are some basic characteristics of Christian Faith?*

Christian Faith is:

- *total, absolute* commitment,
- to the *Blessed Trinity*: our heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, his own divine Son-made-man, and their Holy Spirit,
- in a “*loving knowledge*”
- that *helps us grow* and mature as Filipinos,
- within our *Filipino culture and values*, and
- “*sends*” us *forth* to spread the Gospel.

166. *How important is Faith?*

Faith is necessary to become our true selves and thus gain our salvation, that is, union with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To the three human classic questions Faith responds

- What can I know? God our Father and Christ our Lord.
- What should I do? Love others as Christ does.
- What may I hope for? Christ’s presence and life everlasting.

167. *What does faith in Christ do for us?*

Faith in Jesus Christ:

- helps us to grow into adult persons who can relate to others responsibly and maturely;
- liberates us from being enslaved by sin; and
- opens us to deep joy and happiness in the Lord.

168. *What are the paradoxical characteristics of Faith?*

Our Christian Faith is at once both:

- *certain* enough to die for, yet a “*mystery*” because like love, there is always more to understand;
- a *free* personal response to God, yet *morally binding* in conscience;

- *reasonable, yet beyond our natural ways of knowing;*
- *an individual act of our graced reason, yet also a life-long process;*
- *a gift of God through both Revelation and interior inspiration, yet something we do nobody can “believe” for us;*
- *a personal individual response, yet only possible as a member of the Christian community, the Church.*

169. *How can we be sure of our faith?*

Faith is something like the loving knowledge we have of our family and friends. We are “sure” of their love and we try to respond to them. Likewise, through God’s Revelation in Christ, we are absolutely sure of His love for us, and try to respond through the gift of faith.

Chapter 4

Our Unbelief

“What an unbelieving lot you are! . . . how long can I endure you? . . . Everything is possible to a man who trusts.” Then the father cried out: “I do believe, help my lack of trust!”

(Mk 9:19, 23-24)

“Stop murmuring,” Jesus told them. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; I will raise him up on the last day. . . You will surely die in your sins unless you come to believe that I Am.”

(Jn 6:43f, 8:24)



OPENING

170. Christ, throughout the Gospels, constantly called for *faith*. Jesus praised the Roman centurion for his great faith (*cf. Mt 8:8-10*). He chided those who worried too much about food and clothing for their weak faith (*cf. Mt 6:30*). He could not work miracles among the Nazareans because of their lack of faith (*cf. Mk 6:5*). On the stormy lake, Jesus asked his terrified apostles: “Why are you lacking in faith?” (*Mk 4:40*). And at his Last Supper, Jesus said to Peter: “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” (*Lk 22:32*).

171. We know from experience that Christian Faith meets all kinds of different receptions among us, and within us, throughout our lives. Sometimes in our *thinking* we put conditions to believing, like the doubting Thomas: “I will never believe it without probing the nailprints in his hands . . .” (*Jn 20: 25*). At other times, our *actions* belie our faith, like St. Peter’s triple “I do not know the man” (*Mt 26:72*). Or perhaps in our *trusting* and *hoping*, we begin to doubt, like the disciples of John the Baptist: “Are you ‘he who is to come,’ or are we to look for someone else?” (*Lk 7:20*).



CONTEXT

172. The faith of the Filipino Catholic today is exposed to many pressures and temptations toward unbelief. Our whole social context of Christian faith and the Church has changed. Before, Filipinos lived in a more stable society in which the Church held a dominant position. Unbelief was generally restricted to certain non-practicing individuals who were pursued pastorally by the Church to return to the sacraments. Today we Filipinos live in a

society in transition, in which many religious and anti-religious voices are raised throughout the land. Whole sub-groups are drawn away from the Catholic Faith. The Church's pastoral response is focused on creating new parish and Church structures, such as "Basic Christian Communities," to communicate the Gospel more effectively.

173. Vatican II described this very situation:

greater numbers are falling away from the practice of religion. In the past, it was the exception to repudiate God and religion to the point of abandoning them, and then only in individual cases; but nowadays it seems a matter of course to reject them as incompatible with scientific progress and a new kind of humanism (*GS 7*).

174. In the Philippines, our problems of unbelief often result from overstressing one essential dimension of the faith, while neglecting another equally basic dimension. *Fundamentalists* are strong on Jesus as their personal Savior, on love of the Bible and care for their members, but are frequently closed to Catholic tradition, development of doctrine, sacramental life and the wider social concerns (*cf. PCP II 219, 223-28*). *Activists* take up the thrust for justice and identification with the poor with such zeal that they find little time for prayer or sacramental worship. Some *Charismatics* are so dedicated to Spirit-filled celebrations that the service of neighbor is neglected. All three groups frequently lack the balance and proportion that is one mark of authentic Catholic Faith.



EXPOSITION

175. What, then, are the principal obstacles to authentic Christian Faith in the Philippines today? The paradoxes of Faith described in Chapter 3 indicate some of them. Faith's certitude and reasonableness can lead some to rationalistic *dogmatism*, while its obscurity opens others to *superstition*. Faith as a gift sometimes induces a "*bahala na*" *fideism*. Stressing the freedom of faith has led some to a self-centered, *subjectivistic* faith. Even the personal character of faith can be misunderstood to mean "*private*," rejecting any communitarian dimension.

The obstacles to authentic faith today among Filipinos can be grouped according to how they touch each of the three basic dimensions of faith itself: believing, doing, and worshipping.

I. OBSTACLES TO BELIEVING, DOING, WORSHIPPING

A. Unbelief vs. Believing

176. In Scripture, the problem of unbelief among the people of God, as distinct from the idolatry of the pagans, is a constant scandal. Three principal types of “not believing” can be picked out which remain relevant today. *First* is the simple *denial* that God exists, or that Jesus Christ is Lord, the only begotten Son. “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’ ” (*Ps 14:1*). “Who is the liar? He who denies that Jesus is the Christ” (*1 Jn 2:22*). Usually such denials are caused by erroneous ideas about both *human beings* and *God* (*cf. CCC 2126*). “Their exaggerated idea of being human causes their faith to languish. . . . Others have such a faulty notion of God that . . . their denial has no reference to the God of the Gospels” (*GS 19*).

177. *Second*, the opposite type of unbelieving is seeking “*special knowledge*” into one’s fate and future. Divination, sorcery and magic have always been condemned. “Let there not be found among you . . . a fortuneteller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead” (*Dt 18:10-11; cf. CCC 2115-17*). Today we still have faith healers, private visionaries and the like, who play upon the credulity of simple Christians and draw them into such “abominations to the Lord” (*Dt 18:12; cf. NCDP 136*).

178. A *third* obstacle to Christian believing is the “natural” self-centeredness or pride that tempts everyone to see any dependence on God as against human freedom and self-fulfillment. From this attitude arises current skepticism, doubts and incredulity. “They” say: “what ‘modern’ person could possibly accept such old-fashioned beliefs!” (*cf. CCC 2088-89*).

This mind-set is based on a false image: 1) of God as some authoritarian Judge, arbitrarily imposing His will on us; and 2) of our freedom as totally independent of God.

Response

179. *PCP II* has proposed that the basic help we need to face these challenges is clearly a “Renewed Catechesis” that grounds renewal in social apostolate and worship. Basically this involves a catechesis that is Christ-centered, rooted in the living Word of Scripture, and authentically Filipino and systematic (*cf. PCP II 156-64*). The aim is to communicate the “true teaching” of the Gospel message presented in a fitting manner (*cf. GS 21*). The basic “truth” presented in Scripture is that God created us free with relative autonomy. God wills our own good. But this in no way denies our complete dependence on God. Without the Creator there can be no created world (*cf. GS 36*).

180. Only in seeing every person in relation to God who is the author and final goal of all, is true human dignity preserved. Our true dignity rests on the fact that we are called to communion with God. As Vatican II stated:

If we exist, it is because God has created us through love, and through love continues to hold us in existence. We cannot live fully according to truth unless we freely acknowledge that love and entrust ourselves to our Creator (*GS 19*).

181. The Risen Christ shows us how to carry on a “renewed catechesis” in a fitting manner in his encounter with the two disciples on the way to *Emmaus*. Christ first walked along with the two doubting disciples, listening to their story. *Second* he “interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to him” (*Lk 24:27*). *Finally*, in breaking bread with them, he offered them the choice of believing.

So Christ today leaves to his followers his word and “food for the journey in the sacrament of faith in which natural elements, the fruits of our cultivation, are changed into his glorified Body and Blood, as a supper of human fellowship and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet” (*GS 38*).

182. In summary, then, Christian doctrine or teaching is a living and life-giving reality that develops through the ages under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, believing in Christ can never be reduced to mere acceptance of “true teaching.” For in Christ the believer sees salvation: “Although you have never seen him, you love him, and without seeing, you now believe in him, and rejoice with inexpressible joy touched with glory, because you are achieving faith’s goal, your salvation” (*1 Pt 1:8-9*).

This salvation is a *present* reality, affecting everything we think, and do, and hope for, every day of our lives.

B. Unbelief vs. Doing

183. But there is a “*practical atheism*” that has always been more common than any theoretical unbelief: Filipinos who live their lives as if God did not exist. Like the Hebrews of old, they do not ask the speculative question: “Does God exist?” Rather they are concerned with the practical: “Is the Lord in our midst or not?” (*Ex 17:7*) “Do we have to worry about Him?” “Will God hurt us in any way?”

These “practical” atheists are indifferent to God’s love. This shows in their *ingratitude*, *tepidity* and spiritual *sloth* (*cf. CCC 2094*). They fail to recognize the signs of God’s presence. “How long will they refuse to believe in Me, despite all the signs I have performed among them?” (*Nm 14:11*). Today this blindness can often be traced to *two general causes*.

184. *First*, there is the pragmatic, secularistic mentality that measures all human success in terms of “economic and social emancipation” (*GS 20*). *PCP II* speaks of a “prevailing *consumerism* in our society” (*PCP II 634*). St. John describes the basic abiding causes within each of us — our “concupiscence”— of this “worldly view”: “Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show — all these are from the world” (*1 Jn 2:16*).

185. *Second*, even more pertinent to our Philippine context as causing unbelief in behavior is the *poverty* and *injustice* among us. *PCP II* has strong words to say about these national causes for our sinfulness: “In the poverty and underdevelopment of our nation, in its conflicts and divisions, we see the hand of human sinfulness, particularly the grasping paws of greed for profit and power” (*PCP II 266*).

186. “Great numbers of people are acutely conscious of being deprived of the world’s goods through injustice and unfair distribution” (*GS 9*). “In the midst of huge numbers deprived of the absolute necessities of life there are some who live in riches and squander their wealth. . . . Luxury and misery exist side by side” (*GS 63*). *PCP II* speaks of how

the Christian conscience must recoil at the sins committed against the poor: so many workers denied just wages to maintain living standards of the few. . . so many poor farmers tilling lands they will never own . . . so much economic and political power used selfishly to serve the few . . . (*PCP II* 267).

187. Such injustice is a major cause of unbelief not only in the exploited and oppressed, but also in those who commit the injustices. These exploiters deny God in practice by rejecting the God-given rights of their victims. The oppressed, for their part, come to deny God because they cannot see the truth of the Christian vision and promise in their daily lives. Unbelief in doing, then, gradually becomes a *cultural reality* for people suffering widespread injustices.

188. This culture of unbelief can take on systematic form in political or economic structures which deny basic human rights. *Filipino Marxists* blame religious faith together with feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism for the problems of Philippine society (*cf. PCP II* 265). They claim that religion is a social pacifier, promising the poor and oppressed a heavenly reward if they only remain subservient now.

Response

189. The help prescribed by *PCP II* to face this unbelief in “doing” our faith is a “*Renewed Social Apostolate*” towards “*Social Transformation*” (*cf. PCP II Decree Arts. 15; 20-27; and PCP II Document 165-66; 256-329*). To the Marxists we reply that Christ never promised a heavenly reward to “do-nothing” followers, (those who cry out “Lord, Lord”). Reward is only for those who *do* the will of the Father (*cf. Mt 7:21*).

Genuine Christian Faith, in its ethical-prophetic role, fosters basic human personal and social values. It shapes the lifestyle of Christians according to Gospel priorities and authentic human responsibility and justice. Outside of such faith, there is little that can check the “sin of the world” which remains the perduring, universal source of man’s exploitation of man.

190. *PCP II* not only presents the current social teachings of the Church in a manner relevant to our concrete Philippine situation. It also stresses the actual *witness* and concrete contributions already being offered by so many individuals, BCCs, NGOs, etc (*cf. PCP II Decrees Art. 42, 4; and PCP II Document 390*).

Besides the material help thus offered, the deeper, more lasting contribution may well be in showing “*good example*” by putting the faith into *practice*. Such “good example” is especially effective when joined with reliable guidance and direction in essential Christian attitudes and responses to today’s challenges. The Catholic Church in the Philippines can rightfully claim to be especially blessed on both accounts.

C. Unbelief vs. Trusting/Worshipping

191. In this third area of faith — worship — one common attack comes from some contemporary psychologies which charge that religion is an illusion, an infantile projection of the lost father feature. They claim that we invent a father-god to provide security against our fears in this hostile world. Consequently they attack the ground for Christian Hope, thus leading some to discouragement and even *despair*. Others are tempted to *presumption*: either presuming on human capacities alone, or on divine mercy without repentance and conversion of heart (*cf. CCC 2091-92*).

192. *PCP II* presents an opposite form of unbelief relative to worship.

In the Philippines worship has, unfortunately, been often separated from the totality of life. The liturgy is not seen as the source and apex of the Church’s life. Rather it is seen as one department of life, without an intimate connection with social, economic and political life (*PCP II 167*).

It is also true that too often certain popular pious practices and customs may appear more like superstition and self-centered, privatized attitudes than authentic Christian prayer.

Response

193. The way to respond to unbelief attacks against faith as worship is obviously “*A Renewed Worship*” (*cf. PCP II 167-81*). The Plenary Council prescribed one aspect of the needed remedy:

There is an urgent need to stress to Filipino Catholics that the whole of life must be an act of worship, as St. Paul points out (*cf. Rom 12:1*). We cannot worship God in our churches and shrines, and then disregard Him in the daily business of life (*PCP II 168*).

194. Renewing the worship of our people requires renewing their prayer life and popular religious practices. Regarding the latter, *PCP II* counsels that

our attitude has to be one of critical respect, encouragement and renewal. These practices must lead to the liturgy. They have to be vitally related to Filipino life, and serve the cause of full human development, justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We must have the courage to correct whatever leads to fanaticism or maintains people infantile in their faith.

Yet, it adds, “at the same time, seeing how many of our people cherish these religious practices, we must use them as vehicles of evangelization toward worship in Spirit and truth” (*PCP II* 175).

Now the basis for renewing our prayer life and religious practices is surely the Church’s Trinitarian prayer.

195. Trinitarian Prayer/Worship. “The function of the Church is to render God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and as it were visible, while ceaselessly renewing and purifying herself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (*GS* 21). It is the Catholic worship of Father, Son and Spirit in the Christian community that can most effectively purify and heal our prayer of “illusion” and individualistic self-centeredness. For Trinitarian prayer calls us away from inauthentic “faith” seeking private security, to outgoing self-giving in sharing Christ’s and the Church’s saving mission of loving service.

“This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35) shown in the service of each “one of my least brothers” (*Mt* 25:40).

196. Christian prayer, then, is no childish projection of a “father-idol” or a “Baby Jesus” serving as escape images from the pain of growth and love in the real world. Secular psychology’s objection actually touches the *abuse* of religious faith rather than its authentic reality. Genuine Christian prayer and hope are based, rather, on mature personal realization of God’s PRESENCE, and our consequent gratitude, thanksgiving, adoration and love of Him.

197. *Trinitarian prayer* draws the Catholic Filipino, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, into sharing Christ’s own experience of *Abba*, Father, whose “will be done on earth as in heaven” (*Lord’s Prayer*). Being rooted in the Church’s worship of Father, Son and Spirit, the Catholic Filipino is motivated to the greatest social responsibility, inspired by the Trinity’s

infinite interpersonal, creative, and redeeming love. Filled with this Love, Catholics together in the liturgy respond with a resounding “Amen!” to the finale of all the Eucharistic Prayers:

Through him [Risen Incarnate **Son**], with him and in him,
in the unity of the **Holy Spirit**,
all glory and honor is yours, Almighty **Father**,
for ever and ever.

198. Trinitarian prayer can also help Filipino Catholics in the “inter-religious dialogue” discussed in *PCP II*. While the Plenary Council focused on the principles for the evangelizing mission to Filipino Muslims, Buddhists, Taoists, etc, (*cf. PCP II 110-15*), it implied the larger mission extending to all our fellow Asians who follow the great traditional religious cultures of the East.

Commitment to Christ, the Incarnate *Word* of God, grounds the Christian dialogue with both *Muslim* and *Jew* who also revere God’s Word. The *Buddhist* goal is release from all human desires into the silent stillness of Nirvana. This relates to the Christian worship of the *Father*, whom “no one has ever seen” (*Jn 1:18*) and whom Christian mystics have experienced as “nothing, nothing, nothing. . .” of our worldly consciousness. Finally, Advaitan *Hinduism* can be approached through the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit, the source of oneness between the self and God who draws all men to greater communion in love.

II. OBSTACLES TO BELIEF IN SELF-BECOMING

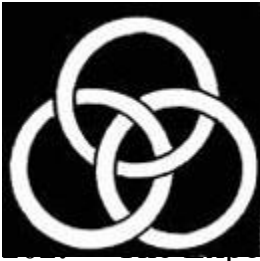
199. Besides the obstacles to authentic faith’s three basic *objective* dimensions (*what* we believe, do and worship), others touch the *subjective* factors (*how* we believe, do and worship) in our natural process of maturing in the Faith. Worthy of note is the common misconception among many Filipino youth that “questioning in matters of faith” is sinful. This arises from a false view, commonly instilled by good-intentioned but erroneous religious instruction, that faith is something to be simply “accepted” from higher authorities. In actual practice, since this view is most often imbibed in childhood, it later becomes an easy excuse for not taking personal responsibility for one’s own religious convictions.

Response

200. What helps the most here is our on-going *initiation* into the Christian Faith involving the active participation of family, friends, BCCs, parish, Catholic community, etc. Christ and the Church call us to intelligent discipleship, in which we use all our faculties of mind, will, imagination and affections.

We must clearly distinguish between two different mind-sets. The *first* is honest *questioning* that seeks through personal study, reflection and dialogue, to know our Lord better so we can love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely. The *second* is a self-centered attitude of real *doubting*, when, like doubting Thomas, we put prior conditions to believing in God (“I will not believe it unless . . . [Jn 20:25]).

201. Our life of faith challenges us to constant *growth* in religious understanding, moral vision and practice, and authentic prayer. This is made possible for us when we are strengthened and confirmed by our fellow Catholics united in the local Church, Christ’s own community of disciples.



INTEGRATION

Position has shown that challenges to authentic faith can arise from any of its three basic objective dimensions of doctrine, morals and worship. The obstacles touch Faith precisely as lived out in our particular personal and social environment. We are Filipinos of the 20th century, living in a specific economic, political, social, cultural, and religious context. The challenges to authentic faith for us take on very definite “faces.” It is in courageously confronting these together in our Christian communities that we respond to the loving call of Christ our Lord.

203. If we do not “*believe*” basic Catholic *doctrine* we certainly will not be motivated to *obey* fundamental Catholic ***moral principles***, nor participate meaningfully in Catholic ***worship***. Whether because of pride, distrust, or indifferent negligence, we will not commit ourselves to the service of others for Christ’s sake, nor be concerned for authentic worship of the living God revealed by Jesus Christ. Thus, rejecting belief in God, Christ and the

Church involves many evil consequences for individuals, families, and the community at large.

204. So we ask God to “help for our lack of faith” as the only means of coming gradually to the “truth” of ourselves, of others, and of God, in our thoughts, our moral acts, and our prayer. Only in Christ and the Spirit can we perseveringly respond to the challenges of “life in Christ” today.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

205. *Does everybody have faith?*

Everyone has *natural faith*, believing in something or someone.

Believing in God is God’s gift which He offers to everyone in different ways. God “wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*).

But experience shows we can misuse our human freedom and reject God’s offer, or turn away from God through sin.

206. *What challenges confront our life of faith in Christ?*

Our life of faith in Christ is challenged by

- our own pride and sinful self-centeredness;
- the poverty, suffering and injustice of so many, contrasted with the indifference and bad example of others;
- religious ignorance, misrepresentation of the Gospel, one-sided practices, and
- atheistic doctrines and consumerist attitudes and values pervading our environment.

207. *How is faith hindered by one-sided practices?*

Exaggerated stress on one dimension of the Faith tends to misrepresent that very dimension and ignore the others.

If Faith is reduced to *only*:

- *doctrine*, an insensitive prayerless dogmatism, out of touch with real life, often results;
- an activist *thrust for justice*, faith can become an ideological, unjust pursuit of one’s own ends;

- *prayers, devotions, and church-going*, faith becomes a substitute for real practical Christian charity.

208. *Who are today's "unbelievers"?*

"Unbelievers" today are:

- either "*practical atheists*" so intent on acquiring riches, reputation or power that they have no time for God;
- or *others who claim special knowledge and power* from God, beyond the ordinary.

Neither represent authentic Christian Faith in Jesus Christ.

209. *How can we respond to doctrinal unbelief?*

We need a *renewed catechesis* in the truth of the Christ-centered Gospel, calling us to respond in Christian service of our neighbor and authentic worship of our loving Father in Spirit and truth, in the Christian community.

210. *How can we respond to the unbelief of "NOT doing"?*

A "*renewed social apostolate*" shows the essential human value of following Christ today in concrete service of the poor and oppressed that leads toward social transformation.

211. *How can we respond to the unbelief of "NO worship"?*

PCP II's call for a "*renewed worship*" means helping all Filipino Catholics to truly understand Christian worship of God our Father, through Christ His Son-made-man, in their Holy Spirit.

It means learning to integrate our personal "popular religiosity" with the Church's liturgical worship. This is achieved only if we worship God in *faith*, by relating personally to Jesus Christ as members of His Body, the Church, and not merely going through some external rituals.

212. *What helps us respond to the challenges of faith?*

We can respond adequately to the challenges of faith only through the *Holy Spirit*, working within us; through our family and friends, and through the Church's teaching and its sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

213. *How do we grow in faith?*

We grow in our Catholic faith by *deepening our understanding of Christ's saving message* (believing), by "*doing*" the truth in Christian

service, and by “*celebrating*” in authentic prayer and sacramental worship through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

214. *How can we help those who sincerely doubt and question Christian faith?*

We can help those who doubt about faith by:

- clarifying the very act of believing, through common examples drawn from their own interpersonal relations in family life and friendships;
- explaining the chief truths of our faith (the Creed) and how they are lived in Christian moral values and sacramental worship; and
- showing them how the Christian Faith grounds and develops basic Filipino cultural values, both personal and social.

215. *Does Christian Faith change?*

The basic truths of Christian Faith remain but as *living* and *vital*, not static and dead. As living, authentic Faith is constantly led by the Spirit to respond to the new challenges in the world, with new expressions and new emphases, precisely in order to remain faithful to the abiding truth of the Gospel.

Chapter 5

Catholic Doctrine: Christ Our Truth

“If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

(*Jn 8:31-32*)

“This is the Christ we proclaim, while we admonish all men and teach them in the full measure of wisdom, hoping to make every man complete in Christ.”

(*Col 1:28*)



OPENING

216. Christian Faith is centered on Jesus Christ, who is himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (*Jn 14:6*). As the Truth, Christ is the “real light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (*Jn 1:9*). He reveals the Father (*cf. Jn 14:6*) and sends the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (*cf. Jn 14:17*) who guides us to all truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). Through Christ we become “consecrated in truth” (*cf. Jn 17:19*), walk in the path of truth (*cf. 2 Jn 4*), act in truth (*cf. Jn 3:21*), share in the work of truth (*cf. 3 Jn 8*) and worship in Spirit and truth (*cf. Jn 4:24*).

217. Catholic doctrine expresses the *truth* that Christ our Lord brings us. This truth does not resolve all the problems and riddles of our daily lives. It does not take the place of our planning what we should do, or sharing our experiences with others, and learning from them. But, as Christians who are open to Christ’s truth in faith, we have a direction and a basic insight into life. We are better able to work out our own personal response to the basic human questions: “Who am I?”, “Why am I here?”, “How am I to relate to others?”. . . Christ’s truth gives each person “the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny” (*GS 10*).



CONTEXT

218. There is a real challenge today for the Catholic Filipino. From all sides questions are being asked about the Catholic Faith that up to fairly recently was accepted by most Filipinos. “*Why* do you worship the Blessed Virgin Mary?” Catholics are asked. “*Why* do you collect statues of Sto. Niño?” “*Why* confess to a priest?” “Is Jesus really divine?” “*Why* interfere in politics and take part in demonstrations and strikes in business affairs?”. . .

219. The need to *understand* the practice of the Catholic Faith, then, has become suddenly urgent. In the First Letter of Peter we are admonished: “Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully” (*1 Pt 3:15-16a*). No longer is it enough for a Catholic to say: “I don’t know why, but that’s just the way we do it here.” Moreover, knowing “why” we Catholics practice our Catholic Faith in this way obviously does not come from memorizing prepared formulas. Rather, it means growing and maturing in our personal faith in Christ our Lord, within his Body, the Catholic community.



EXPOSITION

220. The truth that Christ brings us is both a *gift* of God and a *task*. As *gift*, Christ’s truth is both life-giving and liberating. “If the Son frees you, you will really be free” (*Jn 8:36*). At the same time, it is an ongoing *task* of 1) *discerning* the truth, and 2) *professing* it with courage. Moreover we have to gradually learn to “*distinguish* the spirit of truth from the spirit of deception” (*1 Jn 4:6*). “The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. . . . The spiritual man, on the other hand, can appraise everything” (*1 Cor 2:14-15*). Once recognized, we must “*profess* the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head” (*Eph 4:15*).

221. Catholic doctrine brings us the truth of Christ. It is this truth which grounds our *moral behavior* and our *prayer/worship*. *First*, regarding morality, we know we are committed to the truth when we keep God’s commandments. “His commandment is this: we are to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ and are to love one another as He commanded us” (*1 Jn 3:23*). “Faith that does nothing in practice is thoroughly lifeless” (*Jas 2:17*). *Second*, as Catholics we “must worship in Spirit and truth” (*Jn 4:24*). True worship is offered only through Christ, for “no one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him” (*Jn 1:18*).

222. For the Filipino Catholic, therefore, to believe in Christ means acting, feeling, hoping, trusting, loving, praying — all supported and inspired by one basic conviction: “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and

men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (*1 Tm 2:5-6*). Or more simply: “Jesus is Lord” (*1 Cor 12:3*). “And no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor 12:3*). Faith in Christ, then, is essentially *Trinitarian*. Thus *PCP II* concludes:

We must return to Christ, center our life of discipleship wholly in Him, become a community after the image of the Divine Trinity itself — that we may become truly His people (*PCP II 660*).

I. HISTORY OF THE CREEDS

223. It is at our *Baptism* that we first received the rule of Faith, the *Creed*. “Creed,” from the Latin “Credo” which means “I believe,” presents the essential truths of the Christian Faith. The two principal Catholic Creeds, presented side-by-side in the Vatican’s *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, are: 1) the *Apostles’ Creed*, recited at Sunday Mass in the Philippines, which is an elaboration of the early “Roman Creed” of the third century; and 2) the *Nicene Creed*, which was promulgated by the First Council of Constantinople in 381. It “confirmed the faith of Nicea,” the first Ecumenical Council held in 325 (*cf. CCC 185,194-96*). These Creeds were created and handed down through Catholic Tradition by the Magisterium, the teaching Church. Through them we touch the living core of the Christian proclamation.

A. Biblical Creeds

224. Most Filipino Catholics receive the Creed in infant baptism through our parents. In adult baptism we can receive it personally. The Catholic Creeds have had a long history in Scripture and Tradition. First there are the *Biblical Creeds* or professions of faith from the *Old Testament* times. “Indeed the Lord will be there with us, majestic; yes, the Lord our judge, the Lord our lawgiver, the Lord our king, He it is who will save us” (*Is 33:22*). “The Lord is God and there is no other” (*Dt 4: 35*).

In the *New Testament*, the early proclamations of faith centered on the Risen Christ: “The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree. He whom God has exalted at His right hand as ruler and savior is to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (*Acts 5:30-31*).

B. Liturgical and Catechetical Creeds

225. Out of the early preaching of the Good News of Christ's resurrection developed the *liturgical acclamations* of the early Christian communities: "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all" (*Eph 4:5-6*). As the early churches developed, so did the creeds. For they were needed in *catechetical instruction* to prepare converts for baptism. These creeds quickly took on a fixed form as St. Paul explicitly states:

Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and in which you stand firm. You are being saved by it at this very moment if you hold fast to it as I preached it to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain. I handed on to you first of all what I myself received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried and, in accordance with the Scriptures, rose on the third day; that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve (*1 Cor 15:1-5*).

226. The early creeds were "professions of faith" used in Baptisms that narrated the *saving events which grounded the faith of the Christian communities* (*cf. CCC 187-89*). Three events dominated the Christian story: God's *creating* act, His *redeeming* act in Jesus Christ, and His *sanctifying* presence in all in the Holy Spirit. From these narrative elements grew the *Trinitarian pattern of the classic Creeds*. First the Father as Creator, then the Son, who became man, died and rose from the dead for our redemption, and third, the Holy Spirit uniting us in Christ's Church (*cf. CCC 190-91*). But this Trinity is seen through a *Christocentric focus*, for it is *through, with, and in Christ* that we learn and experience the Father and Holy Spirit.

C. The Creed Today

227. But for most Filipino Catholics, the *Creed* is usually just something memorized as children in school or with the local parish catechist. It is recited — more or less attentively, together at Sunday Mass. Rarely perhaps have Filipinos been taught how the *twelve articles* of the Creed form an *organic unity*. That is, how they fit together in wonderful harmony and coherence. Nor have ordinary Filipino Catholics been catechized in how the creedal statements are not dead propositions but *living truths* which have *developed through the history of Christian communities, the Church*. Unfortunately, few Filipino Catholics have been taught how *relevant* the Creedal truths are today for us because they are *saving, liberating truths* (*cf. NCDP 172-79*).

II. OBJECTIONS TO THE CREED

228. One basic objection today is that for many Filipino Catholics the Creed remains too often merely an impersonal, abstract, and irrelevant dead formula. Through a renewed catechesis that *PCP II* is calling for, we must be able to show how the *Creed is an irreplaceable means for renewing our Faith*. It proclaims a personal and communitarian faith-narrative of the mighty acts of God, in striking images and story, drawn from God's own inspired biblical word.

229. Others object that the Creed and Catholic doctrine in general impede Christian unity. "Doctrine divides, service unites," they claim. But to neglect the truths proclaimed in the Creed can soon lead to mindless activism that cannot sustain itself because it lacks a solid foundation. *The Creedal truths provide the basic ground for the Christian moral criteria* needed for judging what is morally right and justified and what is not. Creed, in Latin: *Credo*, has been likened to the Latin *cardo*, meaning "*hinge*", that upon which everything in the Christian Faith turns.

230. A more serious objection against the Creed is that it makes Catholic Faith seem like a list of doctrines rather than a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. But this mistakenly separates "personal" from truth, pious enthusiasm from God's own self-revelation in Christ Jesus. What *is* true, however, is that many who recite the Creed in public together do not seem to relate it to the Bible. They do not see the connection between the Gospel and the personal/ communitarian Creedal proclamation of God in Christ. In this they fail to follow St. Paul:

We proclaim the truth openly. . .the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God. . . For God. . . has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:2,4,6).

231. The Creed, then, brings us to Jesus by situating him in the great acts of God, and so liberating us from misguided piety and possible superstitions. The Creed is like a *skeleton*, a framework of truths that undergirds our relation to Jesus, to God, to our fellowmen, and to our whole life. A human skeleton is not the whole living person, but gives a framework and rigidity without which no one could live or move. Likewise the Creed is not the whole of our living faith. But its twelve articles or "joints" give the structural support necessary for the authentic growth and vitality of our personal commitment to Christ (*cf. CCC 191*).

III. FUNCTIONS OF THE CREED

232. Through the centuries the Creed has served the Church and individual Catholic believers in many different ways. *Three functions* have been especially valuable: 1) as a *summary* of Catholic beliefs; 2) as a *pledge of loyalty* to God and Church; and 3) as a *proclamation of self-identity*. Each of these main functions covers a number of particular roles which the Creed has played in Christian tradition.

A. Summary of Beliefs

233. As a *summary* of basic *Catholic beliefs*, the Creed has been an indispensable means of Faith for both the Church and the individual Catholics. For the *Church*, the Creed was created: 1) for *communicating* the Christian message to the world; 2) for *grounding* its own ever deepening insight into Christ's truth; 3) for *uniting Catholics* in their common commitment to Christ; and 4) for inter-religious *dialogue* with non-Christians (*cf. NCDP 169*).

234. The history of the Creeds actually manifests *three basic aspects* of Catholic doctrine. *First*, the Creeds bring out in a unique way the *inner unity and coherence* of the doctrines of the Faith. *Second*, they show the *doctrinal development*. As the early Church moved from proclaiming Christ as the Risen Savior to a more developed teaching, so credal statements developed from the *kerygmatic* to the *catechetical*. *Third*, the Creeds have proven their "*relevance*" to every age. The Creeds of the early Church councils became accepted as the standard or "rule of faith," flowing from the New Testament's insistence on "sound doctrine" (*cf. 1 Tim 4:6; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13f; 4:3*). They have consistently fulfilled this function up to the present day (*cf. NCDP 172-76*).

B. Pledge of Loyalty

235. The Creed functions as a *pledge of loyalty* to *God* and the *Church*. The Creeds are public confessions of Christian faith in the *Triune God*. "For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (*Rom 10:9*). Thus the Creed offers praise and thanksgiving since it proclaims the truth of Christ "so that at Jesus' name, every knee must bend, in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord!" (*Phil 2:10-11*)

236. Besides praising God, the Creed also professes loyalty to the “*Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of truth*” (1 Tim 3:15). In this sense the Creed becomes an *apologetic* for the Church’s faith, giving “reason for this hope” (1 Pt 3:15) and defending the faith against all who would “oppose the truth, and with perverted minds falsify the faith” (2 Tim 3:8).

The Creed thus responds to *PCP II*’s insistence on an “*apologetic catechesis*”: Since its birth, Christianity has been the subject of attacks from which it has had to defend itself. Jesus had to answer to objections to his teachings, as the Gospel testifies. St. Paul had to answer early Christian errors, and charged his disciples to protect the faithful from them while keeping pure the deposit of faith. Apologetics has always been part of the pastoral and theological tradition of the Church. We must today be willing and able to defend our teaching in public fora. (*PCP II* 222)

C. Proclamation of Identity

237. The Creed helps ground the Catholic believer’s self-identity. In proclaiming the Creed, we Filipino Catholics acknowledge that our basic personal identity is drawn from God’s initiative in recreating us through Christ and the Holy Spirit into one community. Each of us, as baptized Catholics, can declare with St. Paul: “The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). To each of his disciples Christ says: “It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit” (Jn 15:16).

238. For individual Filipino Catholics, the Creed, then, identifies who we Catholics are and what we stand for as disciples of Christ, united in his Church. In this function, the public recitation of the Creed at Sunday Mass helps us in a number of ways. *First*, it unites us into one worshipping Catholic community which offers each of us strength and support. *Second*, it supplies the basis for guiding our affective religiosity and devotional piety, and for judging the numerous religious groups and sects that have multiplied so quickly in our country in recent years. *Third*, it helps especially in interpreting our daily life-experiences in a truly Catholic manner. *Fourth*, it grounds an open and free dialogue with non-Christian Filipino groups and individuals (*cf. NCDP* 170).

239. Proclaiming together our common heritage as Catholics in the Creed can unite us as few other things could. We have the assurance in standing before others of enjoying a common ground that is deeper and more lasting than anything we could possibly create ourselves. The Creed can be an effective means by which we gradually develop a real personal “sense of belonging” in the Catholic Church, a feeling of “being at home.”



INTEGRATION

240. Catholic *doctrine* presenting the truth of Christ, as summarized in the Creed, has already been shown, by its very nature, to be linked to public **worship** and thanksgiving to God. Without solid grounding in Christ’s truth, prayer and worship inevitably slide into pious sentimentalism, ritualism, and even superstitious idolatry. On the other hand, without sincere, authentic prayer and worship, many are led “to give credence to falsehood, because they have not opened their hearts to the truth in order to be saved” (2 *Thes* 2:11, 10).

241. The inner link between the *doctrinal truth* of Christ and Christian **moral** behavior is well stressed by St. Paul. He contrasts how pagans live with empty minds and darkened understanding with the Ephesians who have been taught the truth that is in Jesus, namely:

that you must lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth. (*Eph* 4:21-24).

242. A Scriptural example of this integration can be easily composed: to “believe in the Lord Jesus” (*Acts* 16:31) means to “keep his commandments” (1 *Jn* 2:3), and to *pray* “through him, with him, and in him” (*Eucharistic Prayer*), repeating the ancient Christian plea “Come, Lord Jesus” (*Rv* 22:20).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

243. *Where do Catholics find the basic truths of their lives?*

Catholic doctrine expresses how we Catholics find in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, both sent to us by our heavenly Father in the Church, the basis of *who* we are, *why* and *how* we are to live, and *where* our final destiny is.

244. *Is it not enough to love one another, without knowing Catholic doctrine?*

No, we need to know Catholic doctrine to be able to:

- determine *how to love authentically* as Christians;
- *give reason* for our service and worship as Catholics;
- *grow* in our relation to Christ and one another, and so build up the Christian community.

[“By obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a genuine love of your brothers” (1 Pt 1:22).]

245. *What is Catholic doctrine?*

Catholic doctrine is the *expression of the truth* which Christ brings us, addressed to our *minds* (what really is), our *wills* (how to *do* the truth, act in truth) and our *hearts* (true love and worship).

[“Let us love in deed and in truth, and not merely talk about it” (1 Jn 3:18).]

246. *What are the basic Catholic doctrines?*

The basic Catholic doctrines are summarized in the *Creed* which, grounded in Sacred Scripture, presents *God as Father Creator*, who sent *His Son Jesus Christ to redeem us*, and the *Holy Spirit in the Church* to draw us to life everlasting.

247. *Why is the Creed important?*

Creeeds have had an important role in evangelizing “all nations” in the Christian Faith, as the New Testament and Church liturgy and catechesis clearly testify. All Creeeds manifest the same *Trinitarian pattern*, and *Christocentric focus*.

248. *How are Catholics initiated into Catholic truths?*

At *Baptism*, the *Creed* is used to express the new life of commitment to Christ in the Holy Spirit, within the Christian community, the Church. The *Creed* proclaims the truths upon which our lives as sons and daughters of the Father depend.

249. *How does the Creed relate us to Christ?*

The *Creed* presents the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from a Christocentric perspective. It highlights Christ's saving Paschal Mystery as the key to understand God's total relationship with us, from creation to our final destiny.

250. *Why do some raise objections against the Creed?*

Some reject the *Creed* as a collection of impersonal, abstract and irrelevant dead formulas that make Christian Faith into a list of "things to believe".

These objections completely misunderstand the true nature of the *Creed*. Yet, unfortunately, they represent how the *Creed* appears to many of the faithful.

251. *How do we respond to these objections?*

Our response is simply to show how the Christian communities from the New Testament times used the *Creeds* to evangelize, proclaim their Faith in Christ, and discern between Gospel truth and error.

252. *What does the Creed do for our life of faith?*

The *Creed* acts like a *skeleton* supplying the framework and support needed for living and growing (maturing) in our Catholic Faith.

253. *What are the principal functions of the Creed?*

The *Creed* functions in three principal ways:

- as a *summary of Catholic truths* needed to communicate and instruct in the Gospel;
- as *profession of loyalty* to God and to the Church; and
- as a *declaration of our own self-identity* as disciples of Christ, reborn in his Spirit within his body, the Church.

254. *How does the Creed foster Christian living?*

The *Creed* provides the basic *doctrinal ground* for authentic *Christian living*. This includes:

- our loving *service* of one another in building up the local Christian community, and
- our sacramental *worship* of God in Spirit and truth.

Chapter 6

God, the Father Almighty

“I am God the Almighty. Walk in my presence . . .”

(Gen 17:1)

“For us there is one God: the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we live; and one Lord, Jesus Christ. . .”

(1 Cor 8:6)



OPENING

focus of religious Faith is God, “the first and the last” (*Is 44:6*). All important, then, is how we perceive and “picture” God. From the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai, Christians inherit a very positive image of God. “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity” (*Ex 34:6*). The Psalmist sings “Praise the Lord, for he is good. . . . Great is our Lord and mighty in power” (*Ps 147:1,5; cf. Rv 15:3-4*). Today more than ever an accurate personal understanding of God is urgently needed.

256. The Christian Creed, of course, presents a Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three Divine Persons structure the Creed and this whole Catechism: the Father in this Part 1, with the Son, whose moral teaching is taken up in Part 2, and the Holy Spirit in Part 3. Like the Creed, we begin immediately with God the Father, to whom Christ our Lord taught us to pray (*cf. Lk 11:2*).



CONTEXT

257. One thing noticeable about Filipinos is how spontaneously they relate to God. A typical example of this is the following excerpt from the Tagalog *Pasion*.*

O Dios sa Kalangitan,	O God in heaven
<i>Hari ng Sangkalupaan,</i>	King of the universe,
Dios na walang kapantay,	God without equal,
Mabait, lubhang maalam	Kind, wise
<i>At puno ng karunungan.</i>	And full of knowledge.

<i>Ikaw ang Amang tibobos</i>	Thou art the Absolute Father
<i>Na nangungulilang lubos,</i>	[Who art] completely alone
Amang di matapus-tapos,	Father eternal,
<i>Maawai't mapagkupkop</i>	Merciful and adoptive
Sa taong lupa't alabok.	Towards earthen men.

258. Nor is this God-relatedness only a thing of the past. Even now, wherever you see a new housing development going up, a chapel is sure to rise. There seems to be no limit to the number of different religious groups throughout the land. Among Filipinos, it is taken for granted that God is central to their community life and welfare, as well as family and individual interests.

259. But *who* is this God so central to life? *How* is He served and worshipped? Some who contribute to building a church or chapel are rarely seen afterwards in Church worship or activities. The old phrase “*Kasal, Binyag, Libing* Christians” describes not only these generally absentee believers. It also points out the common fact that so many Filipinos have never been properly catechized in their Christian Faith. Many complain “I never understood what we were doing.” For such Christians, who is this God that is so taken for granted that He is often seemingly ignored?

260. The Creed is *presumed* to be the official source for clarifying *who* God is, and *how* we are related to Him. But the reality is often quite different.

When Filipinos are catechized in the authentic Christian image of God and of His worship, they are usually *surprised* to discover so many of their Filipino cultural values within the basic Christian catechesis. For example, children's respect and "*utang na loob*" to their parents exemplify our common human gratitude to our heavenly Father. "*Bahala na,*" understood positively, relates the Filipino to God's providential care. "*Malasakit*" pictures well God's unrelenting care for man, his creature. Even our value of "*kagandahang-loob*" expresses God's perfect interior goodness that ever seeks to bring out the best in us.

261. The opening line of the Creed presents us with *three descriptions of God*: God is the *Father*, the *Almighty*, and the *Creator* of heaven and earth. In this chapter we shall focus on the first two, Father and Almighty, leaving the detailed treatment of "Creator" for Chapter 7. But three preliminary points must first be made.



EXPOSITION

I. PRELIMINARY POINTS

262. The first point is the power of these descriptions to *lift us out of ourselves* and *focus our eyes on God*, and what He has done for us through history. There is no false religious sentiment about what *we* do for God, or on *our* obligations. The Creed liberates us from such self-centeredness by directing all our attention to the **ONE GOD who is Love**. As a prayer, the Creed teaches us to believe, to trust, to ground ourselves not in what *we* feel, we do, we want, or we are, but rather in what *God* is, God does, God wills, and God offers in us and for us.

263. The second preliminary observation concerns the *proper identity of God* described by these terms. It is true that the Creed responds to the general, universal human need for God. "As the deer longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God. Athirst is my soul for God, the living God" (*Ps 42:2-3*). Throughout history, men and women have related to God as they have experienced Him in the beauty and goodness of nature and in their own history (*cf. Rom 1:20*).

264. Old Testament. Moreover God has specially revealed Himself in salvation history to the Israelites as recorded in the Old Testament. There is but *One God* who is to be loved (*Dt 6:4-5*), who reveals His *Name* — “*I Am*” — (*cf. Ex 3:14*), who is *Truth* (*2 Sm 7:28*) and *Love* (*cf. Hos 11:1; CCC 200-21*). To believe in such a God affects our whole life tremendously. It means realizing the majestic grandeur of God (*cf. Jb 36:26*), living within the action of His grace (*cf. Ps 116:12*), with complete confidence in His Providence, *recognizing* the unity and dignity of every person (*cf. Gn 1:26*), and the task of caring for all creation (*cf. CCC 222-27*).

265. But the God of the Creed, while firmly based on this Old Testament revelation, is specifically the God revealed in the concrete experiences of Easter and Pentecost, the God revealed by Jesus Christ. He is the God experienced by the disciples of the Risen Christ, in the Spirit. “Father” in the Creed means first and foremost “***Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,***” and only in view of that, Father of *all* men.

266. Identifying the Creed’s “Father” thus expresses the biblical portrayal of Jesus’ *unique* relation to the Father. When Philip asked Jesus: “Show us the Father and that will be enough for us,” Jesus replied: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?. . . it is the Father who lives in me accomplishing His works” (*Jn 14:9-10*). This brings us to the *third* preliminary point, namely, the Trinity as the specific “Christian” image of God.

267. Blessed Trinity/Grace. The God revealed by Jesus Christ is, of course, the Blessed Trinity, the central Mystery of the Christian Faith and of our Christian life. “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him” (*Jn 1:18*). Jesus, the Incarnate Son, reveals to us the Eternal Father, and his own unity with the Father (*cf. Jn 10:30*). Together with the Father, the Risen Christ sends their Holy Spirit, “a spirit of adoption through which we cry, *Abba*, ‘Father!’ The Spirit itself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . . heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ” (*Rom 8:15-17; cf. CCC 232-67*).

268. This Trinitarian image of God is present to us from the very inception of our Christian life. We were *baptized* in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit (*cf. CCC 249*). Baptism is a continuing reality in our lives through which we are called to share their divine life of love even now on earth through *Grace*, in the obscurity of faith, and after death in the eternal light of heaven (*cf. CCC 265*). Meanwhile our every prayer as Catholics is begun with the Sign of the

Cross: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 232). And our community Eucharistic celebrations begin with a greeting such as: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor 13:13). In brief, our whole Christian life is marked by the Trinity.

269. With this general background on God in Old Testament and Christian perspectives, we can now begin to study the meaning of the Creed’s “Father” and “Almighty.”

II. GOD AS OUR FATHER

270. How is it possible, proper, and true to call God *our* “Father?” Five basic reasons can be given why God is our Father.

Our Creator

271. *First*, the most obvious reason is because He *created* us. “Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, . . . Who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk on it: I, the Lord, have called you . . . I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you” (Is 42:5-6).

As Christians, we know further that “we are truly [God’s] handiwork, created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10).

Our Provider

272. *Second*, God is our Father because He *provides* for our needs. The Psalmist acclaims: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps 23:1). He sent us Jesus, “the Good Shepherd,” who taught: “If God clothes in such splendor the grass of the field . . . how much more will he provide for you, O weak in faith!” (Lk 12:28)

Our Redeemer

273. *Third*, God is our Father because He has *redeemed* us. “You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer you are named forever” (Is 63:16). This redemption is a further sign of our Father’s love. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die, but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

God’s Indwelling Spirit

274. *Fourth*, as our Father, God *sends His Spirit* to share His divine life with us. “If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us. The way we know we remain in Him and He in us is that He has given us of His Spirit” (1 Jn 4:12-13).

Our Self-Identity/Destiny

275. *Lastly*, as with Jesus himself, God as our Father grounds our own self-identity. For we are all essentially children of God, destined for life eternal with Him. “*Abba, Father*” captures in a word that unique relationship to God enjoyed by Jesus Christ. In this relationship Jesus invites all of us to share. To be a Christian, then, means to acknowledge that *all persons* are called to be adopted sons/daughters of the Father, in Christ Jesus. Thus filial love of God our Father calls for loving service of our fellowmen.

Our Motherly Father

276. These reasons why God is “Father” are certainly not affirming that God is sexual, that is, masculine rather than feminine. God’s fullness of life embraces both the *paternal* and *maternal* dimensions of love, and infinitely more! Isaiah describes how God promises “as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you” (Is 66:13). Christ described his desire to gather Jerusalem’s children together as “a mother bird gathers her young under her wings” (Mt 23:37).

But to really appreciate that God is *truly our Father*, we have to go back to the biblical narrative of the great events of salvation history.

III. GOD REVEALED AS “FATHER” IN SCRIPTURE

A. Yahweh in the Old Testament

277. The *Old Testament* presents the inspired story of God forming His own people by establishing a *special relationship* with them. This *covenant* was a call to fuller life and salvation. *First* God called *Abraham* out of his homeland and promised him: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you” (Gn 12:1-2). Through Abraham, God promised: “all the nations of the earth shall find blessing – all this because you obeyed my command” (Gn 22:18). Thus God showed Himself to be a *personal* God, eager to endow his people with land, material possessions and countless descendants.

278. The call of *Moses* gives an even sharper picture of *God as liberating His people*. Out of the burning bush the Lord said: “I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers. . . . Come now, I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt” (*Ex 3:7,10*). God showed Himself “Father” to the Israelites by choosing them “to be a people peculiarly His own.” This was not because they were the largest of all nations, but solely because He “set His heart” on them and loved them (*cf. Dt 7:6-8*). For their part, the Israelites were to observe God’s commandments, the “Ten Words,” to guide them toward fuller freedom as His children (*cf. Ex 20:1-17*).

279. The subsequent history of the Israelites showed the same infidelities which we ourselves experience today in our relationship with God. Yet, despite their stubborn unfaithfulness, God remained faithful. He established a covenant with *David* and promised him: “I will raise up your heir after you. . . I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me” (*2 Sm 7:12,14*). After the Exile, God promised through the *prophets* a *New and Eternal Covenant*: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (*cf. Jer 31:31-34*).

This is the image of God given us in the Old Testament and described in the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer:

Father, we acknowledge your greatness.
All your actions show your wisdom and love . . .
Even when we disobeyed you and lost your friendship
You did not abandon us to the power of death,
 but helped us all to seek and find you.
Again and again you offered a covenant to us,
And through the prophets taught us to hope for salvation.

This is the image of God that Jesus came to bring to fulfillment.

B. Jesus’ “*Abba*” Relationship

280. *Jesus’ relation to the Father is unique.* The Old Testament commonly referred to “the God of our Fathers.” It names God as “Father” only in *eleven places*, and never in direct address. But Jesus constantly speaks of God as Father (*over 170 times* in the New Testament). This is especially true at crucial points in our Lord’s life – his Baptism, his Transfiguration, his Last Supper with his apostles, and especially in his Passion and Death. In each of these critical moments, Jesus experienced this special relation to God, his

“*Abba.*” He lived as Son of his Father by his filial love, obedience, and complete dedication to his Father’s will. Jesus also realized that this experience was unique to him: “No one knows the Father but the Son – and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him” (*Mt 11:27*).

281. *Jesus taught that God is the Father of all*, and instructed his disciples to pray to God as “Our Father” (*Mt 6:9*). In this he *revolutionized* the idea and image of God. For Jesus, the Father was not an authoritarian paternalistic God, but a God incredibly committed to us, His adopted children. He rains down the Just One, Immanuel, God-with-us. He is a forgiving Father who runs out to greet His prodigal repentant son (*cf. Lk 15:20*). He is a Father who cannot be bribed, or cajoled, or fooled in any way. But his love for us goes beyond all bounds. He even sends His only begotten Son to die on the Cross to bring salvation and new life to us all.

282. Proclaiming God as Father, as *Ama, Tatay*, is to realize God’s place in *our own self-identity. Our deepest self is to be His adopted son or daughter.* We recognize the tremendous ***utang na loob*** we owe God our Father who sustains us every moment of our lives. But we also come to realize our ***responsibility*** to order our lives according to God’s loving will. His Fatherly love desires only our utmost good. God’s will is that we grow into the fullness of our capacities, unto our perfect happiness. Thus we are most our true selves, most creative, when we obey His will. Trusting completely in His Fatherly Providence frees us from all depressing fear, through an authentic, positive “*bahala na*” attitude.

IV. ALMIGHTY

283. God the Father is described as “*Almighty,*” the only divine attribute cited in the Creed. Its importance can be explained under *three specific qualities*. We believe God’s power is: 1) *universal*; 2) *loving*; and 3) a *mystery* (*cf. CCC 268*).

284. Universal. God the Father’s power is *universal* because He is *PANTOKRATOR*, the Creator and ruler of all things, infinitely beyond any human father we experience on earth (*cf. CCC 268*). This stops us from falling into any false sentimentalism regarding God our loving Father. We believe: “He rules and compasses all things, for the heights of the heavens and the depths of the abysses and the limits of the world are in His Hand” (*St. Theophilus of Antioch*).

285. So in the Old Testament we read of *Yahweh Sabaoth*, “Lord of Hosts,” and *El Shaddai*, “Lord of the mountain,” who showed His power particularly in the Exodus liberation. “With strong hand and outstretched arm you brought your people Israel out of Egypt amid signs and wonders and great terror” (*Jer 32:21*). In the New Testament God’s power is revealed in Christ’s “signs” or miracles, and especially in his Resurrection (*cf. CCC 269*).

286. God’s almighty power is manifested as *universal* in that He is both utterly beyond us (*transcendent*), and yet more intimately within us (*immanent*) than we are to ourselves. His utter *transcendence* is expressed by Isaiah the prophet: “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts” (*Is 55:8-9*). But the same prophet sees this transcendence in God’s *holiness*: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!” (*Is 6:3*) This we repeat in the *Sanctus* of every Mass.

This same quality of holiness brings out God’s *universal immanent presence*. So the *Sanctus* continues Isaiah’s text: “All the earth is filled with his glory!” (*Is 6:3*).

287. Loving. Now since we all expect God to be all-powerful, almighty, we might miss what is most striking about the divine power in the Bible. For as with the idea of “Father,” the Bible actually *revolutionizes* the notion of God as ‘*almighty*.’ The biblical ‘almighty’ is not some impersonal, arbitrary, self-seeking force, imposing terror on all creatures. Rather, the Father’s almighty power is the *re-creating personal energy of non-violent Love*.

288. This “loving power” of the Father, His “*kagandahang-loob*,” is revealed especially in Christ our Lord, present among us in the Spirit. God keeps us as His “*segullah*” – the apple of His eye. His almighty love is forever yearning to do more for us, in the spirit of “*malasakit*,” as Christ pictured for all in his parable of the Good Shepherd (*cf. Jn 10:11; CCC 270*).

289. A Mystery. Yet proclaiming God as Father *Almighty* does not blind the Christian to all the *evil* in the world. Sin and the suffering of countless people are much too real to make light of, or explain away by some flimsy excuse. Thus the ever-persistent question: If God is really all-powerful, why can’t He wipe out all evil? Our Christian Faith does not give us any easy “answer” to this mystery. But it does offer us some basic truths to fortify us against meaningless, despairing suffering (*cf. CCC 309*).

290. Mystery of God's Powerlessness. God's power is "mystery" because it so often appears as *powerlessness*. This is most sharply manifested in the Passion and Death of Christ. With St. Paul we "proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called. . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:23-25). Thus, God's "powerlessness" calls forth the exclamation:

May you know. . . the immeasurable scope of his power in us who believe. It is like the strength he showed in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in heaven, high above every principality, power virtue, and domination, and every name that can be given in this age or in the age to come. He has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him, thus exalted, head of the Church" (Eph 1:19-22; cf. CCC 272).

Moreover, we firmly believe that "God, who raised up the Lord, will raise us also by His power" (1 Cor 6:14).

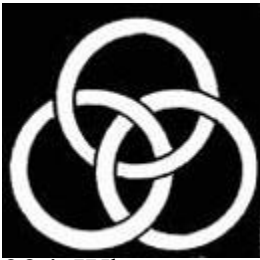
291. Mystery of Evil. In approaching this mystery of evil, we *first* affirm our unshakeable belief that God our Father *is* concerned precisely with each and every one of us, here and now, in all our troubles and sufferings. *Second*, our Faith tells us that evil originated in the Fall of the first persons, and not from any defect in God or his creative power. *Third*, by picturing the Fall of Adam as a dramatic event, the Bible situates moral evil in the mystery of *freedom*, not in the limitations of all creatures. Sin is the result not of our being "*tao lamang*" — only a limited human person! — but of our free choice of evil (cf. CCC 311).

292. The broader mystery of *all* suffering and evil in the world, *physical* as well as *moral*, has to be viewed in terms of our interrelated "world-in-process." We realize the world is developing through an evolutionary process which involves our own free self-development in society. The only power that prevents the evils of the world from becoming intolerable and totally devastating, is God's.

God the Father has entered into this process by sending His Son on His redemptive mission, and sending the Holy Spirit to continue Christ's work on earth. He continues to take upon himself the sin and suffering of the world, and thus transforms what would be the cause of ultimate despair into a source of hope, now and for eternal life.

293. Our Christian faith thus offers us spiritual strength to face “the human condition” rather than any intellectual “solution.” The evil in the world is not some “*problem*” to be solved, but a “*mystery*” to be faced. Three “*faces*” of evil – *fate*, *sin* and *death* – can never be answered by any rationalistic “head knowledge.” What alone is effective is a vibrant spiritual life of believing, hoping and loving God, our Father Almighty, through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, in their indwelling Holy Spirit.

So we can point to the Old Testament narration of *Joseph* (cf. *Gn 45:8; 50:20*), and Christ’s Paschal Mystery in the New Testament, to show how God can draw good from evil. Since we rely on His infinite loving power and mercy. “we know that God makes all things work for good, for those who love God” (*Rom 8:28; cf. CCC 312-14*).



INTEGRATION

294. When we proclaim in the Creed the truth that God is Father and Almighty, we commit ourselves to a certain vision and style of life. The conviction that God is our Almighty Father provides the basis not only for all *meaning* in life, but also for our *moral action* and behavior, and our total *prayer life*. God is proclaimed as the ground for all our most precious values: how we want to think and act, be and pray.

295. *Moral Life.* The first Commandment gives us a perfect example of this connection between believing in God our almighty Father, and acting accordingly. *First*, the *truth*: “I, the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (*Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6*). Then the *action*: “You shall not have other gods besides me” (*Ex 20:3*).

Our *utang na loob* before God our Father means rejecting all other “gods” – whether they be wealth and possessions, reputation before men, or worldly power and success (cf. *Mt 4:1-11*). It means rejecting the split-level type of life of the Christian who gives lip service to the Lord one day a week (or less!) and acts no better than a pagan the rest of the time. Believing in God our almighty Father demands a real *conversion of heart* which alone can motivate the radical change in life-style that constitutes authentic Christian life.

296. The *social dimension* of this authentic life-style rejects all *exclusivism* – caring *only* for our own family, *barkada*, group or region. For this denies that we are all brothers and sisters under God, our heavenly Father. Christian Faith calls for *social* maturity that recognizes our responsibilities in the community. *Pakikisama* must be balanced by *bayanihan*.

297. Prayer Life. The place of God as Father almighty is central to all Christian prayer. In the Eucharistic Celebration we begin with confessing our sins to “almighty God.” In the *Gloria* we worship, give thanks and praise the “almighty God and Father.” This is the worship “in Spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:24*) that Christ proclaimed. This is the way our *utang* before God is expressed in prayer and worship.

PCP II has challenged Filipino Catholics to root out all superstitious practices and belief in occult powers and spirits. Christ came to liberate us from such fears and idolatries. They not only enslave us, but open our faith to ridicule before others.

298. Our private devotions must be grounded in the authentic liturgical prayer of the Church, for there is only ONE GOD and “Him alone shall you adore” (*Mt 4:10; Dt 6:13*). The Church’s prayer insures that our private devotions are not completely taken up with constant petitions, but include the essential dimensions of adoration, thanksgiving and praise. Finally, sincere personal conviction that God is truly our almighty Father may be the best safeguard against “empty ritualism.” Instead of focusing on the external rituals, or on superficial emotional sentimentalism, strong attachment to our almighty Father inspires authentic spiritual movements of the heart (*cf. NCDP 103, 167, 327, 430*).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

299. How do most Filipinos relate to God?

In general, most Christian Filipinos think of God as their all-powerful Father who is the Lord of all.

This image conforms well with many traditional Filipino cultural values.

300. How does the Creed describe God?

The Creed affirms God as *Almighty Father*, Creator of all things, with the *divine Son-made-man* Jesus Christ, and the *Holy Spirit*, thus presenting the Holy Trinity.

301. What is the special value of the Creed's first assertion?

By proclaiming belief in "God, the Father Almighty," the Creed lifts us out of ourselves and centers us on the ONE GOD who is LOVE, and not on our meager selves.

302. How does God enter into our lives?

God enters our lives in our experiencing:

- our own inner search for meaning and happiness;
- the beauty and goodness of nature and our family, friends and neighbors around us;
- our Filipino history and culture; and especially,
- God's public Revelation in salvation history as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and climaxed in Jesus Christ.

"From the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen" (*Wis 13:5*).

"Since the creation of the world, invisible realities: God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made" (*Rom 1:20*).

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork" (*Ps 19:2*).

303. What are some of the Bible's most basic faith affirmations about God?

Scripture affirms: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone!" (*Dt 6:4*), and "I am the Lord your God. . . you shall have no other gods besides me" (*Ex 20:2-3; Dt 5: 6-7*). The one God is a saving God. "This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (*Jn 17:3*).

Church teaching summarizes a description of God as follows:

There is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immeasurable, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will and in every perfection . . . one unique spiritual substance, entirely simple and unchangeable . . . really and essentially distinct from the world, most blessed in and of Himself, and inexpressibly exalted above all things that exist or can be conceived other than Himself (*Vat. I, DS 3001, ND 327*).

304. How did God reveal Himself in salvation history?

First, through the Covenant He made with the Israelites through Moses, Yahweh revealed Himself as the One God who is Truth and Love.

Second, through his personal knowledge and intimacy, Jesus, the only begotten Son, taught us that God is our Father.

Moreover, the Father and Christ are present to us by sending their Spirit into our hearts.

305. How do we exercise this “Trinitarian” relationship?

Our constant and continual relation to the Blessed Trinity:

- *started* with our *Baptism* in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- *continues* in every Christian prayer begun with the “Sign of the Cross,” marked by our “Glory be. . .” and
- *is strengthened* in our Eucharist/thanksgiving to the Father, through memory of His Son’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, made present through the power of the Holy Spirit.

306. Why do Christians affirm that God is “Father”?

The Creed affirms God is Father because Jesus taught us to relate to God as “Our Father” (*Mt 6:9*). Jesus’ own experience of God as “*Abba*” (Father), was the basis for his teaching. “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him” (*Jn 1:18*).

307. What does the name “Father” tell us of God?

“Father” tells us that God is *personal*, close to us, not an impersonal force, distant and far off. He cares for us even with motherly love (*cf. Is 66:13; 49:15; Hos 11*). God the Father therefore is not a patriarchal or paternalistic authoritarian God. Rather He is a God who welcomes and celebrates the return of every son or daughter who was dead and has come back to life, who was lost and is found (*cf. Lk 15:24, 32*).

308. What does “almighty” tell us of God?

“Almighty” affirms God as all-powerful, first as *Creator*, able “to do all things” (*cf. Jb 42:2*) and *Ruler* of all things (*Pantokrator*), secondly as *Love* shown in Christ’s Cross and Resurrection, subjecting all other powers to the ultimate sustaining presence of His love.

“Ah Lord God, you have made heaven and earth by your great might, with your outstretched arm; nothing is impossible to you” (*Jer 32:17*).

“As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts” (*Is 55:9*).

309. If God is “Father” and “Almighty”, why does He allow so much evil and suffering?

First, much evil in the world, especially *physical* evil, results from the kind of *limited* universe in which we live.

Second, moral evil and much of human suffering come from man’s abuse of his freedom in sin.

Third, much courage, generosity, forgiveness, hope and sacrifice arise from the world’s sufferings and evils.

Finally, Christ’s Paschal Mystery shows how God draws out of the depths of evil the victory of the Risen Christ and his transforming love.

“Through Christ and in Christ, light is thrown on the riddle of suffering and death, which apart from his gospel, overwhelms us” (*GS 22*).

“We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him” (*Rom 8:28*).

Chapter 7

Creator of Heaven and Earth

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth . . .
The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament
proclaims His handiwork.*

(Gn 1:1; Ps 19:2)

*He [Christ] is the firstborn of all creation. In him everything
in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created
through him and for him, . . . In Him everything continues in
being.*

(Col 1:15-17)



OPENING

at one time or another, “*Where does everything come from?*” The Psalmist replies: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; by the breath of His mouth all their host. . . He spoke, and it was made; He commanded, and it stood forth” (*Ps 33:6,9*).

We ask: “*What is the purpose of it all? What is the meaning of our life and of death?*” (*Cf. CCC 282.*) Christian doctrine affirms that “the most perfect answer to these questionings is to be found in God alone, who created us in His own image . . . and this answer is given in the revelation of Christ His Son who became one of us” (*GS 41*).



CONTEXT

311. The most spontaneous Filipino image of God is that of *Creator* (*cf. NCDP 199*). Many Filipino folk legends describe God’s creativity. One tale narrates how, after God had molded all the other parts of the world, He shook his hands free of clay, and so formed the 7,141 islands of the Philippines. Another tale humorously describes how after “baking” the black and white races, God produced the perfect human person, the Filipino “*kayumanggi*.” These and other Filipino creation myths indicate how *indigenous to Filipino culture is God the Creator*.

312. But today the Filipino Catholic’s belief in God as Creator of heaven and earth faces new challenges. For example, how can the Genesis account of creation in six days be reconciled with the modern scientific theory of evolution? Or, if God creates and sustains everything, then *bahala na*, all is decided already. Or again, even if God created the world at the beginning of time, what has that got to do with our opportunities and problems today?

313. Such difficulties indicate the urgent need for a better understanding of what the Creed means: 1) in proclaiming God as *Creator* and stressing His creative action; 2) in describing what He created as “heaven and earth”; and 3) in proposing this not as something proven by scientific reason, but as basic convictions in our personal *act of faith* as Christians.



EXPOSITION

314. The Catholic doctrine of creation basically affirms that: 1) the world and everything in it comes from the loving power of **God** who is its ultimate **Origin, Ruler, and Goal**; 2) all created things and human history have a meaning, purpose, and destiny; and 3) the life of every person is not a “private” possession, but is created, sustained and guided *now* by the creative, saving will and love of Almighty God.

Creation is the foundation of God’s saving plan and the beginning of salvation history which culminates in Christ (*cf. CCC 280*). The revelation of God’s creating everything is inseparable from the revelation and realization of His covenant with His people (*cf. CCC 288*).

I. CREATOR

315. “**Creator**” is perhaps the most fundamental image we can have of God. It sets God apart from all created things as ***the only Uncreated Reality***. At the same time, it relates Him to every person, place or thing as their ***Primary Cause*** for existing. Thus God the Creator is both *transcendent* (beyond) all He made, yet *immanent* (remaining) in it, constantly sustaining it in existence (*cf. CCC 300*).

316. But the Creator we proclaim by faith in the Creed is not simply some philosophical First Cause. He is rather the saving God of the Covenant. Thus the Psalmist sings: “How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all — the earth is full of your creatures” (*Ps 104:24*). And “May the Lord bless you from Zion, the maker of heaven and earth” (*Ps 134:3; cf. CCC 287*).

317. Likewise the prophet Isaiah presents the oracle of the Lord: “Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord who made all things” (*Is 44:24*). Again, even more forcefully, the prophet declares:

For thus says the Lord, the Creator of the heavens, who is God, the designer and maker of the earth, who established it . . . I am the Lord, and there is no other . . . There is no just and saving God but me. Turn to me and be safe, all you ends of the earth, for I am God; there is no other! (*Is 45:18,22*).

The Blessed Trinity Is the Creator

318. The Creed links “Creator” directly with “Father Almighty”. This has led to the *over-simplified, mistaken idea* that the Father alone creates (and the Son alone redeems, and the Holy Spirit alone sanctifies). Actually, Christian Faith teaches that *all three Divine Persons act together as ONE GOD in creating, redeeming and sanctifying*. Here we affirm *God the Father creates through His Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit*. Thus St. Paul wrote: “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come, and for whom we live; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom everything was made and through whom we live,” and the Holy Spirit who “gives life” (*1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 3:6; cf. Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17*).

319. St. Irenaeus explained how God is Father, Creator, Author, who made all things through His Word (Son) and Wisdom (Spirit), who are like His “two hands” (*CCC 292*).

For with Him (Father) were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, saying “Let us make man after our image and likeness” (*Adv. Her., Bk. 3, Chap. 20, sec. 1*).

320. Church teaching confirms that “the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the Creator of all things” (*Council of Florence, ND 408*). “The works of the Trinity, in fact,” states Leo XIII, “are undivided just as undivided is the essence of the Trinity, because as the three Divine Person cannot be separated, they likewise operate inseparably.” (*Encyclical Divinum illud, May 9, 1897. Cf. DS 3326*). Therefore, “though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a

truth of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are the one, individual principle of creation (CCC 3166).

II. GOD'S CREATIVE ACTION

321. God commits Himself to us by His free creative activity. Genesis describes creation in two accounts. In the first (*Gen 1:1-2:4a*) God appears as the sovereign Lord who establishes creation in a formal six-day pattern. The second account (*Gen 2:4b-25*) presents God in a closer relationship with human beings. He creates and settles them in the Garden of Eden, and puts them over all other creatures. Both accounts are obviously not modern scientific descriptions of *how* everything came to be. Rather, they present the religious faith insight into *why* all things exist, and what is their ultimate meaning and significance.

322. Another picturesque biblical image of the Creator, close to the Filipino creation myths, is that of the potter forming clay into whatever kind of object he desires. “ ‘Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done?’ says the Lord. ‘Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, house of Israel’ ” (*Jer 18:6*).

A. Biblical and Scientific Accounts

323. The difference between these biblical accounts and a scientific explanation of creation can be compared to two ways of describing a work of art, for example, a beautiful portrait painting. The “*how*” (scientific) explanation focuses on the materials used, the size, weight, age, colors and the whole mechanics of portrait painting. A different type of explanation is the “*why*” which interprets both the artist’s motivations and intentions, and the “meaning and truth” of the portrait itself. The portrait “reveals” the character and personality of the person portrayed.

Both types of “explanation” are valid and necessary. They complement each other and together give a fuller understanding of the painting.

324. The Genesis accounts of creation focus on the “*why*,” the meaning and purpose of everything. The Bible does not teach how heaven was constructed but how to get there, as John Paul II once remarked. The Genesis accounts neither teach nor oppose the scientific theory of evolution. The six “days” do not mean 24 hour solar days (the sun was not made till the

“4th day”). They are simply the inspired author’s way of presenting in a Biblical poem the religious truths which Genesis proclaims. Today we could do no better.

325. The Bible presents God’s creative activity as *a simple act of speech*. “God said ‘Let there be light’ ” (*Gn 1:3*). “For He spoke, and it was made; He commanded, and it stood forth” (*Ps 33:9*). This clearly rejects the pagan myths about the gods’ mortal combat with evil forces and powers, or of some blind, aimless cosmic generation of everything by chance. Instead, the Bible proclaims one Creator, source of all that exists, by a free loving act of His divine will and wisdom. “How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all!” (*Ps 104:24*)

“O Lord our God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor . . . for You have created all things; by Your will they came to be and were made!” (*Rv 4:11*; cf. CCC 295).

B. Church Teaching

326. The Church’s teaching on creation is clearly set forth by the First Vatican Council:

This one and only true God, of His own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of His own happiness, nor for the acquirement of His perfection, but in order to manifest His perfection . . . with absolute freedom of counsel, from the beginning of time *made* at once out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, . . . and then the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body (*ND 412*).

327. This teaches, *first*, that God creates out of His *divine goodness*, to share His goodness with others, *not* because of any need or imperfection. *Second*, He creates by a *free*, intentional, purposeful act, *not* by any sort of natural emanation such as the pantheists propose, or by any “natural” evolution that would deny God’s freedom. *Third*, He creates “*out of nothing*,” that is, not from any matter or any gods already existing (cf. CCC 296-98). All so-called “dualistic” views (matter as evil vs. spirit as good) are rejected. Both spiritual and corporeal creatures are good.

But what precisely has God created? What is the object of his creative act?

III. CREATED REALITY

328. Contrary to some Asian religious views, our Christian faith proclaims all creation as *real* (not an illusion), *intelligible* (not meaningless and purposeless) and *good* (nothing created is intrinsically evil) (*cf.* CCC 299).

This Christian vision can be summarized as follows:

- 1) as a product of divine wisdom, creation is *intelligible* and *meaningful*; therefore
- 2) *evil is not an essential or necessary dimension of our existence*; and thus
- 3) creation is *open to God's saving activity*, and
- 4) *our present lives have an inner divine purpose* which we can discern in faith.

A. Two Consequences

329. All creation, then, is both utterly *dependent upon God* (contingent), and at the same time, precisely because of that dependence, *real and good in itself*. This means that there is nothing in the world that must be *feared*, but also there is nothing that should be *worshipped*! We can explain this briefly as follows.

330. *First*, since everything depends on God, there is no power in creation that can rival God. "For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers; neither height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom 8:38-39*). Therefore Christians are *liberated from* the anxious *dread* of any power or force in the world, visible or invisible, or any magical snare.

331. But *second*, neither is there in all creation anything to be worshipped. Idolatry has been the mark of our infidelity before God since the beginning. Today in our increasingly secularistic environment, the temptation to idolize worldly success is greater than ever. Yet rejecting such temptations must not lead us to denying the rightful autonomy of created things, as proposed by Church teaching.

332. Vatican II expresses it this way:

Created things and societies have their own laws and values which we must gradually come to know, use and organize; this is in accordance with the will of the Creator. It is by virtue of their very creation that all things are provided with a stability, truth and goodness of their own, with their own laws and order. We must respect all this . . . (*GS 36; cf. CCC 339-40*).

333. This does not, of course, deny the essential dependence of all things on God, and more importantly, of our conscious reference to the Creator in our use of them. For without God, creatures vanish into nothingness (*cf. CCC 338*).

B. Man as Crown of Creation

334. Christian faith teaches that *man* is the *crown* and *key to God's creation*. "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to human persons as their center and crown" (*cf. GS 12; cf. CCC 343, 356ff*). The Psalmist expresses this vividly:

"Truly you have formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made."
(*Ps 139:13-14*)

And again:

What is man that you should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that you should care for him?
You have made him little less than the angels,
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
putting all things under his feet (*Ps 8:5-7*).

C. Visible and Invisible: Angels

335. To the phrase "heaven and earth" the Nicene Creed adds "all things visible and invisible." This implies that "earth" refers not only to our planet, but to all reality "visible" to us. In contrast, "heaven" signifies the invisible spiritual world of God, such as the *angels*. Angels are said to be pure spirits, centered on Christ (*cf. Mt 25:31; Heb 1:6*). St. Augustine explains that the term "angel" does not designate their nature, but rather their function as

“ministering spirits sent to serve those who are to inherit salvation” (*Heb 1:14*). The Gospels speak of the care of angels (*Mt 4:11; 18:10; 26:53*). “As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness” (CCC 330).

Angels had a *vital role* in the ***history of salvation***. The Old Testament gives these powerful spiritual creatures different names which reveal both their *function* and their different *degree of perfection*. They are called: angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim. They play important roles both in the life of ***individuals*** like Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobiah (cf. the book of Genesis and of Tobit). . . and in the life of the ***People of God***, especially by protecting them during the Exodus (cf., for instance, *Ex 14:19-20*). Indeed, angels and archangels, throughout the Old testament, are not only members of God’s court in heaven, but also *signs and instruments of God’s love and care for His people*.

336. Angels were also ***closely associated with the earthly existence and mission of our Lord***. “From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word Incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. . . They protect the child Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the Garden” (CCC 333). Jesus is their Lord who could call legions of them in his defense (cf. *Mt 26:53*). When he rose from death, it was some angels who announced to the women the great event (cf. *Lk 24:4-6 and parallels*). They will escort the glorious ***Son of Man*** at the end of time when he will come to judge all human beings (cf. *Mt 25:31*).

The infant ***Church experienced the protection of God’s angels especially in time of persecution or difficulties***, like in the case of Peter saved from jail and Paul strengthened against forthcoming trials (cf. *Acts 12:6-11, and 27:23-25*). All through the centuries the Church has enjoyed the protection and guidance of angels, whether as *God’s People*, or as *communities and individuals* in difficulty. In response that ***the Church honors the angels in the liturgy*** and encourages all believers to trust in their help and live in their presence.

337. God’s absolutely “individualized” and “personal” love for every human being is manifested also in his assigning to each of us *an angel to be our guardian and mentor* “Beside each believer,” wrote St. Basil, “stands an angel as protector and shepherd, leading him to life” (cf. CCC 336). The reality of the ***guardian angels*** is one of the most consoling and inspiring

truths of our faith. “From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession” (CCC 336).

Love, obedience and gratitude to the guardian angel is by no means something “for children only.” It is for all those who care for their own good, and how to appreciate the signs of God’s love. In our spontaneous openness to the supernatural and the world of spirits, we Filipinos have no difficulty in accepting the existence of the angels and revering them. Many of us, at Baptism, are given the names Angelo, Angela, Gabriel, Raphael, and especially Miguel. We trust in the *protection and guidance of our guardian angels*, particularly in moments of need.

D. New Creation

338. From a Christian perspective, all creation is seen as ordered to, and perfected in, the New Creation brought about by the Passion-Death-Resurrection of Christ our Lord, “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (*Rv 21:6; cf. 2 Pt 3:13*). “This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new. All this has been done by God who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ . . .” (*2 Cor 5:17*).

IV. MEANING OF CREATION FOR HUMAN PERSONS

339. We Filipinos naturally tend to take everything personally. Creation therefore becomes more meaningful for us when seen from a *personal perspective*. From this view, three personal aspects of creation are particularly helpful in leading us to a more dynamic understanding of creation.

First, most striking is the sense of God’s **continuing creativity**, as going on *now* (*cf. CCC 301*). Our Creator “calls into being those things which had not been” (*Rom 4:17*). He is the God “who gives to all life and breath and everything else In Him we live and move and have our being” (*Acts 17:25, 28*). The *first personal aspect* of the doctrine of creation, then, is that *God is creating, sustaining each of us in existence, now!* “How could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?” (*Wis 11:25*).

A *second* personal dimension is the **responsibility** with which all human persons are invested: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let

them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air . . . all the creatures that crawl on the ground” (*Gn 1:26*). God puts purpose into creation, and human persons constitute its organizing force.

340. *PCP II* lays great stress on the “*Universal Purpose of Earthly Goods*” and the “*Integrity of Creation*.” With both it details our responsibilities as Filipino Catholics regarding private property and ecological care of the earth (*cf. PCP II 297-303; 321-24*). Vatican II has proposed the basic grounds given us by our Creator for this *responsibility*:

Created in God’s image, we were commanded to conquer the earth with all it contains, and to rule the world in justice and holiness; we were to acknowledge God as Creator of all things and relate ourselves and the totality of creation to Him, so that through our dominion over all things, the name of God would be majestic in all the earth (*GS 34*).

341. This “responsibility”, then, also involves our human “*solidarity*”, that “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, i.e., the good of all and of each individual, because we are really responsible for all” (*PCP II 295; cf. SRS 38*). We are called to exercise responsible STEWARDSHIP over all creation. Such a stewardship is exercised in our daily activities which we can rightfully consider as a prolongation of God’s continuing work of creating, and a service to our fellow men and women. One sign of “living Faith” is that we realize God’s graceful, supporting presence in all our good thoughts, words, and deeds. Far from being “in competition with God,” we recognize in the depths of our hearts and minds, the truth of Christ’s simple assertion: “apart from me you can do nothing” (*Jn 15:5*).

342. A *third* personal characteristic of the Christian doctrine of creation is ***the Creator’s promise to be with His creatures***. “Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God” (*Is 41:10*). So the Psalmist can confidently sing: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (*Ps 124:8*). Against all the deep-set fears and anxieties besetting us all, our loving Creator offers us: 1) a ***hope of ultimate fulfillment*** of all our yearnings; 2) a ***basic vision*** or pattern ***of the relative importance of things***, so we can order our lives accordingly, and 3) a ***promise of inner strength and peace*** of soul unifying our lives.

V. DIVINE PROVIDENCE

343. We Filipino Christians have deep trust in *God's all-knowing and loving Providence*. For He is the Creator, who “covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth; who makes the grass sprout on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men” (*Ps 147:8*). By His providence God protects and governs all things which He has made. He “reaches from end to end mightily and governs all things well” (*Wis 8:1; cf. CCC 302*). For “nothing is concealed from Him; all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must render an account (*Heb 4:13*). This includes even “those things which are yet to come to existence through the free action of creatures” (*Vatican I, ND 413*).

344. The *special Providence* of God concerns man, the crown of His creation (*cf. CCC 307*). Some have explained how we are the “image of God” by reason of our rationality, or because of our spiritual soul, or in view of our capacity to make moral judgments. Vatican II put the stress on man’s interrelationships, man-in-community, starting with the most basic human community described in Genesis: “male and female He created them” (*Gen 1:27*). “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential” (*GS 12*).

345. God’s special Providence relative to man’s social nature is especially evident today in the common thrust toward unity — despite all the tragic obstacles impeding its accomplishment. So Vatican II stresses this basic unity of the human family under God:

All peoples form a single community; their origin is one, for God made the whole human race to dwell over the entire face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, the manifestations of His goodness, His plan of salvation, extend to all men (*cf. 1 Tim 2:4*) until the moment when the elect will be gathered in the Holy City whose light shall be the glory of God, when the nations will walk in His light (*cf. Rv 21:23f; NA 1*).

346. We know that God’s providence does not abolish all evil and suffering from the world. But it does offer the believing Christian the spiritual strength and hope needed to face these evils and refuse to be overcome by them (*cf. CCC 309-14*). And so we pray: “But deliver us from evil. Amen” (*Mt 6:13*).



INTEGRATION

347. Moral Dimensions. PCP II gives “*being created in the image and likeness of God*” as sure Christian basis for our inalienable dignity and our social responsibilities (*cf. PCP II 296; PP*). We are called to “imitate God our Creator both in working and also in resting, since God Himself wished to present His own creative activity under the form of *work and rest*” (*LE 25*).

Thus the conviction that God is creating every human person continually in His own image and likeness is the immediate source for the second of the “great commandments”: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Mt 22:37-38*).

348. The *ecology* crisis today highlights further our moral obligation, flowing from our God-given stewardship over the earth, not only to use its goods responsibly, but to treat them with real respect as gifts from our Creator. The tremendous advances in modern science and technology have heightened this moral responsibility immeasurably, since now, for the first time in history, we have the physical capacity to improve or completely destroy our earthly home. PCP II has called for a “comprehensive theology of STEWARDSHIP [which] makes ecology a special concern of the social action apostolate. . . in view of making everyone a true steward of God’s creation” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 31,1*).

349. Worship Dimensions. Vatican II declares: “The faithful must learn the deepest meaning and value of all creation, and its orientation to the praise of God” (*LG 36*). This is expressed in the liturgy where the doctrine of God, Maker of heaven and earth, is repeated constantly. Two examples will suffice. In the Offertory of the Mass the celebrant prays: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.” Again at the *Sanctus*, the whole congregation prays: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.” Clearly God as Creator is central to the liturgy.

350. The specifically *Christian* insight into the worship dimension of creation is expressed in the *Paschal Mystery*. Thus “we are truly His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance” (*Eph 2:10*). The “good works” of this new worship for all those who are re-created in Christ are nowhere summarized

more simply and sharply than in the ancient prayer: *solī Deo gloria* — to God alone be the glory!



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

351. *What does “God is Creator of heaven and earth” mean?*

To “create” means to put and keep something in existence. God is Creator because He puts and sustains everything in existence. He is the *maker* and *final goal* of everything that exists, all things visible and invisible.

352. *Why is the doctrine of creation important for us today?*

The truth of creation means that God’s loving creativity builds into each of us a *meaning*, *purpose* and *destiny* which nothing can take away from us.

353. *What does the term “Creator” tell us about God?*

“Creator” means God is *absolutely unique and different* from everything else as the only *Uncreated Reality*, but also *related intimately* to everything that exists by His sustaining creative power.

354. *Who is God the Creator?*

The Triune God: Father, Son and Spirit, is the Creator. The Father creates through his Word (Son) in their Holy Spirit.

355. *Do Christians hold a special idea of creation?*

Yes, for Christians “everything in heaven and on earth was created in Christ, . . . all were created through him, and for him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being” (*Col 1:16-17*).

356. *Is God creating now?*

Yes, God continues to create and to sustain in existence the whole world and everything in it. At every moment of their existence, God is the ultimate origin and source, unifying center, and final goal of all things.

357. *Does the Genesis account of creation contradict the scientific theory of evolution?*

No. In affirming that God is the ultimate cause of all that exists, Genesis gives its ultimate meaning and purpose — “*Why*” the world exists. It does not treat “*how*” the physical world came to be in its present condition, which is what the theory of evolution tries to explain.

358. *Why does God create?*

God freely creates *out of sheer love, to share His own divine life and goodness*. Creation is the first step in God’s plan of salvation for all through Jesus Christ.

359. *How does God create?*

God the Father creates through a simple act of His divine Word, the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Each divine Person in the Blessed Trinity is active in the one divine creative act.

“Through Him [the Word] all things came into being, and apart from Him nothing came to be” (*Jn 1:3*).

360. *What effect does “being created” have on everything?*

Being created means all things are equal in being *totally dependent on God* for their very existence, and therefore

- not to be feared or worshipped, but
- respected for their own God-given, built-in stability, truth and goodness, with their own laws and values.

361. *Who is at the top of all creatures?*

Christian Faith teaches that *human persons are the center and crown* of all things on earth.

This is confirmed by Christ’s coming to save us all from sin and raise all to a “New Creation” through his Passion-Death-Resurrection.

362. *How is creation a “personal truth” for us?*

God is *personally present and sustaining each of us now* in our daily lives. Moreover He calls each of us to *personal responsibility in solidarity* with others for the common good of all and of the earth itself.

363. *Are there invisible, spiritual realities?*

Scripture affirms that God's creation includes pure spirits, angels, who serve God as instruments of His Divine Providence for us.

Angels played an active role in the Old Testament, in the life of Jesus and of the Church. God entrusts each human being to the guidance and protection of a guardian angel.

364. *What is "Divine Providence"?*

God continues to sustain and care for everything He created (*general Providence*), with *special Providence* in drawing sinful mankind back to Himself through the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to His decree. . . For I am certain that neither life nor death . . . nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom 8:28, 38-39*).

Chapter 8

The Fall from Glory

They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks; . . . their senseless hearts were darkened . . . they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes.

(Rom 1:21-23)

The secret force of lawlessness is already at work. . . We are bound to thank God for you always, beloved brothers in the Lord, because you are the first fruits of those whom God has chosen for salvation, in holiness of spirit and fidelity to truth. He called you through our preaching of the good news so that you might achieve the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Thes 2:7,13-14)



OPENING

365. The preceding chapter described the goodness of all creation, and especially of human persons created in God's own image, "crowned with glory" (*Ps 8:6*). God is infinitely good, and all His works are good. Yet our daily experience manifests so much in us that is not good — *our sinfulness* (*cf. CCC 385*). Our happiness in goodness and virtue is countered by the misery of evil and sin (*cf. GS 13*).

Moreover, the evil we experience is *not just our own individual sins*. *PCP II* alerts us to "*sinful social structures* — habitual patterns of human interaction are infected by sin" (*PCP II 82*). We become aware of a whole network that oppresses and enslaves: the structures of violence and brutality, prostitution and adultery, poverty and injustice. These are some of the devastating consequences of what Catholic doctrine calls "original sin."

366. Vatican II briefly recounted the Genesis narrative of the origin of this situation. Although set by God in a state of rectitude, the first human beings, enticed by the Evil One, abused their freedom at the very start of history. *They lifted themselves against God, and sought to attain their goal apart from Him*. Although they had known God, they did not glorify Him as God, but their senseless hearts were darkened, and they served the creature rather than the Creator (*cf. GS 13*).



CONTEXT

367. Usually we Filipinos are ever ready to excuse our own and others' faults: "*Sapagkat tayo'y tao lamang*." While this is admirable for patience and forbearance, it too easily avoids honestly facing evil and sin. It makes light of the real personal harm caused by sins to persons, families and whole communities. We often interpret our misfortunes as punishment from God

for our sins (*tadhana*), or as a test from God (*pagsubok*). But this can lead us to concentrate on the punishment rather than the real evil of sin itself.

368. What really bothers most of us is not so much the moral evil of sin as the feeling of shame (*hiya*), of losing face before others. The exclamation “Sorry!” is used so frequently in common speech to mean something like “*pasensiya*” that it no longer expresses any genuine sorrow or contrition, with firm intention of changing one’s ways.

369. But perhaps the more common obstacle to living as outgoing, charitable, forgiving Christians in daily life is the intense concern we normally feel for family, friends and relatives — “*kamag-anak*”. Unfortunately, this often is combined with complete *unconcern* for others. Another common problem arises when, with the familiar *bayanihan spirit*, some socially oriented project is begun. Too often it fails because of the “*ningas-kugon*” defect of not following through when the initial enthusiasm wanes.



EXPOSITION

370. The most fundamental aspect of the Church’s doctrine of original sin is not so much “universal sinfulness” as “**universal salvation.**” The sinfulness is the tragic background needed to understand God’s loving plan to save all men. Only in the light of this Revelation of God’s incredible love for us can we clearly see the reality of sin (*cf.* CCC 387). This focus on God’s redeeming love flows from the earliest tradition handed on by St. Paul: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (*1 Cor 15:3*). The “Good News” is not about original sin but of God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

371. Thus the Church chants on the most solemn vigil of the Liturgical Year, the Vigil of Easter:

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

I. SCRIPTURE ON OUR HUMAN “FALL”

A. Genesis

372. What the book of Genesis presents to us, then, is the story of the Fall of the human race *within* God’s plan of creation and redemption. Genesis describes how, at the origin of our race, man and woman turned away from God their Creator in disobedience and pride, thus rejecting God’s friendship. They wanted to be “like God” (*Gn 3:5*), but “without God, ahead of God, and not according to God” (*CCC 398*).

Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents, Scripture and Church Tradition see imaged in “the serpent” (*Gn 3:1-5*), an evil force called “Satan” or the “devil.” Jesus himself was tempted by the devil (*Mt 4:1-11*) whom he called “murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies” (*Jn 8:44*). “The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing” (*CCC 391*). Scripture gives witness to the disastrous influence, of these created personal beings called also “fallen angels.” Their power is limited by the providence of God who “makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his purpose” (*Rom 8:28*). (*CCC 391-95*)

373. In rebelling against God, man and woman destroyed their original harmony with:

- each other (“they realized they were naked”),
- others (Cain’s murder of his brother Abel),
- the community (Tower of Babel),
- nature (“cursed be the ground . . .”) (*cf. CCC 400f*)

Finally, since man and his wife were now excluded from partaking of the fruit of the tree of life (*cf. Gn 3:22-24*), death will be theirs, “For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return” (*Gn 3:19*).

374. The Genesis narrative presents three moments with which we are all very familiar: *temptation*, *sin*, and *judgment*. But we must not imagine that the author of Genesis was somehow present in the Garden of Eden. Rather, his account is a divinely inspired interpretation of the situation of sin in the

world of his own day. Where did all this evil come from? What is the *origin* of this condition of *universal sinfulness*? (cf. CCC 401)

The Genesis narrative of “The Fall” is the inspired Scriptural response to this fundamental human question of every age. *Not God, but the original man and woman, are the source of moral evil.* And not just “Everyman” like the Medieval plays, but the first members, the origin, of our human race. This alone can explain the universality of evil in our race, and the moral evil which we experience in our world today. Yet the final biblical word is not that “human beings are evil” but that “***God is Savior.***”

B. St. Paul

375. In addition to the Genesis account of the Fall, St. Paul insists strongly on the fact that “All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (*Rom 3:23; cf. 5:12*). But he is equally insistent that “Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again” (*1 Cor 15: 22*). “For if by the offense of the one person all died, much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ abound for all” (*Rom 5:15; cf. CCC 399-401*).

II. CHURCH TEACHING ON ORIGINAL SIN

376. From such biblical sources the Church teaches that “Adam, the first man, by transgressing God’s commandment in paradise, at once lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted; and drew upon himself . . . death.” The holiness and justice received from God was lost not only for him but also for his descendents (*Trent, cf. ND 508-9; CCC 404*). We Filipinos today, as members of the race of Adam, do not inherit his *personal sin*, but rather the ***sinful condition started by his “originating sin.”*** It is a condition in which each of us is personally involved. What we inherit, the “*kasalanang mana,*” is the ***state of sinfulness in which we all are born.***

This universal sinfulness is confirmed by the clear Gospel proclamation that ***all are redeemed by Christ.*** Put briefly, it is a dogma of our Christian Faith that we ***all need to be redeemed.***

377. *First* of all, in describing original sin today we speak of the “*sin of the world*” (*Jn 1:29; CCC 408*). This means the “polluted atmosphere” into which we all are born. It is the *social dimension* of original sin: the “sinful structures” of injustice, oppression and exploitation that *PCP II* so

emphasizes today in its thrust for social renewal and transformation (*cf. PCP II 261-71*).

378. *Second*, there is the *personal interior dimension* of original sin, the “heart of darkness within us” which is “in all men, proper to each” (*Trent, ND 510*). We experience this aspect of original sin especially in one of its effects that remains even after Baptism, called *concupiscence*. Concupiscence itself is not sin, but is rather the “inclination which comes from sin and inclines to sin” (*ND 512; cf. CCC 405-6*).

This indicates that the sacred history narrated in the Bible is re-enacted in some way in each of us. Through the grace of the redeeming Christ received in Baptism, we are called to “wrestle with, manfully resist” this situation and interior inclination to sin (*ND 512*).

379. This Church doctrine merely echoes the Biblical exhortation: “Let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith” (*Heb 12:1-2*).

380. *Third*, there is the “ratification” of original sin by our personal sinful thoughts, words and deeds. Our sins constitute a real part of the “sin of the world” for others, just as their personal sins are part of the “sin of the world” for us (*cf. NCDP 221*).

381. For ourselves, our concupiscence manifests itself in certain sources or roots of sins traditionally called the “*seven capital sins*” from which many sins spring. These sins plague not only individual sinners, but also have a *corporate* dimension. They thrive in various ways among social groups, institutions and various social structures.

The sins usually identified as “capital” include: *pride*: exalting oneself beyond what is due and true; *lust*: disordered desire for, or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure; *anger*: destructive aggressiveness; *gluttony*: excessive indulgence in food or drink; *envy*: begrudging others their talents, success and wishing them evil; *covetousness*: desiring what belongs to others, leading to dishonesty, stealing, and injustice; and *sloth*: laziness and escape from exerting due effort.

382. These “capital sins” can be compared to the “works of the flesh” which St. Paul enumerates: “lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry,

sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (*Gal 5:19-21*).

Descriptive Definition of Original Sin

383. Original sin can be described as *the state in which we are born as members of the human race*. We are thus situated in a sinful history that affects our capacity to love God above all, to become our true full selves, and achieve our destiny.

- It is called **“original”** since it dates from the origin of our human race. This means it is **universal**: all need to be redeemed.
- It is called **“sin”** not because it is a personal sinful thought, word, or action on our part, but because it is **a state contrary to God’s will**. It is an obstacle to that positive loving relation to Him and His whole creation for which we are created.

384. This Catholic doctrine should not be difficult to understand since we all experience this inclination to evil and a lack of harmony within ourselves, with others and with all created things. Genesis describes these consequences of the Fall as the direct result of the refusal to acknowledge God as the creative source of all and final destiny for every human person. The Bible frequently highlights this experience of disharmony by describing life as a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness (*Ecclesiastes; Isaiah; Romans*.)

385. Our experience of this personal disharmony within us is strikingly described by St. Paul’s cry of anguish: “What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend. . . What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death?” Yet Paul’s answer comes immediately: “All praise to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (*Rom 7:19-20, 24-25*).

386. More emphasized today are the *social consequences* of original sin. Yet in many current efforts to bring peace, justice, and economic betterment to all, the obstacle of sin tends to be passed over. Sin is not an active category in current *social sciences*, which even some well-meaning Christians seem to think will bring salvation.

But to so ignore the fact of our wounded human nature, our inclination to self-centeredness and pride has led to “grave errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals” (*CCC 407-9; cf. CA 25*).

387. As *Filipinos* with a deep cultural Catholic tradition, we should be able to recognize the very fruitful contributions of the social sciences without idolizing them. We will not ultimately be “saved” by any new five-year economic plan, or novel political stratagem. Only by responding as best we can to the grace of Christ our Lord, will all our economic, social and political activities be salvific.

388. Vatican II gives us a glimpse of the depth and extent of this response:

For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades our whole human history. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day (*cf. Mt 24:13; 13:24-30*). Caught in this conflict, we are obliged to wrestle constantly if we are to cling to what is good. Nor can we achieve our own integrity without valiant efforts and the help of grace (*GS 37*).

389. Finally, we all must face the ultimate test of our lives: death. Our natural deep fear and dread of total annihilation and extinction can make death a traumatic test. Bodily death as we now experience it is due to the Fall:

Because God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living. For He fashioned all things that they might have being . . . It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death, and considered it a friend, and pined for it, and made a covenant with it, because they deserve to be in its possession (*Wis 1:13-14, 16*).

390. St. Paul also brings out clearly the relation of death to sin: “Just as through one man sin entered the world, and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned” (*Rom 5:12*). But he does this to show “that as sin reigned through death, grace also may reign by way of justice leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Rom 5:21*). Vatican II repeats this message:

“God has called us, and still calls us, to cleave with all our being to Him in sharing forever a life that is divine and free from all decay. Christ won this victory when he rose to life, for by his death he freed us from death” (*GS 18*).

III. ORIGINAL SIN AND FILIPINO CATHOLIC LIFE

391. The reality of original sin is brought home to most Filipinos by two prominent aspects of our Catholic life. The *first* is our practice of *infant Baptism*. Infants “who of themselves cannot have yet committed any sin are truly baptized for the remission of sins” (*Trent, ND 511*). This is because as members of the race of Adam they are affected by its sinfulness. They are influenced both interiorly as they grow up, and exteriorly through the whole sinful situational environment.

In the sacrament of Baptism, the child is blessed in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. This binds the infant through the Risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the “people of God,” the Church, represented by the parents, the sponsors, the whole family and friends, and the local Christian community.

392. Baptism “wipes away original sin” in the sense that the baptized receives the Holy Spirit who makes present the salvific love of the Risen Christ and the Father. This grace enables the baptized to grow up in a Christian way of life: *Christ* is Head, the *Spirit* is inner force, the heavenly *Father* is creative source and final destiny, and the local *Church* is the place of redemption.

393. Vatican II describes the Christian perspective into which the baptized is introduced.

All human activity, constantly imperiled by our pride and deranged self-love, must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ’s cross and resurrection. For, redeemed by Christ and made new creatures in the Holy Spirit, we are able, and indeed ought, to love the things created by God . . . receive them from God, and respect and reverence them as flowing constantly from the hand of God (*GS 37*).

394. The *second* aspect of Filipino Catholic life that brings out the reality of original sin is devotion to *Mary*, the *Immaculate Conception*. Despite many common misunderstandings of this Catholic doctrine, Filipino Catholics are taught to pray to Mary “conceived without original sin.” Mary was, from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, “graced” by God in view of her mission to become the mother of God’s only begotten Son according to the flesh. At no moment was she under the power of sin. This “singular grace and privilege” of Mary was accomplished by “almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race” (*ND 709*).

395. Mary's Immaculate Conception, therefore, shows Christ's power in overcoming sin, and holds out the promise to us all. For if we try to imitate Mary's perfect loving fidelity to God by struggling valiantly in the power of the Spirit to avoid sin and follow Christ faithfully in our daily lives, we too may one day be freed from sin and live fully in God's love. Catholics the world over, through the centuries, have found that sincere devotion to and veneration of Mary is an extraordinarily efficacious means toward that goal.



INTEGRATION

396. The Catholic *doctrine* on original sin naturally goes with *creation*, since it modifies the believers' view of all reality. As with creation, it is Christ our Lord who offers the real insight into this reality. For not only do we see Christ in sharper light as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (*Jn 1:29*) — our Savior. We also see ourselves and our sinful world, with all its tragedies, trials and frustrations, as immediately touched by God our Father, through His only begotten Son-made-man, Risen from the dead, and in Their Holy Spirit. God our Savior is with us precisely in our experience of combatting this universal sinfulness.

397. This doctrine of original sin radically affects our *moral perspective* and vision. We begin to understand the depth of the "power of evil" ranged against our attempts to follow Christ faithfully through thought, word and deed. The personal and social demands of responsible Christian living would be overwhelming if it were not for Christ's promise to be with us always in his Spirit. And this presence of Christ and his Spirit is felt only through an active prayer and sacramental life.

398. In *worship*, a more accurate understanding of original sin would help the Filipino Catholic toward a far deeper appreciation of *Baptism*. Instead of a "social" ceremonial ritual which by some magic supposedly "washes away" sin from an apparently innocent child, Baptism would be seen as a real force throughout our Christian lives. Baptism calls for our persevering effort to follow Christ in everything we do. Our *Baptismal* vows, repeated every Easter, must be taken seriously as a realistic commitment to Christ. Only through the power and inspiration of the *Spirit*, sent by the Risen

Christ and the *Father*, can we be faithful to them. We make them as members of the local *Church*, the Christian community whose strength and support are absolutely essential for our active Catholic life.

399. A better grasp of the reality of original sin would also both inspire a more intense *prayer life* as well as help purify it from self-centeredness. A “pure and open heart,” “child-like simplicity,” and “intense sorrow for sin and firm purpose of amendment,” are not qualities that “come naturally.” When present, we recognize them as gifts of the Spirit. Thus, the *worship* dimension of our Catholic Faith is also intrinsically influenced by the condition described by the doctrine of original sin.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

400. *Why is there sin and evil in the world?*

The Bible teaches that sin and evil come not from God who created everything good, but from the willful disobedience of man who abused his God-given freedom at the dawn of history.

401. *What does “original sin” mean?*

“Original sin” can refer to two things:

- the first “*originating* sin” which brought evil and brokenness into the world; *or*
- “*originated* sin,” or the actual sinful state into which we are born, the essence of which is the privation of sanctifying grace, and some of whose consequences are evident in the outside sinful situation (*sin of the world*), and the inner effect of disordered desires (*concupiscence*) we all experience within us.

402. *Why does the Bible treat of original sin?*

The Bible’s “Good News” narrates the history of sin in the world to bring out our need for God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

403. *What does Genesis teach about original sin?*

Genesis narrates the primordial account of the “originating sin” of Adam and Eve and its consequences for them as well as in the spread of evil in order to account for the evil which we all experience today.

404. *What does St. Paul teach about original sin?*

St. Paul teaches that “just as through one man’s [Adam’s] disobedience all became sinners, so through one man’s [Christ’s] obedience all shall become just” (*Rom 5:19*).

405. *How does Church teaching explain original sin?*

The Church clarifies that we do not inherit Adam’s personal sin, but its consequences, *that is* that as members of the human race, we are born deprived of sanctifying grace, into the sinful condition in the world with our weakened human nature resulting from his sin.

406. *In what does original sin consist and what is related to it?*

Original sin essentially consists in the privation of sanctifying grace, the condition in which all human beings are born.

Related to it are:

- “the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) describing the sinful environment into which we are born;
- the “heart of darkness” in us which we experience in concupiscence; and
- the connection between original sin and personal sins.

407. *Why is it called “original sin”?*

It is called

- “*original*” because its roots in the *origins* of the human race alone explain its *universality*;
- “*sin*” not because it is a personal sinful thought, word or deed, but because it is *a state contrary to God’s will*. It affects our capacity to love God, become our true selves, and achieve our destiny with our fellow men and women.

408. *How do we experience this “heart of darkness” within us due to original sin?*

St. Paul aptly describes this experience: “I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend” (*Rom 7:19*). “The desire to do right is there but not the power” (*Rom 7:18*).

409. *What is meant by “concupiscence”?*

Concupiscence is that deep-seated disorder in our appetites and drives that is the root-cause of many of our personal sins; through God’s redeeming grace we are strengthened to overcome this disorder within us.

410. *What is meant by “capital sins”?*

Capital or “root sins” are basic evil inclinations or disvalues (pride, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, covetousness, sloth) which are the origin of many sinful thoughts, words or deeds. They manifest the evil tendencies within each of us which are the effect of original sin.

411. *How does Baptism “take away original sin”?*

Baptism “takes away original sin” by bringing to the baptized the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s saving, sanctifying presence.

The indwelling Holy Spirit in the baptized makes them adopted sons/daughters of the Father, coheirs with Jesus Christ, and incorporates them into his Body the Church.

412. *Why do we baptize innocent babies?*

Infant baptism is not to take away any personal sins — the baby obviously cannot have committed sin.

Rather, Baptism is to *grace* the child with the gift of the Holy Spirit, within the Christian community of parents, sponsors and neighbors, to effectively symbolize the Christian atmosphere needed for growing up as a disciple of Christ in faith, hope and love.

Chapter 9

God Promises a Savior

You will know that I, the Lord, am your God when I free you from the labor of the Egyptians and bring you to the land which I swore to give.

(Ex 6:7-8)

*With the Lord is kindness and plenteous redemption.
He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.*

(Ps 130:7-8)



OPENING

413. Promise is one of the key words of love. The Old Testament story of God's love for His people centers on His promise of salvation. "I have witnessed the affliction of my people . . . I have heard their cry . . . so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I will come down to rescue them" (*Ex 3:7-8*). That God *knows* the suffering of His people shows Him as one who loves and cares for the oppressed, the afflicted, the poor and the hungry.

414. Immediately after narrating the Fall of man and woman, and the spread of wickedness throughout the world, with the covenant of Noah after the Flood, the book of Genesis shows God's concern for all mankind (*cf. Gn 9:9-11.1*). His love encompasses all nations in spite of their sinfulness and divisions. His plan is to gather them all in one holy people. And he begins to actualize his plan with the call of Abraham and the threefold promise of *land*, of *descendants*, and of a *mission*. These three elements show that God is not limited by place or time, but *acts on a universal scale*, covering all peoples on the face of the earth. The God who saves is to be found where suffering and brokenness are most severe, and where the need for His grace is greatest.



CONTEXT

415. Most Filipinos have a natural attraction for the Word of God in the Old Testament. In their early years they love to hear the Bible stories of the great figures like Moses, Jonah, David, Samson, Solomon and the like. At Sunday

Mass they hear readings from the Old Testament. Today, Bible study groups (*Bibliarasal*) are quite popular, and Bible preachers of all kinds are heard constantly throughout the land. *PCP II* boasts of “Lay Ministers of the Word” in many Basic Ecclesial Communities, particularly those who have been commissioned after appropriate training in Regional Bible Centers (*cf. PCP II 605*).

416. But how well prepared are most Filipino Catholics to respond to the aggressive proselytizing of many “Born Again” and biblical fundamentalists? These active evangelists often disturb the typical Filipino Catholic with a flood of biblical texts quoted from memory, often taken out of context and interpreted according to a pre-set anti-Catholic bias. Thus they charge Catholics with not observing the *Sabbath* as the day of worship, or with violating the Biblical prohibition against making images of God and any other creature, or of eating blood (*cf. PCP II 218-19*).

417. Many Catholic Filipinos find difficulty in responding to these challenges since their familiarity with the Old Testament is often dominated by literal acceptance of “what the Bible says.” The biblical dramas are taken as simple stories, without discerning the underlying deeper meaning. Thus, distorted ideas arise about God as being a fearful Judge exacting dire punishment for every sin. Or about Old Testament morality erroneously conceived in terms of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (*Ex 21: 24*).

418. *Some* react by rejecting the validity of the whole Old Testament for us today. *Others* want to know which parts remain binding on us. For *many*, the Old Testament is simply *obsolete* since we already have the fulfillment of God’s Promise of a Redeemer in Jesus Christ. Besides, they see little relevance for themselves in the ancient history of a far off people who have little in common with Filipinos of the 20th century, fast approaching the 21st!

PCP II, in recognizing the problem, spoke of “the challenge to read and study, pray over and live the written Word of God.” It expressed the strong desire that “the Bible, read in the Church, occupy the place of honor it deserves in every Catholic heart, home and parish” (*PCP II 224:1*).



EXPOSITION

I. VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

419. The truth is that the Old Testament is the living Word of God, “sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*). The “Promise” of salvation is as important for us today as it was for the Israelites because salvation is not a thing, a material gift, but the living, transforming presence of God within us. We are pilgrims, journeying in the light and by the strength of God’s abiding promise: “I will be with you” (*Ex 3:12*).

420. Thus God’s Old Testament Word is necessary for us today, and throughout our lives to understand Christ our Savior more fully. *PCP II* insisted that

nothing and no one speaks better of the Incarnate Word of God than the Scripture as Word of God. When the Bible is read in the Church, it is Christ himself who speaks to us (*cf. SC 7*). The Bible must once again become the primary catechetical book. Familiarity with the Bible through prayerful use and study of it should characterize the Catholic faithful, for “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*DV 5; PCP II 159*).

421. Jesus himself thus taught the Emmaus disciples, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interpreting every passage of Scripture that referred to him” (*Lk 24:27*). The basic reason for this insistence on the Scriptures is not the Fundamentalists’ attack, but the fact that “the plan of salvation is found as the true Word of God in the Old Testament books which, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable” (*DV 14*).

II. CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

422. The biblical Promise of Salvation in the Old Testament is not primarily a question of an individual text or even a series of texts. Rather, the whole Old Testament is a three-part presentation of the saving acts of God. *First*, there is the ***Torah***, the historical books revealing God in the history of His

Covenant Promises to Israel. *Second*, the *prophets*’ “Word of the Lord” promises deliverance from slavery and exile. *Third*, the *writings* of the sages, the poets and the visionaries offer inspired means for discerning God’s saving presence in daily life (*cf. CCC 702*).

This Old Testament “canon” is summarized in Jeremiah:

“It will not mean the loss
of instruction [Torah] from the priests,
nor of messages [word] from the prophets,
nor of counsel from the wise” (*Jer 18:18*).

A. Torah/Historical Books

423. The first five books of the OT, called the *Pentateuch*, constitute the core of the *Torah*, or Law. But unlike our laws today, the Old Testament Torah was formed gradually as a *narrative memory* of God’s covenant with His people. It is the authoritative response to questioning: “Later on, when your son asks you what these ordinances, statutes and decrees mean which the Lord has enjoined on you, you shall say to your son:

We were once slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand, and wrought before our eyes signs and wonders . . . to lead us into the land He promised on oath to our fathers. Therefore the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes in fear of the Lord, our God, that we may always have as prosperous and happy a life as we have today. . . (*Dt 6:20-24*).

424. *Vocation*. Torah or “Law” here signifies a “moral binding” that is at once a *vocation*, a *gift* and a *way of life*. The Old Testament Torah is an open-ended, imaginative narrative of Israel’s historical public experience of their Covenant God. To anyone today who thinks life is made up only of one’s own immediate private experiences, the Torah insists on the essential place of the *community’s heritage* and the “handing down” of a living tradition.

425. At the center of Israel’s memory is the *Covenant Maker*, God who is *with* His people and *for* His people.

“Hear, O Israel! . . . Be not weakhearted or afraid; be neither alarmed nor frightened . . . For it is the Lord, your God who goes *with* you to fight for you against your enemies” (*Dt 20:3-4*).

The decisive event in Israel's history was the *Exodus* from Egypt and the *Sinai Covenant*. The Israelites were commanded by God to relive this great covenant moment of liberation each year by celebrating the *Feast of the Passover*.

“You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendants. . . .When your children ask you, ‘What does this rite of yours mean?’ you shall reply: ‘This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt’ ” (*Ex 12:24-27*).

426. Commandments. For their part of the Covenant, the Israelites were called to keep the “*Ten Words*” given to Moses at Mount Sinai (*cf. Ex 20; Dt 5:6-21*). These Commandments were to *liberate* them, as their preface declares: “I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (*Ex 20:2*). But they also demanded of the people a fateful decision: a persevering commitment to the liberating Covenant God:

“Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . you will live. If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen . . . you will certainly perish” (*Dt 30:15-18*).

427. In brief, the God of the Covenant brought salvation to His people by His active presence. When infidelities weakened this presence, God promised a *New Presence* in a *New Covenant*, fashioned by a Promised Savior. As Christians we enter this New Paschal Covenant made in Christ through our Baptism. But unfortunately, like the Israelites of old, the Covenant God's Promise of life is often forgotten or taken for granted, and our Covenant response in our *Baptismal Promises* only rarely recalled.

B. The Word of the Prophets

428. We often confuse “prophet” with a fortune teller (*manghuhula*) who predicts what the future holds in store for us. But the Old Testament prophets were not like that. They were men called by God to speak His word to the people, interpreting their present situation in the sight of God and telling them what He would do with them. Most of all, ***the prophets called the people back to the Covenant***. For despite God's constant fidelity, Israel's history is a series of infidelities. After the *first stage* of God's saving acts in liberating His people from their slavery in Egypt, a *second stage* concerns their

deliverance proclaimed by the prophets, both before and after the Exile, if only they would turn back to the Lord.

429. *Conversion.* This prophetic “word” comes as a surprise; it is a word of passion, bringing new hope at the very time when things were completely hopeless. It is the “word of the Lord,” free and unaccommodating, breaking all conventional expectations. It is a word of *conversion*: turn back to God. *Amos* admonishes:

“Seek the Lord, that you may live . . .
Seek good and not evil;
Then truly will the Lord, the God of hosts,
be with you as you claim!” (*Am* 5:6, 14)

Isaiah echoes the same call to conversion:

“Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;
Cease doing evil; learn to do good.
Make justice your aim: redress the wronged,
Hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow” (*Is* 1:16-17).

430. The *people’s* “conversion” is not just self-made. Rather, it is also the work of their saving God: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine” (*Is* 43:1). Within this grace of conversion is the promise of *forgiveness*. *Isaiah* gives God’s side:

“Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord. Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool” (*Is* 1:18).

The prophet *Joel* highlights the need for genuine interior repentance to gain God’s mercy:

“Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting,
and weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the Lord your God.
For gracious and merciful is He, slow to anger,
rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment” (*Jl* 2:12-13).

431. God's call through the prophets to repentance ends with an incredible promise. *Ezekiel* describes Yahweh's promise thus:

"I will give you a *new heart*
and place a *new spirit* within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you
and make you live by my statutes" (*Ez 36:26-27*).

Moreover, this deep interior renewal activated by God's grace is worked not just within the individual alone, but especially among the whole people. "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel" (*Jer 31:31*).

432. The messianic prophecies foretell in greater detail the Savior who will bring about the promised new Covenant. This Savior will show a *special love for the poor* and *justice* will be his concern. "He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted" (*Is 11:4*). "This is the name they give him: 'The Lord our justice' " (*Jer 23:6*). "See, your king shall come to you; a just Savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass" (*Zech 9:9*).

433. *Servant Songs*. Isaiah presents *four* "Servant songs" which provide a startling new image of how God will realize His promise of salvation. The *mission* of this suffering Servant is *to establish justice*:

"Here is my servant whom I uphold,
My chosen one with whom I am pleased,
Upon whom I have put my spirit;
He shall bring forth justice to the nations" (*Is 42:1*).

The *scope* of his saving work is *universal*:

"I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (*Is 49:6*).

434. Most striking of all is the characteristic *life-style* of this Servant: his *willingness to suffer*.

"I gave my back to those who beat me,

my cheeks to those who plucked my beard.
My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting” (*Is 50:6*) .

The Servant’s suffering was not for his personal sin, but for the sins of others.

He was pierced for our offenses,
crushed for our sins;
Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep,
each following his own way;
But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all (*Is 53:5f*).

435. But the prophets did more than prophesy a Messiah King and Suffering Servant.” Their call to conversion was a *radical upheaval*. The Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth and told him: “This day I set you over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant” (*Jer 1:10*). The old world is coming to an end: rooted up and torn down, destroyed and demolished. *God is bringing a new world into existence: building and planting it.* “This is the plan proposed for the whole earth. . . The Lord of hosts has planned, who can thwart him?” (*Is 14:26-27*)

436. Prophetic Hope. There are always those who, overcome by the tragedies of life, claim such a new world is impossible even for God. To them the Lord replied through the prophet: “I am the Lord, the God of all mankind! Is anything impossible to Me?” (*Jer 32:26-27*). Thus God makes Himself the firm foundation for the hope held out to the people by the prophets.

437. This *prophetic hope* is, *first* of all, grounded on the *memory of God’s great saving acts in the past*. “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried. Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (*Is 51:1-2*). Thus grounded, hope works against the *rootlessness* with which modern secularism plagues us all. *Second*, prophetic hope looks essentially also to the *future* and to *posterity*. It thus helps us to overcome our excessive individualism. “My salvation shall remain forever, and my justice shall never be dismayed” (*Is 51:6*). *Third*, in freeing us from the guilt of sin, the prophets’ promise of *God’s forgiveness*

brings comfort. “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem . . . her guilt is expiated” (*Is 40: 1-2*).

438. *Fourth*, the prophetic hope sketches a *new life* that drives out resignation and despair.

“They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
they will soar as with eagles’ wings;
They will run and not grow weary,
walk and not grow faint” (*Is 40:31*).

439. *Lastly*, the prophetic hope bursts out of all narrow pragmatic, utilitarian views by offering a *vision of the future that only God can create*.

“Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;
The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.
Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create”
(*Is 65:17-18*).

440. *God is speaking to us today through the Old Testament prophets* as much as in the days of old. The prophetic message is inspiring an extraordinarily active ministry of the Catholic Church in the Philippines in its *thrust for justice* through a *preferential option for the poor*. The prophetic message of *conversion*, of *hope in the Lord*, of *fidelity to the Covenant* with God our Savior, remains ever new and ever relevant.

Recognizing this, *PCP II* decreed that a syllabus of biblical catechesis for social involvement must be undertaken. This biblical catechesis should be promoted and given prominence in evangelization work and in the Church’s programs of formation and action for social awareness” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 21, 3-4*).

C. The Counsel of the Wise

441. The third part of the Old Testament, called the “*Writings*,” presents the discernment needed for ordinary day-to-day living. The *Psalms* and the *Wisdom literature* present how the faithful can discern the presence of God in their daily lives. “How are things inter-connected?” the wise man asks. Can God, through His Covenant Torah and His prophetic Word, bring salvation to ordinary daily life? “Whence can wisdom be obtained, and where is the place of understanding?” (*Jb 28:12*).

442. In the *Wisdom Literature*, *Job* responds by looking not only back to the confident experience of God's saving presence in the past. He also looks forward to the divine inscrutability: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away" (*Jb 1:21*). There is much to learn from the counsels of the wise. "Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and turn away from evil" (*Prv 3:7*). On work and leisure: "He who tills his own land has food in plenty, but he who follows idle pursuits is a fool" (*Prv 12:11*). On relating to people: "A mild answer calms wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (*Prv 15:1*).

443. Some advice "liberates" by exposing evils that enslave. "There are six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet that run swiftly to evil, the false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers" (*Prv 6:16-19*). Others provide something like today's "value clarification." "It is better to harken to the wise person's rebuke than to harken to the song of fools" (*Eccl 7:5*).

444. *Job's* question, then, is answered by the vital interaction of *life-experience* and *Lord-experience*. Both come together in: "Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and avoiding evil is understanding" (*Jb 28:28*). The best human knowledge of salvation is discerning obedience to the Lord.

445. The *Psalms* present *another dimension of salvation*. Characteristic of the *Psalms* is their *direct personal address to God*, expressing deep faith and *trust* in the Lord. In the *Psalms* *all aspects of daily life* are encountered:

- all *places* like houses, fields, roads, workshops and sickbeds;
- all *occupations* like eating, drinking, sleeping, getting up, working, recreating;
- all *ages* of life, from childhood to old age, with all forms of *personal relations*: man and woman, parents and children, brothers and friends.

The *Psalms* repeat Israel's unique history, and even include the whole of creation: the stars of heaven and earth, winds and clouds, trees and flowers.

446. *Psalms* of *praise* express thanksgiving for the saving acts of God, with a plea for His continued care. *Psalms* of *lament* speak of the deliverance God works for His people. Both manifest the sharp conviction that we exist and

live only as participating in a community and in direct relationship with God. Salvation comes from God to us as community members, not as self-made liberators. Filipinos are naturally drawn to the psalms to express their “*utang na loob*” for God’s tremendous “*kagandahang-loob*” with them.

447. *Deep trust in God and His power to save* is the basic theme of these Psalms. On one hand there is bold, unreserved oneness with God.

“Though my flesh and my heart waste away,
God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever” (*Ps 73:26*).

On the other hand, a tough quality is present: the making of a decision, the choosing of sides and standing firm against others.

“Help us, O God our Savior, because of the glory of your name;
Deliver us and pardon our sins for your name’s sake;
Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”
Let it be known among the nations in our sight
that you avenge the shedding of your servants’ blood” (*Ps 79:9-10*).

448. The final salvific message of the Psalms, then, can be summed up by two notions: ***total commitment*** to the mystery of God’s nearness, and concrete ***daily obedience*** to His Torah, His Commandments. This repeats the distinctive marks of Israel in Deuteronomy:

“For what great nation is there that has gods *so close* to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon Him? Or what great nation has *statutes and decrees* that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” (*Dt 4:7-8*).

449. A *God so near* and a *Torah so righteous* — these are the grounds for the promised salvation. “You, O Lord, are near, and all Your commandments are permanent” (*Ps 119:151*). The promise of salvation means this:

“Let Your kindness come to me, O Lord,
Your salvation according to Your promise. . .
And I will keep Your law continually forever and ever.
And I will walk at liberty because I seek Your precepts” (*Ps 119:41-45*).

450. In the New Testament, we meet Christ our Lord responding in similar fashion to the same question about salvation. When the rich young man asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied: “Keep the commandments” [a Torah so righteous]. . . “If you wish to be perfect, . . . come, follow me!” [a God so near] (*Mk 10:17-22*). In Jesus Christ our Savior, God is *with* us, *for* us. Therefore obey Him!



INTEGRATION

451. The Old Testament obviously serves with the New as the major source of all three basic dimensions of the Catholic Faith: *doctrine, morals, and worship*. It is tempting to link the three-part Old Testament canon (the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings) to doctrine, morals and worship respectively. But this will not do: *each major part of the Old Testament contains elements of all three dimensions of our Faith*.

452. Moreover, there is good reason for *not* trying to keep the three parts of the Old Testament canon too clearly apart. For all three parts are so intimately related that in the complex editing process of creating the Old Testament in its final written form, much overlapping resulted. For example, the claims of the Torah moved into the Prophetic books, while the prophetic word became important for interpreting both the Torah and the Writings. Finally, the Wisdom books and the Psalms help to appreciate both the Torah and the Prophets.

453. *Doctrinal Dimension.* Nevertheless, the Old Testament’s inspired narrative grounds most of the basic *doctrines* of our Catholic Faith. For example, regarding God, He is the Father and Creator, who will send a Savior to redeem us from sin, and create within a new heart and among us a new people, through His Spirit.

Therefore we recognize today how one-sided and unbalanced it was to picture the Old Testament God as the great avenging, vindictive Jehovah. Rather we find

- Yahweh the shepherd who “seeks out the lost, brings back the strayed” (*Ez 34:16*),
- a vinekeeper caring for his vineyard (*cf. Is 5: 1-7*),

- the savior who loved Israel as a father loves his son (*cf. Hos 11:1*), and with the tenderness of a mother for the child of her womb (*cf. Is 49:15*).

Yet all this prepares for a greater revelation, for ultimately only Jesus Christ, “the Son, ever at the Father’s side” (*Jn 1:18*) can reveal the full mystery of the living God.

454. Moral Dimension. The *moral* code of the “Ten Words” at Sinai still grounds the New Covenant’s moral stance, as Jesus himself presented it. Moreover, the mystery of moral evil, sin, is dramatically presented in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament. Perhaps even more important is how *sin’s social nature*, and the corresponding call to liberating action are most powerfully described by the prophets, as today’s liberation theology clearly manifests. In addition, the book of Proverbs provides ample examples of common sense advice for “training in wise conduct, in what is right, just and honest” (*Prv 1:3*).

455. Worship Dimension. The Church’s liturgical *worship* in the Eucharist celebration draws directly on the Jewish synagogue service of God’s Word in Sacred Scripture, and especially on Israel’s great feast of the Passover. This practice simply builds on Christ’s own example at the Last Supper. Moreover, especially in Israel’s songs, the Psalms, the Catholic Church finds the inspired expression of her deepest spiritual longings.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

456. *What is the value of the Old Testament for Christians today?*

The Old Testament gives us the living Word of God that brings God’s promise of salvation to us. Salvation is not a material thing, but a spiritual reality only gradually understood through its *promise*.

The OT provides the background for interpreting our own experience as well as the words, example, and presence of Christ our Savior.

“When the holy Scriptures are read in the Church, it is Christ himself who speaks to us” (*SC 7*).

457. *Where is God's Promise of salvation found in the OT?*

God's Promise of salvation is found in all three parts of the OT: the *Law* (Torah), the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* (the Wisdom books and Psalms).

458. *What does the Law teach us today about God's Promise?*

The OT Covenant Law was God's great *gift* to His people, offering them a special vocation and way of life as a community heritage.

The Law reveals a God *for* and *with* His people, whose commandments are meant to *liberate* His people, despite their infidelities toward Him.

459. *What do the Prophets say of God's Promise?*

The prophets interpret the present situation as viewed by God. They constantly call for *conversion of heart* worked within His people by God Himself.

460. *How, according to the Prophets, would God accomplish this?*

The messianic prophecies foretell a Messiah King who brings salvation to his people precisely as a "*Suffering Servant*."

They call the people to radical conversion, to *turn back* to Yahweh's Covenant by renouncing evil and doing justice.

461. *What is meant by "prophetic hope"?*

The prophets grounded the hope of salvation on God Himself, based on the memory of Yahweh's saving acts in the past, but always looking toward a future new life that, through God's creative power, drives out all resignation and despair.

462. *What promise of salvation do the "Writings" give?*

The Wisdom books remind us how to be faithful to God in daily actions and events.

- *Proverbs* take up the practical moral wisdom in ordinary daily life.
- *Job* wrestles with the deepest mysteries of evil and death.

463. *What is the special value of the Psalms for the Christian?*

The Church has adopted the Psalms, the prayers Christ used, to express the New Covenant created by the Triune God.

The Psalms are song-poems of praise, lament, thanksgiving, repentance — arising from the deepest longings of the human heart and drawing on God's saving acts among His people.

They express total personal commitment to God, the Savior of His people, in daily obedience to His Law.

Chapter 10

Jesus Christ: Mission and Person

*“And you,” he said to them, “who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the
living God!”*

(Mt 16:15-16)

Thomas said, “My Lord and my God!”

(Jn 20:28)



OPENING

404. *The center of our Christian Faith is Jesus Christ.* Hence he is the heart and center of catechesis (cf. *PCP II* 157-9; *CCC* 426-29). Thus the chief aim of this Catechism is to put Filipinos “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (*CT* 5). Like *PCP II*, this Catechism intends to be a venue for “meeting with Christ.” It is directed “toward a New Evangelization based on the preaching of Christ Crucified to today’s Filipinos and Asians. . . . To proclaim the wonderful redemptive acts of Christ our Lord, from Aparri to Jolo. To re-animate our life in Christ Jesus; to unite all things in him” (cf. *Message of the Council; PCP II* 7).

This is the first of three chapters focusing directly on Jesus as he is presented to us today through the teaching, witness and prayer life of the Catholic “People of God,” the Church.

465. At a critical point in his public ministry, Jesus asked his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (*Mt 16:15*) This same question is posed to each and every Christian Filipino today. Its unique importance is that our own self-identity and life-meaning as persons, Filipinos and Catholics, rests on our personal response. To truly know ourselves and the ultimate meaning of our lives “we need to contemplate the face and the heart of Christ” (*PCP II 36*).

This chapter takes up the *mission* and *identity* of Jesus Christ. The two following chapters develop the central *truths of his Paschal Mystery* as proclaimed in the Eucharistic acclamation: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”



CONTEXT

466. As the only “Christian nation” of Southeast Asia, we Filipinos can be proud of our faith in Jesus Christ. Chapter 1 pictured the Catholic Filipino in terms of five images of Christ: as Son of God and Son of Man, as Eucharist, as Suffering Servant, as King, and as “Miracle worker,” within a Mary-inspired approach. Here we wish to focus on how to come to a deeper, truer understanding of *what Jesus Christ does* and *who he is*. This tells us something of both the real Jesus Christ living today, and of our deep-felt values and needs as Filipinos, our *kalooban*, as redeemed “disciples of Christ” (*PCP II 34*).

467. Three popular Filipino images of Christ are particularly expressive. *First* is the ***Santo Niño*** (the Holy Child) imaging the innocence, simplicity, child-like wonder of Christ. While responding to the Filipino’s natural love for children, the child image of Christ can sometimes foster a one-sided focus which neglects the mature, adult Christ and the demands of responsible discipleship.

A *second* common image is ***Hesus Nazareno***, picturing the suffering Jesus and inspiring many folk devotional *panata*. This image of Jesus’ suffering love is very consoling to numberless Filipinos in dire poverty and hardships. Yet, unless it is balanced by the image of the Risen Christ, the Victor over sin and death itself, it can foster a certain self-centered, passive

fatalistic attitude that impedes free, creative response to everyday challenges.

468. A *third* popular image of Christ, common in jeepneys and tricycles, is the ***Sacred Heart***, whose meek and mild countenance invites like attitudes in his followers. Traditional Filipino courtesy and patience in the face of suffering are thus religiously grounded. But this serene image needs to be related to Christ the *Liberator*, inspired by his mission to “light a fire on the earth” (*Lk 12:49*). It is this image of Christ, liberating us both within our personal lives and social structures, that has captured the special attention of many Filipinos today.

469. Two realities dominate the present Philippine context of preaching Christ. On the one hand, the startling growth of “*Born Again*” and *Fundamentalist groups* indicates a widespread yearning among Filipinos for a closer, more personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. *PCP II* does not hesitate to admit that “the Church has failed in many ways to satisfy the spiritual hunger of many of the faithful. This we must correct” (*PCP II 223*).

On the other hand, the continuing violence in armed conflicts and kidnapping manifests the deep-set cry of so many Filipinos today for social liberation. They are seeking a way to break out of the injustices and oppressive structures that exploit them. It is in this concrete Philippine context that Jesus Christ must be approached today. As “Church of the Poor,” we Filipino Catholics must be “willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation” (*PCP II 135*).



EXPOSITION

I. PRESUPPOSITIONS

470. *First*, we must recognize that *to really know Jesus Christ is a life-long task*. This is the experience of all who believe in him. It is life-long because to know Jesus is to know the only one whom “God has raised up” (*Acts 2:32*), who “takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*), who is the “only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth” (*Jn 1:14*). It is life-long, too, because

only in Jesus Christ do we come to know our own true selves, and the deepest meaning and destiny of our lives (*cf. GS 22; PCP II 34*).

471. *Second*, knowing Jesus is a living, changing, *growing* and *deepening experience*. It is not like knowing some fact of information, or knowing how to do something, some skill. Rather, *knowing Jesus means entering into a personal relationship with him*. As *PCP II* declares, “the believer lives in Jesus and Jesus lives in him” (*PCP II 66*). “*Knowing him*” animates and liberates us in a way like no other relationship could possibly do.

Concretely, most Filipino Catholics learn of Jesus when taught their prayers as young children. We learn about Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, his mother, and recite the Hail Mary. Our parents take us to Sunday Mass where we learn to listen to Christ’s teaching and his works of power by hearing the proclamation of the Gospel’s Good News. We pray the Creed together with the whole congregation.

472. *Third*, the Jesus we come to know is both the *historical earthly Jesus* and the *Risen Christ of faith*. One cannot be separated from the other. St. Paul exemplifies this in his description of the Gospel:

the gospel concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh but was made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord
(*Rom 1:3-4*).

473. *Fourth*, to know Jesus means being committed to following him, being his *disciple* (*cf. PCP II 34, 44*). As expressed in a popular song a few years ago, “to see” Christ more clearly involves “loving him more dearly” and “following him more nearly.” *There is no authentic “knowing Jesus Christ” outside of personal commitment* to his teaching and way of life. Knowing Jesus must make a difference in our lives. It must accompany loving service of others in living faith (*cf. Jas 2:17*). Otherwise it is knowledge that “puffs up,” rather than “builds up” (*1 Cor 8:1*). *PCP II* declares: “expressing our faith through deeds of justice and love is particularly urgent in the Philippines” (*PCP II 80*).

474. From this practical necessity of following Jesus in order to know him adequately flows a *fifth* basic principle: that *we come to know who Jesus is from what he did*, his salvific mission. This is exemplified by one Eucharistic acclamation which proclaims: “Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world!” John’s Gospel was written according to the same principle: “Jesus performed many

other signs as well. . . . But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name” (*Jn 20:30-31*). So we turn to the Gospels, which “faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among us, really did and taught for our eternal salvation” (*DV 19*).

II. MINISTRY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

475. *The irreplaceable starting point for knowing Christ is the **historical Jesus**.* So it was with the first disciples of Christ, whose Easter proclamation asserted that “the God of our fathers has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and disowned in Pilate’s presence” (*Acts 3:13*). So it is with us Filipino Catholics today: we come to personal faith through the Christian community’s witness to Jesus’ historical life, interpreted with the help of the inspired Scriptures and of the continued inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the living Tradition of the Church. The life and work of the historical Jesus alone provides the basic ground for confessing Jesus as Christ the Lord.

476. *Why the Historical Jesus?* We proclaim in the Creed that the Son of God came down from heaven “for us and our salvation.” Scripture likewise declares: “The Father sent His Son as Savior of the world” (*1 Jn 4:14*). This means *first*, that God sent His Son as an offering for our sins (*cf. 1 Jn 4:10*). *Second*, he came to reveal to us God’s love, that we might have life through him (*cf. Jn 3:16*). *Third*, he came to be our model for sanctity, so that, *fourth*, we could share in his divine sonship (*cf. 2 Pt 1:4; CCC 456-60*).

At Christmas St. Augustine preached: “He who was the Son of God, for you has become the Son of man, so that you who were children of men, might become the children of God. That he might give us of his good things, he shared with us our infirmities.”

477. After situating its work in the “Lights and Shadows” of the Philippines, *PCP II* chose to present its Message with “The Way of Jesus,” followed by “The Call of Jesus Today,” to ground our Christian life of “Discipleship in Community – The Church” (*PCP II 37-144*). The actual work or ministry of Jesus was summed up by Vatican II in the following description:

Jesus Christ speaks the words of God (*cf. Jn 3:34*), and accomplishes the saving work which the Father gave him to do. . . . He did this by the

total fact of his presence and self-manifestation — by words and works, signs and miracles, but above all by this death and resurrection from the dead, and finally by sending the Spirit of truth (*DV 4*).

478. Following Vatican II, *PCP II* described Christ as *prophet*, *priest* and *king* (*cf. LG 10-13; PCP II 57-61*). In this chapter we shall sketch the ministry of the historical Jesus under two main headings: ***prophet*** and ***Savior***. The exposition of Jesus as *King* will be developed in terms of Christ our Moral Norm in Chap. 15. Jesus as *Priest* is explained in the section of Chapter 28 entitled “Jesus Christ, the One Mediator/Priest.”

A. Jesus as Prophet

479. The vocation of a biblical prophet often embraces *three typical tasks*: 1) *to proclaim the word* of God with authority; 2) *to accompany this word with signs and wonders (deeds)*; and 3) *to suffer a martyr’s fate, death*. This is the pattern of Jesus’ ministry that we find in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is “a prophet equal to any of the prophets” (*Mk 6:15*). His ministry incited the Pharisees to ask for signs (*cf. Mk 8:11*), and he was put to death for being a false prophet (*cf. Mk 14:65*).

480. Jesus himself spoke of his own experience in terms of a prophet’s rejection by his own people (*cf. Mk 6:4*) and compared his own fate to a prophet’s death in Jerusalem (*cf. Lk 13:33*). But most of all, Jesus lived a prophetic mission by reason of *his possession of the Spirit*. In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus calmly appropriates to himself the text of Isaiah: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore He has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good tidings to the poor . . .” (*Lk 4:18*). When asked by John the Baptist’s disciples “Are you ‘He who is to come’?” Jesus responds by citing his works of the Spirit:

“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (*Mt 11:4-5*).

We shall briefly develop each of the three dimensions of the prophet’s task — *word*, *deeds*, and *fate* — as Jesus gives them their fullest meaning in his own ministry.

Word

481. *The teaching and preaching of Jesus centered on the “Kingdom of God,”* a dynamic symbol of God’s active presence among His people. For Christ, this Kingdom, was grounded in the Old Testament *hope* for Yahweh’s presence (cf. Ps 91:1, 96:10; 97:1; 99:1 etc). This hope was *eschatological*, that is, something *already* present but *not yet* fully (cf. Mk 1:14f; Mt 4:17). Without ever defining precisely *what* the Kingdom of God is, Jesus uses it to embrace all the blessings of salvation, a salvation of God’s active presence within people’s daily life, liberating them *from* the enslaving power of evil, *for* loving service of their fellowmen.

For Filipino Christians today, *PCP II* sketches the essentials of the Kingdom as a “*gift of God*,” made present in Jesus, as a “*Task*” and as a “*Promise*” (cf. *PCP II* 39-43).

482. Christ’s typical method of communicating his word about the Kingdom was by telling stories, *parables*. In them he focused on the common life of his listeners, and drew them into recognizing God’s presence therein. Jesus taught the people that God was their Father, not in competition with them. That He was not calling them out of their own humanity, but rather making their own creative human efforts possible by His divine presence.

483. Another characteristic of Jesus’ preaching was his peculiar use of “*Amen*.” While “Amen” was customary in responding to another’s assertion, Jesus used it rather to introduce his own message. Jesus’ *Amen* expressed a unique blend of *certainty*, *authority* and *power*.

Certainty, because Jesus claimed to be expressing only what he hears from the Father. “I do nothing by myself. I say only what the Father has taught me” (*Jn* 8:26-28).

Authority, because unlike the prophets of old, Jesus spoke in his own name: “I solemnly assure you . . .” (cf. *Jn* 3:3,11; 5:19,24, etc.) Jesus puts his word above Moses and the Law. “You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers . . . What *I* say to you is. . .” (*Mt* 5:21-48).

Power, because Jesus claimed a unique filial relationship with God his “*Abba*,” Father. And he claimed the power to share this relationship with others:

“Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him” (*Mt* 11:27).

Deeds

484. Peter's Pentecost discourse began with: "Men of Israel, listen to me! Jesus the Nazorean was a man whom God sent to you with miracles, wonders, and signs as his credentials. These God worked through him in your midst, as you well know" (*Acts 2:22*). But Jesus was not the typical "wonder-worker" creating a big show to draw crowds of followers. Rather he worked a *healing* ministry which constantly called to personal *faith* and *discipleship* (*cf. PCP II 84*).

485. The direct connection between *faith* and *healing* works is clearly affirmed by Christ in many of his signs. For instance:

- when he cured the paralytic (*cf. Mk 2:1-12*), and the woman with the issue of blood (*cf. Mk 5:25-34*);
- when he gave sight to the blind Bartimaeus (*cf. Mk 10:46-52*), and restored to life Jairus' daughter (*cf. Mk 5:21-24, 35-43*);
- when he cured the centurion's servant boy at Capernaum (*cf. Mt 8:5-13*), and the daughter of the persistent Canaanite woman (*cf. Mt 15:21-28*);
- when he cleansed the ten lepers, of whom only the one Samaritan returned to give thanks (*cf. Lk 17:11-19*).

In all these cases, Christ's message was the same: "Your faith has been your salvation. Go in peace" (*Lk 7:50*). In contrast, in his own home town of Nazareth, Jesus could work no miracle, "so much did their lack of faith distress him" (*Mk 6:5-6*).

486. The faith which Jesus praised throughout his ministry was not the self-righteous, legalistic faith of the Scribes and Pharisees. Rather, for those who knew their own helplessness, it was the *open acceptance of God's free gift of loving, healing presence among them in Christ*. "Believing" meant reaching out beyond themselves and their need to embrace the free gift of Christ's life-giving and healing love. This is the faith that "saves" because it shares in the very power of God, active within our daily lives.

487. But beyond open acceptance, this faith which Jesus praises also involves *discipleship*: an implicit *commitment*. Each is called to live out the gift of life freely given, in all the concrete circumstances of one's daily life,

by following Jesus' way. This is what coming to know Jesus Christ demands of every believer. Each has a *mission* as Christ himself had, from the Father. To personally know Christ, then, is to understand the meaning of one's own concrete life in view of the larger perspective of the Kingdom of God: of our graced union with God (*cf. PCP II 62,67,79,85*).

488. Besides his healing, Christ's ministry was noted for his celebration of the Kingdom in *table-fellowship*. He not only forgave sinners and associated with tax collectors and outcasts (*cf. Mk 2:15-17*); he even scandalized his pious contemporaries by dining with them. Such table-fellowship symbolized Christ's whole mission and message of drawing all into his Father's Kingdom. "I have come to call sinners, not the self-righteous" (*Mk 2:17*). It prefigures the eternal banquet in the Kingdom of God in which "many will come from the east and the west and will find a place, while the natural heirs will be driven out into the dark" (*Mt 8:11-12*).

489. The importance of this table-fellowship in Jesus' ministry is confirmed by two things. The first is the special importance among the early disciples of the "breaking of bread" (*Lk 24:35; Acts 2:46*). This must have come from Jesus' own mannerism. The *second* is the Lord's prayer which Christ taught his disciples. It summarizes the ministry of Christ in terms of "*Abba*" (Father), the Kingdom, bread, forgiveness and the final test. All of these refer in one way or another to table-fellowship and more. Not just voluntary "coming together" but the *koinonia*, the transforming communion we have in the Eucharistic celebration as members of Christ's Body.

Fate

490. Finally we come to the *third dimension* of the prophet, to suffer a *martyr's death*. Jesus referred to such a fate (*cf. Lk 13:33-34*). Moreover, he had the example of John the Baptist before him. Jesus himself was accused of blasphemy because he proclaimed the forgiveness of sins, and of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub (*cf. Mk 3:22*).

Jesus was constantly under attack by the Jewish religious authorities. This was because he overturned the priorities of their religious practice, especially in regard to the Sabbath Law and the Temple. He claimed authority over the Sabbath Law (*cf. Mk 2:28; Lk 6:5*), and challenged the legalistic approach to its observance (*cf. Lk 13:10-17; 14:1-6*). Likewise, by his symbolic cleansing of the Temple, he exercised a similar command over it (*cf. Jn 2:13-22*).

B. Jesus as Savior/Redeemer

491. More than being a “prophet,” Jesus was proclaimed *Savior/Redeemer* even before his birth. “You are to name him “Jesus” because he will save his people from their sins” (*Mt 1:21*). The very name “Jesus” means “God is salvation.” Today many Filipinos are strongly attracted to Jesus as their personal Savior “who gave himself up *for me*” (*Gal 2:20*). In one Eucharistic acclamation we proclaim: “Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world!” Thus both Scripture and the liturgy invite us to see Christ our Lord in terms of his *saving work*.

492. But with all the injustice, violence and senseless suffering rampant throughout the world today, how can we honestly acclaim Jesus as Savior? *What does Christ save us from?* To reply effectively, two basic insights are essential. First, *Christ “saves” by touching the spiritual root of all these evils experienced today, namely, SIN* — people’s proud, self-seeking moral attitudes and acts before God and with one another. Selfishness enslaves. “Everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. . . . That is why, if the Son frees you, you will really be free” (*Jn 8:34-36*).

493. Second, *the salvation which Christ has already won for all is not yet complete*. It must be accepted, embraced and acted out in the free lives of believers today.

For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. . . . For you were called for freedom — but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh; rather, serve one another through love (*Gal 5:1,13; cf. 1 Pt 5:6-10*).

494. Christ’s saving work in his *Paschal Mystery* is taken up in detail in the two following chapters. Here we only sketch briefly the work of Jesus as Savior by indicating *three basic dimensions of Christian salvation* as presented in Scripture. As throughout salvation history, Filipinos today seek salvation: 1) from the *cosmic demonic powers of evil*; 2) from enslaving, oppressive *forces in the economic, socio-political areas*; and 3) from the absurdity and *meaninglessness* of personal life. In each area Christ has worked his unique salvation.

Saving from Cosmic Evil

495. In his public ministry Jesus was noted for casting out evil spirits. “What do you want of us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!” (*Mk 1:24*) “To be saved” here means to be a “new creation” in Christ. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (*2 Cor 5:17*).

God gave you new life in company with Christ. He cancelled the bond that stood against us with all its claims, snatching it up and nailing it to the cross. Thus did God disarm the principalities and powers. He made a public show of them, and leading them off captive, triumphed in the person of Christ (*Col 2:14-15*).

Yet the fight versus evil spirits continues as St. Peter warns us:

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith . . . The God of all grace who called you to his everlasting glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish those who have suffered for a little while (*1 Pt 5:8-10*).

Saving from Socio-Political Oppression

496. The Exodus liberation of the Old Testament is the background for Jesus’ saving work as the new Moses. He teaches a new hierarchy of values that undermined the oppressive social structures of his day (*cf. Lk 16:14-15*). But how did Jesus actually liberate? *First*, he exposed the enslaving, corrupting power of *riches*. Jesus showed that giving was better than taking, sharing more liberating than hoarding (*cf. Lk 6:29-30; 14:13-14; Acts 20:35*).

For Jesus, the *key* to economic liberation was *twofold*: 1) *to free* human hearts from their greed and self-seeking; and 2) *to inspire* them with respect for others, sensitivity and compassion for the needy, and a generous, outgoing love for those in want.

497. *Second*, Jesus taught that any *power* not rooted in mutual service was enslaving and oppressive. “Whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all” (*Mk 10:42-45*). ***Love*** is ultimately ***the only power that sets people free***.

Third, Jesus liberated his followers from the common social prejudices that bound them. These were the customary ways of honoring the wise and

the rich while discriminating against foreigners, women, public sinners and outcasts. He taught concern for “the little ones” of the Kingdom (*cf. Mt 18:10*).

498. *Finally*, Jesus freed his contemporaries from mere external, legalistic religious obedience to the Law by interiorizing and prioritizing its obligations.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay tithes on mint and herbs and seeds, while neglecting the weight, matters of the law: justice and mercy and good faith. It is these you should have practiced, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, you strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! (*Mt 23:23f*)

Saving from Life’s Meaninglessness

499. *Christ saved by being the revelation of the Father.* To his followers Jesus promised: “If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (*Jn 8:31f*). *His teachings set us free because they offer meaning and purpose in life*, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and despair. Jesus taught: “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (*Jn 8:12*). “I have come into the world as its light, to keep anyone who believes in me from remaining in the dark” (*Jn 12:46*).

III. THE PERSON OF JESUS

500. From this biblical sketch of Jesus as Prophet and Savior, what can we answer to Jesus’ own question: “Who do *you* say that I am?” (*Mk 8:29*). We could begin by answering with Peter: “***You are the Christ.***” We thus affirm that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, foretold by the prophets (*cf. Acts 2:29-32*), anointed by the Holy Spirit as prophet, priest and king. (*cf. Acts 10:38*). He was sent by God to bring salvation to the world and fulfill all history (*cf. CCC 436-40*).

But to fulfill that mission, who must Jesus BE? From what he has *done*, can we discover who he IS? The Scriptures ground *three fundamental truths* about the Person of Jesus: Jesus is ***true man, true God***, and ***one***. (*cf. CCC 480; NCDP 189*).

A. Jesus Our Brother: True Man

501. *The Scriptures and constant teaching of the Church* are one in asserting **that Jesus is truly a man**. So the Creed proclaims: “He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary” (*cf. CCC 484-87*). To be our Savior, Jesus “had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God on their behalf, to expiate the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17*). “Born of a woman, born under the law” (*Gal 4:4*). Jesus “progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (*Lk 2:52*). He experienced hunger (*cf. Lk 4:2*), thirst (*cf. Jn 4:7*), temptation (*cf. Mt 4:1-11*), deep emotions (*cf. Jn 11:33*), and great pity for the people (*cf. Mt 15:32*). In brief, Scripture presents Jesus as fully human.

502. In a memorable passage, Vatican II has stressed Christ’s humanity:

He who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ is himself the perfect man . . . For by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things, except sin (*GS 22*).

503. There can be no doubt, therefore, about the Catholic Faith’s insistence on Jesus’ true humanity. But for many Filipinos, Jesus as truly human is not a familiar image (*cf. NCDP 182*). The actual problem is not with the truth of Jesus as man, but with translating this truth into an ever-deepening personal relation with Jesus, in our thinking, doing and praying.

B. “One Lord, Jesus, the Only Son of God”

504. The Christian Faith stands or falls on the confession of Jesus as the only Son of God, our Lord (*cf. CCC 441-50*). Scripture grounds this confession in two ways. *First*, Jesus as God’s Eternal Word coming down to take on human nature in the *Incarnation*. “The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love” (*Jn 1:14; cf. CCC 461-63*).

Second, Jesus as “lifted up” at the Resurrection. “This is the Jesus God has raised up, and we are his witnesses. Exalted at God’s right hand, . . .

know beyond any doubt that God has made both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified” (*Acts 2:32f,36*).

But both approaches lead to Jesus Christ, *one person* who is *truly man* and *truly God*.

505. Two great hymns of the New Testament proclaim Christ’s divinity for all time. The *first* is in Paul’s Letter to the *Philippians*, where he quotes a Baptismal hymn already in use in the early Church. The hymn covers three states of Jesus. *First*, his *prior heavenly existence*: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at” (*Phil 2:6*).

Second, his *earthly status*: “He emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men, . . . he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!” (*Phil 2: 7-8*)

And *third*, his *exaltation*: “Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father, that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!” (*Phil 2:9-11*).

506. The *second* hymn (*Col 1:15-20*) synthesizes the growing awareness in New Testament times of the Person of Christ. *First*, He is the “new Adam”, “the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures” (*Col 1:15*). *Second*, he is divine, “For *in* him everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created *through* him and *for* him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being” (*Col 1:16-17*). *Third*, Christ possesses the *primacy and fullness*: “It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens” (*Col 1:19-20*).

507. This New Testament assertion of Christ’s divinity underwent a turbulent history in post-apostolic times. Through the centuries the Church gradually came to greater clarity and precision in proclaiming the divinity of Christ, and created the Creeds which we use to the present day. The Council of *Nicea* (325) rejected the heresy of Arius and proclaimed faith in “one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten generated from the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father” (*ND 7*).

508. St. Augustine comments on the Nicene Creed’s “Light from Light”:

Just as the Father is ageless, so the Son does not grow; the Father has not grown old, nor has the Son increased. Rather Equal begot Equal; the Eternal begot the Eternal. Like a temporal flame generates temporal light: the flame which generates the light is coterminous with the light which it generates. From the moment the flame begins, there is light. Show me a flame without light, and I will show you the Father without the Son (*Tracts on the Gospel of John*, 20:8).

509. But controversies continued through the following century as various heresies regarding Christ appeared. An orthodox consensus was finally reached at the Council of *Chalcedon* (451) which defined the *person* of Christ as:

One and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . the same truly God and truly man, . . . the same one in being with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity, like us in all things but sin. The same begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity, and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary, the Virgin Mother of God (*ND 614*).

C. Jesus Is One Person

510. The Scriptures clearly affirm “there is only one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all” (*1 Tim* 2:5). Easter shows how Jesus is both God’s own Self-gift to us, and the perfect human response to God. For it is precisely Jesus the Crucified one who is risen (*cf. Mt* 28:5-6). Paul writes of the wonderful *exchange*: “You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: how for your sake he made himself poor, though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty” (*2 Cor* 8:9).

511. The basic reasoning here is straightforward:

- Unless Jesus was truly man, he could not save us. “He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might. . . expiate the sins of the people” (*Heb* 2:17).
- Unless he was God, he could not redeem us, for only an all holy, immortal God can:
 - 1) free the whole human race from sin and death, and
 - 2) give us a share in the fullness of divine life.

512. Jesus, then, cannot be divided. *He is one Person*, for this man Jesus is *the Eternal Son of God made man*. This is the “Good News” which the Catholic Faith proclaims. This man Jesus is the Son of God who knows us and loves us. We can adore the man Jesus, and promote devotion to his Sacred Heart, precisely because he is not separated from God. Before him with Thomas we pray: “My Lord and my God!” (*Jn 20:28*).

IV. MARY, MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD

513. For many Filipino Catholics, Jesus Christ has become a real Person in their lives through their devotion to *Mary* his mother, who knows him best. Chapter 1 described how we Filipinos approach Christ with and through our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*. Recently, our Catholic devotion to Mary has come under increasing attack. We are therefore called upon to deepen our understanding of the solid biblical, doctrinal and liturgical foundations which ground our traditional Marian piety (*cf. AMB 78*). Here we shall briefly take up Mary as presented: in Scripture, and in the doctrinal teaching of the Church, regarding her relation to Christ.

A. Mary in Scripture

514. Both Matthew and Luke present Mary with many allusions to great figures in the Old Testament. *Matthew* recounts Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy (*cf. Mt 1:23; Is 7:14*). *Luke* describes God’s call to the Virgin Mary to become, through the Holy Spirit, the power of the Most High, the mother of Jesus, Son of God (*cf. Lk 1:26-38; CCC 487, 495*). The angel’s greeting to Mary relates her to the “*Daughter of Zion*” (*Zep 3:14-17*). The coming of the Holy Spirit upon her, and her carrying the Child in her womb, pictures Mary as the *living Ark of the New Covenant* in Christ her Son.

515. Luke’s account inspired the Fathers to compare Mary with *Eve*. As Eve accepted the word of the serpent and gave birth to *disobedience* and death, the Virgin Mary, the New Eve, *obediently* received the word of the angel, and through the power of the Holy Spirit gave birth to the living salvation of all through the Son of God (*cf. LG 56; CCC 411,726; AMB 55*). Mary’s faith in accepting her virginal conception of Jesus relates her to *Abraham*, our father in faith, and the birth of his son Isaac, the child of the promise (*cf. CCC 165*). Luke confirms this by relating Mary to the perfect disciple who hears the word of God and keeps it (*cf. Lk 8:21; 11:27-28*).

516. Early in *John's* Gospel, Mary is described as ***“the Mother of Jesus.”*** Her request prompted the first of the ‘Signs’ of Jesus and the “manifestation of his glory” so that his disciples “believed in him” (*cf. Jn 2:1-11*). Jesus replied, addressing her as ***‘Woman,’*** that his *“Hour”* had not yet come. But Mary, in great faith, already assumed her future role as sharing in her Son’s saving mission. She asked for a sign of the messianic benefits, at that “wedding feast.” Jesus complied.

Late in *John's* Gospel, Jesus’ *“Hour”* had come. Mary, standing at the foot of the Cross, is again addressed as ***‘Woman,’*** and given as *“Mother to the beloved disciple”* by the crucified Jesus (*cf. Jn 19:25-27*).

517. Thus Mary, the physical mother of Jesus our Savior, becomes the spiritual mother in the order of grace of all, particularly of the disciples of Christ (*LG 54, 61*). “She is clearly the mother of the members of Christ . . . since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful who are members of Christ their Head” (*LG 53, quoting St. Augustine; cf. CCC 963*).

The conclusion of this brief Scriptural overview of Mary is that there is *solid biblical foundation* for our traditional Catholic Marian piety.

B. Mary in Catholic Doctrine

518. Our Filipino Marian piety is also solidly grounded on the *doctrinal teaching* of the Church. Vatican II presents the Blessed Virgin Mary in the final chapter of its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). The Church’s teaching on Mary is presented in four sections:

- the Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation;
- the Blessed Virgin and the Church;
- Devotion to the Blessed Virgin in the Church; and
- Mary, a Sign of Sure Hope and Solace for the Pilgrim People of God.

Here we shall briefly develop only Mary’s role with Christ in God’s Plan of Salvation. Chapter 23 will take up her role in the Church, and chapter 24, devotion to Mary and source of hope for the pilgrim Church.

Mother of God

519. The title of Vatican II’s exposition of Mary is: “The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church” (*LG*

Chap. 8). It begins with perhaps the oldest Biblical testimony: “when the designated time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman . . . that we might receive our status as adopted sons” (*Gal 4:4-5; LG 52*). The most basic truth and the essential core of Mary’s unique dignity and role in God’s salvific plan is sharply etched:

The Virgin Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit (*LG 53*).

520. Everything we know and revere about Mary, then, depends upon her unique, God-given vocation to be the “***Mother of God and of the Redeemer***.” This doctrine is expressed everytime we pray the Hail Mary: “Holy Mary, Mother of *God*” (*cf. CCC 495*). This asserts not that Mary is a “goddess,” but that her Son is truly God. Mary gives Jesus what any human mother gives her baby. Through her, Jesus is truly man. “The Son of Mary and the Son of God IS one and the same person, Emmanuel” (*AMB 52*).

What is unique here is God’s action: the Eternal Son of God united to His Person the baby conceived in Mary’s womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. The baby born of Mary was the God-man, Jesus. “Thus the holy Fathers have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin ‘Mother of God’ (*Theotokos*, ‘God-bearer’)” (*Council of Ephesus; ND 605*).

Blessed Virgin

521. Mary, ***Virgin*** and ***Mother***, manifests God’s perfectly free initiative in the *Incarnation* (*God’s Word/Son becoming enfleshed, Jn 1:14*). **Mary’s perpetual virginity** is not simply abstention from sexual intercourse, but the positive value of perfect ***personal integrity in her total gift of self to God***. Mary’s virginity flowered into maternity not only for Jesus, the first-born of all creation (*cf. Rom 8:29; Col 1:15,18*), but also for all who would be born again to new life in him (*cf. Jn 3:3; 1 Jn 5:11; LG 57; CCC 499-501*).

The ***Virgin Birth***, then, is not a privilege affecting only Jesus and Mary, but a positive sign of the Father’s gracious saving love which adopts us all in sending His Son, and the Spirit’s building a new People of God, the Body of Christ, the Church.

522. Against current attacks and doubts both within and without the Church, about Mary's virginal conception and motherhood, a Catholic profession of faith could calmly respond that Mary's virginal conception is not just a symbolic description or literary device of Matthew and Luke to describe God's intervention, nor is it merely a human construct to insist on Jesus "divinity." Rather, it is *simply the way God in fact chose to send His Son into the world when the fullness of time had come (Gal 4:4)*. We Filipino Catholics believe this both from Scripture and from the constant and consistent teaching of the Church.

The Immaculate Conception

523. Mary, therefore, had the unique mission from God to be Mother of His Son-made-man, the Redeemer. She thus shares in a special way Jesus' salvific mission. From this mission flows her singular grace and privilege of the ***Immaculate Conception*** (*cf. CCC 490*). This signifies that Mary was, "from the first moment of her conception, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin" (*ND 709*).

The "Immaculate Conception" as God's gift to Mary, therefore, is *doubly Christ-centered*: first, as given because she would be Mother of Christ; second, as showing that no one is saved apart from Christ, even those who lived centuries before him. "In view of the merits of Christ" means Mary was made holy by her immediate relationship to Christ, the source of grace, for whom and towards whom all things are created (*cf. Col 1:15-17*).

The Assumption

524. Moreover, thus "preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory [*Assumption*] upon the completion of her earthly sojourn" (*LG 59; cf. ND 715; CCC 966*). With her Assumption to join her Son, the Risen Christ, in the fullness of her personality, Mary reveals ***the fullness of God's redeeming work for all of us***, "a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God" (*LG 68*).

525. Both privileges of Mary, her *Immaculate Conception* and her *Assumption*, are ***not exceptions that separate Mary from us***. They are rather ***privileges of fullness and completion***. Mary's *grace* is *universally shared*; her *privilege* is that of *fullness*. Both privileges are constituted by the Spirit's

presence, in whom we are all called to share. Thus they put Mary at the inmost core of all human persons and of the Church.

Practically speaking, this meant that, sinless like Christ himself, Mary was not blinded or confused by pride or false self-centeredness. More fully and truly “human” than we are, Mary then can truly appreciate our human trials and failures.

These graces were *given to Mary precisely in view of her unique role in God’s plan* to save all through Christ’s redemptive mission.

Mediatrix

526. Authentic Catholic doctrine teaches that Mary’s intercession does not in any way detract from, or add to, the *unique mediation of Christ* (*cf. 1 Tim 2:5-6*). Two analogies help us to understand this. *First*, in God’s continuing act of *Creating*, the one goodness of God is communicated diversely to all creatures. *Second*, the *priesthood* of Christ is shared in various ways both by sacred ministers and by all the baptized. Hence, in like manner, the unique mediation of Christ is shared by all, since God calls all to cooperate, in manifold human ways, in Christ’s redemptive mission (*cf. LG 62*). Catholics see in Mary a special cooperation due to her God-given role within His saving work through Christ and the Spirit.



INTEGRATION

527. Every Sunday during the Eucharistic celebration, Filipino Catholics proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son, our Lord. The *doctrine* of the mission and identity of Jesus Christ is the core of every Christian Creed. To affirm “*Jesus is Lord*” is the central conviction of the Christian community. On the truth of Christ as Son and Savior depend all the basic Catholic doctrines: of God as Triune Creator, of the Church as Christ’s Mystical Body, of redemption from sin by Christ’s Paschal Mystery, of our life of grace in the Holy Spirit, and of our final destiny with God in eternal life.

528. The *moral* dimensions of Christ's mission and identity are innumerable. Christ as Son and Savior becomes in person the fundamental *moral norm* for Christian action. At his Transfiguration, the link between doctrinal truth and moral action is explicitly made. The truth, "This is my beloved Son," is followed immediately by the moral command, "Listen to him!" (*Mk 9:7*). Christ as prophet and Savior not only left us with moral teachings, especially in his great Sermon on the Mount (*cf. Mt 5-7*). More importantly, he inspired a unique moral vision of loving service, and offered the interior power of his Holy Spirit to pursue that vision. "The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Jesus is to keep his commandments. The man who claims, 'I have known him,' without keeping his commandments, is a liar; in such a one there is no truth" (*1 Jn 2:3-4*).

529. The basic *worship* dimension of Christ's mission and person is felt in two areas. There is *first* the place of Christ in all Christian worship. The center of the Church's liturgy is the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, the sacramental representation and application of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross (*cf. LG 28; SC 7,47; PCP II 77, 180*). Christ himself, as Son and Savior, is in Person the Primordial Sacrament of God's presence among us. *Second*, there is the yearning prayer to Christ himself, expressed in the ancient liturgical refrain: "*Marana tha! O Lord come!*" (*1 Cor 16:22; cf. Rv 22:20*). Many of us Catholic Filipinos find devotion to Mary, Mother of Christ and our Mother in grace, a natural way to Christ.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

530. *What conditions indicate a special yearning for Christ in the Philippines today?*

The thirst for a personal relationship with Christ our Savior (e.g., in the "*Born Again*"), and for Christ the Liberator among the oppressed and exploited, indicates a strong yearning for Christ among many Filipinos today.

531. *What does "knowing" Jesus Christ entail?*

Getting to know Christ is a gradual, life-long, ever-deepening personal relationship with the Jesus of the Gospels, present to us now in multiple ways as the Risen Christ.

Moreover, “knowing Christ” means being committed to him, being his disciple.

532. *How do we come to know WHO Jesus is?*

We come to know who Jesus IS, from what he DID and continues to DO.

Therefore, it is important to know the historical life and work of Jesus through constant contact with the Gospels, in order to know in faith that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Phil 2:11*).

533. *Why did God become one of us in Jesus Christ?*

God the Son became one of us:

- for our salvation, that is: to save us from the slavery of sin;
- to reveal to us God’s unending love for us;
- to be our model, as the Way, Truth and the Life;
- to actually share His divine sonship with us.

534. *How was Jesus a prophet?*

Jesus, the “Beloved Son” of the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit, perfectly fulfilled the task of a prophet:

- to *proclaim* the Word of God;
- support it by *signs* and *wonders*, and
- *seal* it with *his own blood*.

535. *What did Jesus proclaim?*

Jesus proclaimed the “Kingdom of God,” *already* present and “at hand” through him, but *not yet* realized fully, as it will be at the end of time.

This “Kingdom” summarized all the blessings of God’s presence among His people, liberating them *from* sin, *for* loving service of one another.

536. *How did Jesus preach and teach the “Kingdom”?*

Jesus preached and taught with:

- *certainty*, because he taught only what he heard from his Father;
- *authority*, because he spoke in his own name, of what he knew personally;

- *power* because he claimed a unique filial relationship with God, his “*Abba*,” Father.

537. *What signs and wonders did Jesus perform?*

Jesus worked many miracles, wonders and signs, healing the sick, freeing the possessed, raising the dead to life.

Through these signs he called all to *faith in him* and to *discipleship* which consists in following him in building the Kingdom through loving service of others.

538. *What was Jesus’ fate as a prophet?*

Jesus suffered a martyr’s death at the hands of his own, “who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets” (1 Thes 2:15).

“The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:30; 10:39).

539. *Why is Jesus called “Savior”?*

As announced even before his birth, the Child is to be named Jesus because “he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

“Lord by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world.”

540. *How does Jesus “save”?*

Jesus saves by making it possible for us to work throughout our lives *against SIN*, the spiritual root of all the evils which we experience. He calls us to embrace and exercise his liberating grace in all our moral actions, especially by working for justice and peace.

541. *How does Jesus liberate from socio-economic oppression?*

Jesus liberates in this area by exposing the corrupting force of:

- riches that enslave;
- self-seeking ambition that knows no bounds;
- social prejudices that oppress and exploit others;
- a legalistic attitude toward law that makes even God’s commandments oppressive and exploitative.

Positively, through word and example, Christ saved by inspiring men and women with the ideal of loving service.

542. *How did Jesus save from the “meaninglessness” of life?*

Jesus saved by dissipating the darkness of ignorance and prejudice through the light of his Truth, and by giving meaning and purpose to human life, even its sufferings.

543. *From all Jesus did, what can we say of who he IS?*

Sacred Scripture grounds three fundamental truths about the person of Jesus. He is:

- *truly human*, like us in all things but sin (*cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15*);
- *truly divine*, God's eternal Word, the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, ever at the Father's side, who has revealed Him to us (*cf. Jn 1:14,18*);
- *one*, the "one mediator between God and men" (*1 Tim 2:5*). He cannot be divided.

"When the designated time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it that we might receive our status as adopted sons" (*Gal 4:4-5*).

"Simon Peter said in reply, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'" (*Mt 16:16*).

544. *Was the truth that Jesus is true God and true man easily understood?*

The early Church only gradually came to an accurate expression of the divinity of Jesus, culminating in the Nicene Creed's profession of:

"One Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in being with the Father."

The Council of Chalcedon further defined Jesus as:

"begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity, and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary, the Virgin Mother of God" (*ND 614*).

545. *Why do Catholics venerate Mary as "Mother of God"?*

The Gospels clearly teach that Mary was chosen by God to conceive and bear a son, Jesus, who will be called Son of the Most High. (*Cf. Lk 1:31*.) Mary is the mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus, the God-man.

“Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice, ‘. . . blessed is the fruit of your womb. But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ ” (*Lk 1:41-43*)

546. *Why is Mary exalted as “the Blessed Virgin Mary”?*

Mary’s virginity manifests both God’s free initiative in effecting the Incarnation of His Son, and Mary’s complete gift of self to God.

547. *How is Mary “our Mother”?*

Besides being the virgin mother of Jesus, Mary was given by Christ on the Cross to be the spiritual mother in grace of all his disciples. (*Cf. Jn 19:25-27.*)

548. *What is the meaning and significance of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption?*

Chosen to be the Mother of Jesus our Savior, Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb “preserved free from all stain of original sin” (*Immaculate Conception*). At her death, she was taken up body and soul into heaven (*Assumption*).

Both graces are not exceptions separating Mary from us, but *privileges of perfection and completion* that enable Mary to fulfill her unique role in God’s plan to save all through Christ, the one Mediator.

549. *How is Mary “Advocate” and “Mediatrix”?*

St. Paul clearly affirms “there is ONE mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus” (*1 Tim 2:5*). But just as Jesus calls all to follow him and share in his mission as Prophet, Priest, and King, so he gave Mary, his Mother, the unique mission of being mother to all his disciples (*cf. Jn 19:26*). Thus Jesus makes Mary share in his own saving mediatorship, neither adding nor detracting from it in any way.

Chapter 11

Christ Has Died

The Son of Man has come not to be served but to serve — to give his life in ransom for the many.

(Mk 10:45)

I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

(Jn 12:24)



OPENING

Continuing from the mission and Person of Christ in Chap. 10, we now focus on his *Passion* and *Death*, and their meaning for Filipino Christian life. For suffering and death are two inescapable realities which every human person has to face. Does Jesus Christ help us accept these realities and even find meaning in them?

551. *The whole earthly life of Christ came to its climax in his Paschal Mystery*, his suffering, Death and Resurrection (*cf. CCC 571f; PCP II 55, 85, 413*). This chapter focuses on his suffering and Death, while his Resurrection and glorification are treated in the next. Both chapters are *positive*, presenting the saving love of God in Jesus Christ.

For even the Cross is uplifting. In a secular sense, it was the means of the most painful and degrading death. But for us Christians, ***the Cross of Christ is the symbol of salvation***. At Baptism we are marked with the sign of the Cross. Throughout life we are blessed with this sign, and sign ourselves with it in prayer. St. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he “would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified” (*1 Cor 2:2*).

552. Nevertheless, *the Cross* has always been, and remains for many today, ***a scandal***. Paul wrote: “We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles.” Yet he continued: “but to those who are called, Jews, and Gentiles alike, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (*1 Cor 1:23f*).

The Cross is the symbol not only of Christ’s saving power, but also of our true selves. For it is the exemplar for all time of Jesus’ great “Paradox,” recorded in all four Gospels: “Whoever would preserve his life will lose it,

but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it” (*Mk 8:35; cf. Mt 10:39; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25; PCP II 86*).



CONTEXT

553. Devotion to the suffering Jesus (*Padre Jesus Nazareno*) and the dead Jesus, taken down from the Cross (*Santo Entierro*) is very popular among us Filipinos. This can be seen in many different Lenten and Holy Week practices, especially those focusing on Good Friday. There are the Stations of the Cross, the *flagellantes*, the *Pasyon* chanted throughout Holy Week, and the *Senakulo* dramatizations of Christ’s final week. Lent and Holy Week are also favorite times for Filipinos to make spiritual retreats and days of recollections.

The suffering and dead Jesus obviously strikes a very responsive chord in the heart of us Filipinos. We see in this Jesus one who can identify with us in our poverty, sufferings, and oppression; one who can reach out to us as a forgiving and healing Savior in our weaknesses and failings.

554. But the very intensity of these devotions to the suffering Christ unfortunately leads at times to exaggerations, and even superstitions. “We must have the courage to correct what leads to fanaticism or maintains people infantile in their faith” (*PCP II 175; cf. 12*). These pious practices can give a very one-sided image of Christ which tends to enslave the devotees rather than heal and liberate them.

555. What, then, is the true meaning of Christ’s suffering and death for us, Filipino Christians of today? Two contradictory but widely shared attitudes seem most common. One “piously” makes suffering something to be sought in itself. The other, in worldly fashion, sees it as something to be avoided at all costs. Both gravely misunderstand the authentic Christian approach to suffering and death.

In the face of such misleading views, it is all the more important for us to develop an accurate and ever-deepening personal understanding of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.



EXPOSITION

556. The Creed puts great stress on Christ's passion and death. Immediately following "born of the Virgin Mary," it proclaims five actions undergone by Jesus: *suffered*, *was crucified*, *died*, *was buried*, and *descended* to the dead.

This chapter takes up these five actions of Christ our Lord under five general themes. *First*, an introductory section on the Cross, symbol of saving Love; *second*, Christ's view of his suffering and death; *third*, its characteristics; *fourth*, its profound effects of salvation and radical conversion; and *finally*, Christ's descent to the Dead.

I. THE CROSS: SYMBOL OF SAVING LOVE

557. St. Paul expressed the core of the "Good News" given him as follows: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (*1 Cor 15:3; cf. CCC 601*). Far from being a negative, depressing reality, the suffering and death of Christ help us "to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge" (*Eph 3:18-19*). The innocent Christ's personal pain and suffering brings home to us, in a way nothing else possibly could, the evil and ugliness of sin and its power in creating poverty, disease, hunger, ignorance, corruption and death. A truly "Christian" sense of sin is a grace received at the foot of the Cross, within the felt-experience of God's overwhelming forgiving Love in Christ Jesus.

558. Clearly it is *not* the very sufferings and death of Christ that save us, for this would make his torturers and executioners our saviors. Rather, ***we are saved by Jesus' perfect self-giving love for his Father and for us***, a love lived out to the death. In John's Gospel Jesus declares: "The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me: I lay it down freely" (*Jn 10:17-18*). Paul quotes an early liturgical hymn: "He humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross!" (*Phil 2:8*)

Today's liturgy expresses how Christ, in fulfillment of his Father's will, "gave himself up to death . . . a death he freely accepted . . . For our sake he opened his arms on the Cross" (*EP IV and II*).

559. *The Cross*, then, *does not exalt passive suffering or weakness*, as some have exploited it in order to dominate others. It *is*, rather, ***the transformation of suffering and weakness through active, total self-giving love***. “For God’s folly is wiser than men, and his weakness more powerful than men” (1 Cor 1:25). Gregory the Great describes this wondrous exchange:

He was made flesh that we might possess the Spirit.
He was brought low that we might be raised up.
He endured blows that we might be healed.
He was mocked to free us from eternal damnation.
He died to give us life. (*Homilies on Ezekiel, II:4,20*)

II. CHRIST’S VIEW OF HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH

560. In our present times, some have tried to explain Christ’s suffering and death merely as the political execution of a non-conformist revolutionary by the Roman colonial powers. Doubtless there was a political aspect to the Cross, but it surely was *not* its essential meaning as interpreted in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

The Apostolic Faith expressed in the New Testament sees in *Jesus’ passion and death* not just some incidental historical event of Jews and Romans, but ***the saving act of God in Jesus’ free self-sacrifice***. Thus Peter preached on the first Pentecost: “This man [Jesus] . . . was delivered up by the set purpose and plan of God; you even made use of pagans to crucify and kill him. . .” (Acts 2:23; cf. 4:27f; CCC 599). Jesus himself clearly understood his Passion and Death as his mission from the Father, interpreted in the light of the Old Testament prophets.

561. As His Mission. The Synoptic Gospels ‘record Jesus’ triple *pre-diction* of his suffering and death (cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f). “He began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be put to death, and rise three days later” (Mk 8:31). These predictions correspond with other sayings of Jesus. “Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I?” (Mk 10:38) “I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over” (Lk 12:50). And in his parable of the tenants Jesus portrays the death of the Son at the hands of the vineyard’s wicked tenants (cf. Mt 21:33-46).

562. Following the OT Prophets. Jesus interpreted his coming death in line with the Old Testament prophets. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you slay the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!” (*Lk 13:34; cf. 11:47, 49*). His death was “*necessary*” to fulfill the Scripture: “How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (*Lk 24:25b-26*) He saw his suffering and death as part of the coming of the *Kingdom*, the “*test*” he taught his followers to pray about: “Subject us not to the test” (*Lk 11:4*).

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST’S SUFFERING AND DEATH

A. Redemptive

563. Jesus saw his Passion and Death as redemptive, his *ultimate service in the Kingdom*. “The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve — to give his life in *ransom* for the many” (*Mk 10:45*). The center of the ‘Good News’ focused sharply on “the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe” (*Rom 3:24-25a*). “It was he who sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right” (*Ti 2:14*).

564. That his Passion and Death are “*redemptive*” is shown by Christ most clearly in his Last Supper. John introduces his account with Jesus washing his disciples’ feet. “Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end” (*Jn 13:1*). And for John, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (*Jn 15:13*). Matthew’s account of Christ’s institution of the Eucharist explicitly asserts its *redemptive value*: “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28*). Christ is the New Paschal Lamb, sacrificed to redeem the people (*cf. Jn 19:36; 1:29,36*).

565. Church tradition has stressed this *redemptive* and *sacrificial character* of Christ’s Passion and Death. “Our Lord Jesus was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish an everlasting redemption” (*Trent; ND 1546*). And again, “At

the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again” (SC 47).

566. Thus, in her liturgy the Church prays in the 5th Easter Preface:

Father, we praise you with greater joy than ever in this Easter Season
When Christ became our Paschal Sacrifice.
As he offered his body on the Cross,
His perfect sacrifice fulfilled all others.
As he gave himself into your hands for our salvation.
He showed himself to be the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice.

B. From Sin

567. Christ’s coming, then, was “to expiate the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17; cf. CCC 601, 606*). Paul summarizes Jesus’ saving work in four steps. *First*, Jesus offered a sacrifice as both **priest** and **victim**. “Christ our Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed” (*1 Cor 5:7*). *Second*, he “gave himself **for our sins**, to rescue us from the present evil age” (*Gal 1:4*). *Third*, he thus created **a new Covenant with God**. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (*1 Cor 11:25*). *Fourth*, all this **for us and our salvation**. “When we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men” (*Rom 5:6; cf. Eph 5:2; 1 Thes 5:10*).

568. Jesus *redeems* sinners in two ways. *First*, **he removes their subjective guilt by bringing them God’s pardon and forgiveness**. Thus he restores their relationship of friendship to God which sin had destroyed. *Second*, Jesus **repairs the objective moral harm** and contamination **caused by sin**, through his own act of reparation and expiation which makes possible the sinners’ own acts of expiation.

Both these dimensions are clearly indicated in Christ’s encounter with Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector. In visiting the house of Zacchaeus, Jesus liberated him from his guilt of sin: “Today salvation has come to this house. . . The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost.” This inspired Zacchaeus to make up for the objective harm he had caused: “I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone in the least, I pay him back fourfold” (*cf. Lk 19:1-10*).

569. Clarification. Some have gravely misunderstood Christ's expiation as picturing the Father punishing him cruelly for our sins, even though he is completely innocent. This is a monstrous view of God the Father, and badly misinterprets the New Testament. *The Father hates sin, not Jesus.* Jesus is the Father's "beloved" (*Mk 1:11 et passim*). His whole life was a perfect offering to the Father (*cf. Jn 4:34; 6:38; CCC 606*).

The truth is that *Jesus shares the Father's love for us sinners*, and freely accepted the "cup" the Father has given him (*cf. Jn 18:11; CCC 609*). Jesus suffered *with* sinners, as a victim *for* sin and sinners, and as a victim *of* the Law and sin (*cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Rom 8:3; PCP II 84*).

C. For Us

570. But how can Christ's Sufferings and Death affect us sinners? The key to the answer lies in the biblical notion of *corporate solidarity*. Isaiah's four 'Servant Songs' (*cf. Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12*) present a mysterious figure chosen by God to "give his life as an offering for sin, . . . through his suffering my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear" (*Is 53:10-11*). Christ, one of us, could take upon himself "the sin of the world" (*Jn 1:29*) and offer him-self as a "Lamb of expiation" (*cf. Lv 14*).

Today the notion of "solidarity" has come into new prominence relative to social transformation, and humanity's relation to the Blessed Trinity (*cf. SRS 38-40; PCP II 32, 139, 294-96, 306f, 313, 320, 353*).

571. The Good Friday liturgy stresses Christ's corporate solidarity with us sinners and his suffering for us, quoting Isaiah:

It was *our* infirmities that he bore,
our sufferings that he endured, . . .
He was pierced for *our* offenses, crushed for *our* sins;
Upon him was the chastisement that makes *us* whole,
by his stripes *we* were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way;
But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of *us* all (*Is 53:4-6*).

572. St. Paul used this *principle of solidarity* to explain both our human sinfulness and our salvation in Christ (*cf. Chap. 8 on Original Sin*).

Just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned . . . much

more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound for all (*Rom 5:12,15*).

573. “Christ died for *our* sins” (*1 Cor 15:3*), then, *means two things*. First, Jesus died ***because of our human sinfulness***. Second, he died to show us, and empower us, ***to overcome sin and its effects*** in our broken world. Christ is the Way we are enabled to bear the sins of many, not returning evil for evil, nor violence for violence in a vicious cycle of revenge (*cf. Mt 5:38-42*). Christ’s love gives us a chance to love even our enemies (*cf. Mt 5:44*), for he has sent us his Spirit of love.

574. But Christ’s redemption in no way makes us passive recipients. Scripture clearly affirms:

Christ suffered for you. . . and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps. . . He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live in accord with God’s will. By his wounds you have been healed (*1 Pt 2:21, 24*).

And again: “You have been purchased, and at a price. So glorify God in your body ” (*1 Cor 6:20*).

575. It is true that *Jesus acted on our behalf*: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (*Rom 5:8*). But ***his great Sacrifice does not make our own sacrifices unnecessary***. Rather, ***it makes them possible as saving realities***. We are called by Christ to share in his sacrifice (*cf. CCC 618*). *PCP II* explains how in the Paschal Mystery

Jesus brought us into his passover from suffering to glory, from death to life, from our human sinfulness to his grace. In this mystery we as his disciples need to share, finding in it the rhythm and pattern of our own life. . . By losing our life this way, we save it and grow in our discipleship of Jesus (*PCP II 85-86*).

576. To *know* Jesus as *our Redeemer*, for St. Paul, meant sharing in his sufferings. To the Philippians he wrote: “I wish to *know* Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to *know* how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death” (*Phil 3:10*). Thus Paul could boast: “Even now I find joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church” (*Col 1:24*).

IV. PROFOUND EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

A. Universal, Eschatological, Empowering Salvation

577. But *what makes Christ's saving love unique?* How is Christ different from all other martyrs through the ages? The answer lies in *three fundamental qualities of Christ's saving love*. It is: 1) **universal**, 2) **eschatological**, and 3) **empowering**.

First, Jesus died "not for our sins alone, but for those of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2; cf. CCC 604). St. Paul explains: "He indeed **died for all**, so that those who live, might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up" (2 Cor 5:14-15). So it is Christ's love that transforms us so we can really lead a new way of life. "If God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (1 Jn 4:11).

578. Christ's **Cross** on Calvary stands as a symbol of his **universal redeeming love**. The *horizontal* bar stretches Christ's arms to embrace the whole world of human suffering, while the *vertical* column points him toward his heavenly Father, beyond the bounds of time and space. The "two others crucified with him, one on either side" (Jn 19:18) show Jesus' solidarity with the whole history of human suffering. The crucified body of Jesus Christ speaks a *universal* language to all men and women for all time.

579. *Second*, this saving love of Christ is "**eschatological**." Jesus did not die simply to raise our standard of living, or make life easier. He died that those who follow him will receive "eternal life in the age to come" (Mk 10:30). Moreover, *third*, this dimension is "already" present in us in **grace, empowering us** so that all our actions can have "saving" power. "The Father sent His Son as savior of the world. When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. . . The way we know that we remain in him and he in us is that he has given us of his Spirit" (1 Jn 4:14,13). Put briefly, "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever possesses the Son has life. Whoever does not possess the Son of God, does not possess life" (1 Jn 5:11-12).

580. The essence of the New Testament theology of salvation in Christ can be sketched in *four truths*. *First*, **Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world**; there is no salvation apart from Jesus. *Second*, through his sufferings and

death *he has won for us sinners* “**objective redemption**,” that is, reconciled all with the Father. *Third*, he did this in *loving obedience to his Father’s will and love for us*. *Finally*, he calls us to *personal interior repentance for our sins and a life of loving service of others*, that is, “**subjective redemption**.”

581. Vatican II provides a similar description of Christ’s redemptive work and its effects:

As an innocent lamb he merited life for us by his blood which he freely shed. In him God reconciled us to himself and to one another, freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin, so that each of us could say with the apostle: “the Son of God loved . . . me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). By suffering for us he not only gave us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps, but he also opened up a way. If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning.

Conformed to the image of the Son, Christians receive the “first fruits of the Spirit” (*Rom 8:23*) by which they are able to follow the new law of love (*GS 22*).

582. *Two ways of summarizing Christ as Savior* also help in relating to the wider perspectives of our Faith. The *first* is focusing on “**the blood of Jesus**.” Throughout Old Testament salvation history, blood was highly symbolic. It could refer to deliverance from death (*cf. Ex 12:7, 13, 22f*) and life itself (*cf. Lv 17:11-14*). Or it could mean sin-offering, cleansing from sin (*cf. Lv. 16*). Or blood could mean the seal of the Covenant at Sinai (*cf. Ex 24:6-8*).

These three meanings were supremely realized in Christ, the Paschal Lamb, whose blood a) brings life (*cf. Jn 6:53-56*), b) cleansing us from all sin (*cf. 1 Jn 1:7*) and c) creating a new Covenant (*cf. Mk 14:24*).

The hymn to Christ in the Letters to the Colossians summarizes these dimensions neatly:

It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him [a], and by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens [b], making peace [c] through the blood of his cross (*Col 1:19f*)

583. A *second* way of summarizing Christ’s redemptive work is to *relate our basic human yearnings* for life, for meaning, and for loving fellowship *to the Triune God*. For our drive for *life* is fulfilled by God the *Father*, “the living and true God” (*1 Thes 1:9*). By sending His *Son*, the wisdom of God, He gives *meaning and purpose* to our lives (*Jn 14:6*). And this inspires

“fellowship” by pouring out His “love in our hearts through the *Holy Spirit*” (Rom 5:5; cf. 2 Cor 13:13).

B. Radical Conversion

584. But what is the *experience* of this salvation that Christ calls us to? The answer lies in a *radical conversion of heart*. We can illustrate what this means in *four common Filipino types*. *First*, some Filipinos don’t really believe that God loves them, accepts them and cares for them. They cannot “trust” God. To them Christ reveals that *God really is their “loving Father”* who is truly compassionate (cf. Lk 6:36). His “love was revealed in our midst in this way: He sent His only Son to the world that we might have life through Him” (1 Jn 4:9).

585. *Second*, others lack all self-confidence. Their poor self-image makes them hesitant to reach out and share with others. They are always afraid of what others might say. Christ “saves” them by revealing their inner goodness. His life and death prove how much they mean to God. In bringing them God’s forgiveness and acceptance, Christ radically grounds their *new positive self-image*.

586. *Third*, some Filipinos find it hard to get along with others. They tend to hold grudges against anyone who hurt them. Christ “liberates” them by calling them to turn toward being a “man/woman-for-others” in self-giving service. Through word and example, Christ taught that true happiness and self-fulfillment come from forgiving others, and helping the poor and needy. Moreover, *he empowers them for this service* by sending them his own loving Spirit. It is Christ’s Spirit that brings deep “love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity” (Gal 5:22-23).

587. *Lastly*, to those who seek happiness in riches, reputation and power, Christ gave the example of rejecting these temptations (cf. Mt 4:1-11) and urging simplicity of life (cf. Mt 6). He called the poor “blessed” because they could more easily recognize their dependence on God. He warned the rich against being tied down by concern for their wealth. He asks: “what profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?” (Mk 8:36) His answer was to picture the poor Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man suffered the torments of the damned (cf. Lk 16:19-31).

588. In brief, then, we experience our sinfulness in our *inability* to 1) trust God, 2) accept ourselves, 3) relate positively to others, and 4) control our basic drives toward riches, reputation and power. Christ “saves” us by:

- re-imaging God as our loving Father,
- grounding our own inalienable self-worth in God, as well as
- the dignity of every other person; and
- clarifying the authentic hierarchy of values in life.

Jesus could do this because he lived totally for his heavenly Father, in complete self-giving service for others. He was the “**Sacrament**” of God’s loving presence and power. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” he told Philip (*Jn 14:9*). Christ showed us what it means to be: 1) *free* from servile fear of God, 2) *free* from self-doubt, 3) *free* from negative relationships with others, and 4) *free* from our own greed for riches, reputation and power.

589. But how does this saving power of the “free” Jesus touch ordinary Filipino Catholics today? The answer is multiplex. Christ comes to us: 1) in his inspired Word of the Bible, 2) in his saving symbolic acts, the Sacraments, 3) in the community of his disciples, the “People of God,” the Church; and most of all, 4) in his Holy Spirit, indwelling within us in grace.

V. CHRIST’S DESCENT TO THE DEAD

590. The last action of Christ’s Passion and Death proclaimed in the Creed is: “He descended to the dead.” The *first* meaning of this expression may simply be a confirmation of “died and was buried.” Christ truly and fully underwent the final test of all humans, death (*cf. CCC 632*). But the scriptural basis implies a *second* meaning, namely, ***Christ’s salvific work on behalf of the just who had died before his coming*** (*cf. CCC 633*). In *1 Peter* we read that Christ “went to preach to the spirits in prison.” “The reason the Gospel was preached even to the dead was that, although condemned in the flesh in the eyes of men, they might live in the spirit in the eyes of God” (*1 Pt 3:19; 4:6*).

591. A reading from the liturgy of the Hours on Holy Saturday beautifully expresses this second meaning of Christ’s salvific work among the dead:

There is a great silence on the earth today. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. . . . I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven.

592. A *third* implication of Christ's descent to the dead is the fundamental Christian truth that ***all who are saved are redeemed by Christ's Passion and Death***, whose effects are not limited by time or space (*cf. CCC 634-35*). This ***universal scope of Christ's redemptive work*** grounds the possibility of salvation even for those who have never heard of the "Good News" nor known Jesus Christ (*cf. LG 16; NA 2*).

593. Finally, we know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God-made-man, is "the first-born of the dead" (*Col 1:18*). For St. Paul explains how Christ, raised from the dead, is "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Just as in Adam all die, so *in Christ all will come to life again*, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming, all those who belong to him" (*1 Cor 15:20, 23*).



INTEGRATION

594. The Creedal *doctrine* on the sufferings and death of Christ proclaims central truths of our Christian Faith: God as redeeming Love, and Christ our Savior, responding to our sinful human condition. Christ, the Word-made-flesh, whose glory is that of the Father's only Son (*Jn 1:14*), never reveals the Father more intensely than when dying on the Cross, loving to the end, crying out "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (*Lk 23:46*). The glory of God shines through the Crucified Christ as nowhere else! "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM. . . . The One who

sent me is with me. He has not left me alone.” “And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (*Jn 8:28; 12:32*).

595. Christ’s redemptive Death is, of course, the ground for the center of Christian *worship*, the Eucharist. The Easter Prefaces proclaim that Christ, our Paschal sacrifice, is “the true Lamb who took away the sins of the world. By dying he destroyed our death; by rising he restored our life.” The Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) even dares to proclaim:

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.
O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
Which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

596. By his Passion and Death Christ reached down into the deepest roots of human alienation — our separation from God, from ourselves, and from one another. The love of the crucified Christ becomes the *norm*, the *source*, the *means*, and the *final goal* of all **Christian morality**. Christ tells us: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps” (*Mk 8:34*). For “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (*Jn 15:12*).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

597. *What is characteristic of the Christian “Good News” of salvation?*

Central to the Gospel is Christ’s Cross of salvation. The Cross is the symbol of Christ’s Paschal Mystery (dying to rise to new life) and Christian discipleship:

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (*Lk 9:23-24*).

598. *How did St. Paul summarize the Gospel?*

St. Paul summed up the Gospel he preached and had received by stating:

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, . . . he was buried; . . . he rose on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (*1 Cor 15:1-5*).

“We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Gentiles alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (*1 Cor 1:23-24*).

599. *How do the sufferings of Christ save us?*

Christ saved us not by the physical sufferings taken separately, but by his perfect love for his Father and for us which was expressed in his sufferings and death for us.

600. *Why did Christ suffer and die?*

Jesus freely and consciously went to his death to fulfill the mission he had from his Father. He saw himself fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies by “giving his life in ransom for the many” (*Mk 10:45*).

“Our Savior Christ Jesus. . . sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right” (*Ti 2:14*).

601. *How does the Creed describe Christ’s redemptive sacrifice?*

The Creed describes five acts of Jesus’ redeeming sacrifice: he *suffered*, was *crucified*, *died*, was *buried*, and *descended* to the dead.

602. *How did St. Paul summarize Jesus’ saving work?*

St. Paul described “the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus” in four steps:

- Jesus offered a sacrifice as both priest and victim;
- to expiate for our sins (*cf. 1 Cor 5:7; Gal 1:4*);
- creating a new Covenant with God in his blood;
- for us and for our salvation (*cf. 1 Cor 11:25; Rom 5:6*).

603. *How does Christ’s saving love redeem us?*

Christ redeems us in two basic acts:

- He *removes our subjective guilt* by bringing us God’s pardon and forgiveness, and

- He *restores* the *objective moral order* broken by our sins through his loving act of reparation.

604. *How can Jesus' Suffering and Death save us?*

Because of his *corporate solidarity* with us sinners, Jesus could take away "the sin of the world" (*Jn 1:29*) as the "suffering Servant" foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

605. *What is the meaning of the sentence "Christ died for our sins"?*

It means Christ died *because of* our sins, and to *overcome* our sinfulness and its effects in the world. Thus he made possible our own repentance and sacrifices, to share in his redemptive work.

606. *What special qualities mark Christ's Redemption?*

Christ's redemptive Death is different from all others in that its effect is: a) *universal*, touching all; b) *eschatological*, reaching to eternal life; and c) *empowering* us to share in his redemptive work.

607. *What is the significance of "universal" in describing Christ's Redemption?*

Christ died "not for our sins alone, but for those of the *whole world*" (*1 Jn 2:2*). Thus,

- there is *no* salvation apart from Jesus Christ,
- who won *objective* redemption for *all* sinners,
- by his loving obedience to his Father's will and his love for *all* mankind;
- calling all to true *subjective* repentance for sin and loving service of their neighbor.

608. *Why does Scripture emphasize redemption through the "blood of Christ"?*

In the Old Testament blood symbolizes life, cleansing from sin, and seal of the Covenant with God.

In the New Testament, Christ's blood brings new life, taking away the sin of the world, and establishing the New Covenant (*cf. Mk 14:24*).

609. *Is it Jesus alone who saves us?*

No, it is the *Father* who sends His only begotten *Son* to redeem us from our sins, and to give meaning and purpose to our lives through the fellowship inspired by the *Holy Spirit*.

Thus our redemption, like our creation and sanctification, is a work of the *Triune God*: Father, Son and Spirit.

610. *What does Jesus' redemption demand of us?*

We are called to *radical conversion* of heart:

- trusting in God, our loving Father,
- who grounds our own innate dignity and worth,
- as well as that of all persons, and
- calls us to follow Christ His Son in self-giving service and simplicity of life.

611. *How does Jesus help us toward this radical conversion?*

Jesus leads us to:

- basic trust in God as our heavenly Father,
- deeper, more authentic self-respect,
- acceptance of others as His beloved children, and
- authentic hierarchy of values in everyday life.

612. *How does this help of Jesus reach us today?*

Jesus “frees” us *today* by touching us

- through his inspired Word in Scripture;
- in his saving symbolic acts, the Sacraments;
- through the service and witness of his disciples in the Christian community; and
- especially through his Holy Spirit, indwelling in each of us.

613. *What is the meaning of “Christ descended to the dead?”*

This means that Christ really and fully entered into the human experience of death, that his salvific ministry is universal, extending to all who had died before him, and that he is truly the Savior of all, including even those who have never heard of his “Good News.”

Chapter 12

Christ Is Risen and Will Come Again

This is the Jesus God has raised up, and we are his witnesses. Exalted at God's right hand, he first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured this Spirit out on us. This is what you now see and hear.

(Acts 2:32-33)

If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. . . If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable people.

(1 Cor 15:17,19)



OPENING

614. *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the primordial Christian proclamation.* The early Christian *kerygma* stands or falls with the resurrection and exaltation of the crucified Jesus as LORD (*cf.* CCC 638). Even today, when we read the Gospel accounts of Christ raised from the dead, we experience the incredible joy and excitement of that unique, world-shaking event. “The Lord has been raised! It is true! He has appeared to Simon” (*Lk 24:34*).

This chapter presents the Resurrection and Ascension, the climax of our Lord’s Paschal Mystery, together with the creedal truth of Christ’s Second Coming at the Parousia.

615. Christ’s Resurrection is far from being merely the personal miraculous return from the dead which one might expect of the crucified God-man. The actual event of Christ rising from the dead was the *real starting point and foundation for the beginnings of the Christian Faith*:

- for the Christian community, the Church;
- for adequate understanding of Christ, his Passion and Death;
- for how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies;
- for the apostolic commission to preach Christ to the whole world.

Simply put, *without Christ risen from the dead, there would be no Christian Faith.*



CONTEXT

616. We have seen how many Filipino Catholics focus almost uniquely on the crucified Jesus. This is understandable, given our own situation of poverty and suffering. Nevertheless it can obscure the full, adequate understanding of Christ, our Risen Savior. We have developed some beautiful religious celebrations at Easter. There is the *Salubong*, which dramatizes the meeting of the Risen Christ with the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother. In it, we can see how Mary's deep sorrow is turned to inexpressible joy. Or the custom of depicting the sleeping Roman soldiers, awakened by the chanting of the Easter "Glory" and the great noise of the ringing Church bells announcing: "Jesus has Risen!" The soldiers run out of the Church in great fright and consternation.

617. But these Easter celebrations lack the sharp, personally-felt dimension so prominent in Good Friday celebrations, and Christmas devotions. We Filipinos can instinctively "compassionate" with a suffering Savior, and a young Mother with her new-born Babe. But the once-and-for-all event of Christ rising from the dead and appearing to his disciples is different. It is not something "familiar" to our ordinary experience. So a special effort is needed by us Filipino Catholics of today if we are to become more aware of the full truth and reality of Christ's Resurrection. For this is the unique key to deeper personal understanding of the *living Christ*, and of our authentic living out the Catholic Faith.

618. Another aspect of our present Philippine context is the strident teaching and preaching of various Fundamentalist groups. They seem particularly fascinated by the Second Coming of Christ, and create imaginative scenarios concocted from various biblical texts about Armageddon and the end of the world. An accurate Catholic understanding of the Creed's "He will come again to judge the living and the dead" will greatly help to dissipate the nervous anxiety and unrest such teaching can cause.



EXPOSITION

619. The following pages shall *first* take up the importance and nature of Christ's Resurrection; *second*, investigate its New Testament witness; *third*, study Christ's Ascension; and *finally*, look at Christ's promised Second Coming.

I. IMPORTANCE AND NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION

A. Salvific Importance

620. St. Paul clearly affirmed the singular importance of the Resurrection in declaring: "If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless" (*1 Cor 15:17*). This means that if Christ is not risen, Paul and all Christians would "then be exposed as false witnesses of God, for we have borne witness before Him that He raised up Christ" (*1 Cor 15:15*). In brief, if Christ be not risen, we are all idolaters!

But the truth is: **Christ IS risen**, and his resurrection has revolutionized both the very notion and image of God, and the ultimate meaning and goal of our very own lives.

621. We can sketch the meaning and salvific importance of Christ's Resurrection in *five points* (cf. CCC 651-55). *First, his Resurrection confirmed everything Christ had done and taught.* It fulfilled both Jesus' triple prediction of his Passion, Death and Resurrection in the Synoptics (cf. *Mk 8:31; 9:30; 10:32*), and his triple prediction of being "*lifted up*" in John's Gospel (cf. *Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32*). Christ's exaltation vindicated all he claimed to be, as he himself asserted in his trial before the high priest (cf. *Mk 14:61f*).

622. *Second, through his Resurrection, Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies promising a Savior for all the world* (cf. *Ps 110; Dn 7:13*). The history of God's Self-revelation, begun with Abraham and continuing through Moses, the Exodus, and the whole Old Testament, reached its climax in Christ's Resurrection, something unprecedented, totally new.

623. Third, the Resurrection confirmed Jesus' divinity. St. Paul preached that Jesus was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (*Rom 1:4; cf. Phil 2:7-8*). Upon seeing the Risen Jesus, Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God!" (*Jn 20:28*).

624. Fourth, Christ's death freed us from sin, and his Resurrection brought us a share in the new life of adopted sons/daughters of the Father in the Holy Spirit. "If then we have died with Christ [freed from sin], we believe that we shall also live with him" (*Rom 6:8*).

625. Finally, the Risen Christ is the principle and source of our future resurrection. This means Jesus rose not only to a "glorious" higher state of life himself, but also to become the source of this new life for all. "He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself" (*Phil 3:21*). "In Christ all will come to life again" (*1 Cor 15:22; cf. CCC 651-55*).

626. This importance of the Resurrection is often missed. Two practical problems indicate this. Many Filipino Catholics today seem to feel uneasy if asked to explain the meaning and implications of Christ's Resurrection. This may indicate that, many merely accept the fact that Christ has risen from the dead. But they have no idea of what this means nor do they know how to "live out" its implication in their lives. No one has helped them see how **Jesus' Resurrection can be the basic principle and animating force for a truly Christian way of life.** We are saved only if we not only "confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord" but also "believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead" (*Rom 10:9*).

627. The importance of the Resurrection also calls for the clarification of some common misleading conceptions. Some Christians treat the Resurrection simply as a factual "proof" of the Gospel message, with no particular meaning in itself. But in the New Testament, **Jesus' Resurrection** is not only a *proof* of the Gospel message — it **IS also the message!**

Neither can the Resurrection be reduced to "making-up" for the crucifixion, as if Easter were like some recompense for Good Friday! On the contrary, **Christ's Resurrection is the central event of God's whole plan of salvation.** This is how God wills to save all persons for all time. In the Risen Christ "a new age has dawned, the long reign of sin is ended, a broken world has been renewed, and we are once again made whole" (*Easter Pref. IV*).

B. Nature of the Resurrection

628. *The Resurrection was basically Jesus' passage from death to new, definitive glorified life.* Thus it can be described from three points of view:

- 1) as *passage: an event* in human history;
- 2) as the *glorified life* of the Risen Christ; and
- 3) as *effected by the Blessed Trinity*.

629. *First, as an event,* Christ's Resurrection is both **historical** and **trans-historical**. It is historical in terms of the testimony of witnesses to the Risen Christ, the empty tomb, etc. But it surpasses and transcends history in that no one claimed to see the event, no one described how it took place, no one can explain what "risen, glorified existence" is essentially. Therefore, the passage to such a new state of life is necessarily a reality discerned through the eyes of Faith, not by the senses (*cf. CCC 639, 647*).

630. *Second, the glorified state of the Risen Christ is both like and unlike the historical, earthly Jesus.* He has *personal continuity* with his prior earthly bodily existence. The Risen Christ re-established direct relations with his disciples, even with the marks of his Passion. For it was the Crucified one whom "God freed from death's bitter pangs and raised up again" (*Acts 2:24*).

Yet, the Risen Christ also showed a clear *discontinuity* with his earthly state. In his risen state he transcends the bodily limits of time and space, and inaugurates the new and final creation, the final destiny of all. The Risen Christ is the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep . . . in Christ all will come to life again" (*1 Cor 15:20, 22; cf. CCC 645*).

631. Therefore, Christ's Resurrection did not mean a return to earthly life. The Risen Christ is not like Lazarus, the son of the widow of Naim or the daughter of Jairus (*cf. Jn 11:43f; Lk 7:15; Mk 5:41f*). They were revived from death to resume their earthly existence, only to die again (*cf. Jn 11:43-44; CCC 646*). Christ arose to an entirely new "glorified" existence. We recognize this in the fact that "Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him" (*Rom 6:9*). Thus we pray: "Christ is the victim who dies no more; the Lamb, once slain, who lives for ever" (*Easter Pref. III*).

632. *Third.* As effected by the Trinity, the Resurrection represents the definitive intervention of the Triune God into creation and our human history. As in all out-going divine acts, the Resurrection is effected by all three divine Persons working together, but each according to the distinctiveness proper to each (cf. CCC 648-50).

Thus, like the source of Jesus' divine sonship and mission is the Father, so too the divine power raising Jesus from the dead has its source in *the Father* (cf. Acts 2:24). Also, like Jesus' very conception in the Virgin Mary, the divine power re-vivifying and glorifying the dead Jesus, body and soul, is the *Holy Spirit*. And as sharing equally together with Father and Spirit the one divine power, the Eternal *Son* works his own humanity's resurrection as Jesus promised. "I have the power to lay down my life, and to take it up again" (Jn 10:18).

II. NEW TESTAMENT WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

633. The New Testament gives witness to Christ's Resurrection in *three* basic ways. *First*, the ***Kerygma*** or early preaching of the Gospel, proclaimed the central importance of Christ's Resurrection. This was true for both the commission and authority of the apostles, and for grounding the Christian Faith itself. *Second*, Jesus' ***Presence***, both in the Risen Christ's appearances, and then through the teaching, moral exhortation, and worship of the Apostolic Church, witnesses to his Resurrection. The appearances of the Risen Christ illumine how he relates to us through his witnesses, and the essential need for faith.

634. And *finally*, the Resurrection is proclaimed as the ***Christians' future***. It indicates how God saves, and illustrates this by the empty tomb. The empty tomb provides invaluable insight into our future by showing how God actually saves us bodily in Christ. We shall briefly investigate each of these three ways of witnessing to Christ's Resurrection.

A. The Resurrection as Kerygma

635. The early preaching contrasts Jesus' death for sin with his Resurrection by God, and connects them with his appearances to his disciples and fulfilling Scripture. "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he was buried; . . .

he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve” (1 Cor 15:3b-5). And again: “We believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, Jesus who was handed over to death for our transgressions and was raised for our justification” (Rom 4:24-25).

636. In key texts, Jesus’ Resurrection is linked with the *apostolic commission*: “Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead” (Gal 1:1). Matthew has the Risen Christ commissioning his disciples for their apostolic mission. “Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:18-19). These texts show how Jesus’ Resurrection directly affected the first apostolic mission, creating the daily life and practice of the first Christian communities.

637. But the Resurrection *kerygma* is perhaps most important for *grounding the Christian Faith*. For the Risen Christ not only crowns God’s Self-revelation in history. He also illumines all of creation as its cosmic Lord, in whom “everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). This is the basis for the genuine *universality* of Christian Faith. ***Through Christ’s Resurrection, a real transformation of creation was effected by God.***

638. We see some indication of this in Christian moral praxis and spirituality. Both rest firmly on the Risen Christ’s actual presence in the world. Without the Resurrection, Christians might simply relate to the historical Jesus as one religious leader among many. Or they might relate to the Risen Lord like the transcendent God, leaving behind the historical “Jesus story.” But the mystery of ***the Risen Christ*** unites inseparably the ***exalted Lord with the crucified “Man-for-others”*** in a way that makes the earthly life of Jesus eternally valid and operative in our history today.

639. One particular phrase in the Easter *kerygma* is specially significant: “***on the third day***” (1 Cor 15:4; Acts 10:40). Throughout the Old Testament the “third day” signified a special point in salvation history, not merely numerical time. Moses told the people: “be ready on the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai” (Ex 19:11). Hosea prophesied: “He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence” (Hos 6:2). In the New Testament, Jesus used the phrase in predictions of his Passion, in invoking the sign of Jonah (cf. Mt

12:40), and in offering the Jews a sign of his authority to cleanse the temple: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (*Jn 2:19*).

B. The Resurrection as Jesus’ Presence

640. In his discourse to Cornelius’ household, Peter describes the *appearances* of the Risen Christ (*cf. CCC 641-43*). “They killed Jesus, hanging him on a tree, only to have God raise him up on the third day and grant that he be seen, not by all, but only by such witnesses as had been chosen beforehand by God – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (*Acts 10:40-41*).

Unlike the Old Testament prophets’ experience of *hearing* God’s word, the disciples’ encounter with the Risen Christ is constantly described in terms of *seeing*, sometimes even with “*touching*.” The women “embraced” the feet of Jesus (*cf. Mt 28:9*). To his disciples who thought he was a ghost, the Risen Christ said: “Look at my hands and my feet; it is really I. Touch me and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bones as I do” (*Lk 24:39*). To the doubting Thomas Jesus said: “Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side” (*Jn 20:27*).

641. These appearances of the Risen Christ have three significant characteristics. *First*, they were different from visions totally within history since the Risen Christ showed himself as transcending the ordinary limits of time and space. *Second*, except for Paul, the Risen Christ appeared only to those who could *identify* him with the earthly, historical Jesus. These thus became the once-and-for-all original witnesses founding the Church. The Apostolic Age closed with their passing; from then on, Christians are those “who have not seen and have believed” (*Jn 20:29*).

642. *Third*, and most importantly, the appearances did not remove all doubts nor the need for faith (*cf. CCC 644*). Some doubted that the one who appeared was really Jesus of Nazareth, others that he was the Christ. A real change of heart, a conversion, was needed to “see” the Risen Christ as the apostle Thomas and the Emmaus disciples clearly show (*cf. Jn 20:27; Lk 24:13-35*). Matthew describes how “those who had entertained doubts fell down in homage” (*Mt 28:17*). This confirms the fact that faith is truly a gift. “No one can say: ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor 12: 3*). St. Thomas Aquinas explains that “the apostles saw the living Christ after his Resurrection with the eyes of faith” (*ST, III: 55, 2 ad 1m*).

643. But the presence of the Risen Jesus was not confined to his appearances. Rather, Christ's active presence was intensely felt by the early community, and linked with life in the Spirit. "We ourselves, although we have the Spirit as firstfruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies" (*Rom 8:23*). Jesus' presence was especially felt in *three areas*, corresponding to our present "Doctrine," "Morals," and "Worship." First, as source of the *teaching* and authority of the Christian community's leaders. Second, in the *moral exhortations* of the Pauline epistles. And *third*, in the community *worship*, especially Baptism and the Eucharist.

Teaching

644. The Risen Christ commissioned his disciples: You are to "teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (*Mt 28:20*). Jesus and the Father abide in anyone who is "true to my word. . . . We will come to him and make our dwelling place with him" (*Jn 14:23*). This abiding presence is effected through the Holy Spirit who "will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you" (*Jn 14:26*). For the Spirit "bears witness" to the Risen Christ (*cf. Jn 15:26*). He "will guide you to all truth. . . . announce to you the things that are to come. In doing this he will give glory to me because he will have received from me what he will announce to you" (*Jn 16:13-14*).

Pauline Moral Exhortation

645. The Risen Christ's *Paschal pattern* of new life through death determines the shape of all Christian life in the Spirit. Christ's Resurrection makes spiritually present He to whom every Christian belongs. So Paul writes: "Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed" (*2 Cor 4:10*). He exhorts his Corinthian converts: "Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (*1 Cor 5:7-8*).

Liturgical Worship

646. The Risen Christ's presence was experienced perhaps most clearly in the sacramental worship of the Christian community. *First*, "in baptism you were not only buried with him but also raised to new life with him because

you believed in the power of God who raised him from the dead” (*Col 2:12*). The Eucharist, for Paul, makes present Christ’s Paschal Mystery: “Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes” (*1 Cor 11:26*). John stresses the notion of abiding presence through the Eucharist: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (*Jn 6:56*).

C. The Resurrection and the Empty Tomb

647. By itself, the tradition of the “empty tomb” does not prove anything. But when linked to the Risen Christ’s appearances, it is *confirmatory of the Resurrection* (*cf. CCC 640*). More important, perhaps, is what the empty tomb indicates about the nature of our salvation. For the corpse of Jesus was a symbol of the ultimate human sin, and God took that corpse and made of it the beginning of the new creation. Redemption in the Catholic sense, then, is not escaping from this sinful world, but transforming it with all its evil and suffering. Moreover, respect for material creation, against all forms of spiritualism, is once again affirmed. As He had done in creation and at the Incarnation, God once again enhances matter by raising Christ from the dead.

PCP II strongly supports this respect for material creation in its appeal for “a passionate care of our earth and our environment” to preserve the “integrity of God’s creation” (*PCP II 79, 321-24*).

III. CHRIST’S ASCENSION

648. But the “raising” of Christ did not stop with his Resurrection from the dead. *An integral part of Christ’s Paschal Mystery is his Ascension.* The Risen Jesus told Mary Magdalene: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (*Jn 20:17; cf. CCC 659-60*). John’s Gospel neatly unifies all dimensions of Christ’s Paschal Mystery (Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension) by Jesus’ assertion of being “lifted up” (*cf. Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33*). These correspond to the predictions of the Passion, Death and Resurrection in the Synoptic Gospels (*e.g., Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34*).

The predictions of both the Passion and “being lifted up” have two things in common. They speak of 1) the “*Son of Man*,” and 2) the *divine imperative*. “So must the Son of Man be lifted up” (*Jn 3:143*). And “The Son of Man had to suffer much. . . be put to death, and rise three days later” (*Mk 8:31*).

649. The *primary meaning of* being raised or “*lifted up*” is *Christ’s exaltation, sovereign authority and power over creation and all history* (cf. CCC 668-70). This recalls a “Suffering Servant” prophecy of Isaiah: “See, my Servant shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly *exalted*” (*Is 52:13*). It also appears in two of Peter’s discourses in Acts expressing both Resurrection and Ascension. “The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree. He whom God has *exalted* at His right hand as Ruler and Savior to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (*Acts 5:30-31*). Referring “lifted up” also to Christ’s Ascension to the Father, then, helps explain: “When you lift up the Son of Man, you will come to realize that I AM” (*Jn 8:28*). “I AM” was the name God revealed to Moses in Ex 3:14, which John’s Gospel uses to bring out the *divinity* of Jesus.

650. But *the Ascension is also a saving event for us*. Christ’s return to the Father was necessary for sending the Spirit: “It is much better for you that I go. . . . If I go, I will send the Paraclete to you” (*Jn 16:7*). Jesus’ Ascension to his Father did not separate him from the world. Rather, it made him even more present to his disciples.

The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and took his seat at God’s right hand. The Eleven went forth and preached everywhere. The Lord continued to work with them throughout, and to confirm the message through the signs which accompanied them” (*Mk 16:19-20*).

Paul also stresses this same active presence of “Christ Jesus who died or rather was raised up, who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us” (*Rom 8:34*).

651. Christ’s Ascension, then, brings out *a number of basic truths* of our Christian Faith. *First*, the Ascension marks Jesus’ exaltation into the heavenly realm of his Father. *Second*, it does not separate Christ from us because as he promised, from heaven he “draws everyone to himself” (*Jn 12:32*). *Third*, since “he lives forever to make intercession,” Christ continues to exercise his priesthood since he entered “heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf” (*Heb 7:25; 9:24*). *Finally*, the ascended Christ as Head of the Church gives us, members of his Body, the hope of one day entering into glory with him (cf. CCC 661-67).

652. The Preface of the Ascension summarizes these truths neatly as it proclaims:

Christ, the Mediator between God and man,
Judge of the world and Lord of all,
has passed beyond our sight,
not to abandon us but to be our hope.
Christ is the beginning, the head of the Church;
where he has gone, we hope to follow.

IV. CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

653. We are aware of the living presence of the Risen Christ among us in the Holy Spirit sent among us. But we also know from the Creed that he “will come again to judge the living and the dead” (*cf. CCC 687-82*). In the first eucharistic acclamation we proclaim: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!” “*Parousia*,” meaning “*coming*” or “*presence*,” is the traditional term for Christ’s Second Coming as divine Judge (*cf. Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; etc.*). “The Son of Man will come with his Father’s glory accompanied by his angels. When he does, he will repay each man according to his conduct” (*Mt 16:27-28*).

654. In the early days Christians prayed for this coming of Christ their Savior: “O Lord, come! *Marana tha!*” (*1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20*). But gradually this longing for their forgiving Savior gave way to gnawing consciousness of individual sinfulness and infidelity. The attitude of longing for the Lord was replaced by something akin to the Old Testament prophetic warnings. The “*Day of the Lord*” was pictured as a “*Day of Judgment*,” a *Dies Irae* (*Day of God’s Wrath*). In recent times there has been a renewal of the New Testament stress on Christ’s “saving presence,” and his Second Coming as introducing the final completion not just of the individuals but of the whole world. The final destiny of the human race is ultimately in God’s hands.

655. But confusion often arises today, partly due to the exaggerated interpretations of the final day by some fundamentalist sects. They overemphasize and interpret in literal fashion the poetic, apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the world given in the Bible, especially in Daniel and the book of Revelation. Biblical literature of this type has to be read in terms of its typical characteristics.

First, while seemingly a revelation of the future, apocalyptic texts actually are usually a commentary on their own times. *Second*, the revelation is generally presented in a vision or dream, in which allegorical language and

complicated symbolism are used. *Third*, the texts attempt by such means to portray the final end of world history and the fearful destruction of all the evil forces in the world.

656. Given such qualities of biblical apocalyptic literature, it is more important for us, Filipino Catholics, to focus on the *basic truths of the Parousia*. The *first* is that *the Risen Christ as the Son of Man will “come to judge the living and the dead”* (2 Tim 4:1). “The Lord himself will come down from heaven at the word of command, at the sound of the archangel’s voice and God’s trumpet; and those who have died in Christ will rise first” (1 Thes 4:16).

Second, *Christ’s Second Coming will be unmistakable* since it will be accompanied by unprecedented signs in the heavens and on the earth. “As the lightning from the East flashes to the West, so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt 24:27).

657. *Third*, regarding *when* the Parousia will take place, the Gospel is very clear. “As for the exact day or hour, *no one knows it*, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father only” (Mt 24:36). Therefore, *fourth*, because it will come unexpectedly, “like a thief in the night” (1 Thes 5:2), we must *“be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come”* (Mk 13:33).

658. *Lastly*, because Christ is already in his glory, and has sent his Spirit among us, *the “time” of salvation has already come*. Now is the time when our salvation is being worked out in our daily acts with our neighbors. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory,” he will judge our acts according to one norm: “As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me” (Mt 25:31, 40).



INTEGRATION

659. The *doctrine* of Christ’s Resurrection and Second Coming constitutes a central part in our understanding who Jesus Christ IS. Without much speculative reasoning, the ordinary Catholic Filipino instinctively senses that Christ as Risen Savior and as Judge must be true God and true man in some way. He is both one of us, able “to sympathize

with our weakness” (*Heb 4:15*), and yet capable of taking “away the sin of the world,” and given “the power to pass judgment” on it (*Jn 1:29; 5:27*). As risen from the dead, Christ is present and operative in our human history, the “Head” of the Christian communities, the Church.

660. Christian *morality* rests precisely on the presence of the Risen Christ among us today, through the Spirit he has sent into our hearts. For the living Risen Christ is not merely some external “model” of 2,000 years ago, proposed for our imitation. He is, rather, a *personal presence* through his living biblical Word, and in active grace-filled power within us. The Risen Christ’s presence, both personal and com-munitarian, in Filipino Catholics, is the abiding source of our authentic Christian moral discernment and strength for our daily living out our Christian Faith.

661. Christian *worship* depends for its validity on the Resurrection, for if Jesus be not risen, he cannot mediate for us before the Father, nor be experienced in his Sacraments. The reality of the Resurrection was brought home sharply to the early Christians precisely in their experience of him in their worship. Today, in the active liturgies of thriving parishes and BECs, we Filipino Catholics share the same experience. We come to recognize him “in the breaking of bread” (*Lk 24:35*).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

662. *Why is it so important to believe in Christ’s Resurrection?*

Because the Risen Christ is the key to our salvation and all authentic knowledge of God. If Christ is not risen, our faith is worthless (*cf. 1 Cor 15:17*).

663. *What is the meaning and salvific importance of Christ’s Resurrection?*

Christ’s resurrection is *not* simply a “fact” of information, but rather, together with the Incarnation, the most significant event of the Christian Faith. It

- confirmed all Christ had done and taught during his public ministry;
- fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies;
- confirmed Jesus as the “only Son of the Father”;

- enabled Christ to share his new life with us as adopted sons and daughters of the Father; and
- will be the principle and source of our resurrection.

664. *What is the challenge surrounding the Resurrection?*

The challenge today is not in accepting Christ's Resurrection, but in living out the Gospel of the Risen Christ.

665. *Does the Resurrection "prove" the Gospel message?*

Christ's Resurrection is not only the proof of the Gospel message. It IS the central Gospel message itself.

666. *What does "Jesus Christ rose from the dead" mean?*

It means that:

- Jesus passed from death to
- a new, definitive glorified life,
- effected by the Blessed Trinity, and
- is now the source of that new life for all.

667. *How does the New Testament witness to Christ's Resurrection?*

The New Testament testifies to Christ's Resurrection in *four ways*, namely, in its:

- Easter proclamation and apostolic mandate;
- descriptions of the Risen Christ's appearances to his disciples;
- narrative of the tradition of the empty tomb; and
- account of the early Christian community's experience of the Risen Christ's presence in the Holy Spirit.

668. *What is an example of the early kerygma?*

In the First Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul wrote: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, . . . he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve" (*1 Cor 15:3-5*).

669. *How did the Risen Christ show his presence in the world?*

The Risen Christ was seen by his disciples, but especially experienced through the teaching, the moral exhortation, and in the liturgical worship of the early Christian communities.

670. *What does the "Ascension" mean?*

It means that the Risen Christ ascended to heaven to take his place at the right hand of the Father.

The Ascension is a salvific event for us since Christ's return to the Father was necessary for sending the Spirit among us, and for Christ's continued mediating on our behalf as well as for grounding our hope in our own future resurrection.

671. *What does Christ's being "lifted up" refer to?*

In John's Gospel Christ speaks of being "lifted up" in referring to his Crucifixion, his Resurrection, and his Ascension to heaven.

672. *Why will Christ "come again"?*

The Risen Christ will come again at the *Parousia* to judge the living and the dead.

Biblical accounts of Christ's Second Coming are written in the apocalyptic genre and must be interpreted accordingly.

673. *When will Christ's Second Coming or "Parousia" take place?*

Christ clearly affirmed that no one knows this, except the Father. It is useless, therefore, to speculate on this "when."

Chapter 13

Living as Disciples of Christ

"What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do."

(Jn 13:15)

But only God, who created man to His own image and ransomed him from sin, provides a fully adequate answer to [man's basic] questions. . . revealed in Christ His Son who became man. Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man.

(GS 41)



OPENING

674. For Christians, *moral living* is simply “*following Christ*.” Yet when “morality” is mentioned, the first thing we often think about is laws, commandments, a series of don’ts, and dire punishments if we fail. But **Christian Faith is more than a set of truths to be believed; it is the way of Christ which leads to life** (*cf. CCC 1696*). It is the Gospel of Christ believed and lived which will decide our destiny as Christians. Fullness of life here on earth means that, in all the innumerable actions, events and problems of daily life, we *walk with Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (*Jn 14:6*).

675. Christian moral life, then, is about the Gospel. It is about *growing in love and holiness*. It is the process of becoming authentically human (*cf. RH 14*). The Christian moral person is one who experiences the liberating and transforming presence of Christ, through the grace of his Spirit (*cf. 2 Cor 3:17; Jn 8:32*). From this experience, Christians commit themselves, in their moral attitudes, decisions, and acts, to the ongoing process of liberating and transforming men and women into disciples of Christ. For Christ is he “from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our journey leads us” (*LG 3*). Thus “the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace” (*LG 36*). This is developed in the *PCP II* in terms of “social transformation” (*cf. PCP II 256-74, 435-38*).

676. But we soon find that this “*following of Christ*” is *not easy* – life is full of challenges. “From the very dawn of history human beings, enticed by the evil one, abused their freedom. They set themselves against God and sought to find fulfillment apart from God. . . . Their senseless minds were darkened and they served the creature rather than the Creator” (*GS 13; cf. CCC 1707*).

677. Left to ourselves, we have no power to fulfill Christ’s command: “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt 5:48*). Yet God strengthens us by letting us share the life of Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit received in Baptism (*cf. Rom 6:4*). This Spirit, in uniting us to Christ, our risen Savior, as members of his Body, the Church, liberates and empowers us with new life to respond in our daily words and deeds to God’s love (*cf. CCC 1742*). Thus, as disciples of Christ, mutually supporting

one another through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we come to exercise *responsible freedom* according to God's loving design, as grasped by our gradually formed Christian *conscience*.

678. This chapter proposes the constitutive elements of personal Christian moral living: the moral agent, *human persons*; our basic dignity in *freedom* and in *personal moral responsibility*; governed by our *conscience*, the inner guide for moral growth in virtue, through the example of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, and the Father's loving mercy (*cf. CCC 1700-9*).



CONTEXT

679. We, Catholic Filipinos, constituting more than 82% of our population, are rightly proud of our Christian faith. We are especially fond of *religious processions, novenas* and numerous *devotions* to Christ our Savior, to Mary and the other Saints. Our churches are crowded on Sundays and special fiestas. Moreover, recent religious movements in our country such as the *Cursillo*, the *Charismatic renewal*, the *Focolare*, and the like, have clearly shown a widespread yearning for closer union with Christ. A great number of Filipinos are seeking ways to draw closer to Christ their Lord.

680. Yet *this yearning for spiritual intimacy with Jesus often does not seem to touch the daily words and actions of some devotees*. Their piety frequently fails to produce acts of loving service, forgiveness and sacrifice. How can many pious Church-members continue to act as abusive landlords, usurers, oppressive employers, or unreliable employees? Why do many graduates of our best Catholic schools turn out to be corrupt government officials, unfaithful husbands and wives, or cheating businessmen? There seems to be a *serious gap between external ritual expression of Christian Faith, and authentic discipleship*: following Christ in action.

681. *Genuine* Christian piety, of course, inspires true Christian witness and service. But in the Philippines today, the challenge of *authentic Christian witness demands two things*: a) *interiorly*, that Filipino Catholics break through external ritualism and social conformism to *interiorize their devotional prayer and sacramental worship* deeply into their very selves (*kalooban*); b) *exteriorly, to commit themselves to*

Jesus Christ and to all he stands for, in daily practice of the faith according to Catholic moral principles and the guidance of the teaching Church.



EXPOSITION

I. MORAL AGENT: THE HUMAN PERSON

682. Christian moral life is simply the call to become loving persons, in the fullness of life-with-others-in-community before God, in imitation of Jesus Christ. The key to moral life, then, is the *human person*, considered *in the light of both reason and faith*. All human rights, personal and social, all moral duties and responsibilities, all virtues and moral character — all depend directly on the answers we give to the questions: who am I as a person in community? as a disciple of Jesus Christ, in his Church? In the words of *PCP II*: “How to live as Filipino Christians in our situation of lights and shadows”? (*PCP II 35*)

683. This “sense of the *dignity of the human person* has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man” (*DH 1*). “The inviolable dignity of every human person. . . is *the most precious possession* of an individual, [whose] value comes not from what a person ‘has’ as much as from what a person ‘is’ ” (*CL 37*). “Hence the pivotal point of our total presentation will be the human person, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will” (*GS 3*). But just who or what IS the human person according to reason and Christian Faith?

684. Persons in Christ. For Christians, *the answer can only be grounded on Jesus Christ himself*. “In Christ and through Christ, we have acquired full awareness of our dignity, of the heights to which we are raised, of the surpassing worth of our own humanity, and of the meaning of our existence” (*RH 11*). “For by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person” (*GS 22*).

685. Christ reveals how *the essential dignity of all persons is grounded directly on their origin, meaning and destiny*. We believe all persons are *created* by God in His image and likeness (*cf. Gen 1:26*) through our Lord

Jesus Christ, “through whom everything was made and through whom we live” (1 Cor 8:6). We believe all are **redeemed** by the blood of Christ (cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:14), and are **sanctified** by the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:14-16; 1 Cor 6:19). We believe all persons are **called to be children of God** (cf. 1 Jn 3:1), **destined for eternal life** of blessed communion with the Father, His Risen-Incarnate Son, and their Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 1692).

686. But, despite their firm belief in these basic truths of the Christian Faith, many Catholics do not realize how these truths touch their day-to-day moral attitudes, acts and choices. Only if these credal truths are linked directly with the *Filipinos’ experience of themselves as persons*, will they influence their moral living. Hence, we have to relate these Christian truths to the common experience of “being a Filipino person.” Although we tend to take these characteristics of our own person for granted, we nevertheless need to become more conscious of them to gain a true knowledge of self and of our relationships to others and to God.

II. PERSONS IN EXPERIENCE

687. Persons are **open** and **relational** by nature. No man is an island; we grow into our full selves as persons only in relating to others. We Filipinos are outstanding in this regard: it is said “Filipinos are never alone.” We realize being a person means being *by* others (our conception, birth, upbringing), being *with* others (our family, friends, neighbors, business associates), and being *for* others (love, service). This is how we have been **created** by God — as social beings. This is how we have been **redeemed** by Christ — as a people. This is how the Holy Spirit works not only within but *among* us as the people of God, journeying toward our common **destiny** in God.

688. Persons are **conscious beings**, aware of themselves in their outgoing acts. We possess this self-awareness through our knowing and free willing (cf. CCC 1704-7; GS 14-17). Thus we “image” in our small way the **Creator’s infinite knowing and loving**. This is the basis for our moral life.

689. Persons are **embodied spirits**. This stresses the *unity* between our “body and soul.” Our bodies are an essential part of our being human, not merely an “instrument” we “use” according to our whims. Contrary to those who look down on the body, and make it the source of all evil, Christian Faith

regards the body as “good and honorable since God has **created** it and will raise it up on the last day” (*GS 14*). Moreover, God the Son further dignified the body through his **Incarnation** — “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (*Jn 1:14*). And St. Paul admonishes us: “You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within — the Spirit you have received from God. . . . So, glorify God in your body” (*1 Cor 6:19-20*). All our relationships with others and with God are expressed through our bodies, which are the “natural sacrament” of our spiritual depth.

690. Persons are *historical* realities. We are *pilgrims on-the-way*, who gradually, through time, become our full selves. In exercising freedom, we decide for ourselves and form ourselves; in this sense we are our own cause. We *develop* as persons in discernible stages, described in great detail by modern psychology. Salvation history narrated in the Bible shows the dynamic interplay between good and evil, success and failure, within the lives of the great biblical figures. It recounts how God progressively brought His Chosen People to a clearer understanding, and higher moral vision, of their own being and of God Himself.

691. Persons are *unique*, yet *fundamentally equal*. Despite physical differences as well as differing intellectual and moral powers, we instinctively realize that *as persons*, in some basic way, *we are all equal*. This is what our Faith explains: “All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God’s image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men” (*GS 29*). Yet, *each of us is called to “image” God in a unique way* — no one can “take our place,” as it were. To each of us Christ says: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine” (*Is 43:1*). Thus, within the fundamental equality of all persons, we recognize the unique identity of each person.

692. This fundamental equality of all individual persons also grounds the *participation and solidarity* of all peoples. “Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all people, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned by the same destiny, which is both human and divine, we can and should work together to build up the world in genuine peace” (*GS 92*).

III. HUMAN FREEDOM

693. Throughout the world today there is an *unprecedented drive for freedom*, for breaking out of all the old structures of political oppression, racial prejudice, economic injustice, and constricting cultural mores. “The demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty” (*DH 1*). Since “the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation” (*ITL*), we recognize here “an authentic sign of God’s presence and purpose . . . for authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man” (*GS 11, 17*).

694. But it is so easy to confuse human freedom with simply “doing what I want.” *Authentic freedom* is *not* “the right to say and do anything,” but to “*do the good*” (*cf. CCC 1740*). It is *not* my own individual private possession, but a *shared freedom* with others in community. It is *not* found in prejudice, deceit, or ignorance, but *in truth*. Christ’s words, “the truth will set you free” (*Jn 8:32*), set truth as both the condition for authentic freedom and a warning against “every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world” (*RH 12*). “Lovers of true freedom [are those] who come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, and govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, striving after what is true and right” (*DH 8*). The pillars of this freedom are “*the truth about Jesus the Savior*, the truths about *the Church*, and the truth about *man and his dignity*” (*ITL, XI, 5*).

695. Freedom from Authentic human freedom has many aspects. Ordinarily we become sharply aware of the value of our freedom only when we are forced to do something against our will. Then we realize how much we long to be *free from* things imposed on us. But this “freedom *from*” all restraints can often result in following selfish inclinations or blind prejudices rather than seeking what is truly good. So St. Paul warns us:

It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm, and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time! My brothers, remember that you have been called to live in freedom—but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh. Out of love, place yourselves at one another’s service. My point is that you should live in accord with the Spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh (*Gal 5:1,13,16*).

And St. Peter adds: “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cloak for vice. In a word, live as servants of God” (1 Pt 2:16).

696. Authentic freedom, therefore, involves first of all *freedom from* everything that opposes our true self-becoming with others in community. Such, for example, are *interior obstacles* like ignorance, or our disordered passions, fears, personality defects, bad habits, prejudices or psychological disturbances, and *exterior forces*, such as violent force or even the threat of violence. These impediments to authentic freedom are commonly traced to three sources: *biological*, which include inherited handicaps and defects as well as external substances like drugs; *psychological*, or interior compulsions, including those originating in the unconscious; and *social pressures* such as the many economic, political, and cultural obstacles which impede the right to freedom (cf. CCC 1740)

All these factors diminish our freedom and thus moral imputability and our responsibility (cf. CCC 1735). But *the greatest single obstacle to authentic freedom is SIN*. Liberation to true freedom means “first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin” (*Instr. on Christian Freedom and Liberation* 23).

697. Freedom for. But this freedom *from* is obviously directed towards a second freedom, the more important “freedom *for*.” Beyond being liberated *from* all the obstacles to authentic freedom is the *freedom for growing as full persons and children of God*, sharing in the life of Christ our Liberator through his Spirit. It is the freedom found in *authentic love*. Of this many-sided freedom we treat only of the *personal dimension* here; its social dimensions are explained in the next chapter.

Two levels of the individual person’s “freedom for” stand out: 1) the *freedom of choice* by which I direct my moral acts, and 2) the *fundamental freedom* of my very self. In the *first* level, we *have* the freedom to choose to **act** in this or that way, to do good or evil. But by consistently choosing to do the good, we gradually become free loving persons, the *second* level (cf. VS 65-68). This shows how our personal “freedom *for*” is both a *process* and a *task*. Through our free choices, striving to overcome the obstacles from within and without (task), we gradually grow (process) towards authentic, mature fundamental (self) freedom.

698. Freedom of the Children of God. The goal of this process and task of personal freedom is “to be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). Christ has freed us by giving to everyone the power to conquer sin and to recover the meaning

of our freedom and so attain the good and accomplish our calling as children of God (*cf. CCC 1741*). Freedom “to attain the good” simply means to “act as Jesus did” – to “mirror in life the Fatherhood of God as the *Father’s* adopted sons and daughters in Jesus, *the Son*, and through Jesus’ indwelling Spirit. Promised by Christ, the *Holy Spirit* is within us creating space for our freedom and making us alive. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17; *cf. CCC 1742*).

699. Thus *it is the power of Christ’s Spirit within us that liberates us from* sin, the law and death (*cf. Rom, chap. 5*), *for* a life of **loving service** of our fellowmen, wherein we find our true selves by imitating Christ Jesus, our Lord. For “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (*Gal 5:22f*).

700. Exercise of Responsible Freedom. But how do we learn to exercise our freedom responsibly? As Christians, we come to know what is moral good in the light of the *Gospel* and *human experience*. “For faith throws a new light on everything and manifests God’s design for our total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions that are fully human” (*GS 11*). This “new light” regarding our moral life works through our **conscience**, “the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (*GS 16*). **Moral conscience is the expression of the divine law, defining what is good and what is evil.** It impels us to do the good and to avoid evil. It judges our behavior, approving what is good, condemning what is evil” (*cf. Rom 1:32; CCC 1778*). Thus, it is our conscience that indicates for us how, in our daily thoughts, words and deeds, we are to love God and our neighbor.

IV. CONSCIENCE

701. For most Filipinos, conscience is understood as a kind of inner voice (*tinig ng budhi*) which guides us in our moral life. This can mean our basic tendency toward the good, the “voice always summoning us to love the good and avoid evil.” More concretely it refers to applying objective moral norms to our particular acts: “the voice of conscience can, when necessary, speak to our hearts more specifically: do this, shun that.” As such, conscience acts as “*the proximate norm of personal morality*” (*VS 60*) for discerning good and evil (*cf. CCC 1796*).

On our part, we perceive and acknowledge the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all our activity we are bound to follow our conscience faithfully, in order to come to God, for whom we were created (*DH 3*).

To obey conscience is “our very dignity; according to it we will be judged” (*GS 16; cf Rom 21:15f*).

702. A common misunderstanding arises here. How can I be free if I am “bound,” morally obliged, to follow the moral law and dictates of conscience? This complaint is based directly on the *misconception* of freedom as “doing what I want.” Our built-in tendency toward self-centered use of freedom is so deep that only the liberating grace of God can help us work against this abiding inner effect of original sin (*cf. GS 17*).

703. The truth is that *freedom of conscience carries with it a corresponding duty to respect the same freedom in others*. Each person has the right, original in human nature, to be recognized and respected as a free and responsible being (*cf. CCC 1931; GS 27*). Moral obligation, then, far from destroying authentic freedom, pertains *only* to our *free* thoughts, words and deeds, and guides them toward true, genuine freedom. Whenever we try to free ourselves from the moral law and become independent of God, far from gaining genuine freedom, we destroy it.

Vatican II admirably captures this apparent paradox of freedom and moral obligation co-existing: “God calls us to serve Him in Spirit and in truth. Hence we are *bound in conscience* but stand under *no compulsion* . . . we are to be guided by our own judgment and to enjoy *freedom*” (*DH 11*).

704. Formation of Conscience. But *our conscience is not something “automatic.”* It is *gradually shaped* through all the many and complex factors that enter into our growth to Christian maturity. Family upbringing, basic education and catechesis in the Faith, our cultural attitudes and values, the friends we grow with in school, and the larger social environment of the community — all influence the development of conscience. Crucial to correct understanding of our conscience is its essential *relational dimension*. Our ongoing moral experiences, within which our consciences gradually take shape, are *never isolated*, but rather always involve countless interactions with parents, guardians, relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, religious and priests, within the social groupings of family, school, parish and community.

705. When the circumstances of life challenge us with difficult choices, we become more aware of the *need to form a right conscience*. In complex modern conditions, with new sensitivities (e.g., solidarity, social justice, peace), new demands and hopes (equal rights, liberation movements, feminism), moral judgments are more difficult and less certain. In such cases, where there are often legitimate differences among Catholics, we must be careful not to identify our opinion with the authority of the Church (*GS 43*). Rather, our conscience therefore needs to be both enlightened and informed (*cf. CCC 1783-85*).

706. Levels of Conscience. We realize that “the education of conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience” (*CCC 1784*).

Due weight being given to the advances in psychological, pedagogical and intellectual sciences. Children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities. They should be trained to acquire gradually a more perfect sense of responsibility. . . . Children and young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgments based on a well-formed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment (*GE 1*).

707. Forming a Christian Conscience. But to form the conscience of a disciple of Christ, *the key* is obviously *Christ and his Spirit, experienced within Christ’s community*, the Church. The formative process takes place in faith and through prayer, by attending to the Word of God and the teachings of the Church, and by responsiveness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Critical reflection on the events and experiences of our life helps us in forming moral judgments. *It is in living out the faith that we form our Christian consciences*. Two types of formative factors, are stressed: 1) “**heart**” factors such as reading and reflecting on Jesus’ teaching and actions, and our affective prayer and sacramental life wherein we encounter the Risen Christ; and 2) “**mind**” factors —attending “to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church, whose duty is to authoritatively teach that Truth which is Christ himself, and also to declare and confirm those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself” (*DH 14*).

708. Types of Conscience. St. Paul distinguishes good people from the bad, according to their faith and *good* or *bad* consciences. He admonishes

Timothy: “Hold fast to faith and a *good conscience*. Some, by rejecting the guidance of conscience, have made shipwreck of their faith” (1 Tim 1:19). He warns against “the hypocrisy of liars with *branded* consciences” (1 Tim 4:2), and “those defiled unbelievers . . . [whose] minds and consciences are *tainted*” (Ti 1:15). This manifests the critical importance of conscience for becoming an authentic person and disciple of Jesus Christ.

709. But even within sincere believers, conscience at times can be *erroneous* — we mistakenly judge something that is really evil to be good, or something good to be evil. “Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity” (GS 16; cf. CCC 1791-93). Forming a Christian conscience, therefore, includes correcting any errors in conscience by instruction in the relevant moral values and precepts which provide a correct vision of Christ’s moral witness. “The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by the objective standards of moral conduct” (GS 16).

710. At other times we experience feelings of *guilt* — when we are bothered by having acted against some norm or rule. These guilt feelings can be a result of an authentic Christian conscience — when we have acted contrary to the Gospel. But the guilt feelings could also be the result merely of shame over breaking some social or cultural “taboo.” Formation of an authentic Christian conscience here means clarifying the *difference* between true moral guilt (a true “guilty conscience”) and psychological guilty feelings which do not necessarily involve any moral fault. “The [genuine] sense of sin disappears when it becomes identified with morbid feelings of guilt or with the simple breaking of rules or precepts of the law” (RP 18).

711. Work of Conscience. Chapter 15 takes up moral norms which our consciences use in discerning good from evil. Here we wish to treat only of what makes our acts good or evil. What does conscience have to decide on?

Traditionally *three dimensions* of every moral act have been highlighted: 1) the *act chosen*, 2) the *intention*, and 3) the *circumstances* (cf. CCC 1750-56). *The three are dimensions of the one moral act*; hence they *must always be considered together* to make an adequate moral judgment. For to focus only on the “act chosen” would forget the personal agent and the context. To stress only the “intention” neglects the objective nature of the moral act: a good intended end does not justify using means that are evil. Finally, considering only the circumstances would be to close one’s eyes to the objective nature of the act chosen, and all moral norms.



INTEGRATION

712. The *doctrines* grounding the intrinsic dignity of every human person, and thus of the Christian's whole moral life, were sketched above (*cf.* # 684-91). We Filipinos naturally think of **God** as **Creator**, and in some way as the *final destiny* of all. Yet for many of us, both truths seem very "far away" from the hustle and bustle of everyday moral activity. *A more direct and personal experience and motivation is needed.* For this, something like Paul's personal experience of the Risen Christ in his moral life is needed: "I speak the truth in Christ: I do not lie. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit" (*Rom 9:1*). If the truths of the Creed are allowed to remain abstract and impersonal, they will prove powerless to motivate the constant personal effort needed to follow Christ faithfully as an authentic disciple — one who has gradually learned how to "love in deed and in truth, and not merely talk about it" (*1 Jn 3:18*).

713. This essential need for motivation brings out the intrinsic place of *prayer* and *sacramental worship* for Christian moral life. *Knowing* what is good and evil is not the same as *doing* good and avoiding evil. Again Paul is our example: he clearly showed that the Law was incapable of giving the power to be faithful to it. Only Christ through his Spirit can free us from sin and death, for true life. Hence without a personal relationship to Christ our Lord — begun, nourished, developed, and sustained through prayer and sacrament — we have no power to live as "children of God."

714. This chapter has presented the basic dimensions of the follower of Christ in the light of reason and of Faith. To live as a disciple of Christ is to respond to God as:

- a) a **human person**: a conscious, historical, unique, relational embodied spirit with innate dignity — created, redeemed, graced now for eternal life hereafter;
- b) a **free self**, called *from* all enslavements *to* an authentic Christian vision and character, responsible in pursuing true good, as discerned by

- c) a *Christian conscience*, formed by directing one's freedom to the person and message of Jesus Christ, the center of the Christian's self-becoming and identity.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

715. *What is “moral life” for the Christian?*

Christian moral life is the following of Christ:

- in all our daily free actions, values and attitudes,
- empowered by Christ's liberating and transforming presence,
- through the grace of his Spirit,
- within the Christian community.

It is simply responding to the Gospel call to become loving persons, in the fullness of life-with-others-in-community before God, in imitation of Jesus Christ.

716. *What problems does “moral life” commonly raise?*

We all experience numerous pressures and temptations both from inside ourselves and from without, against exercising our freedom responsibly. Strangely enough, we find it difficult to *consistently* “do good and avoid evil.”

717. *How does Christian Faith help us understand this situation?*

Scripture and Church teaching help us recognize this situation as the *universal human condition* resulting from the “Fall” at the origins of our race.

Hence our personal moral problems have a foundation that goes deeper than anything we can handle by ourselves, without the redeeming power of Christ.

718. *What is the key to Christian moral life?*

The key to Christian moral life is our dignity as human persons, created by God, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit, and destined for eternal life with God.

719. *How do we experience ourselves as persons?*

We experience ourselves as *embodied spirits*, conscious of our *historical* process of growing up and developing, in constant *relation*

with others with whom we are *fundamentally equal*, yet *unique* in ourselves.

720. *What is authentic human freedom?*

Authentic human freedom is a *shared* capacity with others in the community for *choosing* — not anything at all — but *what is the good*, in order to become our *true selves*.

It involves *both*:

- ***freedom from*** whatever opposes our true self-becoming with others in community, and
- ***freedom for*** growing as full persons before God and our fellow human persons, in authentic love.

721. *How is human freedom experienced?*

We experience freedom most naturally in our free choices to act or not to act, to do or not to do something. We accept responsibility for these acts.

Beside our individual *free acts* there is the *freedom of our very self* formed gradually by our free acts. Often called “*fundamental freedom*” or option, it is not primarily a psychological term, but rather refers to our “moral being” as a human person.

722. *What is meant by “freedom of the children of God?”*

It means the freedom we share by the power of Christ’s Spirit within us, that liberates us *from* the enslavement of sin, the law, and death, *for* a life of loving service of our fellowmen.

This does not mean that

- we have no sin, no laws to obey, and we will never die;

but that the grace of God offers us the real possibility of:

- breaking out and overcoming the slavery of sin,
- living in true freedom as guided by law, and
- transcending our physical death by sharing in Christ’s eternal life.

723. *What is Conscience?*

Conscience is the proximate norm of personal morality, our *ultimate subjective norm for discerning moral good and evil*, with the feeling of *being bound to follow its directive*.

It is the inner voice:

- summoning us to love the good and avoid evil, by

- applying objective moral norms to our particular acts,
- and thus commanding: do this, do not do that!

724. *If we are morally obliged by our conscience to “do good,” are we any longer free?*

We are exercising *authentic* freedom in obeying moral laws and our consciences. The objection is based on the common erroneous idea of freedom as “doing what I want.”

725. *How are our consciences formed?*

Our consciences are formed gradually through the natural educational agents of our family upbringing, our school training, parish catechesis, and the influence of friends and social contacts.

726. *How do we form a “Christian conscience”?*

A “Christian conscience” is formed gradually in faith and through personal and ecclesial prayer-life:

- by attending to the Word of God and the teachings of the Church,
- by responsiveness to the indwelling Holy Spirit, and
- by critical reflection on our concrete moral choices and experiences of daily life.

“*Heart factors*” include reading and prayerful reflection on Jesus’ teaching and actions, and our own prayer and sacramental life.

“*Mind factors*” refer to a deepening in understanding of Sacred Scripture and Church teaching, especially Catholic moral principles, and sound moral guidance.

727. *What types of conscience are there?*

Many different categories are used to describe the exercise of conscience, but the most functional is:

- “*correct*” conscience corresponds to objective moral values and precepts;
- “*erroneous*” conscience, one which mistakenly judges something as morally good which is objectively evil.

Our moral responsibility is to develop a properly “informed” conscience, and to correct any erroneous conscience we may have had.

728. *What must our consciences decide on?*

To judge the good or evil of an act, our consciences must decide on its *three essential aspects*:

- the *nature* or object of the act,
- our *intention* as agents or doers of the act, and
- the *circumstances* which affect the morality of the act.

Chapter 14

The Challenge of Following Christ

*Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God:
“ . . . The kingdom of God is at hand! Reform your lives and
believe in the Gospel!”*

(Mk 1:15)

*The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our
time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way,
are [shared] by the followers of Christ. For theirs is a
community composed of men who, united in Christ and
guided by the Holy Spirit, press toward the Kingdom of the
Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for
all men.*

(GS 1)



OPENING

729. The preceding chapter sketched the disciple of Christ as a *person* with innate dignity shown in responsible use of *freedom* according to *conscience*. This chapter presents the *social context of the moral life of the Christian*.

We live in a world changing at an ever faster pace, where traditional moral values and ways of acting seem to disappear overnight. It is a world of

sharp contrasts, where mass media flood mind and heart with images of “success” in opulent luxury and power on one hand, and of “failure” in unspeakable suffering, destitution and oppression on the other. These sudden upheavals put in question not only our daily behavior, but more basically our whole Christian vision of life and fundamental moral attitudes and values. For amidst all the incredible advances of today, we often find ourselves strangely confused, paralyzed by uncertainty about the most basic things in Christian moral living.

730. In such a situation, the Church has the “duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*GS 4*). God’s Word brings the light of Christ to bear on those “anxious questions about the current trends of the world” (*GS 3*) which so mark our times. To bring the commandments fulfilled by Christ to bear on a concrete situation is an act of *prophetic interpretation*. In so acting, the Church “is interested in one thing only — to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served” (*GS 3*; *cf. Jn 18:37; Mt 20:28*). Thus this chapter treats of what constitutes *the social context of following Christ* in today’s world, namely, ***Christian Faith and Morality***, developed through Christ’s image of the *Kingdom of God*, which calls us to personal *conversion from sin* in following Christ, as members of his people, the Church.



CONTEXT

731. Dramatic changes in Philippine life have occurred in the past decades. Some of the traditional Filipino ways of relating to one another have quietly faded away. New *heightened expectations* have roused formerly dormant people to actively espouse various causes for: a) liberating the many oppressed; b) defending the human rights of the exploited; c) improving working conditions, raising salaries, and d) promoting better living conditions among the less fortunate. The Catholic Church in the Philippines has consistently exercised a major influence on this new “social awareness” and concern for justice and the poor. *PCP II* calls for renewal as a “Church of the Poor” (*cf. PCP II 125-36*), courageously addressing the causes and conditions of poverty and social injustice (*cf. PCP II 165, 247-49, 256-61, 290-329, etc.*).

732. Yet Philippine society continues to present **glaring contradictions** which, far from “passing away,” have so successfully defied all efforts thus far to remove them, that they have actually grown in depth and intensity. Never has the *gap between rich and poor* Filipinos been so wide, so tangible (conspicuous) and so shameless. Striking too, despite all the public outcry, the government stress on value education, and the many religious groups calling for high moral integrity and reform, is the alleged persistence of widespread political **graft and corruption**, and the continued **ruthless destructive exploitation of our natural resources**. The enduring spectacle of such national social ills has contributed to the apparently widespread confusion over the role of Christian Faith in moral matters.

733. Most Filipinos naturally *link their belief in God with their ideas of good and evil*. They *pray* for guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit when they have serious problems, or must make an important decision. They *make novenas* to gain certain favors. This speaks much of the Filipino Catholics’ conviction of being close to God in their personal lives. Unfortunately, *in many cases, these practices remain enclosed within their own private prayer life*, with little relationship with others. “The split between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives is one of the gravest errors of our time” (GS 43).



EXPOSITION

I. FAITH AND MORALITY

734. We begin with the most general theme of all — the influence of Christian Faith on morality. Every human person, Christian or not, is called to live a moral life. Therefore, Christian faith and moral life are *not* identical. But for Filipino Christians, their Faith makes a *radical difference* in their moral lives in two basic ways:

- 1) by providing a *distinctive Christian meaning to life*; and
- 2) by *strengthening moral motivation with uniquely Christian motives*.

735. The *Christian meaning* for the *individual person* was detailed in the preceding chapter: how Christ gives new practical meaning to the innate

dignity of human persons, to what it means to be authentically free, with a good and true conscience. For the broader vision of this personal meaning within the real world context, with all its problems, evils, and suffering, Faith brings further meaning. In the words of Vatican II:

736. In the Christian vision, the *world* is the whole human family, the theater of human history — its travails, its triumphs and failures — this world has been created and is sustained by the love of its Maker, [it] has been freed from the slavery of sin by Christ, who was crucified and rose again in order to break the stranglehold of personified Evil, so that it might be fashioned anew according to God's design and brought to its fulfillment (*GS 2*).

737. The *motivation* with which Faith inspires the moral life of Filipino Christians *flows from this new meaning Christ gives, and from the Spirit of Truth* who guides us to all truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). Motives are gradually formed by the many symbols, stories, personages, ritual ceremonies, customs and prayers through which the Faith is handed on from generation to generation. Thus, not only the mind but the imagination, affections, heart and will of the Filipino Christian are deeply touched by Faith in Christ. *PCP II* emphasizes this motivation by beginning its vision of a Church renewed with "The Way of Jesus," and "The Call of Jesus Today" (*cf. PCP II 37-85*).

738. Christian Faith radically influences the moral life of the Filipino, then:

a) By ***giving reasons for acting in a Christian way***. The Christ of the Gospels provides a new *perspective* which helps us to *interpret* the relevant moral aspects of our daily life situations. He is the "light" that illumines our consciences with the truth, so we can "judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect" (*Rom 12:2*). "God's Word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. . . it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart" (*Heb 4:12*).

b) By ***developing the attitudes and dispositions of Christ***. Christians grow up with the Gospel stories of Christ's care for the poor, his fidelity to his Father, his sacrificial love. We honor Mary and the Saints for their heroic virtues in following Christ through the power given them by the Holy Spirit. Thus Christ-like attitudes are built up which "test and interpret all things in a truly Christian spirit" (*GS 62*).

c) By ***inspiring "Christ-like" affections***. The Christ of the Gospel naturally attracts us. As Filipinos, our natural affective nature is formed under the sacramental influence of our Baptism, Confirmation, Confession,

and weekly Eucharist celebrations. Our parish liturgy is a “school” which helps form our affections on the model of Christ’s own affectivity. But most of all, it is through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit whom our heavenly Father sends us, that our affections are ever more closely conformed to the image of His Son (*cf. Rom 8:29*).

In summary, ***faith gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment.*** Through moral life, especially our works of charity, our faith becomes a confession, a witness before God and our neighbors of our gift of self, like that of Jesus, the Source, Model and Means of our moral life (*cf. VS 89*).

A. The Kingdom of God

739. Having sketched the general relationship between Christian Faith and Morality, we now focus on the ***essentials of Christian moral living.*** They are neatly ***summarized in the “Kingdom of God,”*** the central image of Christ’s teaching in the Gospels. Jesus opened his public ministry by proclaiming: “The Reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel!” (*Mk 1:15*). In this basic proclamation, there is, *first*, the *condition* for entry into the Kingdom: ***repentance.*** As sinners, our first step must always be reform of life. *Second* is the nature of *membership* in the Kingdom: ***discipleship,*** or the following of Christ. *Third* is the *life* characteristic of the Kingdom: ***love.*** *Fourth*, the Kingdom’s *norm*, is the ***New Law*** of the Spirit. *Lastly*, the *charter* of the Kingdom is set forth in the ***Beatitudes.***

740. Repentance. In our praying for the coming of the Kingdom in the Lord’s Prayer, we ask “forgive us the wrong we have done . . . deliver us from the Evil One” (*cf. Mt 6:9-13*). John the Baptist prepared for the kingdom by “proclaiming a baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins” (*Lk 3:3*). The repentance needed for the Kingdom demands a total personal *conversion*, a change of life-style and of priorities. “I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God” (*Mt 18:3*). As Nicodemus learned, this is impossible “without being born of water and Spirit” (*Jn 3:5*). Thus we who are “baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death . . . so that we might be slaves to sin no longer . . . but dead to sin, alive for God in Christ Jesus” (*Rom 6:3, 6, 11*).

Conversion is the first and perduring condition for Christian moral living. However, as *PCP II* makes plain, it cannot be merely a private,

individualistic turning to God, but must entail commitment to “social transformation” (*cf. PCP II 271-76*).

741. Discipleship. The preceding chapter dealt with the personal factors in following Christ: the human person, responsible freedom, conscience. But what does this “following Christ” entail? *PCP II* stressed the theme of “discipleship”: responding to the Call of Christ, in his Community, the Church (*cf. PCP II 64-153*). Perhaps the sharpest Scriptural description is contained in Christ’s “Gospel Paradox,” found in all four Gospels: “Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will save it” (*Mk 8:35*). At the Last Supper Christ told his disciples: “Let the greater among you be as the younger, the leader as the servant. I am among you as the one who serves” (*Lk 22:26f*). Christ commissioned his disciples to carry on his work (*cf. Mt 28:19f*), allowing no interference: “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. . . Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the Kingdom of God” (*Lk 9:60-62*). Personal commitment to being Christ’s disciple is the key to all Christian morality.

742. Love. The life that is love in the Kingdom of God is first of all “not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an offering for our sins” (*1 Jn 4:10*). The basis for moral living, then, is not our good intentions or efforts, but rather the incredible fact of God’s love for us. Now, since “God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another” (*1 Jn 4:11*), a love that is “*forgiving*” (*cf. Eph 4:32*), *universal*, “for all” (*cf. 1 Thes 3:12*), and *necessary*, for without love we are merely “a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal” (*cf. 1 Cor 13:1*). Two direct effects of this love are *fellowship* (*koinonia*) and *service* (*diakonia*). Fulfilling the commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself” (*Rom 13:9*) creates community fellowship, the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (*2 Cor 13:13*). So too we bear one another’s burdens and serve “in all humility” (*Acts 20:19*), “in the newness of the Spirit” (*Rom 7:6*).

743. New Law. Before the New Law of the Kingdom, the Christian cannot have a legalistic attitude, but must have a *filial* one. He acts neither out of fear, like a slave, nor out of calculation, like a businessman; but *out of love* like a child. He knows he must do everything possible to respond to the love of the one who “loved us first” (*1 Jn 4:19*). The rule of the Kingdom interiorized the old prescriptions, forbidding not just killing, but even anger; not only adultery, but even lustful looks; not just false oaths, but even swear words (*cf. Mt 5:22, 28, 34*). It is not external show but the “quality of the

heart” that matters. “What emerges from within a man, that and nothing else, is what defiles” (*Mk 7:20*). The “weightier matters of the law — justice and mercy and fidelity” (*Mt 23:23*) are what count for Christian moral living. The norm is: “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all [other] things will be given besides” (*Mt 6:33*).

744. The Beatitudes. At the start of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ laid down the charter or “marks” of the Kingdom — a new, mysterious life-giving vision (*cf. PCP II 272, 276*). The beatitudes are *not* a series of commands: be merciful! act as peacemakers! Rather they picture for us the face of Christ in sketching the vocation of every disciple of Christ, drawn to share in his Passion and Resurrection. They spotlight the essential qualities, actions, and attitudes of Christian living; they offer the paradoxical promises which sustain hope in our tribulations; they announce the blessings and reward already obscurely experienced by the faithful and manifested in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints (*cf. CCC 1717*).

745. The blessings of the Kingdom are promised to the poor and the powerless; to the gentle and the afflicted; to those who seek eagerly for a righteousness beyond external observance; to the compassionate and the pure-hearted; to those who turn from violence and seek reconciliation. To these *Jesus promises a unique type of happiness*: to inherit God’s Kingdom, to possess the earth, to be a child of God, to receive mercy, to see God. This sharp contrast with the secular values of the world will be taken up in the next chapter.

B. Response to the Kingdom

746. Christian moral life has often been presented in terms of a **Call-Response** pattern. The Kingdom of God just described has provided a particularly good picture of God’s call. In similar fashion, the response to the Kingdom can be sketched as *three dimensional*: **respect** for the worth of others; **solidarity** with all; and **fidelity** to God and to one another.

747. *First, respect for one another* (*cf. CCC 1929-33*). As members of God’s Kingdom our dignity and intrinsic worth comes from God. Therefore Paul exhorts us: “Love one another with the affection of brothers . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for all; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly” (*Rom 12:10-16*). “Do

nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each of you looking to others' interests rather than his own" (*Phil 2:3-4*).

748. *Second, solidarity*, "the firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all" (*SRS 38*). This means that we cannot even offer true worship to God unless we "go first to be reconciled with your brother" (*cf. Mt 5:24*). This solidarity "helps us to see the 'other' — whether a person, people or nation — not just as some kind of instrument, . . . but as our 'neighbor,' a 'helper' to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God" (*cf. SRS 39; CCC 1939-42*).

749. *Third, fidelity* to God and to one another. It is to the faithful disciple that the joy of the Kingdom is granted: "Well done my good and faithful servant . . . come share your Master's joy" (*Mt 25:21*). But this fidelity demands watchfulness and prayer:

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith, realizing that the brotherhood of believers is undergoing the same sufferings throughout the world" (*1 Pt 5:8-9*).

750. The life-or-death importance of this fidelity or trustworthiness is portrayed in the biblical stories of the two gardens. In the *Garden of Eden*, the serpent sows the seed of distrust, and Adam and Eve prove unfaithful to God and to each other (*cf. Gn 3*). In the other garden, *Gethsemane*, betrayed by Judas, Christ remains faithful to his Father and to his mission of saving all by the blood of his Cross (*cf. Mk 14:32-42; Col 1:20*). However, our human experience of fidelity is not a once-and-for-all reality, but a continuing challenge with consequences. The betrayals of Judas and Peter clearly illustrate this dimension: Judas' infidelity led him to suicide (*cf. Mt 27:5*), while Peter's opened him to repentance, forgiveness and renewed commitment (*cf. Jn 21:15-19*).

751. Filipinos schooled in the traditional catechesis have been taught to view this fidelity to God and neighbor in terms of VIRTUES. Today great stress is placed on VALUE FORMATION. Both come to much the same thing, if our moral values are recognized as "fruits" of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace,*

patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22f). Moreover the basic human values of *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance* (the “cardinal virtues”) are strengthened by the grace and Gifts of the Holy Spirit: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (cf. Is 11:2)*, and grounded and purified by the “theological virtues” of *Faith, Hope and Charity (cf. CCC 1804-32)*.

752. *PCP II* adds an important note in emphasizing the need to study “how the values that we have from our Christian faith can strengthen the good in our cultural values or correct what is excessive in them and supply for their deficiencies” (*PCP II 22*).

C. Parables of the Kingdom

753. We conclude this section on the Kingdom of God and Christian moral life with two of Christ’s *parables*. In comparing the Kingdom to a treasure buried in a field and to a pearl of great price (*cf. Mt 13:44-46*), Christ indicated something of the structure of the moral response called for in the Kingdom. Both parables manifest the same *threefold pattern*: first, ***discovery***; second, ***divesting*** oneself of everything (selling); thirdly, ***action*** (buying). This sketches a moral response of:

- a) An ***alert open-mindedness*** that discovers where the Spirit is at work building up God’s Kingdom. [“The Kingdom of God is at hand!”]
- b) A ***metanoia*** or conversion that transforms the whole person. [“Reform your lives!”]
- c) ***Responsible attitudes and actions***, cooperating with God’s grace for the common good of all. [“Believe in the Gospel!”] (*Mk 1:15*).

II. THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

754. Church as Context. The response to the Kingdom is *not made alone*. The task of becoming authentic disciples of Jesus Christ in word and deed can only be accomplished *in community*. The Church, the Christian community, supports us with the ministry of God’s Word and of the Sacraments (*cf. CCC 2030*). Christian moral teaching looks to God’s abiding word as its unfailing source and guide. The Word of God, including Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, is a fount of constant inspiration and new life.

755. Moreover it is within the Church that we Filipino Catholics, *baptized into the death of Christ Jesus*, to live a new life (*cf. Rom 6:3-4*), encounter the Risen Christ sacramentally — forgiving us in Penance, strengthening us in Confirmation and Anointing, sanctifying our life's vocation in Matrimony and Orders, and most of all, nourishing us with his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Through these saving sacramental encounters, the Holy Spirit inspires and empowers us as Christ's followers, with infused virtues to strengthen us for the moral combat in the service of others.

756. Church as Communal Support. The Church provides the communal support absolutely necessary to be faithful in following Christ in our moral living. The next chapter takes up the specific role of the Church's *Magisterium*, or teaching function, as norm for our consciences in moral reasoning and the process of moral deciding (*cf. CCC 2032-37*). Here we summarize the broader mission of the Church in regard to the moral lives of her members in terms of *three functions*: a) to help form Christian moral character; b) to carry on and witness to Christian moral tradition; and c) to serve as the community of Christian moral deliberation.

757. Active Agent in Forming Christian Character. One commendable feature of today's moral thinking is the shift in emphasis *from individual acts and techniques of decision making to the formation of moral consciousness or character*. More important for moral living than explicit instructions in the form of *do's* and *don'ts* are the symbols, images, stories, and celebrations that, by capturing our active imaginations, determine in great part how we think, evaluate, judge and decide morally. Thus the Church helps form moral character with its epic Old Testament narratives of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Sinai Covenant, Exodus, and the formation of the Kingdom of Israel with their great heroes and figures — Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. The New Testament follows with the “Good News” of Jesus the Christ, who redeems all by his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Such stories are not only proclaimed by and in the Church, but also embodied in its ritual ceremonies, and imitated in its history of saintly witnesses through the ages.

Thus does the Church help form moral character by exercising an indispensable influence on the imaginations and moral sense of Filipino Catholics.

758. Bearer of Moral Tradition. A common complaint today among those plagued with difficult moral decisions is the lack of “rootedness.” So many have lost the sense of who they are, their identity, heritage and “roots.” For Filipinos, the Catholic Church can supply their solid point of reference, where they feel at home in continuity with their family and community traditions. The constancy of the Church’s moral tradition through changing times helps Filipino Catholics:

- a) by **grounding** *their own moral development with moral instructions, customs and ways of acting;*
- b) by *supplying much of the content of a Christian morality* — the Ten Commandments, Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, the Precepts of the Church; and
- c) by *serving as the structure or framework for their moral accountability as disciples of Christ.*

Specifically, the Precepts of the Church include: 1) to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; 2) to fast and abstain on the days appointed; 3) to confess one’s sins at least once a year, and receive Holy Communion during the Easter time; 4) to contribute to the support of the Church; and 5) to observe Church laws concerning marriage.

759. Community of Moral Deliberation. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), and individual bishops throughout the land, have consistently brought before Filipino Catholics the burning moral issues affecting everyone — on violence, peace, family planning, procured abortion and euthanasia, on voting in elections, on ecology, anti-government coups, and the like. These directive/guidelines and the moral reasoning employed are often themselves the outcome of prolonged serious reflection, careful research and discussion. In this, the Church is acting as a moral community in which active and vigorous dialogue between Filipinos on serious moral matters can take place on all levels, under the guidance of the Bishops. Typical are the moral catechetical programs for school children, religious education for teenagers, *cursillos*, marriage encounter programs, and social action seminars for adults — just to name a few.

III. THE MYSTERY OF WICKEDNESS: SIN

760. But our common experience testifies to the fact that the full and perfect Reign of God has not yet come. On the contrary, we are all too conscious of

our shattered world in which so many moral evils, both personal and social, afflict the human race. All too easily we can recognize St. Paul's descriptions of the "works" of the flesh: "lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drinking bouts, orgies and the like" (*Gal 5:19-21*). "The mystery of evil is already at work" (*2 Thes 2:7*). So we must face the **reality of SIN** which obstructs the coming of Christ's Kingdom.

761. The Mystery of Sin. But beyond the stark factual reality of sin, we must recognize that sin is not simply "doing something wrong," or "making a mistake" which we can easily rectify at will. John Paul II describes it as follows:

Clearly sin is a product of man's freedom. But deep within its human reality there are factors at work which place it beyond the merely human, in the border-area where human conscience, will, and sensitivity are in contact with the dark forces which, according to St. Paul, are active in the world, almost to the point of ruling it (*RP 14*).

The mystery of sin "hates the light" (*cf. Jn 3:19; 1 Jn 2: 9f*), and we, sinners all, are often ashamed to take it seriously. But we need to reflect deeply on sin: 1) to truly appreciate God's everlasting merciful love, and 2) to correct common distorted ideas of God, the Church, conscience, law and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

762. In summary fashion, with St. Augustine, we can define sin as "an utterance, a deed or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (*cf. CCC 1849*). We can sketch the essence of sin in a few broad strokes as:

- **refusing to follow our own conscience's call** towards the good;
- **rejecting God**, our Creator and Lord, and **our own true selves and others**, by turning away from God, our true end; and
- **breaking God's loving Covenant with us**, shown forth in Jesus Christ, dying and rising for our sake.

What must be stressed these days is the *inner link between rejecting God and rejecting ourselves*. In refusing God and wishing to make a god of ourselves, we deceive and destroy ourselves. We become alienated from the truth of our being. Hence, to acknowledge oneself a sinner, is to know oneself guilty — not only before conscience, but before God our Creator, Lawgiver, and Savior (*cf. CCC 1849-51*).

763. The “Sense of Sin.” Our Christian faith alerts us to the basic fact that we are “not well,” that all of us have an urgent need for a physician to “cure us.”

If we say, “We are free of the guilt of sin,” we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us. But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word finds no place in us (*1 Jn 1:8-10*).

764. Moral life, then, requires that we recognize in ourselves the tendency to sin and acknowledge ourselves as sinners when we have done evil. *PCP II* presents Jesus’ mission to “liberate from sinfulness” (*cf. PCP II 53-54*), as well as his call to us for “overcoming the reality of personal sin and sinful structures (*cf. PCP II 81-86, 266-70*). Today this sense of sin seems to have been radically weakened by ***secularism***: we are caught up in the flagrant ***consumerism*** that surrounds us. We are unconsciously influenced by the modern ***behaviorist*** psychologies that identify sin with morbid guilt feelings or with mere transgressions of legal norms (*cf. RP 18*). And through radio, TV and the cinema, we continually face so many examples of bribery and corruption in business and government, cheating in family life and lying in personal relationships, that we often end up rationalizing for our own misdeeds: “Anyway, everybody does it,” or “I *had* to do it because. . . .”

765. Even within the thought and life of the Church, certain trends contribute to the decline of this basic sense of sin. Exaggerated attitudes of the past are replaced by opposite exaggerations: from seeing sin everywhere to not recognizing it anywhere; from stressing the fear of hell to preaching a love of God that excludes any punishment due to sin; from severe correction of erroneous consciences to a respect for individual conscience that excludes the duty of telling the truth. Some conclude: “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin” (*RP 18*). Despite the “natural piety” of the Filipino, an authentic Christian “sense of sin” is gradually being eroded due mainly to ***religious ignorance*** and the consequent ***secularistic set of attitudes and values***. A true sense of sin is a **grace** as we perceive in the saints, who (paradoxically) manifested, without exception, a far keener sense of sin than the “ordinary sinner.”

A. Sin in Sacred Scripture

766. The *Old Testament* presents *three basic notions* for what we call sin.

- a) “**Missing the mark**” focuses on the offense inflicted on another by failing to meet one’s covenant obligations. Since the first law of the Covenant is worship of Yahweh, idolatry is its clearest expression. “The worship of infamous idols is the reason and source and extremity of all evil” (*cf. Wis 14:27*).
- b) **Depravity** and **perversity** refer to the defect of character or disorder that weighs the sinner down. “For my iniquities . . . are like a heavy burden, beyond my strength” (*Ps 38:5*).
- c) **Rebellion** and **transgression** picture sin as a conscious choice which destroys positive relationships. “See what rebellious Israel has done! She has . . . played the harlot” (*Jer 3:6*).

767. More importantly, the Old Testament manifests certain *shifts of emphasis* in its conception of sin. A more *primitive*, less morally developed idea of sin pictures it as *defilement* or “**stain**,” the sense of being unclean before the face of God, the All-Holy. “You shall warn the Israelites of their uncleanness, lest by defiling my Dwelling, their uncleanness be the cause of their death” (*Lv 15:31*). Strong in its sense of God’s holiness, this “stain” image manifests a rather primitive ethical sense by: 1) missing the inner evil of sin in not seeing the difference between responsible free acts and involuntary evils; 2) fixing on sexual taboos and ritual cleanliness, but ignoring interpersonal and societal justice; and 3) being motivated by a self-centered fear that shuts out authentic faith in the transforming merciful forgiveness of God.

768. A more ethical view of sin is presented in the Old Testament prophets and “covenant” narratives. Sin is seen as a **crime**, an internal, willful violation of Yahweh’s covenant relationship. Isaiah warns: “It is your sins that make Him [Yahweh] hide His face,” and lists their sins: their works are evil, their lips speak falsehood, their hands are stained with innocent blood, their feet run to evil, and their thoughts to destruction, plunder and ruin on their highways. Crooked have they made their paths, and the way of peace they know not (*cf. Is 59:2-8*). Viewing sin as crime emphasizes its juridical aspect, with its concern for determining the nature of the crime, the culpability of the sinner, and the appropriate punishment.

769. A third model of sin is **personal rejection** of a love relationship. It draws on the Bible’s covenantal language of personal vocation, discipleship and conversion, to reduce the fire and brimstone emphasis of the more

juridical “crime” image. The evil of sin in this basically personalist model is located not in the violation of an extrinsic law, but rather in the free, responsible malice of the sinner and the harm inflicted on other persons. Sin is seen as truly *interpersonal*: the personal malice of the sinner offending the persons of God and neighbor. By sin, sinners alienate themselves from their neighbors, all creation, God, and from their own true selves.

770. Today, perhaps more important than the different models of sin, is the *loss of the sense of sin* and *its link with conscience*. John Paul II quotes Pius XII: “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin.” He explains how

this sense of sin is rooted in our moral conscience, and is, as it were, its thermometer. . . . Nevertheless it happens not infrequently in history, for more or less lengthy periods and under the influence of many different factors, that the moral conscience of many people becomes seriously clouded. . . . It is inevitable in this situation that there is an obscuring also of the sense of sin which is closely connected with moral conscience, the search for truth, and the desire to make a responsible use of freedom. . . . [This] helps us to understand the progressive weakening of the sense of sin, precisely because of the crisis of conscience and the crisis of the sense of God (*RP 18*).

771. *New Testament* authors identified Christ as the suffering Servant who has come to “justify many, bearing their guilt” (*Is 53:11*). Christ calls all to a radical conversion *from the power and deadly evil of sin, to the Kingdom of his Father*. To all entrapped in the snares of sin, he offers forgiveness: “Your sins are forgiven” (*Lk 7:48*). “Sin no more!” (*Jn 5:14; 8:11*) In St. John we meet the contrast between many “*sins*” (plural) or conscious acts against the Kingdom, and “*sin*” (singular) meaning the “*world*” as hostile to God and to God’s word (*cf. Jn 1:29*). This contrast is repeated today in our Eucharistic celebrations in the *Gloria* and the *Lamb of God* prayers. Much like “world” in John’s Gospel is St. Paul’s notion of “*flesh*.” As contrasted with “*Spirit*,” it stands for the power of sin that permeates the human condition and grounds all individual sinful thoughts, words, and deeds (*cf. 1 Cor 5:5; Rom 7:5, 18*).

B. Church Teaching on Sin

772. The Church's doctrine of original sin was taken up in Part 1, Chap. 8, as were the seven "deadly [capital] sins" of Christian tradition. Original sin also appears briefly below in Part III, Chapter 25 on Baptism. The distinction between mortal and venial sin is treated in Chapter 27 on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But two more recent approaches to sin that add considerably to a fuller pastoral understanding of sin must be briefly treated: the different dimensions of sin; and "social sin."

773. Sin can have different dimensions. It can be described as a *spiral*, a *sickness*, *addiction*. 1) As a *spiral* that enslaves us in a contagious, pathological habit of vice that acts like a virus, infecting social attitudes and structures such as family, social groups and the like. 2) As *sickness*, drawing on St. Luke's trait of linking healing with forgiveness of sin (*Lk 5:18-26*). 3) As *addiction*, a process over which we become powerless as it becomes progressively more compulsive and obsessive. Sin as addiction leads to a pattern of ever deeper deception of self and others, ending in the inevitable disintegration of all our major personal and social relationships. Examples given of sin as addiction are *consumerism* and *militarism*.

774. *Due consideration of these dimensions of sin helps to have:*

- a more realistic appraisal of the sinner's actual operative freedom;
- a positive orientation toward a *process* of healing and forgiveness; and
- a stress on the over-riding importance of the social and structural dimensions of sin.

775. "Social sin," stresses complicity in evil by showing how members of the same group are mutually involved. It can refer to:

- sin's power to affect others by reason of human solidarity;
- sins that directly attack human rights and basic freedoms, human dignity, justice, and the common good;
- sins infecting relationships between various human communities such as class struggle, or obstinate confrontations between blocs of nations; and
- situations of sin, or sinful structures that are the consequences of sinful choices and acts, e.g., racial discrimination, and economic systems of exploitation (*cf. RP 16*).

Regarding the last meaning, *PCP II* urges Filipinos “to reject and move against sinful social structures, and set up in their stead those that allow and promote the flowering of fuller life” (*PCP II* 288).



INTEGRATION

776. This chapter has focused on *Faith* and *Morality*, Christ’s central symbol of the *Kingdom of God*, the *Church’s* role in Christians’ moral life, and the reality of *Sin*. These themes have described the *social context* of “following Christ.” ***Doctrinally***, they are based solidly on the correct understanding of *original sin* and especially of *grace*. For the life of grace in the Holy Spirit is constantly working to build up the kingdom of God. It is the Spirit within and among Christ’s disciples that enlightens and strengthens their life of Faith in the Christian community against the power and alienation of sin.

777. As regards the ***worship*** dimension of these moral themes, the Sacraments of *Reconciliation* and of *Anointing* are directly concerned with *healing* and strengthening the disciples of Christ in their spiritual combat against the malice and evil of sin. These two Sacraments, then, act as a *remedy* for sin, particularly in its relational dimensions. Moreover, without an ever-deepening prayer life which alone can inspire and animate a personal relationship to Jesus Christ our Savior, this spiritual combat will never be sustained. And it is within the ecclesial context of the Church, the Christian community, that this sacramentally nourished prayer life of the follower of Christ can grow and develop by the grace of God.

778. This chapter has sketched in broad lines the key dimensions constituting the context of following Christ. *First*, the Catholic Faith influences Filipinos’ moral living by offering the distinctive perspective of the Gospel, while developing Christ-like attitudes and affections. *Second*, within Christ’s great symbol of the Kingdom of God, with its call to repentance and discipleship, Filipino Christians are called to exercise a new life of mutual respect, solidarity and fidelity. *Thirdly*, in this the Church serves as their context and communal support in their struggle against evil. *Lastly*, the “kingdom of sin” is described — the mystery of evil, experienced from within as stain, crime, and personal rejection — a spiralling sickness

and addiction that so infects social relationships that society's very structures are affected.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

779. *What is the social context of Christian moral life?*

The social context of Christian moral life today is a world-in-change, marked by the Church “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”

780. *What is the role of Faith in morality?*

Christian Faith influences moral life primarily by:

- offering a new distinctive Christian vision of moral good and developing Christ-like attitudes and values;
- teaching moral precepts that foster this vision; and
- strengthening moral motivation by giving reasons for acting in a Christian way and inspiring Christ-like affections.

781. *How does the “Kingdom of God” summarize Christian moral living?*

The Kingdom of God is characterized by its:

- condition for entry: *conversion and repentance*;
- membership: becoming a *disciple of Christ*;
- life: *loving service* grounded on God's Love for us;
- basic law: *new life in the Spirit*;
- charter: the *Beatitudes*.

782. *What response from us does the Kingdom call for?*

The Kingdom of God calls for:

- respect for one another;
- solidarity with all; and
- fidelity to God and to one another.

783. *What role does the Catholic Church play in moral life?*

The Catholic Church serves as the *context* and *communal support* for the moral life of its members by:

- actively forming Christian moral character;

- carrying on and witnessing to the Christian moral tradition; and
- serving as the community of moral deliberation.

784. *What is sin?*

Sin is basically a refusal of God's love. It entails:

- refusing to follow our own conscience;
- rejecting our true selves, others, and God by turning away from God, our true end;
- breaking God's covenant of love with us.

785. *How is sin presented in Sacred Scripture?*

Sin is presented in the inspired Word of God in the Old Testament as:

- “*missing the mark*” by failing to meet one's obligations to God and neighbor;
- a defect or *disorder of character* weighing down the sinner; and
- a conscious *choice of rebelling against God* and transgressing His commandments.

786. *What images are used to picture sin?*

The Old Testament moves

- from the image of sin as a *stain* (unclean before the all-holy God),
- to that of *crime* (willful violation of the covenant), and finally,
- to *personal rejection* (of love relationship).

787. *How did Christ speak of sin?*

Christ called for a radical *conversion of heart* — a turning away — from *sin to service* in the Kingdom of his Father. One sign of this Kingdom was Christ's own forgiving sins by the power of the Spirit.

788. *What new “models” of sin are proposed?*

One insightful new model of sin looks more to its social effects on the sinner as

- a *spiral* of evil that ensnares;
- a *sickness* that weakens; and
- a compulsive and obsessive *addiction* that enslaves.

789. *What is meant by “social sin”?*

“Social sin” today refers to situations and structures that attack basic human rights and dignity, and infect social relationships between communities.

Chapter 15

The Christian Law of Life-Giving Love

Jesus replied: “The first Commandment is this: You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

(Mk 12:29-31)

“I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.”

(Jn 13:34)



OPENING

190. Chapter 15 introduced Christian moral living by focusing on the **moral agent**: the Christian disciple as *person*, endowed with the tremendous gift of *freedom*, operating according to *conscience*. Chapter 14 took up the **social context** of following Christ: the role of *Christian Faith* and the *Church* in moral living, sketched by Christ in his fundamental image of the *Kingdom of God*, and engaged in the life-and-death combat with *Sin*. This chapter takes up the function of **moral norms** or laws in Christian living. Christian morality is a *response* to the *call* of God in Christ Jesus. This response is viewed:

- a) as embracing a basic moral **vision** of both person (*Chap. 13*) and social context (*Chap. 14*);
- b) codified in moral **norms**; and

- c) implemented in moral **acts** which result from a personal decision-making process (this present chapter) [cf. NCDP 271].

791. The major problem with moral living is MOTIVATION. We often know what we should do, but find ourselves oddly incapable of doing it. “The desire to do right is there, but not the power. What happens is that I do not do the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend” (*Rom 7:18b-19*). It is very important, then, to understand properly how **LOVE**, which is *the basic Christian motivation* and power, also constitutes its *fundamental liberating moral norm*. This entails reflecting on how *moral norms* operate in the following of Christ, both *personally* in regard to our conscience, and *communally* as members of society (*Natural Law; culture*) and of Christ’s Body, the Church (law in *Scripture* and the *Christian tradition*). Beyond understanding the proper role of moral norms, there is the basic need to develop the skill in *making moral judgments* and *acting* precisely as a true disciple of Christ in his community.



CONTEXT

792. Our Filipino culture affords many *traditional VALUES* that are deeply consonant with the Christian vision that grounds all its moral norms. For example, there is *pagsasarili*, the self-reliance that is the first step toward moral responsibility; *pakikisama*, getting-along-with-others, or the willingness to share with others; *pagkakaisa*, the unity of the community that supports all loving service; and *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, the human solidarity with all, or “being a friend of all” that supports Christian love of neighbor. Catholic Filipinos today are alert, perhaps as never before, to the task of “building a truly Christian community, a genuine *pagsasamahang Kristiyano* with *pagdadamayán, bayanihan, pakikipagkapwa-tao*, and *pagkamakadiyos* as building blocks” (NCDP 28).

793. But regarding *MORAL NORMS*, the Filipino attitude seems ambiguous. On the one hand, patient to a fault, the Filipino’s natural “personalism” tends to consider “*impersonal*” laws only in terms of *personal relations*. In the absence of a traffic policeman, traffic laws are often ignored. Overcharging in the family store is excused because money is needed for the children’s

school tuition. The *kanya-kanya* syndrome gravely weakens any personal commitment to law and the common good. Obeying the law seems quite secondary in the hierarchy of Filipino cultural values.

794. On the other hand, external compliance with the law, especially with cultural mores, is demanded to safeguard one's *amor proprio* and avoid *hiya*. The upbringing of children in the family is frequently moralistic, tending to focus uniquely on the "letter of the law" and its external observance, without due care for its inner spirit. This unfortunately carries over to much catechetical instruction on Catholic moral living pictured as:

- a) dominated by sin, explained solely in terms of breaking a law;
- b) motivated primarily by fear of punishment for sin; and thus
- c) creating a legalistic and juridical mind-set characterized by minimalistic attitudes to morality (How far can we go before committing mortal sin?).

795. Recent years have shown remarkable progress in the maturing process in the Faith of many Filipino Catholics. Primary moral motivation for many in the extraordinary events such as the EDSA '86 Revolution, and in combatting the December '89 coup attempt, went clearly beyond the level of reward/punishment characteristic of "instinctive" conscience — beyond even the strict moral level of justice. As the letters of the CBCP on both occasions manifested, the crisis brought many to a level of real self-sacrifice for the common good, inspired in many cases by explicit Christian love and piety. Such "highpoints" reflect the Christian moral growth taking place everyday, among ordinary Filipinos in the thousand and one moral challenges and tasks of ordinary life. The maturing process is never-ending.



EXPOSITION

796. Christ, Our Moral Norm. For Christians, the norm by which all their thoughts, words and deeds are judged and evaluated morally is not some law, but *the person of Jesus Christ*. In the Kingdom of God there is only one teacher: the Messiah (*cf. Mt 23:10*); all must listen to [his] words and put them into practice (*cf. Mt 7:24*), take up his yoke and learn from him (*cf. Mt 11:29*). ***Salvation depends on one's attitude to Jesus:*** "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will

acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before men, I will deny before my Father in heaven” (*Mt 10:32f*). “For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom 10:9*).

797. This is because Jesus reveals to us not only God as our Father, but who we truly are. Jesus himself – not only what he did and taught, but his whole life and person, climaxing in his *Paschal Mystery* through which he saved us (*cf. PCP II 55*). Jesus embodies God’s loving call to us, and the perfect human response of a child of God. ***Jesus himself IS the New Covenant between God and all human persons***, the Way and authentic norm for becoming our true selves. Commenting on a Vatican II text, John Paul II describes this primacy of Christ as follows:

798. In Christ and through Christ, God has revealed Himself fully to mankind and has definitively drawn close to it; at the same time, in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence” (*RH 11*).

“Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man – each and every man – with the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme calling (*RH 14; cf. GS 10*).

799. Today, educational psychologists stress the impact of “significant persons” on the moral growth and development of children and youth. For the Filipino Christian, Jesus Christ is the “most significant other.” We have already seen how Christ radically affects our ***moral vision*** of what it means: 1) to be a person (*Chapters 13, 9*), and 2) to form an authentic Christian conscience (*Chapters 13, 27*). We have also seen how Christ enters into our attitudes, affections, values and intentions (*Chapters 14, 8*). Here we wish to focus on Christ as the basis for all moral norms or laws and for the way we actually come to make our moral judgments and decisions.

I. MORAL NORMS

800. Amidst today’s great stress on personal dignity, freedom, individual conscience, and moral character, the notions of norm and “law” have become quite “unpopular.” Some consider moral “law” as a carry-over from pre-Vatican II moralistic times. St. Paul is quoted in support of this: “If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (*Gal 5:18*); “you are now under grace, not under the

law” (*Rom 6:14*). But Paul’s point is not to deny all value to law, but to insist on Christ: “I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ maybe my wealth and I may be in him, not having any justice of my own based on observance of the law. The justice I possess is that which comes through faith in Christ” (*Phil 3:8-9*). Paul recognizes that “the law is good, provided one uses it in the way law is supposed to be used” (*1 Tim 1:8*; cf. *Rom 7:12*). Now just how is the law supposed to be used? Some basic notions will help to clarify this important dimension of Christian moral living.

801. What is a norm or law? We need some general idea of law that can give us some insight into its meaning when applied to God’s law, the law of the Old and New Testaments and the natural law. The standard definition is “an ordinance of reason, promulgated by competent authority for the sake of the common good” (*St. Thomas, ST, I-II, 90, 4*). Each element has its importance: 1) law is a **reasonable decision**, i.e., prudent and with purpose, not a capricious whim; 2) **promulgated**: communicated with sufficient notice to its subjects while respecting their rights and dignity; 3) by **competent authority**: i.e. by those who have legitimate power to do so; and 4) for the **common good**: for the social betterment of its subjects.

802. Two characteristics of law, especially moral law, help greatly in appreciating its place in Christian moral living. *First*, law is **based on vision**, certain presuppositions. The Christian vision has been described in detail in the two preceding chapters (*Chapters 13-14*), and is portrayed in Christ’s sketch of the ideal member of the Kingdom in the Beatitudes presented below. *Second*, law arises from and **expresses basic values**. This is clearly exemplified in the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill” commands respect for human life; “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” respect for sexuality; “Thou shalt not steal,” respect for a person’s possessions; “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” respect for the truth.

Likewise, Christ’s teaching in his Sermon on the Mount manifests this: “Do not swear at all” (*Mt 5:34*) commands respect for personal integrity; while “Offer no resistance to injury” (*Mt 5:39*) fosters a self-respect based not on answering violence with violence, but on acting as children of the Father. These two characteristics go far in modifying the legalistic and moralistic concept of moral norms or laws.

803. Functions of Moral Law. But don’t laws contradict human freedom? Some compare our freedom and law to a lake and its shore. Laws give shape to our freedom by imposing boundaries similar to the way the shore shapes the lake within its boundaries. But moral norms or laws do more than that.

First, they provide ***criteria for judging*** *who* we are and *how* we should act. By explicating the moral memory and value-experience of the community, moral norms afford us a broader basis for judging than our own limited personal moral experience. *Secondly*, moral norms/laws ***help our moral development***, especially in the formation of conscience, by expressing typical patterns of moral behavior and human values. *Thirdly*, they ***provide stability and consistency*** in our lives by acting as a constant and reliable point of reference. Universal negative moral laws indictate the minimum below which moral acts cannot sink. It would be humanly impossible to decide every moral issue “from zero,” i.e., with no precedent or guide. *Lastly*, positive norms/laws can also ***challenge us*** by stretching us in view of an *ideal*, or ***correcting us*** by illuminating our faults.

804. But *many Filipinos tend to confuse morality with legality*: if something is legal, permissible by law, they think it must be morally good. This misunderstanding ignores the difference between *positive civil law* which judges *crimes* against the state, and authentic *moral law* which is the objective norm for judging *sin*. Something is *legal* when it does not contradict any law of the state, but it is *morally good* only if its nature, intention and circumstances are positively good for the person as person-in-community, that is, according to *moral norms*. The functions of *moral norms* can best be seen in Sacred Scripture.

II. LAW IN SCRIPTURE

805. The Old Testament. Through His revealing word, God gave to Israel, His chosen people, the Law of the Covenant (*cf. CCC 1961-64*). This Law or Torah, called by various names such as *instruction*, *witness*, *precept*, and *word*, went far beyond the limits of merely human law. It governed the whole Covenant relationship. The *priests* promulgated the law to Israel (*cf. Dt 33:10*), instructing the people in the knowledge of Yahweh and His ways (*cf. Jer 18:18; 5:4*). The *prophets* reproached the priests for failing in their duty to the Law (*cf. Ez 22:26; Hos 4:6*), and warned: “Cursed be the one who does not observe the terms of this covenant” (*Jer 11:3*). The *Wisdom authors* extolled the Law: “The book of the Most High’s covenant, the law which Moses commanded us, . . . overflows . . . with wisdom” (*Sir 24:22f*), and the *psalmist* sang:

806. The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes. . .
The ordinances of the Lord are true, and all of them just.

(*Ps 19:8-10; cf. Ps 119 passim; 147:19f*)

807. The Old Testament Law covered not only moral demands, and prescriptions for religious ritual, but even legal stipulations for social behavior as well. Instructive for us are certain basic characteristics.

- a) The Law flowed directly from the ***Covenant relationship*** of Yahweh's loving call creating His Chosen people. This means the whole law was based on the vision and values of God's Covenant with His people.
- b) ***Obedience***, then, to God's comprehensive Law was the hallmark for the believing Israelite. All sin was viewed primarily as an offense against the Lord with whom the Israelites were "bonded" in every aspect of their lives by the Covenant.
- c) The law, then was God's ***great gift***, bringing great joy to His people: "In your decrees I rejoice and in your statutes I take delight" (*Ps 119*).

808. But the history of Old Testament Law has also unfortunately manifested how all law is dangerously open to the serious abuse of *legalism*. The Israelites "without guile" saw the actions commanded by the law more as *symbols of love* of God, the Covenant Lord, than as means of accomplishing specific tasks. Thus seemingly insignificant acts could have rich devotional potential. But the temptation to mistake the precept for the value, the external compliance for "obedience of the heart," was ever present (*cf. Is 29:13; Mt 13:15; Acts 28:26*). Two specific abuses stand out.

- a) By putting all the law's ordinances — moral, religious, civil and ritual — on equal footing, an impossible burden was placed on the people (*cf. Lk 11:46*), and the "weightier matter" were lost (*Mt 23:23*).
- b) By so extolling obedient observance of the law, it seemed that persons could save themselves simply by perfectly keeping the law, without any need for God's grace.

809. The New Testament. Even while they vigorously attacked these abuses, the Old Testament prophets had prophesied the coming of a New Covenant. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . I will place My law within them, and write it upon their hearts" (*Jer 31:31, 33*). "I will put My spirit within you, and make you live by my statutes" (*Ez 36:27*). So Christ came not to "abolish the law and the prophets, . . . but to **fulfill**

them” (Mt 5:17). He did this, *first*, by inaugurating the new law of the Kingdom. “The law and the prophets were in force until John. From his time on, the Good News of God’s Kingdom has been proclaimed” (Lk 16:16). *Secondly*, Christ removed the imperfections allowed because of their “stubbornness of hearts” (cf. Mt 19:8) by proclaiming his new commandment of love which transcends all human wisdom and all morality, and summons his disciples to the sovereign demands of their calling. “Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48; cf. CCC 1967-72).

810. This is possible only by the interior strength offered by the Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13; Acts 1:8). ***The presence of the Holy Spirit gives an absolutely new meaning to moral life.*** Present in the hearts of the baptized, the Spirit is himself in a way the ***New Law*** which is the ***law of LOVE***. The Spirit *signifies* this law because He is love. He *realizes* it because He is the gift of the love of the Father. He *calls* to love because the whole life of the baptized should express this gift (cf. CCC 1966).

811. *Thirdly*, Christ *perfected* the dietary laws regulating eating and purity of food, so important in Jewish daily life, by disclosing their “pedagogical” meaning, and the Sabbath Law by recalling that the sabbath rest is not broken by the service of God or of one’s neighbor (cf. Mt 12:5; Lk 13:15-16; 14:2-4). *Lastly*, he set the precepts of the law in a hierarchical order in which ***everything is subordinated to love of God and neighbor***. His law of love which “sums up the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12) radically transformed the ancient ‘Golden Rule’ from a law of simple mutual give-and-take to a law of positive love (cf. CCC 1789, 1970).

812. The Great Commandments. When asked “which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus replied: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments” (Mt 22:37-40; cf. CCC 2055). In this reply Christ brought together two well known precepts of the Old Testament (Dt 6:5 and Lv 19:18) in a novel fashion.

First, he brought out the inner bond between love of God and love of neighbor. This is stressed in John’s first letter: “We can be sure we love God’s children when we love God and do what He has commanded” (1 Jn 5:2).

813. *Secondly, Christ exemplified the triple “heart, soul, and strength” of the “love-of-God-injunction” in his life and teaching.* Old Testament interpreters had identified “heart” with our inner and outer desires and longings; “soul” with obeying God at the risk even of one’s life; and “strength” with all one’s resources of wealth, property and reputation. But these three dimensions must be concretized. One necessary way is by making use of the rich Filipino cultural terms and values so expressive of these dimensions: with “*buong puso/loob/kalooban*”; with “*buong kaluluwa*,” and “*buong lakas*.”

814. Another way is to bring out their social and contextual effects, as Christ does in his teaching, for example in his parable of the sower, depicting three groups who failed to respond to God’s word: the “*path*” group had no real desire or understanding, so the devil easily steals away the word from their *hearts*. The “*rocky soil*” group withers away under heat because it has no “*soul*” to risk life for God. The “weeds and thorns” group allows other interests to divide its attention and choke out undivided commitment of resources (*strength*) to God (*cf. Mt 13:4-9, 18-23*).

815. But perhaps the *best Scriptural concretization of loving God* with all one’s heart, soul and strength is not in Christ’s teaching, but in *his very life*. In his triple temptation in the desert, Christ *first* refused to satisfy his own basic needs in view of an undivided *heart* for God’s word. *Second*, in refusing divine intervention, he risked his life (soul) for God. *Finally*, ignoring all enticements of the devil, Jesus committed all his *strength* to God alone (*cf. Mt 4: 1-11*).

816. These temptations were faced by Christ all through his life as is shown by the jeers at the Cross that parallel the three temptations. 1) “If you are the *Son of God*, save yourself!” 2) “He relied on God, let God rescue him now if He wants to. For he claimed ‘I am the Son of God.’” 3) “So he is the *King of Israel*. Let us see him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him” (*Mt 27:41*). The temptation “Come down from the cross” has echoed through the centuries. But so too has “Father, . . . not my will, but yours be done” (*Lk 22:42*).

817. *Third, Christ gave a radically new interpretation to “neighbor.”* It is now to be understood universally, to cover **everyone**: those in need, as taught by the parable of the Good Samaritan (*cf. Lk 10:30-37*), and even our enemies (*cf. Mt 5:44*). Christ went further and *made everyone “neighbor”*

by identifying himself with them as Vatican II has pointed out, “Christ wished to identify himself with his brethren as the object of this love when he said: ‘As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me’ ” (Mt 25:40; cf. AA 8).

818. *Fourth, Christ reduced the whole law and the prophets to this* — and only this — ***double commandment***, because “the law of love is at the heart of each of the commandments. Love is the source of their value and obligation” (cf. CCC 1971, 2055). “The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in the saying: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:9-10).

819. *PCP II* focuses on “loving faith,” an active love like that of Christ, a participation in God’s own love which comes to us through His Son” (PCP II 71). Thus, love is the summary of the whole law because it is the reflection in human life of God’s very being. “Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God” (1 Jn 4:7-8).

820. Now we are empowered to love both God and neighbor since God’s own love “has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). In the strength of this divine Spirit of love, Christ gave his own command: “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Christ thus overcame the greatest weakness of the *Old Law*, namely, it showed people what sin was without empowering them to avoid it. But now St. Paul declares, “The law of the spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from the law of sin and death. The law was powerless because of its weakening by the flesh. Then God sent His Son” (Rom 8:2-3).

821. Christ’s Liberating Law. It is this new law of love through Christ’s Spirit that is liberating, for to be conformed to the law of Christ, is to know freedom. ***Christ’s new law comes to us as a gift that the Holy Spirit places in our hearts.*** It carries the imperatives of the law beyond the mere external moral behavior and beyond even a sense of obligation. Christ’s law is a law of love, grace, and liberty (cf. CCC 1972). It touches the spirit rather than the letter. It requires a change of heart from which a change in behavior will follow. It names that self-giving openness to God and to others from which

all the commandments derive their redemptive vitality; which changes them from servile constraints into a force which liberates our true humanity.

822. Beatitudes. Christ's law, then, liberates *from* mere externalism, from being bound to the letter of the law, endured as servile constraints, *for* a life graced by the Spirit's gift of a change of heart. By inspiring a new vitality in us, the Spirit enables us to experience our true humanity. Positively, as inwardly transformed by grace, re-created in God's im-age, we are enabled to gradually establish our moral life on a different basis. The idea of simply avoiding sin, being legally "justified," is replaced by an ideal arising faith and love, the fruit of the indwelling Spirit. This "new basis" for moral life is graphically portrayed in Christ's poetic sketch of those "blessed." The Beatitudes oppose the wisdom of the world (*cf. 1 Cor 1:20*): materialism, the cult of wealth, the lust for power, ruthless competition, the ethic of success. In God's Kingdom, these values are reversed.

823. In the Beatitudes, Christ describes those who are truly "happy" in the Kingdom of God. Most people, according to St. Thomas, relate happiness to: 1) sensible pleasures and satisfaction of desires, or 2) success in undertakings and interpersonal relations, or finally 3) deep reflection and contemplation. Christ claims that instead of sensible satisfaction and many possessions (1), *detachment* (poverty of spirit), *meekness* and *compassion* bring us true happiness. Instead of completely self-centered activity (2), *thirsting for justice* for all and *merciful* forgiveness offer authentic human interpersonal relationships. Instead of withdrawing from the problems and concerns in the world to seek contemplation, those who are single-minded/*clean of heart*, and work for *peace* among all will find God. Such a life will undoubtedly bring trials and persecutions because of our sinful selves and the world; but it is the life of faith, hope and love of the disciples of Christ (*cf. CCC 1717*).

III. LAW IN THE CHURCH

824. Christian moral tradition has developed another type of law called "*Natural Law*" because it *expresses the wisdom of God in His creation* and because it *belongs to the very nature of human persons*. It is not imposed on them from the outside like an arbitrary restriction, but as a call coming from their deepest selves (*cf. CCC 1954*). Already within Sacred Scripture, moral knowledge is related to human "nature," in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. But it is especially St. Paul who brings this out: "When Gentiles

who do not have the [Jewish] law keep it as by instinct, . . . they show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness together with that law” (*Rom 2:14f*). In Catholic morality, **natural law** means *the sum of the rights and duties which follow directly from the nature of the human person*, endowed with reason and freedom, not to be confused with social norms and conventions, nor with public opinion, nor with civil law (*cf. CCC 1954-60*).

825. *Three basic convictions* of the natural law approach are central to Catholic morality. *First*, the basis for the “natural law” is the truth that God has created everything and is the root of all things. The natural law written in the heart of man manifests the order willed by God in creation. Human moral life is **grounded in reality** — our moral responsibilities flow from the very structure of who we are as persons in society through history. Therefore, *secondly*, **natural law morality is knowable by all persons**, independent of their religious faith. Engraved in the conscience of each, the natural law is accessible to all (*cf. CCC 1954*). *Thirdly*, **there are objective moral values and teaching that can be universalized**, addressed to all people of good will. “All are required to follow its precepts” (*CCC 1956*). Paul VI offers a concrete description of the natural law in life:

826. In the design of God, all are called upon to develop and fulfill themselves, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow all to direct themselves toward the destiny intended for them by their Creator. Endowed with intelligence and freedom, they are responsible for their fulfillment as for their salvation (*PP 15*).

827. But to avoid abusive rationalistic and narrowly legalistic interpretations, the **natural law** must be viewed in terms of certain fundamental aspects. *First*, as **real**: morality is based on reality, not just on commands as the legal positivists hold. Moral life means doing the good, not just blindly following law. *Second*, it is **experiential** because it directly concerns our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with society. *Third*, it is **historical** since our human nature is involved in the historical process of our self-becoming growth. *Fourth*, it deals with the **specific nature and consequences of our free acts**, and therefore, *fifth*, is basically **personal**, since it is grounded in

the human person's nature. These features indicate how the natural law approach can be effective in today's moral climate.

828. Christ and the Natural Law. But what has this “natural law” got to do with God's Law as manifested in “Christ, our Moral Norm”? (*cf.* # 796) Many seem to misunderstand and think of the natural law in purely philosophical terms, as completely separated from God's law. In reality they are intimately connected, for in obeying the natural law, we obey the divine law itself — “*eternal, objective and universal*” (*DH* 3), of which it is the expression (*cf.* CCC 1955).

829. We see natural law and God's law united in Christ. ***First in their very being:*** since God creates all persons in and through Christ (*cf.* *Jn* 1:3; *Col* 1:16f), Jesus is the model for both our human nature [natural law] and all our free moral acts. ***Second, existentially and operationally*** they are one because Christ is both our final destiny built into our human nature, and the norm for our free moral thoughts, words and deeds by which we journey toward this destiny. ***Third, historically they are united in Christ*** because through the historical event of the *Incarnation*, Passion, Death and Resurrection, Christ manifested and actualized all the above links. In Christ God ratified the dignity of all human persons, our unity with Him, and our path to Him through our human world and activities. Fidelity to the human in history is fidelity to Christ's presence. In the end, then, “the New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural *and revealed*” (CCC 1965).

IV. PROCESS OF MORAL DECISION-MAKING

830. Elements. We have seen the person as moral *agent* (*chap.* 13), the social *context* of moral acts (*Chap.* 14), and now their structure (moral *norms*). What remains to be studied is *what goes on in the actual process of making moral judgments and decisions*. Here we can only treat briefly some of the more important aspects of this ordinary yet complicated process we all go through every time we make a moral decision of any importance.

831. Agent in Deciding. Moral acts have traditionally been described in terms of ***the person's thinking and willing***. *Three aspects* of this thinking and willing are currently emphasized as particularly important in making moral decisions. ***First, evaluative knowledge***. The knowing that influences making moral judgments is not only “head knowledge,” speculative

knowledge of quantitative facts or information, easily detached from the knower and specific occasion, and thus ready for passing on, but also what moves us to decision. It is “*knowledge of the heart*,” knowledge *involving quality* and *values*, not easily detached from the knower and the concrete situation, and therefore more difficult to communicate. Evaluative knowledge is *personal knowledge*. It is how we Filipinos know one another, especially within our family and circle of friends.

832. Second, *imagination*. The power of the Christian story, images, and devotions has already been mentioned. What is pertinent here is the influence of imagination on our moral norms: their *effectivity* in our lives and their *applicability*. Moral norms taught us by our elders will hardly be *effective* unless our own imagination draws together the universal, abstract terms of the norms with our concrete personal experience. Finally, imagination is most needed in *applying* universal moral norms to specific actual cases.

833. Third, *affectivity*. Strong human passions have always been recognized as limiting the moral agent’s actual freedom. Today, however, affections are seen more broadly as influencing all our moral judgments. Rather than an obstacle to freedom, our human affections often open us up to deeper knowledge and understanding in our interpersonal relationships. They help us see more truly, compassionate with others. One dimension of Christian moral education, then, is *to form true Christian affectivity* — authentic Christian ways of affectively responding to situations and others.

834. Virtues and Character. Besides these three aspects of our acts of knowing and willing, there are the more permanent, underlying factors of virtue and character which influence our personal moral life. Virtues are taken up at length in Chapter 17 on Love of Neighbor. Here we only wish to stress the current emphasis on *the moral person’s character and habitual ways of acting* (virtues), rather than being overly preoccupied with detailed scrutiny of individual acts. The interplay of our fundamental commitment and stance — **who I am** — with my freedom of choice — **what I do** — is another way of expressing this influence of virtue and character on my decision-making process.

835. Process of Coming to a Moral Judgment. The process of deciding can be outlined in *three steps*: moral discernment, moral demand, judgment or decision. *First*, the *discerning stage* includes many elements, such as

summarized in the common pedagogical “STOP” formula (*Search, Think, [consult] Others, Pray*). All these contribute to the formation of a basic relevant Vision, that will ground the decision to be made.

836. The *second* step of ***demand*** brings in the role of the pertinent *moral norm*, which our consciences use to formulate their dictates on what we must do. Our consciences always work on accepted moral norms. They never act as a law unto themselves. Likewise, moral norms and commandments touch us only through our consciences. Strangely enough, many do not seem to realize this dynamic interaction of conscience and law. By erroneously claiming freedom from all law by reason of their conscience, they ignore the basic *relational* nature of their authentic freedom and of themselves as persons.

837. The *third* step, the ***judgment or decision stage***, simply refers to the judgment of conscience we make on the morality of any proposed action, and our consequent decision to follow this dictate of our conscience or not.

838. Conscience and the Magisterium. As Catholics, we Filipinos decide serious moral questions with the special help of the teaching office of the Church, the Magisterium. This is to be expected, for in times of crisis or serious decisions, Filipinos naturally consult others for help and guidance. It is only natural, then, that Catholics look to the moral leadership of the teaching Church, with its long tradition and world-wide experience. But the real basis, the supernatural reason is “the Holy Spirit’s unfailing guidance of the Pope and the college of Bishops when they fulfill their role as authentic teachers of faith and morals” (NCDP 276). It is the distinctive mission of the Church’s magisterium to proclaim and interpret the moral law before men in the light of the Gospel (*cf. DH 14; CCC 2036*). “The faithful therefore have the *duty* of observing the constitutions and decrees conveyed by the legitimate authority of the Church. Even if they are disciplinary in matters, these determinations call for docility in charity” (CCC 2037).

839. The interaction between Catholic Filipinos’ consciences and the teaching authority of the Church holds no danger or restriction to “freedom of conscience.” On the contrary, obedience to the Magisterium manifests clearly the relational and communitarian nature of conscience noted above. The awareness of “being obliged” is experienced within one’s own call to personal responsibility. “We discern how ***freedom and obedience mutually imply each other*** rather than being incompatible” (NCDP 276).

840. This mutual relationship of obedience and freedom is the teaching of Vatican II. On obedience, Catholics are reminded “in matters of faith and morals, the Bishops speak in the name of Christ, and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind” (*LG 25*). Regarding freedom of conscience, the laity are instructed that

it is their task to cultivate a properly informed conscience and to impress the divine law on the affairs of the earthly city. . . . It is up to the laymen to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with eager attention to the teaching authority of the Church (*GS 43*).

841. Christian moral maturity, then, has always included the need for *reasonable interpretation* of law. Thus the traditional principle of *epikeia* states that a merely human law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, (except invalidating and procedural laws), does not bind if right reason indicates that the legislator did not wish it to bind in these particular circumstances. This happens, for example, when the difficulty in obeying the law here and now is disproportionate to the end which the law has in view.

842. Christian moral living offers to the world perhaps our most effective *missionary witness* as Filipino Catholics. This means giving daily witness to the basic moral values which flow from our nature as human persons and from our God-given relationship with creation. Through such witness we not only respond to the call of holiness to all within the Church (*cf. LG 39*), but draw others to personal belief in God and Jesus Christ (*cf. AA 6; CCC 2044-46*).



INTEGRATION

843. The place of moral norms in following Christ, explained at length in this chapter, rests ultimately on the *doctrinal truths* of God’s creation and loving call of grace to eternal life. Christian moral norms are grounded in the vision of fundamental values proposed by Christ in his *Sermon on the*

Mount. Such are the values of human life, sexuality, integrity, self-respect and love (*cf. Mt 5:21-48*). Guided by these moral norms, so grounded in the Christian vision, the Christian's conscience is enabled to discern and decide responsibly as a disciple of Christ.

844. *Prayer* and an active sacramental life are the necessary means not only for clarifying the Christian vision, but especially for motivating responsible moral decisions and acts. In the last analysis moral living is question of the "heart," rather than of complex reasoning and arguments. Following Christ in moral life means a heart "wedded to Christ" by his Holy Spirit, nourished in the Eucharist celebration, and experienced in personal prayer.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

845. *How can Christian moral life be viewed?*

Christian moral life can be viewed as our *free response to God's call* involving three essential levels:

- a basic moral *vision*;
- expressed in moral *norms* and precepts; and
- exercised in personal moral *acts* guided by conscience.

846. *What is the major problem in Christian moral living?*

Motivation is the major problem in Christian moral living — how we can inspire ourselves and others to act consistently according to the Christian moral norms.

847. *What is the basic Christian norm for moral living?*

The basic standard by which Christians judge all their thoughts, words and deeds is *the person of Jesus Christ* who reveals God as our Father, and who we truly are.

Christ is the most significant "other" in forming:

- our moral vision (values, attitudes, and affections),
- our moral norms, and
- the actual decision-making process of our conscience.

848. *What is a norm or law?*

A norm or law is a decree of reason, promulgated by competent authority, for the common good.

Moral norms, based on a moral vision comprising basic moral values, express the objective standard for judging moral good and evil.

849. *What are moral norms supposed to do?*

Moral norms are indispensable for moral life. They

- provide the objective criteria for our conscience to judge what is morally good or evil;
- help our moral development, especially in the formation of our conscience;
- offer the needed moral stability in our lives;
- challenge us to stretch for an ideal beyond our limited experience, and correct our personal moral misconceptions in the process.

850. *What was God's Law in the Old Testament?*

God's Law in the Old Testament was His great gift to His chosen people, Israel, creating with them a Covenant which called for obedience to His Law as their response to His gratuitous love.

The danger inherent in all laws is to so focus on the "letter of the law" and its external observance as to ignore the basic human values and interior dispositions which the law was made to preserve.

851. *How did Christ in the New Testament relate to the Law?*

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law by:

- inaugurating the New Law of the Kingdom which
- perfected the Old Law by
- subordinating all its precepts to love of God and of neighbor.

852. *What is Christ's own Law of love?*

In his own life Christ taught and perfectly exemplified the Old Testaments' two great Commandments of Love:

- love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and
- love your neighbor as yourself.

853. *What was new about Christ's Commandments of love?*

In his "New" commandment of love Christ:

- stressed the inner bond between love of God and love of neighbor;

- exemplified “heart,” “soul,” and “strength” in his example and teaching, especially his response to the triple temptations experienced in the desert and on the Cross;
- gave a radically new interpretation of “neighbor” as meaning everyone, especially those in need, and
- summarized and subordinated the whole law and the prophets to these two Commandments alone.

854. *How is Christ’s law of love “liberating”?*

Christ’s law of love is liberating because it not only shows us what makes us authentically free, but through the Spirit of love offers us the power to fulfill it.

855. *What pictures for us Christ’s law of love?*

Christ’s Spirit of love liberates us

- a) from mere external observance of the law,
- b) for a life transformed by radically new values, sketched in the Beatitudes:

- detachment from worldly possessions,
- meekness and compassion,
- thirsting for justice and merciful forgiveness,
- purity of heart, and
- single-mindedness in working for peace.

856. *What is meant by the “Natural Law”?*

Christian moral tradition has developed another type of law called the “natural law” that is

- grounded in our very nature as human persons created by God,
- supporting universal objective moral values and precepts, and
- knowable by all persons using their critical reason, independent of their religious affiliation.

857. *Has not “natural law” at times led to certain abuses?*

To avoid the danger of a rationalistic, legalistic interpretation of the “natural law,” stress should be put on certain characteristics:

- its basis in reality;
- its experiential and historical dimensions;
- its dealing with the consequences of our *free* acts, and
- its being based on the human person’s nature.

858. *How is Christ related to the “natural law”?*

The “natural law” and God’s law are united in Christ since:

- everything is created in Christ;
- he is the final destiny built into the nature of every person, and
- through the Incarnation, Christ has become the concrete model for every human person, in their daily thoughts and actions.

859. *What is the process of moral decision-making?*

The process of making moral decisions involves:

- we ourselves as the moral agent or doer;
- using evaluative knowledge, i.e. personal knowledge of the heart, including affections and imagination,
- according to our basic moral character and the virtues we have freely developed.

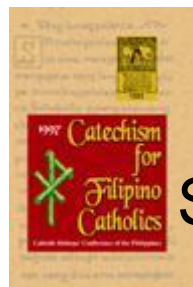
860. *What are the stages in moral decision-making?*

Among the many proposed patterns for moral decision making, three stages are essential:

- discerning (STOP: *Search, Think, [consult] Others, Pray*),
- relevant obligating moral norms, and
- conscience’s decision in applying the objective norm to the concrete act/situation.

861. *How does the Church help Catholics in moral decisions?*

The teaching office of the Church (*Magisterium*) offers Catholics moral guidance and leadership based on the Holy Spirit’s unfailing presence, and the Church’s long tradition and worldwide experience. It thus supports and strengthens the essentially relational and communitarian dimensions of our personal consciences in their effort to achieve moral goodness.



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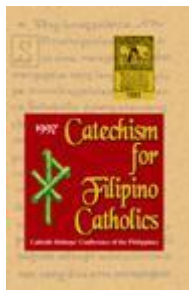
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Glossary

Absolution: in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the formula pronounced by the priest, over repentant sinners, of forgiveness through Christ of personal sins. (*Cf. Trent, ND 1620.*)

Abstinence: commonly refers to refraining from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays in Lent.

Adoration: the worship and homage offered to God alone.

Advent: the liturgical season preparing for Christmas, the feast day which celebrates the coming of Christ.

Agape: the special NT Greek term for *God's love for us*, and which Christ commanded his disciples to have for one another. (*Cf. Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 4:16; 1 Cor 13.*)

Agnosticism: the theory that God or the afterlife cannot be known with certainty. (Cf. *Vatican II, GS 57.*)

Anamnesis: “memorial” or “remembrance,” Greek term used to describe the Eucharist as a commemoration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection/Ascension of Christ. (Cf. *1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19.*)

Anathema: term used by St. Paul to exclude an unworthy member from the community. (Cf. *Gal 1:9; 1 Cor 16:22.*) Later, it was used as the Church’s solemn condemnation of an erroneous, heretical position that contradicts Catholic truth.

Apocalyptic: the style of writing filled with visions, portents and signs claiming to reveal divine mysteries, especially the end of the world. (Cf. *Daniel, Revelation and Mk 13.*)

Apocrypha: writings of ancient Jewish and Christian origin that have not been accepted as part of the Biblical Canon. Among them are: “*The Book of Henoc*” and “the Ascension Moses,” the “*Infancy Gospel of James*,” the “*Gospel of Peter*” and the “*Gospel of Thomas*.” Protestant practice includes under this term “*Apocripha*” what we call “Deuterocanonical Books” (Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch) which the Catholic and Eastern Churches accept as canonical.

Apologetics: the systematic theological presentation of the reasonableness of Christian doctrine in defense from various attacks.

Apostle: someone sent as messenger or missionary of the Church. In the NT, the 12 disciples chosen by Christ to be the primary witnesses to his teaching, miracles and resurrection.

Apostolic See: name given to the Catholic Church in Rome, founded on the apostles Peter and Paul, and especially to the Papal office whose authority rests on the Pope as successor of St. Peter.

Asceticism: the general name given to the spiritual efforts and exercises at purification and growth in Christian perfection, and toward a closer following of Christ.

Beatific Vision: the immediate direct knowledge of God and perfect happiness enjoyed by the Blessed in heaven.

BECs/Basic Ecclesial Communities: small faith communities of Christians, gathered together around the Word of God and the Eucharist, striving to integrate their faith and their daily life, in solidarity with one another,

action for justice, and a vibrant celebration of life in the liturgy. (*Cf. PCP II 138-39.*)

Body of Christ: can refer to:

- a) the human earthly body of Jesus;
- b) the glorified body of the Risen Christ, present to us in the Eucharist; or
- c) the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, constituted by all the baptized, including those in purgatory and those in heaven.

Canon: a rule or norm. With the reference to the Bible, this term is used to indicate the list of books accepted as part of the Bible whose content contains the “norm” of our faith and Christian living. (*Cf. DV 11.*)

Canon Law: the body of laws, precepts and regulations of the Catholic Church.

Canonization: the solemn declaration by the Pope that a deceased person, already beatified, is among the saints in heaven and can be publicly venerated. (*Cf. CJC 1186-90.*)

Catechesis: “education in the faith, especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.” (*Cf. Catechesi Trad., 18.*)

Catechism: a general term for the contents of catechesis, used primarily for books, manuals, and summaries of Catholic teachings.

Charism: special grace or gift of the Holy Spirit given for building up the Christian community. (*Cf. 1 Cor 12; LG 10-12.*)

Charity: the infused theological virtue of love of God above all, and all else for God’s sake. (*Cf. Dt 6:5; Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 4:7-5:4; 1 Cor 13:1.*)

Chastity: the virtue that enables persons to integrate their sexuality within their vocation in life, according to the principles of faith and right reason.

Concupiscence: the disorder of desires which, while not sin in the true and proper sense, comes from original sin and inclines to sin. Since it remains in the baptized, it is left to us to wrestle with, and to resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ. (*Cf. Trent, ND 512; 1 Jn 2:16.*)

Conscience: the inner power which discerns and calls us to do what is good and to avoid evil, according to the law God has written in our hearts. (*Cf. Rom 2:12-16.*)

Conscience applies moral law to a particular case, thus formulating moral obligation.

Conversion: a change of heart (*metanoia*), turning away from sin (sorrow and repentance) and turning toward God and the following of Christ in his Kingdom (purpose of amendment). (*Cf. Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17.*)

Corporal Works of Mercy: acts of charity responding to “body needs”: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead. (*Cf. Mt 25:31-46.*)

Creation: God’s free act of putting and keeping all reality in existence.

Creationism: originally, God’s direct creation of each human soul, but now more commonly referring to anti-evolutionary views which interpret Genes is in a Fundamentalist way.

Decalogue: “Ten words”: the Ten Commandments summarizing Israel’s religious and moral obligations in the Covenant with Yahweh. (*Cf. Ex 20:1-17.*)

Deposit of Faith: everything God definitively revealed through Christ for our salvation and entrusted to the Church to be proclaimed, preserved, and interpreted. (*Cf. 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12,14; DV 10; GS 62.*)

Deuterocanonical Books: Catholic name for books found in the Greek version [LXX Septuagint] of the OT, but not in the Hebrew version. These Books are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees. There are also additional parts in the Books of Esther and Daniel.

Devil: (“tempter”) Lucifer or Satan, chief of the fallen angels. (*Cf. Wis 2:24; Mt 25:41; Lk 10:18; Rv 12:9-12; 16:14.*)

Development of Doctrine: gradual growth in the Church’s understanding of the deeper meaning and implications of the truths revealed by Jesus Christ.

Diakonia: “service”: the NT Greek term referring to ministry in the Church for the good of the community. (*Cf. Acts 12:17, 25; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 1:12.*)

Didache: the oldest Christian writing outside the NT. In the catechetical process, *didache* as “teaching” refers to what follows the first proclaiming of the Gospel, the “*kerygma*.”

Discernment of spirits: the Holy Spirit’s gift, including prudence and wisdom, enabling one to distinguish authentic divine charisms from natural or evil influences. (Cf. *1 Cor 12:10; 1 Jn 4:1-6*.)

Dogma: truths defined by the infallible teaching authority of the Church as revealed by God and thus to be accepted by all the faithful as a matter of faith. (Cf. *ND 219, 839-40; LG 25*.)

Doxology: giving praise and glory to God, e.g., the “*Gloria*” and the concluding prayer in the Eucharistic canon. (Cf. *Ps 8; 66; 150; Lk 2:14; 1 Pt 4:11; Rv 4:11; 5:12*.)

Epiclesis: the calling down of the Holy Spirit to bless and sanctify creation. (Cf. *1 Tim 4:1-5*.) In the Mass it is the invocation to the Spirit to come and change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and sanctify the participants.

Ecumenism: the movement to foster through prayer and dialogue the unity willed by Christ for all his disciples. (Cf. *Jn 17:21; Eph 4:4-5; UR 1-4; LG 15*.)

Eschatology: study of “*the last things*” (death, judgment, heaven and hell), especially the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Excommunication: the exclusion from celebration or reception of the Sacraments, and from exercising any ecclesiastical office or ministry in the Church. (Cf. *CJC 1331*.)

Exegesis: bringing out the meaning of the Biblical texts by analysis of its words, grammatical structure, literary form, historical context, etc. (Cf. *DV 12, 23; OT 16*.)

Faith: the free, reasonable, personal committed total response to God, or the objective revealed truth believed in, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. *Jn 20:31; Rom 10:9; Heb 11:1; 2 Cor 3:16-18; Acts 16:14; DV 4-5*.)

Fruits of the Spirit: effects worked by the Holy Spirit in the believers. They are: “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity*.” (Cf. *Gal 5:22f*.)

Fundamentalism: the movement that rejects the Bible’s historical formation, literary forms and study of original meaning, and

emphasizes its literal interpretation as the sole norm for all Christian belief and behavior.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: seven special graces of the Holy Spirit: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.* (Cf. *Is 11:2-3.*)

Grace: God's free Self-giving whereby we share in God's own Triune life of love (cf. *2 Pt 1:4*), and the consequent multiple favors offered to all persons, particularly salvation in Christ. (Cf. *Rom 3:21-26; 1 Tim 2:4-6.*) It brings new life (cf. *Jn 1:13; 1 Pt 1:3-5*), making us adopted children of God in the Spirit and members of Christ's Body. (Cf. *Rom 5:5, 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-7.*)

Hermeneutics: the theory and practice of "interpretation" of texts, their original and contemporary meanings; usually taken as broader in scope than "exegesis."

Hierarchy: in the Church, the successors of the Apostles, under the Pope as successor of St. Peter. This term describes the order of the ordained: bishops, priests and deacons; more commonly, it refers simply to the Pope and the bishops.

Infallibility: the special charism bestowed by Christ in the Spirit that safeguards the Church from teaching error in matters of faith and morals. (*Jn 16:12-15; LG 12.*) It is exercised particularly by the college of bishops in union with Peter's successor, the Pope (*Acts 15:1-29; 1 Cor 15:3-11; LG 25*), and by the Pope alone when, as Peter's successor, he solemnly teaches a revealed truth of faith and morals.

Inspiration, biblical: the special assistance to the human author-editors by the Holy Spirit through which the books of the Bible were written and have God as their [principal] author. (Cf. *Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pt 1:19-21, 3:15-16; DV 11.*)

Justification: the saving grace which is "not only the remission of sins but the sanctification and renewal of the interior man," that he may be "an heir in hope of eternal life (*Ti 3:7*)" (cf. *Trent, ND 1932*), through faith in Jesus Christ. (Cf. *Rom 1:17; 9:30-31.*)

Kerygma: the act of proclaiming, or the core message proclaimed, of the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ (Cf. *Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 15:3-5.*)

Koinonia: community or fellowship in the Holy Spirit (*cf. Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1*), or the sharing in the Eucharist (*cf. 1 Cor 10:16*), or in Christ's sufferings. (*Cf. Phil 3:10.*)

Lent: the liturgical season of 40 days of prayer and penance (imitating Jesus' 40-day fast in the desert), beginning on Ash Wednesday, and preparing for Easter, the celebration of Christ's Resurrection.

Lex orandi, lex credendi: an old Latin axiom that states "the law of prayer is the law of belief," i.e., liturgy is a reliable expression of the Church's basic beliefs.

Liberation Theology: stresses the Exodus and prophetic calls for justice and of liberation from sin and its consequences, especially structures of injustice and economic oppression.

Liturgy: originally any "public service" (*cf. Phil 2:17, 30*), it now refers to the *official public worship of the Church*, especially the Eucharist and the administration of the Sacraments.

Magisterium: the teaching authority of the Church, exercised primarily by the bishops, both collegially and individually, as successors of the Apostles, and united under the Pope as successor of St. Peter.

Ministry: authorized service of God in the service of others, according to specific norms of the Church. The rendering of this service is a sharing in Christ's roles as prophet, priest and king. It can be conferred on all the faithful in virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, and on clerics in a particular way through the Sacrament of Orders. (*Cf. Vatican II, PO 1; AA 10; Christi-fideles Laici, 14 et passim.*)

Mystery: not an obscure, inexplicable matter, but God's loving plan and present saving action, revealed through Jesus Christ. (*Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9; 3:9; Col 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3.*) "Mystery" is not primarily what we cannot understand, but rather something about which there is always more to understand. (*Cf. Vatican I, ND 132.*)

Natural Law: the universal moral law built into human beings by God in creating them, and accessible to the light of reason. (*Cf. GS 79; DH 2.*)

Paraclete: "*helper*," a title applied in John's Gospel to the Holy Spirit (*cf. Jn 14:16; 15:16; 16:7*), the Spirit of Truth who will guide the disciples in everything Christ has taught them.

Parousia: the Second Coming of Christ in glory to judge the world. (*Cf. Mt 24:29-31; 35:31-46; Nicene-Const. Creed.*)

Paschal Mystery: the saving work of Christ, especially his Passion, Death, Resurrection/Ascension (*cf. SC 5; GS 22*). Christians share in it through Baptism, the Eucharist, the other sacraments, and their life of grace.

Pentateuch: the first five books of the OT (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*) called *Torah* by the Jews, and traditionally assigned to Moses as their author.

Petrine Office/Ministry: the special service for the guidance of the Church and its unity, exercised by St. Peter and his successors, the Bishops of Rome.

Predestination: God's eternal fore-knowledge and will of our salvation. (*Cf. Mt 20:23; Jn 10:29; Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:3-14.*) While safeguarding the primacy of God's grace, both God's universal salvific will (*1 Tim 2:3-6*) and authentic human freedom must be preserved.

Providence: God's universal loving guidance and care for everything He has created, and particularly free human persons. (*Cf. Mt 6:25-34; 10:29-31.*)

Redemption: literally to "*buy back*," "pay a ransom": God's action of saving us from sin and evil. In the OT God "redeemed" His people in the Exodus event (*cf. Ex 15:1-21; Dt 7:8; 13:5; 24:18*), and the return from the Exile (*Is 41:14; 43:14*). In the NT God redeemed all mankind through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. (*Cf. Mk 10:45; Rom 4:25; Eph 1:7; 1 Pt 1:18-21.*)

Resurrection: the core Christian truth that God has raised Jesus from the dead to his definitive glorified life (*cf. Acts 2:24, 32-33, 36; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:1-11, 42-50; DV 4, 17*), and which is the ground for the resurrection of all human persons and their world. (*Cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28.*)

Revelation: "taking away the veil," God making Himself known through words and deeds in salvation history. (*Cf. DV 2, 4, 6-11.*) The term refers commonly to both who/what is made known, and the means of disclosure; it also refers to the last book of the NT.

Sacrilege: the deliberate violation and desecration of persons, events, places and things set aside publicly for the service/worship of God.

Sanctifying Grace: God's freely bestowed gift by which we are made holy, through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Senses of Scripture: the different meanings of biblical texts. Traditionally, the term refers to 4 "senses": *literal*, the meaning intended by the original

author, what happened; *allegorical*, what must be believed; *moral*, what is to be done; *anago-gic*, toward what we must strain.

Soteriology: the study of Christ's saving mission, from the Greek word *soter*, meaning Savior. (Cf. *Mk 14:24; Jn 11:49-52; Rom 4:25; 5:6-11; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pt 1:3.*)

Spiritual Works of Mercy: acts of charity responding to spiritual needs: *to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead.*

Supernatural: what is "above nature" and pertains to the order of grace which "elevates" our natural capacities beyond their created abilities and prepares us for the life of glory.

Theological Virtues: infused virtues that center directly on God: *faith*, on God as Creator and Savior; *hope*, on God as Provider and final Destiny; *charity*, on God as perfect Love.

Tradition: the "handing on" of the complex of Christian doctrines, moral norms, and rites of worship. (Cf. *DV 8-11.*)

Viaticum: "food for the journey," the Eucharist or Holy Communion given to those in danger of death, to prepare them for life hereafter.

Vicar of Christ: the Pope as visible head of the Church, acting in the place of Christ. The biblical basis of this title/role is *Jn 21:15-17*: "feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

Virtue: an operative good habit or the capacity for doing good with ease, pleasure and consistency. Natural virtues are acquired through repeated acts, while other virtues are "infused" by God's grace.