

Acts of Apostles

Acts 15

(Acts 15, 1-2) Paul, Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem

[1] Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." [2] Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question.

(CCC 1150) *Signs of the covenant.* The Chosen People received from God distinctive signs and symbols that marked its liturgical life. These are no longer solely celebrations of cosmic cycles and social gestures, but signs of the covenant, symbols of God's mighty deeds for his people. Among these liturgical signs from the Old Covenant are circumcision, anointing and consecration of kings and priests, laying on of hands, sacrifices, and above all the Passover. The Church sees in these signs a prefiguring of the sacraments of the New Covenant. (CCC 527) Jesus' *circumcision*, on the eighth day after his birth (Cf. Lk 2:21), is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law (Cf. Gal 4:4) and his deputation to Israel's worship, in which he will participate throughout his life. This sign prefigures that "circumcision of Christ" which is Baptism (Cf. Col 2:11-13).

(Acts 15, 3-4) They reported what God had done

[3] They were sent on their journey by the church, and passed through Phoenicia and Samaria telling of the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. [4] When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters, and they reported what God had done with them.

(CCC 1152) *Sacramental signs.* Since Pentecost, it is through the sacramental signs of his Church that the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification. The sacraments of the Church do not abolish but purify and integrate all the richness of the signs and symbols of the cosmos and of social life. Further, they fulfill the types and figures of the Old Covenant, signify and make actively present the salvation wrought by Christ, and prefigure and anticipate the glory of heaven. (CCC 1153) A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God's children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. Admittedly, the symbolic actions are already a language, but the Word of God and the response of faith have to accompany and give life to them, so that the seed of the Kingdom can bear its fruit in good soil. The liturgical actions signify what the Word of God expresses: both his free initiative and his people's response of faith.

(Acts 15, 5-9) Granting them the holy Spirit

[5] But some from the party of the Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Mosaic law." [6] The apostles and the presbyters met together to see about this matter. [7] After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to them, "My brothers, you are well aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. [8] And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the holy Spirit just as he did us. [9] He made no distinction between us and them, for by faith he purified their hearts.

(CCC 578) Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all embracing detail - according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments" (Mt 5:19). He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly (Cf. Jn 8:46). On their own admission the Jews were never able to observe the Law in its entirety without violating the least of its precepts (Cf. Jn 7:19; Acts 13:38-41; 15:10). This is why every year on the Day of Atonement the children of Israel ask God's forgiveness for their transgressions of the Law. The Law indeed makes up one inseparable whole, and St. James recalls, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it". (Jas 2:10; cf. Gal 3:10; 5:3).

(Acts 15, 10-11) Saved through the grace of the Lord

[10] Why, then, are you now putting God to the test by placing on the shoulders of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? [11] On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they."

(CCC 579) This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal (Cf. Rom 10:2). This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry (Cf. Mt 15:31; Lk 11:39-54), could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfillment of the Law by the only Righteous One in place of all sinners (Cf. Isa 53:11; Heb 9:15). (CCC 592) Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf. Mt 5:17-19) with such perfection (cf. Jn 8:46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf. Mt 5:33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf. Heb 9:15). (CCC 868) The Church is catholic: she proclaims the fullness of the faith. She bears in herself and administers the totality of the means of salvation. She is sent out to all peoples. She speaks to all men. She encompasses all times. She is "missionary of her very nature" (AG 2).

(Acts 15, 12-18) Paul described the signs and wonders

[12] The whole assembly fell silent, and they listened while Paul and Barnabas described the signs and wonders God had worked among the Gentiles through them. [13] After they had fallen silent, James responded, "My brothers, listen to me. [14] Symeon has described how God first concerned himself with acquiring from among the Gentiles a people for his

name. [15] The words of the prophets agree with this, as is written: [16] 'After this I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; from its ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again, [17] so that the rest of humanity may seek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles on whom my name is invoked. Thus says the Lord who accomplishes these things, [18] known from of old.'

(CCC 849) *The missionary mandate.* "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men" (AG 1; cf. Mt 16:15): "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).

(Acts 15, 19-21) Stop troubling the Gentiles

[19] It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God, [20] but tell them by letter to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood. [21] For Moses, for generations now, has had those who proclaim him in every town, as he has been read in the synagogues every sabbath."

(CCC 850) *The origin and purpose of mission.* The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (AG 2). The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love (Cf. John Paul II, *RMiss* 23). (CCC 851) *Missionary motivation.* It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14; cf. AA 6; *RMiss* 11). Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

(Acts 15, 22-24) Some of our number have upset you

[22] Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers.[23] This is the letter delivered by them: "The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. [24] Since we have heard that some of our number (who went out) without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind,

(CCC 1975) According to Scripture the Law is a fatherly instruction by God which prescribes for man the ways that lead to the promised beatitude, and proscribes the ways of evil. (CCC 1976) "Law is an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by the one who is in charge of the community" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 90, 4). (CCC 1977) Christ is the end of the law (cf. Rom 10:4); only he teaches and bestows the justice of God. (CCC 1978) The natural law is a participation in God's wisdom and goodness by man formed in the image of his Creator. It expresses the dignity of the human person and forms the basis of his fundamental rights and duties. (CCC 1979) The natural law is immutable, permanent throughout history. The rules that express it remain substantially valid. It is a necessary foundation for the erection of moral rules and civil law.

(Acts 15, 25-29) The decision of the holy Spirit and of us

[25] we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, [26] who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [27] So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: [28] 'It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, [29] namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.'

(CCC 1980) The Old Law is the first stage of revealed law. Its moral prescriptions are summed up in the Ten Commandments. (CCC 1981) The Law of Moses contains many truths naturally accessible to reason. God has revealed them because men did not read them in their hearts. (CCC 1982) The Old Law is a preparation for the Gospel. (CCC 1983) The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit received by faith in Christ, operating through charity. It finds expression above all in the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and uses the sacraments to communicate grace to us. (CCC 1984) The Law of the Gospel fulfills and surpasses the Old Law and brings it to perfection: its promises, through the Beatitudes of the Kingdom of heaven; its commandments, by reforming the heart, the root of human acts. (CCC 1985) The New Law is a law of love, a law of grace, a law of freedom.

(Acts 15, 30-35) Teaching and proclaiming the Word

[30] And so they were sent on their journey. Upon their arrival in Antioch they called the assembly together and delivered the letter. [31] When the people read it, they were delighted with the exhortation. [32] Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted and strengthened the brothers with many words. [33] After they had spent some time there, they were sent off with greetings of peace from the brothers to those who had commissioned them. [34] [35] But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming with many others the word of the Lord.

(CCC 425) The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) And they invite people of every era to

enter into the joy of their communion with Christ: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete (1 Jn 1:1-4). (CCC 163 Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God "face to face", "as he is" (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). So faith is already the beginning of eternal life: When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy (St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15, 36: PG 32, 132; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 4, 1).

(Acts 15, 36-39) To see how the brothers are getting on

[36] After some time, Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us make a return visit to see how the brothers are getting on in all the cities where we proclaimed the word of the Lord." [37] Barnabas wanted to take with them also John, who was called Mark, [38] but Paul insisted that they should not take with them someone who had deserted them at Pamphylia and who had not continued with them in their work. [39] So sharp was their disagreement that they separated. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.

(CCC 845) To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 96, 7, 9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, *De virg.* 18, 118: PL 16, 297B; cf. already 1 Pet 3:20-21).

(Acts 15, 40-41) Bringing strength to the churches

[40] But Paul chose Silas and departed after being commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. [41] He traveled through Syria and Cilicia bringing strength to the churches.

(CCC 854) By her very mission, "the Church... travels the same journey as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: she is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God" (GS 40 § 2). Missionary endeavor requires *patience*. It begins with the proclamation of the Gospel to peoples and groups who do not yet believe in Christ (Cf. *RMiss* 42-47), continues with the establishment of Christian communities that are "a sign of God's presence in the world" (AG 15 § 1), and leads to the foundation of local churches (Cf. *RMiss* 48-49). It must involve a process of inculturation if the Gospel is to take flesh in each people's culture (Cf. *RMiss* 52-54). There will be times of defeat. "With regard to individuals, groups, and peoples it is

only by degrees that [the Church] touches and penetrates them and so receives them into a fullness which is Catholic" (AG 6 § 2).

Acts 16

(Acts 16, 1-5) The decisions reached by the apostles

[1] He reached (also) Derbe and Lystra where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. [2] The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him, [3] and Paul wanted him to come along with him. On account of the Jews of that region, Paul had him circumcised, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. [4] As they traveled from city to city, they handed on to the people for observance the decisions reached by the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem. [5] Day after day the churches grew stronger in faith and increased in number.

(CCC 9) "The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the councils. The Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the *Roman Catechism*, which is also known by the name of that council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching..." (CT 13) The Council of Trent initiated a remarkable organization of the Church's catechesis. Thanks to the work of holy bishops and theologians such as St. Peter Canisius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Turibius of Mongrovejo or St. Robert Bellarmine, it occasioned the publication of numerous catechisms. (CCC 4) Quite early on, the name *catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. (Cf. John Paul II, apostolic exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae* 1; 2.) (CCC 6) While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. (CT 18). (CCC 7) "Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis." (CT 13).

(Acts 16, 6-10) God called us to proclaim the good news

[6] They traveled through the Phrygian and Galatian territory because they had been prevented by the holy Spirit from preaching the message in the province of Asia. [7] When they came to Mysia, they tried to go on into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, [8] so they crossed through Mysia and came down to Troas. [9] During (the) night Paul had a vision. A Macedonian stood before him and implored him with these words, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." [10] When he had seen the vision,

we sought passage to Macedonia at once, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

(CCC 739) Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body. (CCC 727) The entire mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of time, is contained in this: that the Son is the one anointed by the Father's Spirit since his Incarnation - Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Everything in the second chapter of the Creed is to be read in this light. Christ's whole work is in fact a joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here, we shall mention only what has to do with Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and the gift of him by the glorified Lord. (CCC 738) Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity: All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us,... and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Jo. Ev.*, 11, 11: PG 74, 561).

(Acts 16, 11-15) The Lord opened her heart

[11] We set sail from Troas, making a straight run for Samothrace, and on the next day to Neapolis, [12] and from there to Philippi, a leading city in that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We spent some time in that city. [13] On the sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river where we thought there would be a place of prayer. We sat and spoke with the women who had gathered there. [14] One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. [15] After she and her household had been baptized, she offered us an invitation, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home," and she prevailed on us.

(CCC 1252) The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized (Cf. Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; CDF, instruction, *Pastoralis actio*: AAS 72 (1980) 1137-1156). (CCC 1657) It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way "by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity" (LG 10). Thus the home is the first school of

Christian life and "a school for human enrichment" (GS 52 § 1). Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life.

(Acts 16, 16-18) In the name of Jesus Christ come out

[16] As we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl with an oracular spirit, who used to bring a large profit to her owners through her fortune-telling. [17] She began to follow Paul and us, shouting, "These people are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." [18] She did this for many days. Paul became annoyed, turned, and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Then it came out at that moment.

(CCC 434) Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Savior God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28). The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name (Cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16).

(Acts 16, 19-24) They threw them into prison

[19] When her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the public square before the local authorities. [20] They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These people are Jews and are disturbing our city [21] and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us Romans to adopt or practice." [22] The crowd joined in the attack on them, and the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. [23] After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. [24] When he received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake.

(CCC 2115) God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future, and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it. Improvidence, however, can constitute a lack of responsibility. (CCC 2116) All forms of *divination* are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future (Cf. Deut 18:10; Jer 29:8). Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

(Acts 16, 25-28) Paul and Silas were praying and singing

[25] About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, [26] there was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose. [27] When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew (his) sword and was about to

kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. [28] But Paul shouted out in a loud voice, "Do no harm to yourself; we are all here."

(CCC 323) Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to co-operate freely with his plans. (CCC 324) The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life. (CCC 306) God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan.

(Acts 16, 29-34) Believe in the Lord Jesus

[29] He asked for a light and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. [30] Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" [31] And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved." [32] So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. [33] He took them in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized at once. [34] He brought them up into his house and provided a meal and with his household rejoiced at having come to faith in God.

(CCC 1226) From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism. Indeed St. Peter declares to the crowd astounded by his preaching: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, the God-fearing, pagans (Cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 10:48; 16:15). Always, Baptism is seen as connected with faith: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," St. Paul declared to his jailer in Philippi. And the narrative continues, the jailer "was baptized at once, with all his family" (Acts 16:31-33). (CCC 1655) Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than "the family of God." From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers "together with all [their] household" (Cf. Acts 18:8). When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved (Cf. Acts 16:31; Acts 11:14). These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world. (CCC 1656) In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica* (LG 11; cf. FC 21). It is in the bosom of the family that parents are "by word and example... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation" (LG 11).

(Acts 16, 35-40) They saw and encouraged the brothers

[35] But when it was day, the magistrates sent the lictors with the order, "Release those men." [36] The jailer reported the (se) words to Paul, "The magistrates have sent orders that you be released. Now, then, come out and go in peace." [37] But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, even though we are Roman citizens and have not been tried, and have thrown us into prison. And now, are they going to release us secretly? By no means. Let them come themselves and lead us out." [38] The lictors reported these words to the magistrates, and they became alarmed when they heard that they were Roman citizens. [39] So they came and placated them, and led them out and asked that they leave the city. [40] When they had come out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house where they saw and encouraged the brothers, and then they left.

(CCC 2298) In times past, cruel practices were commonly used by legitimate governments to maintain law and order, often without protest from the Pastors of the Church, who themselves adopted in their own tribunals the prescriptions of Roman law concerning torture. Regrettable as these facts are, the Church always taught the duty of clemency and mercy. She forbade clerics to shed blood. In recent times it has become evident that these cruel practices were neither necessary for public order, nor in conformity with the legitimate rights of the human person. On the contrary, these practices led to ones even more degrading. It is necessary to work for their abolition. We must pray for the victims and their tormentors. (CCC 2242) The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21). "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29): When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel (GS 74 § 5).

Acts 17

(Acts 17, 1-4) This is the Messiah, Jesus

[1] When they took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they reached Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. [2] Following his usual custom, Paul joined them, and for three sabbaths he entered into discussions with them from the scriptures, [3] expounding and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that "This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you." [4] Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so, too, a great number of Greeks who were worshipers, and not a few of the prominent women.

(CCC 648) Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. The Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1 3-4; cf. Acts 2:24). St. Paul insists on the manifestation of God's power (Cf. Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-22; Heb 7:16). through the working of the Spirit who gave life to Jesus' dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship.

(Acts 17, 5-9) There is another king, Jesus

[5] But the Jews became jealous and recruited some worthless men loitering in the public square, formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil. They marched on the house of Jason, intending to bring them before the people's assembly. [6] When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city magistrates, shouting, "These people who have been creating a disturbance all over the world have now come here, [7] and Jason has welcomed them. They all act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar and claim instead that there is another king, Jesus." [8] They stirred up the crowd and the city magistrates who, upon hearing these charges, [9] took a surety payment from Jason and the others before releasing them.

(CCC 678) Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching (Cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3:19; Mt 3:7-12). Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (Cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (Cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (Cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (CCC 2484) The *gravity of a lie* is measured against the nature of the truth it deforms, the circumstances, the intentions of the one who lies, and the harm suffered by its victims. If a lie in itself only constitutes a venial sin, it becomes mortal when it does grave injury to the virtues of justice and charity. (CCC 2485) By its very nature, lying is to be condemned. It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbor into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity. The culpability is greater when the intention of deceiving entails the risk of deadly consequences for those who are led astray.

(Acts 17, 10-14) Many of them became believers

[10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas to Beroea during the night. Upon arrival they went to the synagogue of the Jews. [11] These Jews were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all willingness and examined the scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so. [12] Many of them became believers, as did

not a few of the influential Greek women and men. [13] But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had now been proclaimed by Paul in Beroea also, they came there too to cause a commotion and stir up the crowds. [14] So the brothers at once sent Paul on his way to the seacoast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind.

(CCC 102) Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely (Cf. Heb 1:1-3): You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers, since he who was in the beginning God with God has no need of separate syllables; for he is not subject to time (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 103, 4, 1: PL 37, 1378; cf. Ps 104; Jn 1:1). (CCC 103) For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body (Cf. DV 21). (CCC 104) In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God" (Th 2:13; cf. DV 24). "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them" (DV 21). (CCC 2483) Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error. By injuring man's relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of man and of his word to the Lord. (CCC 2486) Since it violates the virtue of truthfulness, a lie does real violence to another. It affects his ability to know, which is a condition of every judgment and decision. It contains the seed of discord and all consequent evils. Lying is destructive of society; it undermines trust among men and tears apart the fabric of social relationships.

(Acts 17, 15-21) Preaching 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection.'

[15] After Paul's escorts had taken him to Athens, they came away with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. [16] While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he grew exasperated at the sight of the city full of idols. [17] So he debated in the synagogue with the Jews and with the worshipers, and daily in the public square with whoever happened to be there. [18] Even some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him in discussion. Some asked, "What is this scavenger trying to say?" Others said, "He sounds like a promoter of foreign deities," because he was preaching about 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection.' [19] They took him and led him to the Areopagus and said, "May we learn what this new teaching is that you speak of? [20] For you bring some strange notions to our ears; we should like to know what these things mean." [21] Now all the Athenians as well as the foreigners residing there used their time for nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

(CCC 74) God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth":(1 Tim 2:4) that is, of Christ Jesus (cf. Jn 14:6). Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth: God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted

to all generations (DV 7; cf. 2 Cor 1:20; 3:16 - 4:6). (CCC 75) "Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline" (DV 7; cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15). (CCC 96) What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

(Acts 17, 22-25) The Lord of heaven and earth

[22] Then Paul stood up at the Areopagus and said: "You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. [23] For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, 'To an Unknown God.' What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, [25] nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything. Rather it is he who gives to everyone life and breath and everything.

(CCC 142) *By his Revelation*, "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 into his own company" (DV 2; cf. Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15; Bar 3:38 (Vulg.)). The adequate response to this invitation is faith. (CCC 199) "I believe in God": this first affirmation of the Apostles' Creed is also the most fundamental. The whole Creed speaks of God, and when it also speaks of man and of the world it does so in relation to God. The other articles of the Creed all depend on the first, just as the remaining Commandments make the first explicit. The other articles help us to know God better as he revealed himself progressively to men. "The faithful first profess their belief in God" (Roman Catechism I, 2, 2). (CCC 215) "The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever" (Ps 119:160) "and now, O LORD God, you are God, and your words are true" (2 Sam 7:28); this is why God's promises always come true (Cf. Dt 7:9). God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. The beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness and faithfulness. (CCC 269) The Holy Scriptures repeatedly confess the *universal* power of God. He is called the "Mighty One of Jacob", the "LORD of hosts", the "strong and mighty" one. If God is almighty "in heaven and on earth", it is because he made them (Gen 49:24; Isa 1:24 etc.; Pss 24:8-10; 135 6). Nothing is impossible with God, who disposes his works according to his will (Cf. Jer 27:5; 32:17; Lk 1:37). He is the Lord of the universe, whose order he established and which remains wholly subject to him and at his disposal. He is master of history, governing hearts and events in keeping with his will: "It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the strength of your arm? (Wis 11:21; cf. Esth 4:17b; Prov 21:1; Tob 13:2).

(Acts 17, 26a) He made from one the whole human race

[26a] He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth,

(CCC 279) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. The profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is "Creator of heaven and earth" (*Apostles' Creed*), "of all that is, seen and unseen" (*Nicene Creed*). We shall speak first of the Creator, then of creation and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again. (CCC 280) Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation" (GCD 51) that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ (Gen 1:1; cf. Rom 8:18-23). (CCC 281) And so the readings of the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the new creation in Christ, begin with the creation account; likewise in the Byzantine liturgy, the account of creation always constitutes the first reading at the vigils of the great feasts of the Lord. According to ancient witnesses the instruction of catechumens for Baptism followed the same itinerary (Cf. Egeria, *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, 46: PLS 1, 1047; St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 3, 5: PL 40, 256). (CCC 282) Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked themselves (Cf. NA 2): "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is our origin?" "What is our end?" "Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?" the two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions.

(Acts 17, 26b) He fixed the ordered seasons

[26b] And he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions,

(CCC 287) The truth about creation is so important for all of human life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator (Cf. Acts 17:24-29; Rom 1:19-20), God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. He who chose the patriarchs, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and who by choosing Israel created and formed it, this same God reveals himself as the One to whom belong all the peoples of the earth, and the whole earth itself; he is the One who alone "made heaven and earth" (Cf. Isa 43:1; Pss 115:15; 124:8; 134:3). (CCC 355) "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). Man occupies a unique place in creation: he is "in the image of God"; in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; he is created "male and female"; God established him in his friendship. (CCC 356) Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator" (GS 12 § 3). He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (GS 24 § 3), and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and

love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity: What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good (St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* 4, 13 "On Divine Providence": *LH*, Sunday, week 19, OR).

(Acts 17, 27) Indeed he is not far from any one of us

[27] so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us.

(CCC 57) This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity (Cf. Acts 17:26-27), united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel (Cf. Wis 10:5; Gen 11:4-6). But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism (Cf. Rom 1:18-25). (CCC 2566) *Man is in search of God*. In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence. "Crowned with glory and honor," man is, after the angels, capable of acknowledging "how majestic is the name of the Lord in all the earth" (Ps 8:5; 8:1). Even after losing through his sin his likeness to God, man remains an image of his Creator, and retains the desire for the one who calls him into existence. All religions bear witness to men's essential search for God (Cf. Acts 17:27). (CCC 28) In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a *religious being*: From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:26-28).

(Acts 17, 28) In him we live and have our being

[28] For 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

(CCC 32) *The world*: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe. As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rom 1:19-20; cf., Acts 14:15, 17; 17:27-28; Wis 13:1-9). And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky... question all these realities. All respond: "See, we are beautiful." Their beauty is a profession [*confessio*]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [*Pulcher*] who is not subject to change? (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 241, 2:

PL 38, 1134). (CCC 300) God is infinitely greater than all his works: "You have set your glory above the heavens" (Ps 8:1; cf. Sir 43:28). Indeed, God's "greatness is unsearchable" (Ps 145:3). But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures' inmost being: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In the words of St. Augustine, God is "higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self" (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 3, 6, 11: PL 32, 688).

(Acts 17, 29a) We are the offspring of God

[29a] Since therefore we are the offspring of God,

(CCC 360) Because of its common origin *the human race forms a unity*; for "from one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth" (Acts 17:26; cf. Tob 8:6): O wondrous vision, which makes us contemplate the human race in the unity of its origin in God... in the unity of its nature, composed equally in all men of a material body and a spiritual soul; in the unity of its immediate end and its mission in the world; in the unity of its dwelling, the earth, whose benefits all men, by right of nature, may use to sustain and develop life; in the unity of its supernatural end: God himself, to whom all ought to tend; in the unity of the means for attaining this end;... in the unity of the redemption wrought by Christ for all (Pius XII, encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* 3; cf. NA 1). (CCC 361) "This law of human solidarity and charity" (Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*, 3), without excluding the rich variety of persons, cultures and peoples, assures us that all men are truly brethren. (CCC 362) The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. The biblical account expresses this reality in symbolic language when it affirms that "then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being"(Gen 2:7) Man, whole and entire, is therefore *willed* by God. (CCC 364) The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit (Cf. 1 Cor 6:19-20; 15:44-45): Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day (GS 14 § 1; cf. Dan 3:57-80).

(Acts 17, 29b) Divinity is not fashioned by human art

[29b] We ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination.

(CCC 2112) The first commandment condemns *polytheism*. It requires man neither to believe in, nor to venerate, other divinities than the one true God. Scripture constantly recalls this rejection of "idols, (of) silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see." These empty idols make their worshippers empty: "Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them" (Ps 115:4-5, 8; cf. Isa 44:9-20; Jer 10:1-16; Dan 14:1-30; Bar 6; Wis 13: 1- 15:19). God, however, is the "living God" (Josh 3:10; Ps 42:3; etc.) who gives

life and intervenes in history. (CCC 2113) Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" (Cf. Rev 13-14) refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God (Cf. Gal 5:20; Eph 5:5). (CCC 2114) Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2, 40: PG 11, 861).

(Acts 17, 30) He demands that all people repent

[30] God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent

(CCC 679) Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1). Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself (Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26). By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31). (CCC 1002) Christ will raise us up "on the last day"; but it is also true that, in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ. For, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is already now on earth a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ: And you were buried with him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.... If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col 2:12; 3:1).

(Acts 17, 31) He will 'judge the world with justice'

[31] Because he has established a day on which he will 'judge the world with justice' through a man he has appointed, and he has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead."

(CCC 1003) United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3; cf. Phil 3:20). The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"(Eph 2:6). Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). (CCC 1004) In expectation of that day, the believer's body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering: The body [is meant] for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... You are not your own; So glorify God in your body (Cor 6:13-15, 19-20). (CCC 1005) To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must "be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body (Cf. Phil 1:23). It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead (Cf. Paul VI, CPG § 28).

(Acts 17, 32-34) Some joined him and became believers

[32] When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, "We should like to hear you on this some other time." [33] And so Paul left them. [34] But some did join him, and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the Court of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

(CCC 996) From the beginning, Christian faith in the resurrection has met with incomprehension and opposition (Cf. Acts 17:32; 12Cor 15:12-13). "On no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body"(St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 88, 5: PL 37, 1134). It is very commonly accepted that the life of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death. But how can we believe that this body, so clearly mortal, could rise to everlasting life? (CCC 988) The Christian Creed - the profession of our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in God's creative, saving, and sanctifying action - culminates in the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead on the last day and in life everlasting. (CCC 989) We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day (Cf. Jn 6:39-40). Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11). (CCC 1017) "We believe in the true resurrection of this flesh that we now possess" (Council of Lyons II: DS 854). We sow a corruptible body in the tomb, but he raises up an incorruptible body, a "spiritual body" (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44).

Acts 18

(Acts 18, 1-4) Stayed with them and worked

[1] After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. [2] There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to visit them [3] and, because he practiced the same trade, stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. [4] Every sabbath, he entered into discussions in the synagogue, attempting to convince both Jews and Greeks.

(CCC 2427) *Human work* proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another (Cf. Gen 1:28; GS 34; CA 31). Hence work is a duty: "If

any one will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thess 3:10; Cf. 1 Thess 4:11). Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work (Cf. Gen 3:14-19) in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish (Cf. LE 27). Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. (CCC 531) During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God (Cf. Gal 4:4), a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:51-52).

(Acts 18, 5-6) From now on I will go to the Gentiles

[5] When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. [6] When they opposed him and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your heads! I am clear of responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

(CCC 893) The bishop is "the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood" (LG 26), especially in the Eucharist which he offers personally or whose offering he assures through the priests, his co-workers. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the particular Church. The bishop and priests sanctify the Church by their prayer and work, by their ministry of the word and of the sacraments. They sanctify her by their example, "not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:3). Thus, "together with the flock entrusted to them, they may attain to eternal life" (LG 26 § 3). (CCC 597) The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles' calls to conversion after Pentecost (Cf. Mk 15:11; Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-14; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; 1 Th 2:14-15). Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept "the ignorance" of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders (Cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17). Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!", a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence (Mt 27:25; cf. Acts 5:28; 18:6). As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council:... [N]either all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion... [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture (NA 4).

(Acts 18, 7-8) Many believed and were baptized

[7] So he left there and went to a house belonging to a man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next to a synagogue. [8] Crispus, the synagogue official, came to believe in the Lord along with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians who heard believed and were baptized.

(CCC 1252) The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized (Cf. Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; CDF, instruction, *Pastoralis actio*: AAS 72 (1980) 1137-1156). (CCC 1655) Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than "the family of God." From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers "together with all [their] household" (Cf. Acts 18:8). When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved (Cf. Acts 16:31; Acts 11:14). These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

(Acts 18, 9-11) Go on speaking, and do not be silent

[9] One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, [10] for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in this city." [11] He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them.

(CCC 875) "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? and how are they to hear without a preacher? and how can men preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14:15). No one - no individual and no community - can proclaim the Gospel to himself: "Faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10:17). No one can give himself the mandate and the mission to proclaim the Gospel. The one sent by the Lord does not speak and act on his own authority, but by virtue of Christ's authority; not as a member of the community, but speaking to it in the name of Christ. No one can bestow grace on himself; it must be given and offered. This fact presupposes ministers of grace, authorized and empowered by Christ. From him, they receive the mission and faculty ("the sacred power") to act *in persona Christi Capitis*; deacons receive the strength to serve the people of God on the *diaconia* of liturgy, and charity, in communion with the bishops and his presbyterate. The ministry in which Christ's emissaries do and give by God's grace what they cannot do and give by their own powers, is called a "sacrament" by the Church's tradition. Indeed, the ministry of the Church is conferred by a special sacrament. (CCC 1122) Christ sent his apostles so that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations" (Lk 24:47). "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). The mission to baptize, and so the sacramental mission, is implied in the mission to evangelize, because the sacrament is prepared for by *the word of God and by the faith* which is assent to this word: The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God.... The preaching of

the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word (PO 4 §§ 1, 2).

(Acts 18, 12-17) The Jews rose up together against Paul

[12] But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him to the tribunal, [13] saying, "This man is inducing people to worship God contrary to the law." [14] When Paul was about to reply, Gallio spoke to the Jews, "If it were a matter of some crime or malicious fraud, I should with reason hear the complaint of you Jews; [15] but since it is a question of arguments over doctrine and titles and your own law, see to it yourselves.." [16] And he drove them away from the tribunal. [17] They all seized Sosthenes, the synagogue official, and beat him in full view of the tribunal. But none of this was of concern to Gallio.

(CCC 2244) Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognized man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer. The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man: Societies not recognizing this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows (Cf. CA 45; 46). (CCC 2245) The Church, because of her commission and competence, is not to be confused in any way with the political community. She is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. "The Church respects and encourages the political freedom and responsibility of the citizen" (GS 76 § 3).

(Acts 18, 18-23) Paul had taken a vow

[18] Paul remained for quite some time, and after saying farewell to the brothers he sailed for Syria, together with Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut because he had taken a vow. [19] When they reached Ephesus, he left them there, while he entered the synagogue and held discussions with the Jews. [20] Although they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, [21] but as he said farewell he promised, "I shall come back to you again, God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus. [22] Upon landing at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. [23] After staying there some time, he left and traveled in orderly sequence through the Galatian country and Phrygia, bringing strength to all the disciples.

(CCC 2101) In many circumstances, the Christian is called to make *promises* to God. Baptism and Confirmation, Matrimony and Holy Orders always entail promises. Out of personal devotion, the Christian may also promise to God this action, that prayer, this alms-giving, that pilgrimage, and so forth. Fidelity to

promises made to God is a sign of the respect owed to the divine majesty and of love for a faithful God. (CCC 2102) "A *vow* is a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion" (CIC, can. 1191 § 1). A vow is an act of *devotion* in which the Christian dedicates himself to God or promises him some good work. By fulfilling his vows he renders to God what has been promised and consecrated to Him. The *Acts of the Apostles* shows us St. Paul concerned to fulfill the vows he had made (Cf. Acts 18:18; 21:23-24).

(Acts 18, 24-28) He spoke accurately about Jesus

[24] A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus. He was an authority on the scriptures. [25] He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. [26] He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the Way (of God) more accurately. [27] And when he wanted to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. After his arrival he gave great assistance to those who had come to believe through grace. [28] He vigorously refuted the Jews in public, establishing from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus.

(CCC 904) "Christ...fulfills this prophetic office, not only by the hierarchy... but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the sense of the faith [*sensus fidei*] and the grace of the word" (LG 35). To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh.* III, 71, 4 *ad* 3). (CCC 905) Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization... acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world" (LG 35 § 1, § 2). This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers... or to the faithful (AA 6 § 3; cf. AG 15). (CCC 906) Lay people who are capable and trained may also collaborate in catechetical formation, in teaching the sacred sciences, and in use of the communications media (Cf. CIC, cann. 229; 774; 776; 780; 823 § 1).

Acts 19

(Acts 19, 1-7) The holy Spirit came upon them

[1] While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. [2] He said to them, "Did you receive the holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit." [3] He said, "How were you baptized?" They replied, "With the baptism of John." [4] Paul then said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." [5] When they heard this, they were baptized in the

name of the Lord Jesus. [6] And when Paul laid (his) hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. [7] Altogether there were about twelve men.

(CCC 1288) "From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the *Letter to the Hebrews* the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church" (Paul VI, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 659; Cf. Acts 8:15-17; 19:5-6; Heb 6:2). (CCC 768) So that she can fulfill her mission, the Holy Spirit "bestows upon [the Church] varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her" (LG 4). "Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth the seed and the beginning of that kingdom" (LG 5).

(Acts 19, 8-12) Mighty deeds God accomplished

[8] He entered the synagogue, and for three months debated boldly with persuasive arguments about the kingdom of God. [9] But when some in their obstinacy and disbelief disparaged the Way before the assembly, he withdrew and took his disciples with him and began to hold daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. [10] This continued for two years with the result that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord, Jews and Greeks alike. [11] So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul [12] that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

(CCC 1508) The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing (Cf. 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30) so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," and that the sufferings to be endured can mean that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church" (2 Cor 12:9; Col 1:24). (CCC 799) Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world. (CCC 550) The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:26, 28). Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31; cf. Lk 8:26-39). The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood" (LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn *Vexilla Regis*: "Regnavit a ligno Deus").

(Acts 19, 13-17) Paul I know, but who are you?

[13] Then some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." [14] When the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, tried to do this, [15] the evil spirit said to them in reply, "Jesus I recognize, Paul I know, but who are you?" [16] The person with the evil spirit then sprang at them and subdued them all. He so overpowered them that they fled naked and wounded from that house. [17] When this became known to all the Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus, fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in great esteem.

(CCC 2851) In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ. (CCC 434) Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Saviour God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28). The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name (Cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16). (CCC 2852) "A murderer from the beginning,... a liar and the father of lies," Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world" (Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9). Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death" (*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 125). Now "we know that anyone born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one" (1 Jn 5:18-19). The Lord who has taken away your sin and pardoned your faults also protects you and keeps you from the wiles of your adversary the devil, so that the enemy, who is accustomed to leading into sin, may not surprise you. One who entrusts himself to God does not dread the devil. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 5, 4, 30: PL 16, 454; cf. Rom 8:31).

(Acts 19, 18-20) Collected their books and burned them

[18] Many of those who had become believers came forward and openly acknowledged their former practices. [19] Moreover, a large number of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in public. They calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand silver pieces. [20] Thus did the word of the Lord continue to spread with influence and power.

(CCC 2115) God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future, and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it. Improvidence, however, can constitute a lack of responsibility. (CCC 2116) All forms of *divination* are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future (Cf. Deut 18:10; Jer 29:8). Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a

desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone. (CCC 2117) All practices of *magic* or *sorcery*, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health - are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. *Spiritism* often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another's credulity.

(Acts 19, 21-27) A serious disturbance broke out

[21] When this was concluded, Paul made up his mind to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must visit Rome also." [22] Then he sent to Macedonia two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, while he himself stayed for a while in the province of Asia. [23] About that time a serious disturbance broke out concerning the Way. [24] There was a silversmith named Demetrius who made miniature silver shrines of Artemis and provided no little work for the craftsmen. [25] He called a meeting of these and other workers in related crafts and said, "Men, you know well that our prosperity derives from this work. [26] As you can now see and hear, not only in Ephesus but throughout most of the province of Asia this Paul has persuaded and misled a great number of people by saying that gods made by hands are not gods at all. [27] The danger grows, not only that our business will be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be of no account, and that she whom the whole province of Asia and all the world worship will be stripped of her magnificence."

(CCC 2536) The tenth commandment forbids *greed* and the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It forbids *avarice* arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power. It also forbids the desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods: When the Law says, "You shall not covet," these words mean that we should banish our desires for whatever does not belong to us. Our thirst for another's goods is immense, infinite, never quenched. Thus it is written: "He who loves money never has money enough" (*Roman Catechism*, III, 37; cf. Sir 5:8). (CCC 2537) It is not a violation of this commandment to desire to obtain things that belong to one's neighbor, provided this is done by just means. Traditional catechesis realistically mentions "those who have a harder struggle against their criminal desires" and so who "must be urged the more to keep this commandment":... merchants who desire scarcity and rising prices, who cannot bear not to be the only ones buying and selling so that they themselves can sell more dearly and buy more cheaply; those who hope that their peers will be impoverished, in order to realize a profit either by selling to them or buying from them... physicians who wish disease to spread; lawyers who are eager for many important cases and trials (*Roman Catechism*, III, 37).

(Acts 19, 28-34) The city was filled with confusion

[28] When they heard this, they were filled with fury and began to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" [29] The city was filled with confusion, and the people rushed with one accord into the theater, seizing Gaius and Aristarchus, the Macedonians, Paul's traveling companions. [30] Paul wanted to go before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him, [31] and even some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent word to him advising him not to venture into the theater. [32] Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, others something else; the assembly was in chaos, and most of the people had no idea why they had come together. [33] Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, as the Jews pushed him forward, and Alexander signaled with his hand that he wished to explain something to the gathering. [34] But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison, for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

(CCC 1806) *Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going" (Prov 14:15). "Keep sane and sober for your prayers" (1 Pet 4:7). Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 47, 2). It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

(Acts 19, 35-41) You must calm yourselves

[35] Finally the town clerk restrained the crowd and said, "You Ephesians, what person is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell from the sky? [36] Since these things are undeniable, you must calm yourselves and not do anything rash. [37] The men you brought here are not temple robbers, nor have they insulted our goddess. [38] If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. [39] If you have anything further to investigate, let the matter be settled in the lawful assembly, [40] for, as it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's conduct. There is no cause for it. We shall (not) be able to give a reason for this demonstration." With these words he dismissed the assembly.

(CCC 1835) Prudence disposes the practical reason to discern, in every circumstance, our true good and to choose the right means for achieving it. (CCC 1906) By common good is to be understood "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (GS 26 § 1; cf. GS 74 § 1). The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise

the office of authority. (CCC 1907) First, the common good presupposes *respect for the person* as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation, such as "the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard... privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion" (GS 26 § 2).

Acts 20

(Acts 20, 1-6) Paul set out on his journey to Macedonia

[1] When the disturbance was over, Paul had the disciples summoned and, after encouraging them, he bade them farewell and set out on his journey to Macedonia. [2] As he traveled throughout those regions, he provided many words of encouragement for them. Then he arrived in Greece, [3] where he stayed for three months. But when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return by way of Macedonia. [4] Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea, accompanied him, as did Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia [5] who went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. [6] We sailed from Philippi after the feast of Unleavened Bread, and rejoined them five days later in Troas, where we spent a week.

(CCC 814) From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great *diversity* which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life. "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions" (LG 13 § 2). The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. And so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). (CCC 133) The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ' (DV 25; cf. Phil 3:8 and St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii* prol.: PL 24, 17B). (CCC 322) Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf. Mt 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you" (1 Pt 5:7; cf. Ps 55:23). (CCC 323) Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to co-operate freely with his plans.

(Acts 20, 7-12) Don't be alarmed; there is life in him

[7] On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day, and he kept on speaking until midnight. [8] There were many lamps in the upstairs

room where we were gathered, [9] and a young man named Eutychus who was sitting on the window sill was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. Once overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and when he was picked up, he was dead. [10] Paul went down, threw himself upon him, and said as he embraced him, "Don't be alarmed; there is life in him." [11] Then he returned upstairs, broke the bread, and ate; after a long conversation that lasted until daybreak, he departed. [12] And they took the boy away alive and were immeasurably comforted.

(CCC 1343) It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life. (CCC 1329) The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9). The *Breaking of Bread*, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17). The *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). (CCC 994) But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54). Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39). The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22).

(Acts 20, 13-16) Paul was hurrying to be in Jerusalem

[13] We went ahead to the ship and set sail for Assos where we were to take Paul on board, as he had arranged, since he was going overland. [14] When he met us in Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. [15] We sailed away from there on the next day and reached a point off Chios, and a day later we reached Samos, and on the following day we arrived at Miletus. [16] Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order not to lose time in the province of Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if at all possible, for the day of Pentecost.

(CCC 583) Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth (Lk 2:22-39). At the age of twelve he decided to remain

in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business (Cf. Lk 2 46-49). He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover (Cf. Lk 2 41). His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts (Cf. Jn 2:13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8:2; 10:22-23). (CCC 731) On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance (Cf. Acts 2:33-36). (CCC 2623) On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Promise was poured out on the disciples, gathered "together in one place" (Acts 2:1). While awaiting the Spirit, "all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). The Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls for her everything that Jesus said (Cf. Jn 14:26) was also to form her in the life of prayer.

(Acts 20, 17-23) Imprisonment and hardships await me

[17] From Miletus he had the presbyters of the church at Ephesus summoned. [18] When they came to him, he addressed them, "You know how I lived among you the whole time from the day I first came to the province of Asia. [19] I served the Lord with all humility and with the tears and trials that came to me because of the plots of the Jews, [20] and I did not at all shrink from telling you what was for your benefit, or from teaching you in public or in your homes. [21] I earnestly bore witness for both Jews and Greeks to repentance before God and to faith in our Lord Jesus. [22] But now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. What will happen to me there I do not know, [23] except that in one city after another the holy Spirit has been warning me that imprisonment and hardships await me.

(CCC 861) "In order that the mission entrusted to them might be continued after their death, [the apostles] consigned, by will and testament, as it were, to their immediate collaborators the duty of completing and consolidating the work they had begun, urging them to tend to the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit had appointed them to shepherd the Church of God. They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death other proven men should take over their ministry" (LG 20; cf. Acts 20:28; St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Cor.* 42, 44: PG 1, 291-300). (CCC 862) "Just as the office which the Lord confided to Peter alone, as first of the apostles, destined to be transmitted to his successors, is a permanent one, so also endures the office, which the apostles received, of shepherding the Church, a charge destined to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops" (LG 20 § 2). Hence the Church teaches that "the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ" (LG 20 § 2).

(Acts 20, 24-28) Keep watch over the whole flock

[24] Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace. [25] "But now I know that none of you to whom I preached the kingdom during my travels will ever see my face again. [26]

And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, [27] for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God. [28] Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood.

(CCC 1562) "Christ, whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world, has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of their ministry" (LG 28; cf. Jn 10:36). "The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be *co-workers of the episcopal order* for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ" (PO 2 § 2). (CCC 1564) "Whilst not having the supreme degree of the pontifical office, and notwithstanding the fact that they depend on the bishops in the exercise of their own proper power, the priests are for all that associated with them by reason of their sacerdotal dignity; and in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest, they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship *as true priests of the New Testament*" (LG 28 cf. Heb 5:1-10; 7:24; 9:11-28; Innocent I, *Epist. Ad Decentium*: PL 20, 554 A; St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 2, 22: PG 35, 432B). (CCC 1565) Through the sacrament of Holy Orders priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission, "but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation 'to the end of the earth'" (PO 10; OT 20; cf. Acts 1:8), "prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere" (OT 20).

(Acts 20, 29-38) It is more blessed to give

[29] I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. [30] And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. [31] So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. [32] And now I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are consecrated. [33] I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. [34] You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. [35] In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" [36] When he had finished speaking he knelt down and prayed with them all. [37] They were all weeping loudly as they threw their arms around Paul and kissed him, [38] for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

(CCC 798) The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body" (Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: DS 3808). He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity (Cf. Eph 4:16): by

God's Word "which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32); by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body (Cf. 1 Cor 12:13); by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts" (LG 7 § 2); by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (LG 12 § 2; cf. AA 3). (CCC 2636) The first Christian communities lived this form of fellowship intensely (Cf. Acts 12:5; 20:36; 21:5; 2 Cor 9:14). Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his ministry of preaching the Gospel (Cf. Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25) but also intercedes for them (Cf. 2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:3; Phil 1:3-4). The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: "for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions," for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel (2 Tim 2:1; cf. Rom 12:14; 10:1).

Acts 21

(Acts 21, 1-8) They kept telling Paul through the Spirit

[1] When we had taken leave of them we set sail, made a straight run for Cos, and on the next day for Rhodes, and from there to Patara. [2] Finding a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went on board and put out to sea. [3] We caught sight of Cyprus but passed by it on our left and sailed on toward Syria and put in at Tyre where the ship was to unload cargo. [4] There we sought out the disciples and stayed for a week. They kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to embark for Jerusalem. [5] At the end of our stay we left and resumed our journey. All of them, women and children included, escorted us out of the city, and after kneeling on the beach to pray, [6] we bade farewell to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home. [7] We continued the voyage and came from Tyre to Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed a day with them. [8] On the next day we resumed the trip and came to Caesarea, where we went to the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him.

(CCC 2584) In their "one to one" encounters with God, the prophets draw light and strength for their mission. Their prayer is not flight from this unfaithful world, but rather attentiveness to the Word of God. At times their prayer is an argument or a complaint, but it is always an intercession that awaits and prepares for the intervention of the Savior God, the Lord of history (Cf. Am 7:2, 5; Isa 6:5, 8, 11; Jer 1:6; 15:15-18; 20:7-18).

(Acts 21, 9-17) The Lord's will be done

[9] He had four virgin daughters gifted with prophecy. [10] We had been there several days when a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. [11] He came up to us, took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the holy Spirit: This is the way the Jews will bind the owner of this belt in Jerusalem, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles." [12] When we heard this, we and the local residents begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. [13] Then Paul replied, "What are you doing,

weeping and breaking my heart? I am prepared not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." [14] Since he would not be dissuaded we let the matter rest, saying, "The Lord's will be done." [15] After these days we made preparations for our journey, then went up to Jerusalem. [16] Some of the disciples from Caesarea came along to lead us to the house of Mnason, a Cypriot, a disciple of long standing, with whom we were to stay. [17] When we reached Jerusalem the brothers welcomed us warmly.

(CCC 217) God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is "true instruction" (Mal 2:6). When he sends his Son into the world it will be "to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37): "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true" (1 Jn 5:20; cf. Jn 17:3). (CCC 2826) By prayer we can discern "what is the will of God" and obtain the endurance to do it (Rom 12:2; cf. Eph 5:17; cf. Heb 10:36). Jesus teaches us that one enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing "the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

(Acts 21, 18-22) Thousands of believers from the Jews

[18] The next day, Paul accompanied us on a visit to James, and all the presbyters were present. [19] He greeted them, then proceeded to tell them in detail what God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. [20] They praised God when they heard it but said to him, "Brother, you see how many thousands of believers there are from among the Jews, and they are all zealous observers of the law. [21] They have been informed that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses and that you are telling them not to circumcise their children or to observe their customary practices. [22] What is to be done? They will surely hear that you have arrived.

(CCC 595) Among the religious authorities of Jerusalem, not only were the Pharisee Nicodemus and the prominent Joseph of Arimathea both secret disciples of Jesus, but there was also long-standing dissension about him, so much so that St. John says of these authorities on the very eve of Christ's Passion, "many... believed in him", though very imperfectly (Jn 12:42; cf. 7:50; 9:16-17; 10:19-21; 19:38-39). This is not surprising, if one recalls that on the day after Pentecost "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" and "some believers... belonged to the party of the Pharisees", to the point that St. James could tell St. Paul, "How many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; and they are all zealous for the Law" (Acts 6:7; 15:5; 21:20). (CCC 2099) It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion: "Every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 10, 6: PL 41, 283).

(Acts 21, 23-26) Purify yourself with these four men

[23] So do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. [24] Take these men and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses that they may have their heads shaved. In this way everyone will know that there is nothing to the reports they have been given about you but

that you yourself live in observance of the law. [25] As for the Gentiles who have come to believe, we sent them our decision that they abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage." [26] So Paul took the men, and on the next day after purifying himself together with them entered the temple to give notice of the day when the purification would be completed and the offering made for each of them.

(CCC 2100) Outward sacrifice, to be genuine, must be the expression of spiritual sacrifice: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit..." (PS 51:17). The prophets of the Old Covenant often denounced sacrifices that were not from the heart or not coupled with love of neighbor (Cf. Am 5:21-25; Isa 1:10-20). Jesus recalls the words of the prophet Hosea: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13; 12:7; Cf. Hos 6:6). The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the cross as a total offering to the Father's love and for our salvation (Cf. Heb 9:13-14). By uniting ourselves with his sacrifice we can make our lives a sacrifice to God. (CCC 2101) In many circumstances, the Christian is called to make *promises* to God. Baptism and Confirmation, Matrimony and Holy Orders always entail promises. Out of personal devotion, the Christian may also promise to God this action, that prayer, this alms-giving, that pilgrimage, and so forth. Fidelity to promises made to God is a sign of the respect owed to the divine majesty and of love for a faithful God. (CCC 2102) "A *vow* is a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion" (CIC, can. 1191 § 1). A vow is an act of *devotion* in which the Christian dedicates himself to God or promises him some good work. By fulfilling his vows he renders to God what has been promised and consecrated to Him. The *Acts of the Apostles* shows us St. Paul concerned to fulfill the vows he had made (Cf. Acts 18:18; 21:23-24).

(Acts 21, 27-33) They were trying to kill him

[27] When the seven days were nearly completed, the Jews from the province of Asia noticed him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd, and laid hands on him, [28] shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us. This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place, and what is more, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this sacred place." [29] For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him and supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. [30] The whole city was in turmoil with people rushing together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the gates were closed. [31] While they were trying to kill him, a report reached the cohort commander that all Jerusalem was rioting. [32] He immediately took soldiers and centurions and charged down on them. When they saw the commander and the soldiers they stopped beating Paul. [33] The cohort commander came forward, arrested him, and ordered him to be secured with two chains; he tried to find out who he might be and what he had done.

(CCC 2476) *False witness and perjury*. When it is made publicly, a statement contrary to the truth takes on a particular gravity. In court it becomes false witness (Cf. Prov 19:9). When it is under oath, it is perjury. Acts such as these

contribute to condemnation of the innocent, exoneration of the guilty, or the increased punishment of the accused (Cf. Prov 18:5). They gravely compromise the exercise of justice and the fairness of judicial decisions.

(Acts 21, 34-40) I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia

[34] Some in the mob shouted one thing, others something else; so, since he was unable to ascertain the truth because of the uproar, he ordered Paul to be brought into the compound. [35] When he reached the steps, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob, [36] for a crowd of people followed and shouted, "Away with him!" [37] Just as Paul was about to be taken into the compound, he said to the cohort commander, "May I say something to you?" He replied, "Do you speak Greek? [38] So then you are not the Egyptian who started a revolt some time ago and led the four thousand assassins into the desert?" [39] Paul answered, "I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; I request you to permit me to speak to the people." [40] When he had given his permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the people; and when all was quiet he addressed them in Hebrew.

(CCC 2477) *Respect for the reputation* of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury (Cf. CIC, can. 220). He becomes guilty: - of *rash judgment* who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor; - of *detraction* who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them (Cf. Sir 21:28); - of *calumny* who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them. (CCC 2479) Detraction and calumny destroy the *reputation and honor of one's neighbor*. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity.