

Acts of Apostles

Acts 22

(Acts 22, 1-5) I persecuted this Way to death

[1] "My brothers and fathers, listen to what I am about to say to you in my defense." [2] When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew they became all the more quiet. And he continued, [3] "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel I was educated strictly in our ancestral law and was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. [4] I persecuted this Way to death, binding both men and women and delivering them to prison. [5] Even the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify on my behalf. For from them I even received letters to the brothers and set out for Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem in chains for punishment those there as well.

(CCC 2542) The Law entrusted to Israel never sufficed to justify those subject to it; it even became the instrument of "lust" (Cf. Rom 7:7). The gap between wanting and doing points to the conflict between God's Law which is the "law of my mind," and another law "making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Rom 7:23; cf. 7:10). (CCC 530) The *flight into Egypt* and the massacre of the innocents (Cf. Mt 2:13-18) make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn 1:11). Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him (Cf. Jn 15:20). Jesus' departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people (Cf. Mt 2:15; Hos 11:1).

(Acts 22, 6-13) Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[6] "On that journey as I drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from the sky suddenly shone around me. [7] I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' [8] I replied, 'Who are you, sir?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.' [9] My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me. [10] I asked, 'What shall I do, sir?' The Lord answered me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything appointed for you to do.' [11] Since I could see nothing because of the brightness of that light, I was led by hand by my companions and entered Damascus. [12] "A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [13] came to me and stood there and said, 'Saul, my brother, regain your sight.' And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him.

(CCC 748) "Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heartfelt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church" (LG 1; cf. Mk 16:15). These words open

the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. By choosing this starting point, the Council demonstrates that the article of faith about the Church depends entirely on the articles concerning Christ Jesus. The Church has no other light than Christ's; according to a favorite image of the Church Fathers, the Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun. (CCC 2466) In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. "Full of grace and truth," he came as the "light of the world," he *is the Truth* (Jn 1:14; 8:12; cf. 14:6). "Whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46). The disciple of Jesus continues in his word so as to know "the truth [that] will make you free" and that sanctifies (Jn 8:32; cf. 17:17). To follow Jesus is to live in "the Spirit of truth," whom the Father sends in his name and who leads "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes or No.'" (Mt 5:37).

(Acts 22, 14-20) Get up and have yourself baptized

[14] Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice; [15] for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard. [16] Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name.' [17] "After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance [18] and saw the Lord saying to me, 'Hurry, leave Jerusalem at once, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' [19] But I replied, 'Lord, they themselves know that from synagogue to synagogue I used to imprison and beat those who believed in you. [20] And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I myself stood by giving my approval and keeping guard over the cloaks of his murderers.'

(CCC 1216) "This bath is called *enlightenment*, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding...." (St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 61, 12: PG 6, 421). Having received in Baptism the Word, "the true light that enlightens every man," the person baptized has been "enlightened," he becomes a "son of light," indeed, he becomes "light" himself (Jn 1:9; 1 Thess 5:5; Heb 10:32; Eph 5:8): Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift...We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; *grace* since it is given even to the guilty; *Baptism* because sin is buried in the water; *anointing* for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; *enlightenment* because it radiates light; *clothing* since it veils our shame; *bath* because it washes; and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40, 3-4: PG 36, 361C).

(Acts 22, 21-25) I shall send you to the Gentiles

[21] Then he said to me, 'Go, I shall send you far away to the Gentiles.'" [22] They listened to him until he said this, but then they raised their voices and shouted, "Take such a one as this away from the earth. It is not right that he should live." [23] And as they were yelling and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, [24] the cohort commander ordered

him to be brought into the compound and gave instruction that he be interrogated under the lash to determine the reason why they were making such an outcry against him. [25] But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion on duty, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and has not been tried?"

(CCC 522) The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant" (Heb 9:15). He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming. (CCC 781) "At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him. He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness. He therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He gradually instructed this people.... All these things, however, happened as a preparation for and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ... The New Covenant in his blood; he called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit" (LG 9; Cf. Acts 10:35; 1 Cor 11:25). (CCC 1816) The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks" (LG 42; cf. DH 14). Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33).

(Acts 22, 26-30) Why he was being accused by the Jews

[26] When the centurion heard this, he went to the cohort commander and reported it, saying, "What are you going to do? This man is a Roman citizen." [27] Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes," he answered. [28] The commander replied, "I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money." Paul said, "But I was born one." [29] At once those who were going to interrogate him backed away from him, and the commander became alarmed when he realized that he was a Roman citizen and that he had had him bound. [30] The next day, wishing to determine the truth about why he was being accused by the Jews, he freed him and ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin to convene. Then he brought Paul down and made him stand before them.

(CCC 769) "The Church... will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven" (LG 48), at the time of Christ's glorious return. Until that day, "the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world's persecutions and God's consolations" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 18, 51: PL 41, 614; cf. LG 8). Here below she knows that she is in exile far from the Lord, and longs for the full coming of the Kingdom, when she will "be united in glory with her king" (LG 5; cf. 6; 2 Cor 5:6).

The Church, and through her the world, will not be perfected in glory without great trials. Only then will "all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect,'... be gathered together in the universal Church in the Father's presence" (LG 2). (CCC 675) Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers (Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12). The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth (Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20) will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh (Cf. 2 Th 2:4-12; 1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; I Jn 2:18, 22).

Acts 23

(Acts 23, 1-6) I am on trial for hope in the resurrection

[1] Paul looked intently at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have conducted myself with a perfectly clear conscience before God to this day." [2] The high priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike his mouth. [3] Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. Do you indeed sit in judgment upon me according to the law and yet in violation of the law order me to be struck?" [4] The attendants said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" [5] Paul answered, "Brothers, I did not realize he was the high priest. For it is written, 'You shall not curse a ruler of your people.'" [6] Paul was aware that some were Sadducees and some Pharisees, so he called out before the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees; (I) am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead."

(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 991) Belief in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. "The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live" (Tertullian, *De res.* 1, 1: PL 2, 841). How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor 15:12-14).

(Acts 23, 7-10) When he said this, a dispute broke out

[7] When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the group became divided. [8] For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, while the Pharisees acknowledge all three. [9] A great uproar occurred, and some scribes belonging to the Pharisee party stood up and sharply argued, "We find nothing wrong with

this man. Suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" [10] The dispute was so serious that the commander, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, ordered his troops to go down and rescue him from their midst and take him into the compound.

(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).

(Acts 23, 11-17) The Lord stood by him: Take courage

[11] The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage. For just as you have borne witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome." [12] When day came, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. [13] There were more than forty who formed this conspiracy. [14] They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have bound ourselves by a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. [15] You, together with the Sanhedrin, must now make an official request to the commander to have him bring him down to you, as though you meant to investigate his case more thoroughly. We on our part are prepared to kill him before he arrives." [16] The son of Paul's sister, however, heard about the ambush; so he went and entered the compound and reported it to Paul. [17] Paul then called one of the centurions and requested, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to report to him."

(CCC 662) "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12:32). The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, "entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands... But into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24). There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he "always lives to make intercession" for "those who draw near to God through him" (Heb 7:25). As "high priest of the good things to come" he is the centre and the principal actor of the liturgy that honours the Father in heaven (Heb 9:11; cf. Rev 4:6-11).

(Acts 23, 18-22) Not to eat until they have killed him

[18] So he took him and brought him to the commander and explained, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked that I bring this young man to you; he has something to say to you." [19] The commander took him by the hand, drew him aside, and asked him privately, "What is it you have to

report to me?" [20] He replied, "The Jews have conspired to ask you to bring Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to inquire about him more thoroughly, [21] but do not believe them. More than forty of them are lying in wait for him; they have bound themselves by oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are now ready and only wait for your consent." [22] As the commander dismissed the young man he directed him, "Tell no one that you gave me this information."

(CCC 668) "Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom 14:9). Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion", for the Father "has put all things under his feet" (Eph 1:20-22). Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are "set forth" and transcendently fulfilled (Eph 1:10; cf. 4:10; 1 Cor 15:24, 27-28). (CCC 669) As Lord, Christ is also head of the Church, which is his Body (Cf. Eph 1:22). Taken up to heaven and glorified after he had thus fully accomplished his mission, Christ dwells on earth in his Church. The redemption is the source of the authority that Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, exercises over the Church. "The kingdom of Christ (is) already present in mystery", "on earth, the seed and the beginning of the kingdom" (LG 3; 5; cf. Eph 4:11-13).

(Acts 23, 23-30) To ride and give him safe conduct

[23] Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go to Caesarea by nine o'clock tonight, along with seventy horsemen and two hundred auxiliaries. [24] Provide mounts for Paul to ride and give him safe conduct to Felix the governor." [25] Then he wrote a letter with this content: [26] "Claudius Lysias to his excellency the governor Felix, greetings. [27] This man, seized by the Jews and about to be murdered by them, I rescued after intervening with my troops when I learned that he was a Roman citizen. [28] I wanted to learn the reason for their accusations against him so I brought him down to their Sanhedrin. [29] I discovered that he was accused in matters of controversial questions of their law and not of any charge deserving death or imprisonment. [30] Since it was brought to my attention that there will be a plot against the man, I am sending him to you at once, and have also notified his accusers to state (their case) against him before you."

(CCC 1040) The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Cf. *Song* 8:6).

(Acts 23, 31-35) They took and escorted Paul by night

[31] So the soldiers, according to their orders, took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris. [32] The next day they returned to the compound, leaving the horsemen to complete the journey with him. [33] When they arrived in Caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul to him. [34] When he had read it and asked to what province he belonged, and learned that he was from Cilicia, [35] he said, "I shall hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that he be held in custody in Herod's praetorium.

(CCC 310) But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? With infinite power God could always create something better (Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 25, 6). But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world "in a state of journeying" towards its ultimate perfection. In God's plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also *physical evil* as long as creation has not reached perfection (Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* III, 71). (CCC 2738) The revelation of prayer in the economy of salvation teaches us that faith rests on God's action in history. Our filial trust is enkindled by his supreme act: the Passion and Resurrection of his Son. Christian prayer is cooperation with his providence, his plan of love for men. (CCC 2739) For St. Paul, this trust is bold, founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us and on the faithful love of the Father who has given us his only Son (Cf. Rom 10:12-13; 8:26-39). Transformation of the praying heart is the first response to our petition.

Acts 24

(Acts 24, 1-9) We found this man to be a pest

[1] Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and an advocate, a certain Tertullus, and they presented formal charges against Paul to the governor. [2] When he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, "Since we have attained much peace through you, and reforms have been accomplished in this nation through your provident care, [3] we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all gratitude. [4] But in order not to detain you further, I ask you to give us a brief hearing with your customary graciousness. [5] We found this man to be a pest; he creates dissension among Jews all over the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoreans. [6] He even tried to desecrate our temple, but we arrested him. [7] [8] If you examine him you will be able to learn from him for yourself about everything of which we are accusing him." [9] The Jews also joined in the attack and asserted that these things were so.

(CCC 2464) The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral

uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant. (CCC 2465) The Old Testament attests that *God is the source of all truth*. His Word is truth. His Law is truth. His "faithfulness endures to all generations" (Ps 119:90; Cf. Prov 8:7; 2 Sam 7:28; Ps 119:142; Lk 1:50). Since God is "true," the members of his people are called to live in the truth (Rom 3:4; cf. Ps 119:30). (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 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.

(Acts 24, 10-16) I hope there will be a resurrection

[10] Then the governor motioned to him to speak and Paul replied, "I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years and so I am pleased to make my defense before you. [11] As you can verify, not more than twelve days have passed since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. [12] Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor anywhere in the city did they find me arguing with anyone or instigating a riot among the people. [13] Nor can they prove to you the accusations they are now making against me. [14] But this I do admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors and I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and written in the prophets. [15] I have the same hope in God as they themselves have that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. [16] Because of this, I always strive to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

(CCC 1794) A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith" (1 Tim 5; cf. 3:9; 2 Tim 3; 1 Pet 3:21; Acts 24:16). The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct (GS 16). (CCC 2504) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16). Christ's disciples have "put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). (CCC 2505) Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy. (CCC 2508) Lying consists in saying what is false with the intention of deceiving one's neighbor. (CCC 2509) An offense committed against the truth requires reparation.

(Acts 24, 17-21) I am on trial for the resurrection

[17] After many years, I came to bring alms for my nation and offerings. [18] While I was so engaged, they found me, after my purification, in the temple without a crowd or disturbance. [19] But some Jews from the province of Asia, who should be here before you to make whatever accusation they might have against me – [20] or let these men themselves

state what crime they discovered when I stood before the Sanhedrin, [21] unless it was my one outcry as I stood among them, that 'I am on trial before you today for the resurrection of the dead.'"

(CCC 2506) The Christian is not to "be ashamed of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8) in deed and word. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith. (CCC 2507) Respect for the reputation and honor of persons forbids all detraction and calumny in word or attitude. (CCC 2510) The golden rule helps one discern, in concrete situations, whether or not it would be appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it. (CCC1015) "The flesh is the hinge of salvation" (Tertullian, *De res.* 8, 2: PL 2, 852). We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh. (CCC 1016) By death the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our body, transformed by reunion with our soul. Just as Christ is risen and lives for ever, so all of us will rise at the last day. (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 24, 22-24) He listened about faith in Christ Jesus

[22] Then Felix, who was accurately informed about the Way, postponed the trial, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I shall decide your case." [23] He gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that he should not prevent any of his friends from caring for his needs. [24] Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He had Paul summoned and listened to him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

(CCC 2471) Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that he "has come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). The Christian is not to "be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8). In situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation, after the example of St. Paul before his judges. We must keep "a clear conscience toward God and toward men" (Acts 24:16). (CCC 1807) *Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor" (Lev 19:15). "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col 4:1).

(Acts 24, 25-27) Self-restraint and the coming judgment

[25] But as he spoke about righteousness and self-restraint and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, "You may go for now; when I find an opportunity I shall summon you again." [26] At the same time

he hoped that a bribe would be offered him by Paul, and so he sent for him very often and conversed with him. [27] Two years passed and Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

(CCC 2337) Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift. (CCC 2338) The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech (Cf. Mt 5:37). (CCC 1038) The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15), will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29). Then Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him.... Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.... And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Mt 25:31, 32, 46).

Acts 25

(Acts 25, 1-8) Paul said: "I have committed no crime"

[1] Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem [2] where the chief priests and Jewish leaders presented him their formal charges against Paul. They asked him [3] as a favor to have him sent to Jerusalem, for they were plotting to kill him along the way. [4] Festus replied that Paul was being held in custody in Caesarea and that he himself would be returning there shortly. [5] He said, "Let your authorities come down with me, and if this man has done something improper, let them accuse him." [6] After spending no more than eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the following day took his seat on the tribunal and ordered that Paul be brought in. [7] When he appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him and brought many serious charges against him, which they were unable to prove. [8] In defending himself Paul said, "I have committed no crime either against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar."

(CCC 2234) God's fourth commandment also enjoins us to honor all who for our good have received authority in society from God. It clarifies the duties of those who exercise authority as well as those who benefit from it. (CCC 2235) Those who exercise authority should do so as a service. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). The exercise of authority is measured morally in

terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law.

(Acts 25, 9-12) I appeal to Caesar

[9] Then Festus, wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, said to Paul in reply, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there stand trial before me on these charges?" [10] Paul answered, "I am standing before the tribunal of Caesar; this is where I should be tried. I have committed no crime against the Jews, as you very well know. [11] If I have committed a crime or done anything deserving death, I do not seek to escape the death penalty; but if there is no substance to the charges they are bringing against me, then no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." [12] Then Festus, after conferring with his council, replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go."

(CCC 2238) Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God, who has made them stewards of his gifts: (Cf. Rom 13:1-2) "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.... Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (1 Pet 2:13, 16). Their loyal collaboration includes the right, and at times the duty, to voice their just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community.

(Acts 25, 13-21) Some issues about a certain Jesus

[13] When a few days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea on a visit to Festus. [14] Since they spent several days there, Festus referred Paul's case to the king, saying, "There is a man here left in custody by Felix. [15] When I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and demanded his condemnation. [16] I answered them that it was not Roman practice to hand over an accused person before he has faced his accusers and had the opportunity to defend himself against their charge. [17] So when (they) came together here, I made no delay; the next day I took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. [18] His accusers stood around him, but did not charge him with any of the crimes I suspected. [19] Instead they had some issues with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul claimed was alive. [20] Since I was at a loss how to investigate this controversy, I asked if he were willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these charges. [21] And when Paul appealed that he be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."

(CCC 2236) The exercise of authority is meant to give outward expression to a just hierarchy of values in order to facilitate the exercise of freedom and responsibility by all. Those in authority should practice distributive justice wisely, taking account of the needs and contribution of each, with a view to harmony and peace. They should take care that the regulations and measures they adopt are not a source of temptation by setting personal interest against that of the community (Cf. CA 25). (CCC 2237) *Political authorities* are obliged to respect the fundamental

rights of the human person. They will dispense justice humanely by respecting the rights of everyone, especially of families and the disadvantaged. The political rights attached to citizenship can and should be granted according to the requirements of the common good. They cannot be suspended by public authorities without legitimate and proportionate reasons. Political rights are meant to be exercised for the common good of the nation and the human community.

(Acts 25, 22-23) I too should like to hear this man

[22] Agrippa said to Festus, "I too should like to hear this man." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him." [23] The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great ceremony and entered the audience hall in the company of cohort commanders and the prominent men of the city and, by command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

(CCC 2257) Every society's judgments and conduct reflect a vision of man and his destiny. Without the light the Gospel sheds on God and man, societies easily become totalitarian. (CCC 2254) Public authority is obliged to respect the fundamental rights of the human person and the conditions for the exercise of his freedom. (CCC 2255) It is the duty of citizens to work with civil authority for building up society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. (CCC 2256) Citizens are obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Acts 25, 24-27) I have nothing to write about him

[24] And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all you here present with us, look at this man about whom the whole Jewish populace petitioned me here and in Jerusalem, clamoring that he should live no longer. [25] I found, however, that he had done nothing deserving death, and so when he appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. [26] But I have nothing definite to write about him to our sovereign; therefore I have brought him before all of you, and particularly before you, King Agrippa, so that I may have something to write as a result of this investigation. [27] For it seems senseless to me to send up a prisoner without indicating the charges against him."

(CCC 2235) Those who exercise authority should do so as a service. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). The exercise of authority is measured morally in terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law. (CCC 2238) Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God, who has made them stewards of his gifts: (Cf. Rom 13:1-2) "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.... Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (1 Pet 2:13, 16). Their loyal collaboration includes the right, and at times the duty, to voice their just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community.

Acts 26

(Acts 26, 1-11) I am standing trial because of my hope

[1] Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense. [2] "I count myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am to defend myself before you today against all the charges made against me by the Jews, [3] especially since you are an expert in all the Jewish customs and controversies. And therefore I beg you to listen patiently. [4] My manner of living from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my people and in Jerusalem, all (the) Jews know. [5] They have known about me from the start, if they are willing to testify, that I have lived my life as a Pharisee, the strictest party of our religion. [6] But now I am standing trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors. [7] Our twelve tribes hope to attain to that promise as they fervently worship God day and night; and on account of this hope I am accused by Jews, O king. [8] Why is it thought unbelievable among you that God raises the dead? [9] I myself once thought that I had to do many things against the name of Jesus the Nazorean, [10] and I did so in Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the holy ones with the authorization I received from the chief priests, and when they were to be put to death I cast my vote against them. [11] Many times, in synagogue after synagogue, I punished them in an attempt to force them to blaspheme; I was so enraged against them that I pursued them even to foreign cities.

(CCC 839) "Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways" (LG 16). *The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People*. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People (Cf. NA 4), "the first to hear the Word of God" (*Roman Missal*, Good Friday 13: General Intercessions, VI). The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom 9:4-5), "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). (CCC 840) And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus.

(Acts 26, 12-18) I send you to open their eyes

[12] "On one such occasion I was traveling to Damascus with the authorization and commission of the chief priests. [13] At midday, along the way, O king, I saw a light from the sky, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my traveling companions. [14] We all fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is

hard for you to kick against the goad.' [15] And I said, 'Who are you, sir?' And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. [16] Get up now, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness of what you have seen (of me) and what you will be shown. [17] I shall deliver you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I send you, [18] to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may obtain forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been consecrated by faith in me.'

(CCC 2018) Like conversion, justification has two aspects. Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, and so accepts forgiveness and righteousness from on high. (CCC 2022) The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom. (CCC 2020) Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God's mercy. (CCC 2017) The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in his life. (CCC 2021) Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.

(Acts 26, 19-23) I preached to repent and turn to God

[19] "And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. [20] On the contrary, first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and throughout the whole country of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached the need to repent and turn to God, and to do works giving evidence of repentance. [21] That is why the Jews seized me (when I was) in the temple and tried to kill me. [22] But I have enjoyed God's help to this very day, and so I stand here testifying to small and great alike, saying nothing different from what the prophets and Moses foretold, [23] that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

(CCC 601) The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin (Isa 53:11; cf. 53:12; Jn 8:34-36; Acts 3:14). Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received", St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3; cf. also Acts 3:18; 7:52; 13:29; 26:22-23). In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant (Cf. Isa 53:7-8 and Acts 8:32-35). Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant (Cf. Mt 20:28). After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles (Cf. Lk 24:25-27, 44-45).

(Acts 26, 24-32) This man could have been set free

[24] While Paul was so speaking in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "You are mad, Paul; much learning is driving you mad." [25] But Paul replied, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; I am speaking words of truth and reason. [26] The king knows about these matters and to him I speak boldly, for I cannot believe that (any) of this has escaped his notice; this was not done in a corner. [27] King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe." [28] Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You will soon persuade me to play the Christian." [29] Paul replied, "I would pray to God that sooner or later not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am except for these chains." [30] Then the king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and the others who sat with them. [31] And after they had withdrawn they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing (at all) that deserves death or imprisonment." [32] And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

(CCC 2087) Our moral life has its source in faith in God who reveals his love to us. St. Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26) as our first obligation. He shows that "ignorance of God" is the principle and explanation of all moral deviations (cf. Rom 1:18-32). Our duty toward God is to believe in him and to bear witness to him. (CCC 2088) The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith: *Voluntary doubt* about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. *Involuntary doubt* refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness. (CCC 2089) *Incredulity* is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. "*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; *apostasy* is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; *schism* is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (CIC, can. 751: emphasis added).

Acts 27

(Acts 27, 1-14) They handed Paul over to a centurion

[1] When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they handed Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion named Julius of the Cohort Augusta. [2] We went on board a ship from Adramyttium bound for ports in the province of Asia and set sail. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. [3] On the following day we put in at Sidon where Julius was kind enough to allow Paul to visit his friends who took care of him. [4] From there we put out to sea and sailed around the sheltered side of Cyprus because of the headwinds, [5] and crossing the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia we came to Myra in Lycia. [6] There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship that was sailing to Italy and put us on

board. [7] For many days we made little headway, arriving at Cnidus only with difficulty, and because the wind would not permit us to continue our course we sailed for the sheltered side of Crete off Salmone. [8] We sailed past it with difficulty and reached a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. [9] Much time had now passed and sailing had become hazardous because the time of the fast had already gone by, so Paul warned them, [10] "Men, I can see that this voyage will result in severe damage and heavy loss not only to the cargo and the ship, but also to our lives." [11] The centurion, however, paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. [12] Since the harbor was unfavorably situated for spending the winter, the majority planned to put out to sea from there in the hope of reaching Phoenix, a port in Crete facing west-northwest, there to spend the winter. [13] A south wind blew gently, and thinking they had attained their objective, they weighed anchor and sailed along close to the coast of Crete. [14] Before long an offshore wind of hurricane force called a "Northeaster" struck.

(CCC 302) Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call "divine providence" the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection: By his providence God protects and governs all things which he has made, "reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well". For "all are open and laid bare to his eyes", even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures (Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* I: DS 3003; cf. Wis 8:1; Heb 4:13).

(Acts 27, 15-22) Men, not one of you will be lost

[15] Since the ship was caught up in it and could not head into the wind we gave way and let ourselves be driven. [16] We passed along the sheltered side of an island named Cauda and managed only with difficulty to get the dinghy under control. [17] They hoisted it aboard, then used cables to undergird the ship. Because of their fear that they would run aground on the shoal of Syrtis, they lowered the drift anchor and were carried along in this way. [18] We were being pounded by the storm so violently that the next day they jettisoned some cargo, [19] and on the third day with their own hands they threw even the ship's tackle overboard. [20] Neither the sun nor the stars were visible for many days, and no small storm raged. Finally, all hope of our surviving was taken away. [21] When many would no longer eat, Paul stood among them and said, "Men, you should have taken my advice and not have set sail from Crete and you would have avoided this disastrous loss. [22] I urge you now to keep up your courage; not one of you will be lost, only the ship.

(CCC 321) Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end. (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" (I Pt 5:7; cf. Ps 55:23). (CCC 303) The witness of Scripture is unanimous

that the solicitude of divine providence is *concrete* and *immediate*; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases" (Ps 115:3) and so it is with Christ, "who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens" (Rev 3:7). As the book of Proverbs states: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established" (Prov 19:21).

(Acts 27, 23-29) An angel said: 'Do not be afraid Paul'

[23] For last night an angel of the God to whom (I) belong and whom I serve stood by me [24] and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You are destined to stand before Caesar; and behold, for your sake, God has granted safety to all who are sailing with you.' [25] Therefore, keep up your courage, men; I trust in God that it will turn out as I have been told. [26] We are destined to run aground on some island." [27] On the fourteenth night, as we were still being driven about on the Adriatic Sea, toward midnight the sailors began to suspect that they were nearing land. [28] They took soundings and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on, they again took soundings and found fifteen fathoms. [29] Fearing that we would run aground on a rocky coast, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

(CCC 301) With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence: For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living (Wis 11:24-26). (CCC 307) To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it (Cf. Gen 1:26-28). God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers and their sufferings (Cf. Col 1:24). They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom (1 Cor 3:9; I Thess 3:2; Col 4:11). (CCC 334) In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels (Cf. Acts 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25).

(Acts 27, 30-38) He took bread, gave thanks to God

[30] The sailors then tried to abandon ship; they lowered the dinghy to the sea on the pretext of going to lay out anchors from the bow. [31] But Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." [32] So the soldiers cut the ropes of the dinghy and set it adrift. [33] Until the day began to dawn, Paul kept urging all to take some food. He said, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting,

going hungry and eating nothing. [34] I urge you, therefore, to take some food; it will help you survive. Not a hair of the head of anyone of you will be lost." [35] When he said this, he took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, broke it, and began to eat. [36] They were all encouraged, and took some food themselves. [37] In all, there were two hundred seventy-six of us on the ship. [38] After they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

(CCC 294) The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us "to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*" (Eph 1:5-6), for "the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 20, 7: PG 7/1, 1037). The ultimate purpose of creation is that God "who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all", thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude" (AG 2; cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

(Acts 27, 39-44) All reached shore safely

[39] When day came they did not recognize the land, but made out a bay with a beach. They planned to run the ship ashore on it, if they could. [40] So they cast off the anchors and abandoned them to the sea, and at the same time they unfastened the lines of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail into the wind, they made for the beach. [41] But they struck a sandbar and ran the ship aground. The bow was wedged in and could not be moved, but the stern began to break up under the pounding (of the waves). [42] The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so that none might swim away and escape, [43] but the centurion wanted to save Paul and so kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to the shore, [44] and then the rest, some on planks, others on debris from the ship. In this way, all reached shore safely.

(CCC 295) We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom (Cf. Wis 9:9). It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: "For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev 4:11). Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all"; and "The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made" (Pss 104:24; 145:9).

Acts 28

(Acts 28, 1-10) The sick came to Paul and were cured

[1] Once we had reached safety we learned that the island was called Malta. [2] The natives showed us extraordinary hospitality; they lit a fire and welcomed all of us because it had begun to rain and was cold. [3] Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire when a viper,

escaping from the heat, fastened on his hand. [4] When the natives saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must certainly be a murderer; though he escaped the sea, Justice has not let him remain alive." [5] But he shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm. [6] They were expecting him to swell up or suddenly to fall down dead but, after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god. [7] In the vicinity of that place were lands belonging to a man named Publius, the chief of the island. He welcomed us and received us cordially as his guests for three days. [8] It so happened that the father of Publius was sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and, after praying, laid his hands on him and healed him. [9] After this had taken place, the rest of the sick on the island came to Paul and were cured. [10] They paid us great honor and when we eventually set sail they brought us the provisions we needed.

(CCC 1507 The risen Lord renews this mission ("In my name... They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" Mk 16:17-18.) and confirms it through the signs that the Church performs by invoking his name (Cf. Acts 9:34; 14:3). These signs demonstrate in a special way that Jesus is truly "God who saves" (Cf. Mt 1:21; Acts 4:12). (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 1509) "Heal the sick!" (Mt 10:8). The Church has received this charge from the Lord and strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick as well as by accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. She believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health (Cf. Jn 6:54, 58; 1 Cor 11:30).

(Acts 28, 11-15) Paul gave thanks to God

[11] Three months later we set sail on a ship that had wintered at the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the Dioscuri as its figurehead. [12] We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days, [13] and from there we sailed round the coast and arrived at Rhegium. After a day, a south wind came up and in two days we reached Puteoli. [14] There we found some brothers and were urged to stay with them for seven days. And thus we came to Rome. [15] The brothers from there heard about us and came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul gave thanks to God and took courage.

(CCC 788) When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit (Cf. Jn 14:18; 20:22; Mt 28:20; Acts 2:33). As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his

Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation" (LG 7). (CCC 2074) Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren. His person becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

(Acts 28, 16-22) Called together the leaders of the Jews

[16] When he entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. [17] Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered he said to them, "My brothers, although I had done nothing against our people or our ancestral customs, I was handed over to the Romans as a prisoner from Jerusalem. [18] After trying my case the Romans wanted to release me, because they found nothing against me deserving the death penalty. [19] But when the Jews objected, I was obliged to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no accusation to make against my own nation. [20] This is the reason, then, I have requested to see you and to speak with you, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear these chains." [21] They answered him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, nor has any of the brothers arrived with a damaging report or rumor about you. [22] But we should like to hear you present your views, for we know that this sect is denounced everywhere."

(CCC 59) In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house (Gen 12:1), and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 17:5; 12:3 (LXX); cf. Gal 3:8). (CCC 60) The people descended from Abraham would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church (Cf. Rom 11:28; Jn 11:52; 10:16). They would be the root on to which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe (Cf. Rom 11:17-18, 24). (CCC 62) After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Saviour (Cf. DV 3.). (CCC 63) Israel is the priestly people of God, "called by the name of the LORD", and "the first to hear the word of God" (Deut 28: 10; *Roman Missal*, Good Friday, General Intercession VI; see also Ex 19:6), The people of "elder brethren" in the faith of Abraham.

(Acts 28, 23-29) The Gentiles will listen

[23] So they arranged a day with him and came to his lodgings in great numbers. From early morning until evening, he expounded his position

to them, bearing witness to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets. [24] Some were convinced by what he had said, while others did not believe. [25] Without reaching any agreement among themselves they began to leave; then Paul made one final statement. "Well did the holy Spirit speak to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, saying: [26] 'Go to this people and say: You shall indeed hear but not understand. You shall indeed look but never see. [27] Gross is the heart of this people; they will not hear with their ears; they have closed their eyes, so they may not see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.' [28] Let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." [29]

(CCC 591) Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished (Jn 10:36-38). But such an act of faith must go through a mysterious death to self, for a new "birth from above" under the influence of divine grace (Cf. Jn 3:7; 6:44). Such a demand for conversion in the face of so surprising a fulfilment of the promises (Cf. Isa 53:1) allows one to understand the Sanhedrin's tragic misunderstanding of Jesus: they judged that he deserved the death sentence as a blasphemer (Cf. Mk 3:6; Mt 26:64-66). The members of the Sanhedrin were thus acting at the same time out of "ignorance" and the "hardness" of their "unbelief" (Cf. Lk 23 34; Acts 3: 17-18; Mk 3:5; Rom 11:25, 20). (CCC 613) Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:19), and the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28; cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 1 Cor 11:25). (CCC 614) This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices (Cf. Heb 10:10). First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience (Cf. Jn 10:17-18, 15:13; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 4:10).

(Acts 28, 30-31) He taught about the Lord Jesus Christ

[30] He remained for two full years in his lodgings. He received all who came to him, [31] and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

(CCC 1816) The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks" (LG 42; cf. DH 14). Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33). (CCC 2471) Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that he "has come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). The Christian is not to

"be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8). In situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation, after the example of St. Paul before his judges. We must keep "a clear conscience toward God and toward men" (Acts 24:16). (CCC 2468) Truth as uprightness in human action and speech is called *truthfulness*, sincerity, or candor. Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy. (CCC 274) "Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God. Once our reason has grasped the idea of God's almighty power, it will easily and without any hesitation admit everything that [the Creed] will afterwards propose for us to believe - even if they be great and marvellous things, far above the ordinary laws of nature" (*Roman Catechism* I, 2, 13).