

Acts of Apostles

Acts 8

(Acts 8, 1-4) On that day broke out a severe persecution

[1] Now Saul was consenting to his execution. On that day, there broke out a severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. [2] Devout men buried Stephen and made a loud lament over him. [3] Saul, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment. [4] Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

(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 8, 5-8) Philip proclaimed the Messiah

[5] Thus Philip went down to (the) city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. [6] With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. [7] For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. [8] There was great joy in that city.

(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 8, 9-16) A man, Simon, used to practice magic

[9] A man named Simon used to practice magic in the city and astounded the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great. [10] All of them, from the least to the greatest, paid attention to him, saying, "This man is the 'Power of God' that is called 'Great.'" [11] They paid attention to him because he had astounded them by his magic for a long time, [12] but once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized. [13] Even Simon himself believed and, after being baptized, became devoted to Philip; and when he saw the signs and mighty deeds that were occurring, he was astounded. [14] Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, [15] who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, [16] for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(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. (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 8, 17-25) May your money perish with you

[17] Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit. [18] When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money [19] and said, "Give me this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay my hands may receive the holy Spirit." [20] But Peter said to him, "May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money. [21] You have no share or lot in this matter, for your heart is not upright before God. [22] Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your intention may be forgiven. [23] For I see that you are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of iniquity." [24] Simon said in reply, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." [25] So when

they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem and preached the good news to many Samaritan villages.

(CCC 2121) *Simony* is defined as the buying or selling of spiritual things (Cf. Acts 8:9-24). To Simon the magician, who wanted to buy the spiritual power he saw at work in the apostles, St. Peter responded: "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!" (Acts 8:20). Peter thus held to the words of Jesus: "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 10:8; cf. already Isa 55:1). It is impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master, for they have their source in God. One can receive them only from him, without payment. (CCC 2118) God's first commandment condemns the main sins of irreligion: tempting God, in words or deeds, sacrilege, and simony.

(Acts 8, 26-29) The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip

[26] Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, "Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route." [27] So he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, [28] and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. [29] The Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join up with that chariot."

(CCC 331) Christ is the centre of the angelic world. They are *his* angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...." (Mt 25:31) They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Heb 1:14). (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). (CCC 747) The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men. (CCC 1108) In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of the Father's vine which bears fruit on its branches (Cf. Jn 15:1-17; Gal 5:22). The most intimate cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is achieved in the liturgy. The Spirit who is the Spirit of communion, abides indefectibly in the Church. For this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together. Communion with the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion are inseparably the fruit of the Spirit in the liturgy (Cf. Jn 1:3-7).

(Acts 8, 30-35) Then Philip proclaimed Jesus to him

[30] Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" [31] He replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.

[32] This was the scripture passage he was reading: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [33] In (his) humiliation justice was denied him. Who will tell of his posterity? For his life is taken from the earth." [34] Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, "I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this? About himself, or about someone else?" [35] Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him.

(CCC 536) The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:12). Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death (Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Already he is coming to "fulfil all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins (Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39). The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son (Cf. Lk 3:22; Isa 42:1). The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him" (Jn 1:32-33; cf. Isa 11:2). Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" (Mt 3:16) - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

(Acts 8, 36-40) What is to prevent my being baptized?

[36] As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?" [37]. [38] Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him. [39] When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing. [40] Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

(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). (CCC 1213) Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*) (Cf. Council of Florence: DS 1314: *vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through

water in the word" (*Roman Catechism* II, 2, 5; cf. Council of Florence: DS 1314; CIC, cann. 204 § 1; 849; CCEO, can. 675 § 1).

Acts 9

(Acts 9, 1-9) Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[1] Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. [3] On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. [4] He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" [5] He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. [6] Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." [7] The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. [8] Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. [9] For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

(CCC 154) Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions, or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to "yield by faith the full submission of... intellect and will to God who reveals" (*Dei Filius*: 3: DS 3008), and to share in an interior communion with him. (CCC 155 In faith, the human intellect and will co-operate with divine grace: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 2, 9; cf. *Dei Filius* 3; DS 3010). (CCC 162 Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim 1:18-19). To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith (Cf. Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5; 22:32); it must be "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church (Gal 5:6; Rom 15:13; cf. Jas 2:14-26).

(Acts 9, 10-14) Ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul

[10] There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." [11] The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, [12] and (in a vision) he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay (his)

hands on him, that he may regain his sight." [13] But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. [14] And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name."

(CCC 1426) *Conversion* to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us "holy and without blemish," just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is "holy and without blemish" (Eph 1:4; 5:27). Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls *concupiscence*, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life (Cf. Council of Trent (1546) DS 1515). This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545; LG 40). (CCC 1425) "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). One must appreciate the magnitude of the gift God has given us in the sacraments of Christian initiation in order to grasp the degree to which sin is excluded for him who has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). But the apostle John also says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8). And the Lord himself taught us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses" (Cf. Lk 11:4; Mt 6:12), linking our forgiveness of one another's offenses to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us.

(Acts 9, 15-19) He will have to suffer for my name

[15] But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, [16] and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." [17] So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit." [18] Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, [19] and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength. He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus,

(CCC 1442) Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). (CCC 1435) Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right (Cf. Am 5:24; Isa 1:17), by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance (Cf. Lk 9:23).

(Acts 9, 20-25) He began to proclaim Jesus Son of God

[20] and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. [21] All who heard him were astounded and said, "Is not this the man who in Jerusalem ravaged those who call upon this name, and came here expressly to take them back in chains to the chief priests?" [22] But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded (the) Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this is the Messiah. [23] After a long time had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, [24] but their plot became known to Saul. Now they were keeping watch on the gates day and night so as to kill him, [25] but his disciples took him one night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

(CCC 430) Jesus means in Hebrew: "God saves." At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission (Cf. Lk 1:31). Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, "will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21; cf. 2:7). In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men. (CCC 435) The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words "through our Lord Jesus Christ". The *Hail Mary* reaches its high point in the words "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." the Eastern prayer of the heart, the *Jesus Prayer*, says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word "Jesus" on their lips. (CCC 436) The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means "anointed". It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets (Cf. Ex 29:7; Lev 8:12; 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 16:1, 12-13; 1 Kings 1:39; 19:16). This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively (Cf. Ps 2:2; Acts 4:26-27). It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet (Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Zech 4:14; 6:13; Lk 4:16-21). Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet and king.

(Acts 9, 26-29) In Jerusalem Paul spoke out boldly

[26] When he arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. [27] Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how on the way he had seen the Lord and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. [28] He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. [29] He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him.

(CCC 433) The name of the Savior God was invoked only once in the year by the high priest in atonement for the sins of Israel, after he had sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies with the sacrificial blood. The mercy seat was the place of

God's presence (Cf. Ex 25:22; Lev 16:2,15-16; Num 7:89; Sir 50:20; Heb 9:5,7). When St. Paul speaks of Jesus whom "God put forward as an expiation by his blood", he means that in Christ's humanity "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (Rom 3:25; 2 Cor 5:19). (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).

(Acts 9, 30-31) With the consolation of the holy Spirit

[30] And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus. [31] The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

(CCC 747) The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men. (CCC 737) The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *prepares* men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to *bring them into communion* with God, that they may "bear much fruit" (Jn 15:8, 16).

(Acts 9, 32-33) A man, named Aeneas, was paralyzed

[32] As Peter was passing through every region, he went down to the holy ones living in Lydda. [33] There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been confined to bed for eight years, for he was paralyzed.

(CCC 1503) Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (Cf. Mk 2:17). His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them. (CCC 1506) Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn (Cf. Mt 10:38). By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associates them with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing: "So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mk 6:12-13). (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).

(Acts 9, 34-35) Peter said to him, Jesus Christ heals you

[34] Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed." He got up at once. [35] And all the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

(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). (CCC 1510) However, the apostolic Church has its own rite for the sick, attested to by St. James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [*presbyters*] of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:14-15). Tradition has recognized in this rite one of the seven sacraments (Cf. Council of Constantinople II (553) DS 216; Council of Florence (1439) 1324-1325; Council of Trent (1551) 1695-1696; 1716-1717).

(Acts 9, 36-39) A disciple fell sick and died

[36] Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated means Dorcas). She was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving. [37] Now during those days she fell sick and died, so after washing her, they laid (her) out in a room upstairs. [38] Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." [39] So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs where all the widows came to him weeping and showing him the tunics and cloaks that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

(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). (CCC 997) *What is "rising"?* In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection. (CCC 998) *Who will rise?* All the dead will rise, "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:29; cf. Dan 12:2).

(Acts 9, 40-43) Peter said, "Tabitha, rise up."

[40] Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. [41] He gave her his hand and raised her up, and when he had called the holy ones and the widows, he presented her alive. [42] This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord. [43] And he stayed a long time in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

(CCC 999) *How?* Christ is raised with his own body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Lk 24:39); but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, "all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear," but Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body," into a "spiritual body" (Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 801; Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 15:44): But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel.... What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.... The dead will be raised imperishable... For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality (1 Cor 15:35-37, 42, 52, 53). (CCC 1000) This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies: Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 4-5: PG 7/1, 1028-1029). (CCC 1001) *When?* Definitively "at the last day," "at the end of the world" (Jn 6: 39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; LG 48 § 3). Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thess 4:16).

Acts 10

(Acts 10, 1-4) He saw an angel of God come in to him

[1] Now in Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Cohort called the Italica, [2] devout and God-fearing along with his whole household, who used to give alms generously to the Jewish people

and pray to God constantly. [3] One afternoon about three o'clock, he saw plainly in a vision an angel of God come in to him and say to him, "Cornelius." [4] He looked intently at him and, seized with fear, said, "What is it, sir?" He said to him, "Your prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a memorial offering before God.

(CCC 327) The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirms that God "from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (*deinde*) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body" (Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3002 and Paul VI, CPG § 8). (CCC 351) The angels surround Christ their Lord. They serve him especially in the accomplishment of his saving mission to men. (CCC 352) The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being. (CCC 335) In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli...* ["May the angels lead you into Paradise... "]). Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

(Acts 10, 5-8) Summon one Simon who is called Peter

[5] Now send some men to Joppa and summon one Simon who is called Peter. [6] He is staying with another Simon, a tanner, who has a house by the sea." [7] When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from his staff, [8] explained everything to them, and sent them to Joppa.

(CCC 336) From its beginning until death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession (Cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Ps 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12). "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life" (St. Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* III, I: PG 29, 656B). Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God. (CCC 2462) Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God. (CCC 2447) The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities (Cf. Isa 58:6-7; Heb 13:3). Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God (Cf. Tob 4:5-11; Sir 17:22; Mt 6:2-4): He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise (Lk 3:11). But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you (Lk 11:41). If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (Jas 2:15-16; cf. 1 Jn 3:17).

(Acts 10, 9-15) Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat.

[9] The next day, while they were on their way and nearing the city, Peter went up to the roof terrace to pray at about noontime. [10] He was hungry and wished to eat, and while they were making preparations he fell into a trance. [11] He saw heaven opened and something resembling a large sheet coming down, lowered to the ground by its four corners. [12] In it were all the earth's four-legged animals and reptiles and the birds of the sky. [13] A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat." [14] But Peter said, "Certainly not, sir. For never have I eaten anything profane and unclean." [15] The voice spoke to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane."

(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 528) The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee (Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, antiphon at the Cantic of Mary). In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations (Cf. Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16). Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament (Cf. Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6). The Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini* 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third Reading) (are made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

(Acts 10, 16-23) I am the one you are looking for

[16] This happened three times, and then the object was taken up into the sky. [17] While Peter was in doubt about the meaning of the vision he had seen, the men sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house and arrived at the entrance. [18] They called out inquiring whether Simon, who is called Peter, was staying there. [19] As Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said (to him), "There are three men here looking for you. [20] So get up, go downstairs, and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them." [21] Then Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your being here?" [22] They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, respected by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to

summon you to his house and to hear what you have to say." [23] So he invited them in and showed them hospitality. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him.

(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).

(Acts 10, 24-29) May I ask why you summoned me?

[24] On the following day he entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. [25] When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. [26] Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being." [27] While he conversed with him, he went in and found many people gathered together [28] and said to them, "You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean. [29] And that is why I came without objection when sent for. May I ask, then, why you summoned me?"

(CCC 1989) The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man (Council of Trent (1547): DS 1528). (CCC 1990) Justification *detaches man from sin* which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals.

(Acts 10, 30-33) We are all here in the presence of God

[30] Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, I was at prayer in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling robes stood before me and said, [31] 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your almsgiving remembered before God. [32] Send therefore to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' [33] So I sent for you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to listen to all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

(CCC 1991) Justification is at the same time *the acceptance of God's righteousness* through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or "justice") here means

the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us. (CCC 1993) Justification establishes *cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom*. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent: When God touches man's heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God's sight (Council of Trent (1547): DS 1525).

(Acts 10, 34-38) God shows no partiality

[34] Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. [35] Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. [36] You know the word (that) he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, [37] what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, [38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

(CCC 761) The gathering together of the People of God began at the moment when sin destroyed the communion of men with God, and that of men among themselves. The gathering together of the Church is, as it were, God's reaction to the chaos provoked by sin. This reunification is achieved secretly in the heart of all peoples: "In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable" to God (Acts 10:35; cf. LG 9; 13; 16). (CCC 453) The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (Lk 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). (CCC 486) The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is "Christ", that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:1-12; Lk 1:35; 2:8-20; Jn 1:31-34; 2:11). Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38).

(Acts 10, 39-44) The holy Spirit fell upon all

[39] We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and (in) Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. [40] This man God raised (on) the third day and granted that he be visible, [41] not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42] He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. [43] To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name." [44] While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word.

(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 852) *Missionary paths*. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist, "the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission" (John Paul II, *RMiss* 21). It is he who leads the Church on her missionary paths. "This mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor; so the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death, a death from which he emerged victorious by his resurrection" (AG 5). So it is that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 50, 13; PL 1, 603).

(Acts 10, 45-49) Peter ordered them to be baptized

[45] The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, [46] for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, [47] "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?" [48] He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. [49] Then they invited him to stay for a few days.

(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 683) "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6). This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son. Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them. And it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of

God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit (St. Irenaeus, *Dem. Ap.* 7: SCh 62, 41-42).

Acts 11

(Acts 11, 1-7) In a trance I had a vision

[1] Now the apostles and the brothers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles too had accepted the word of God. [2] So when Peter went up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers confronted him, [3] saying, "You entered the house of uncircumcised people and ate with them." [4] Peter began and explained it to them step by step, saying, [5] "I was at prayer in the city of Joppa when in a trance I had a vision, something resembling a large sheet coming down, lowered from the sky by its four corners, and it came to me. [6] Looking intently into it, I observed and saw the four-legged animals of the earth, the wild beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. [7] I also heard a voice say to me, 'Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat.'

(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 11, 8-15) You and all your household will be saved

[8] But I said, 'Certainly not, sir, because nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' [9] But a second time a voice from heaven answered, 'What God has made clean, you are not to call profane.' [10] This happened three times, and then everything was drawn up again into the sky. [11] Just then three men appeared at the house where we were, who had been sent to me from Caesarea. [12] The Spirit told me to accompany them without discriminating. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. [13] He related to us how he had seen (the) angel standing in his house, saying, 'Send someone to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, [14] who will speak words to you by which you and all your household will be saved.' [15] As I began to speak, the holy Spirit fell upon them as it had upon us at the beginning,

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 11, 8-15).

(Acts 11, 16-18) God gave them the same gift

[16] and I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.' [17] If then God gave them the same gift he gave to us when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to hinder God?" [18] When they heard this, they stopped objecting and glorified God, saying, "God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too."

(CCC 686) The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these "end times," ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. (CCC 684) Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to "know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ" (In 17:3). But the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, explains this progression in terms of the pedagogy of divine "condescension": The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly.... By advancing and progressing "from glory to glory," the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio theol.*, 5, 26 (= *Oratio* 31, 26): PG 36, 161-163). (CCC 685) To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: "with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed; see above, par. 465). For this reason, the divine mystery of the Holy Spirit was already treated in the context of Trinitarian "theology." Here, however, we have to do with the Holy Spirit only in the divine "economy." (CCC 804) One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (LG 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (AG 1).

(Acts 11, 19-26) A great number turned to the Lord

[19] Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that arose because of Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but Jews. [20] There were some Cypriots and Cyrenians among them, however, who came to Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. [21] The hand of the Lord

was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. [22] The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas (to go) to Antioch. [23] When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart, [24] for he was a good man, filled with the holy Spirit and faith. And a large number of people was added to the Lord. [25] Then he went to Tarsus to look for Saul, [26] and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

(CCC 1432) The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart (Cf. Ezek 36:26-27). Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him: "Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!" (Lam 5:21). God gives us the strength to begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced (Cf. Jn 19:37; Zech 12:10): Let us fix our eyes on Christ's blood and understand how precious it is to his Father, for, poured out for our salvation, it has brought to the whole world the grace of repentance (St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Cor.* 7, 4: PG 1, 224). (CCC 1433) Since Easter, the Holy Spirit has proved "the world wrong about sin" (Cf. Jn 16:8-9) i.e., proved that the world has not believed in him whom the Father has sent. But this same Spirit who brings sin to light is also the Consoler who gives the human heart grace for repentance and conversion (Cf. Jn 15:26; Acts 2:36-38; John Paul II, *DeV* 27-48). (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). (CCC 1289) Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (*chrism*) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38). This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason the Eastern Churches call this sacrament *Chrismation*, anointing with *chrism*, or *myron* which means "chrism." In the West, the term *Confirmation* suggests that this sacrament both confirms baptism, and strengthens baptismal grace.

(Acts 11, 27-30) Each should send relief to the brothers

[27] At that time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, [28] and one of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine all over the world, and it happened under Claudius. [29] So the disciples determined that, according to ability, each should send relief to the brothers who lived in Judea. [30] This they did, sending it to the presbyters in care of Barnabas and Saul.

(CCC 770) The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it. It is only "with the eyes of faith" (*Roman Catechism* I, 10, 20) that one can see her in her visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life. (CCC 951) *Communion of charisms*. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit "distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" for the building up of the Church (LG 12 § 2). Now, "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). (CCC 952) "*They had everything in common*" (Acts 4:32). "Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy... and of their neighbors in want" (*Roman Catechism* 1, 10, 27). A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods (Cf. Lk 16:1, 3). (CCC 2003) Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are *sacramental graces*, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore *special graces*, also called *charisms* after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit" (Cf. LG 12). Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 12). (CCC 2004) Among the special graces ought to be mentioned the *graces of state* that accompany the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church: Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom 12:6-8).

Acts 12

(Acts 12, 1-2) King Herod had James killed by the sword

[1] About that time King Herod laid hands upon some members of the church to harm them. [2] He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword,

(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). (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 12, 3-5) He proceeded to arrest Peter also

[3] And when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (It was (the) feast of Unleavened Bread.) [4] He had him taken into custody and put in prison under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. He intended to bring him before the people after Passover. [5] Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer by the church was fervently being made to God on his behalf.

(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 2565) In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity ... with the whole human spirit" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, 16, 9: PG 35, 945). Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ (Cf. Rom 6:5). Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love (Cf. Eph 3:18-21).

(Acts 12, 6-8) The angel of the Lord stood by him

[6] On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. [7] Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying, "Get up quickly." The chains fell from his wrists. [8] The angel said to him, "Put on your belt and your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Put on your cloak and follow me."

(CCC 353) God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence and their order. He destined all material creatures for the good of the human race. Man, and through him all creation, is destined for the glory of God. (CCC 325) The Apostles' Creed professes that God is "creator of heaven and earth". The Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes "all that is, seen and unseen". (CCC 328) The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

(Acts 12, 9-11) His angel rescued me from Herod

[9] So he followed him out, not realizing that what was happening through the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. [10] They passed the first guard, then the second, and came to the iron gate leading out to the city, which opened for them by itself. They emerged and made their way down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him. [11] Then Peter recovered his senses and said, "Now I know for certain that (the) Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting."

(CCC 330) As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness (Cf. Pius XII, *Humani generis*: DS 3891; Lk 20:36; Dan 10:9-12). (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). (CCC 335) In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli...* ["May the angels lead you into Paradise..."]. Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).(CCC 336) From its beginning until death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession (Cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Ps 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12). "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life" (St. Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* III, I: PG 29, 656B). Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

(Acts 12, 12-15) Peter went to the house of Mary

[12] When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who is called Mark, where there were many people gathered in prayer. [13] When he knocked on the gateway door, a maid named Rhoda came to answer it. [14] She was so overjoyed when she recognized Peter's voice that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. [15] They told her, "You are out of your mind," but she insisted that it was so. But they kept saying, "It is his angel."

(CCC) 2624 In the first community of Jerusalem, believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This sequence is characteristic of the Church's prayer: founded on the apostolic faith; authenticated by charity; nourished in the Eucharist. (CCC 2590) "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C). (CCC 2591) God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man. (CCC 2592) The prayer of Abraham and Jacob is presented as a battle of faith marked by trust in God's faithfulness and by certitude in the victory promised to perseverance. (CCC 2593) The prayer of Moses responds to the living

God's initiative for the salvation of his people. It foreshadows the prayer of intercession of the unique mediator, Christ Jesus.

(Acts 12, 16-17) When they saw him were astounded

[16] But Peter continued to knock, and when they opened it, they saw him and were astounded. [17] He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and explained (to them) how the Lord had led him out of the prison, and said, "Report this to James and the brothers." Then he left and went to another place.

(CCC 2594) The prayer of the People of God flourished in the shadow of the dwelling place of God's presence on earth, the ark of the covenant and the Temple, under the guidance of their shepherds, especially King David, and of the prophets. (CCC 2595) The prophets summoned the people to conversion of heart and, while zealously seeking the face of God, like Elijah, they interceded for the people. (CCC 2596) The Psalms constitute the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament. They present two inseparable qualities: the personal, and the communal. They extend to all dimensions of history, recalling God's promises already fulfilled and looking for the coming of the Messiah. (CCC 2597) Prayed and fulfilled in Christ, the Psalms are an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church. They are suitable for men of every condition and time. (CCC 2598) The drama of prayer is fully revealed to us in the Word who became flesh and dwells among us. To seek to understand his prayer through what his witnesses proclaim to us in the Gospel is to approach the holy Lord Jesus as Moses approached the burning bush: first to contemplate him in prayer, then to hear how he teaches us to pray, in order to know how he hears our prayer.

(Acts 12, 18-20) Herod ordered the guards executed

[18] At daybreak there was no small commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. [19] Herod, after instituting a search but not finding him, ordered the guards tried and executed. Then he left Judea to spend some time in Caesarea. [20] He had long been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, who now came to him in a body. After winning over Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they sued for peace because their country was supplied with food from the king's territory.

(CCC 415) "Although set by God in a state of rectitude man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very start of history. He lifted himself up against God, and sought to attain his goal apart from him" (GS 13 § 1). (CCC 398) In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to "be like God", but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *ambigua*: PG 91, 1156C; cf. Gen 3:5). (CCC 1008) *Death is a consequence of sin*. The Church's Magisterium, as authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin (Cf. Gen 2:17; 3:3; 3:19; Wis 1:13; Rom 5:12; 6:23; DS 1511). Even though man's nature is mortal God had destined him not to die. Death was

therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin (Cf. Wis 2:23-24). "Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned" is thus "the last enemy" of man left to be conquered (GS 18 § 2; cf. 1 Cor 15:26).

(Acts 12, 21-23) Herod eaten by worms breathed his last

[21] On an appointed day, Herod, attired in royal robes, (and) seated on the rostrum, addressed them publicly. [22] The assembled crowd cried out, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." [23] At once the angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not ascribe the honor to God, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

(CCC 1013) Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When "the single course of our earthly life" is completed (LG 48 § 3), we shall not return to other earthly lives: "It is appointed for men to die once" (Heb 9:27). There is no "reincarnation" after death. (CCC 1033) We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

(Acts 12, 24-25) The word of God continued to spread

[24] But the word of God continued to spread and grow. [25] After Barnabas and Saul completed their relief mission, they returned to Jerusalem, taking with them John, who is called Mark.

(CCC 1101) The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual understanding of the Word of God to those who read or hear it, according to the dispositions of their hearts. By means of the words, actions, and symbols that form the structure of a celebration, the Spirit puts both the faithful and the ministers into a living relationship with Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, so that they can live out the meaning of what they hear, contemplate, and do in the celebration. (CCC 1102) "By the saving word of God, faith... is nourished in the hearts of believers. By this faith then the congregation of the faithful begins and grows" (PO 4). The proclamation does not stop with a teaching; it elicits the *response of faith* as consent and commitment, directed at the covenant between God and his people. Once again it is the Holy Spirit who gives the grace of faith, strengthens it and makes it grow in the community. The liturgical assembly is first of all a communion in faith.

Acts 13

(Acts 13, 1-2) They were worshiping the Lord and fasting

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(CCC 1969) The New Law *practices the acts of religion*: almsgiving, prayer and fasting, directing them to the "Father who sees in secret," in contrast with the desire to "be seen by men" (Cf. Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). Its prayer is the Our Father (Cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). (CCC 699) *The hand*. Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them (Cf. Mk 6:5; 8:23; 10:16). In his name the apostles will do the same (Cf. Mk 16:18; Acts 5:12; 14:3). Even more pointedly, it is by the Apostles' imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given (Cf. Acts 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6). The *Letter to the Hebrews* lists the imposition of hands among the "fundamental elements" of its teaching (Cf. Heb 6:2). The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental epicleses. (CCC 2632) Christian petition is centered on the desire and *search for the Kingdom to come*, in keeping with the teaching of Christ (Cf. Mt 6:10, 33; Lk 11:2, 13). There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (Cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer (Cf. Rom 10:1; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 19-11; Col 1:3-6; 4:3-4, 12). By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom.

(Acts 13, 3) They laid hands on them and sent them off

[3] Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

(CCC 1070) In the New Testament the word "liturgy" refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity (Cf. Lk 1:23; Acts 13:2; Rom 15:16, 27; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:14-17, 25, 30). In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbor. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one "*leitourgos*" (Cf. Heb 8:2, 6); she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity): The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In its full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action

surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree (SC 7 § 2-3).

(Acts 13, 4-8) Elymas the magician opposed them

[4] So they, sent forth by the holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus. [5] When they arrived in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. They had John also as their assistant. [6] When they had traveled through the whole island as far as Paphos, they met a magician named Bar-Jesus who was a Jewish false prophet. [7] He was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who had summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. [8] But Elymas the magician (for that is what his name means) opposed them in an attempt to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

(CCC 2110) The first commandment forbids honoring gods other than the one Lord who has revealed himself to his people. It proscribes superstition and irreligion. Superstition in some sense represents a perverse excess of religion; irreligion is the vice contrary by defect to the virtue of religion. (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. (CCC 2118) God's first commandment condemns the main sins of irreligion: tempting God, in words or deeds, sacrilege, and simony.

(Acts 13, 9-12) The hand of the Lord is upon you

[9] But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the holy Spirit, looked intently at him [10] and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all that is right, full of every sort of deceit and fraud. Will you not stop twisting the straight paths of (the) Lord? [11] Even now the hand of the Lord is upon you. You will be blind, and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately a dark mist fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. [12] When the proconsul saw what had happened, he came to believe, for he was astonished by the teaching about the Lord.

(CCC 2121) *Simony* is defined as the buying or selling of spiritual things (Cf. Acts 8:9-24). To Simon the magician, who wanted to buy the spiritual power he saw at work in the apostles, St. Peter responded: "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!" (Acts 8:20). Peter thus held to the words of Jesus: "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 10:8; cf. already Isa 55:1). It is impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master, for they have their source in God. One can receive them only from him, without payment. (CCC 2122) The minister should ask nothing for the administration of the sacraments beyond the offerings defined by the competent authority, always being careful that the needy are not deprived of the

help of the sacraments because of their poverty"(CIC, can. 848). The competent authority determines these "offerings" in accordance with the principle that the Christian people ought to contribute to the support of the Church's ministers. "The laborer deserves his food" (Mt 10:10; cf. Lk 10:7; 2 Cor 9:5-18; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

(Acts 13, 13-15) A word of exhortation for the people

[13] From Paphos, Paul and his companions set sail and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. But John left them and returned to Jerusalem. [14] They continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered (into) the synagogue and took their seats. [15] After the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue officials sent word to them, "My brothers, if one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

(CCC 441) In the Old Testament, "*son of God*" is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings (Cf. Dt 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; Job 1:6; Ex 4:22; Hos 2:1; 11:1; Jer 3:19; Sir 36:11; Wis 18:13; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 82:6). It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called "son of God", it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus "son of God", as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this (Cf. 1 Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7; Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47). (CCC 442) Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God", for Jesus responds solemnly: "Flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but *my Father* who is in heaven" (Mt 16:16-17). Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Gal 1:15-16). "And in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20). From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the centre of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation (Cf. 1 Th 1:10; Jn 20:31; Mt 16:18).

(Acts 13, 16-22) The God of this people Israel

[16] So Paul got up, motioned with his hand, and said, "Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-fearing, listen. [17] The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out of it [18] and for about forty years he put up with them in the desert. [19] When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance [20] at the end of about four hundred and fifty years. After these things he provided judges up to Samuel (the) prophet. [21] Then they asked for a king. God gave them Saul, son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. [22] Then he removed him and raised up David as their king; of him he testified, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish.'

(CCC 203) God revealed himself to his people Israel by making his name known to them. A name expresses a person's essence and identity and the meaning of this person's life. God has a name; he is not an anonymous force. To disclose one's name is to make oneself known to others; in a way it is to hand oneself over by becoming accessible, capable of being known more intimately and addressed personally. (CCC 207) By revealing his name God at the same time reveals his faithfulness which is from everlasting to everlasting, valid for the past ("I am the God of your father"), as for the future ("I will be with you") (Ex 3:6, 12). God, who reveals his name as "I AM", reveals himself as the God who is always there, present to his people in order to save them. (CCC 212) Over the centuries, Israel's faith was able to manifest and deepen realization of the riches contained in the revelation of the divine name. God is unique; there are no other gods besides him (Cf. Isa 44:6). He transcends the world and history. He made heaven and earth: "They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment... but you are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps 102:26-27). In God "there is no variation or shadow due to change" (Jas 1:17). God is "He who Is", from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises.

(Acts 13, 23-25) God brought to Israel a savior, Jesus

[23] From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. [24] John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; [25] and as John was completing his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'

(CCC 709) The Law, the sign of God's promise and covenant, ought to have governed the hearts and institutions of that people to whom Abraham's faith gave birth. "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant,... you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6; Cf. 1 Pet 2:9). But after David, Israel gave in to the temptation of becoming a kingdom like other nations. The Kingdom, however, the object of the promise made to David (Cf. 2 Sam 7; Ps 89; Lk 1:32-33), would be the work of the Holy Spirit; it would belong to the poor according to the Spirit. (CCC 710) The forgetting of the Law and the infidelity to the covenant end in death: it is the Exile, apparently the failure of the promises, which is in fact the mysterious fidelity of the Savior God and the beginning of a promised restoration, but according to the Spirit. The People of God had to suffer this purification (Cf. Lk 24:26). In God's plan, the Exile already stands in the shadow of the Cross, and the Remnant of the poor that returns from the Exile is one of the most transparent prefigurations of the Church. (CCC 523) *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way (cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3). "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last (Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13). He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29). Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom (Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29).

(Acts 13, 26-31) But God raised him from the dead

[26] "My brothers, children of the family of Abraham, and those others among you who are God-fearing, to us this word of salvation has been sent. [27] The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize him, and by condemning him they fulfilled the oracles of the prophets that are read sabbath after sabbath. [28] For even though they found no grounds for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him put to death, [29] and when they had accomplished all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and placed him in a tomb. [30] But God raised him from the dead, [31] and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are (now) his witnesses before the people.

(CCC 653) The truth of Jesus' divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he" (Jn 8:28). The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly "I Am", the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: "What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'" (Acts 13:32-33; cf. Ps 2:7). Christ's Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God's Son, and is its fulfillment in accordance with God's eternal plan. (CCC 657) The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.

(Acts 13, 32-37) By raising up Jesus, as it is written

[32] We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what God promised our ancestors [33] he has brought to fulfillment for us, (their) children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you.' [34] And that he raised him from the dead never to return to corruption he declared in this way, 'I shall give you the benefits assured to David.' [35] That is why he also says in another psalm, 'You will not suffer your holy one to see corruption.' [36] Now David, after he had served the will of God in his lifetime, fell asleep, was gathered to his ancestors, and did see corruption. [37] But the one whom God raised up did not see corruption.

(CCC 602) Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake" (1 Pet 1:18-20). Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death (Cf. Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:56). By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Phil 2:7; Rom 8:3).

(Acts 13, 38-43) Many Jews followed Paul and Barnabas

[38] You must know, my brothers, that through him forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, (and) in regard to everything from which you could not be justified under the law of Moses, [39] in him every believer is justified. [40] Be careful, then, that what was said in the prophets not come about: [41] 'Look on, you scoffers, be amazed and disappear. For I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will never believe even if someone tells you.'" [42] As they were leaving, they invited them to speak on these subjects the following sabbath. [43] After the congregation had dispersed, many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

(CCC 1263) By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin (Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1316). In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God. (CCC 638) "We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus" (Acts 13:32-33). The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross: Christ is risen from the dead! Dying, he conquered death; To the dead, he has given life (Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter). (CCC 445) After his Resurrection, Jesus' divine sonship becomes manifest in the power of his glorified humanity. He was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead"(Rom 1:3; cf. Acts 13:33). The apostles can confess: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

(Acts 13, 44-47) We now turn to the Gentiles

[44] On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. [45] When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said. [46] Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. [47] For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

(CCC 2640) St. Luke in his gospel often expresses wonder and praise at the marvels of Christ and in his *Acts of the Apostles* stresses them as actions of the Holy Spirit: the community of Jerusalem, the invalid healed by Peter and John, the crowd that gives glory to God for that, and the pagans of Pisidia who "were glad and glorified the word of God" (Acts 2:47; 3:9; 4:21; 13:48). (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 13, 48-49) The Gentiles were delighted

[48] The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, [49] and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region.

(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 13, 50-52) The disciples were filled with joy

[50] The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory. [51] So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. [52] The disciples were filled with joy and the holy Spirit.

(CCC 677) The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection (Cf. Rev 19:1-9). The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven (Cf. Rev 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4). God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world (Cf. Rev 20:12; 2 Pt 3:12-13). (CCC 1719) The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith. (CCC 736) By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit:... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25; cf. Mt 16:24-26). Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory (St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15, 36: PG 32, 132).

Acts 14

(Acts 14, 1-7) Wonders to occur through their hands

[1] In Iconium they entered the Jewish synagogue together and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks came to believe, [2] although the unbelieving Jews stirred up and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against the brothers. [3] So they stayed for a considerable period, speaking out boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the word about his grace by granting signs and wonders to occur through their hands. [4] The people of the city were divided: some were with the Jews; others, with the apostles. [5] When there was an attempt by both the Gentiles and the Jews, together with their leaders, to attack and stone them, [6] they realized it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding countryside, [7] where they continued to proclaim the good news.

(CCC 699) *The hand.* Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them (Cf. Mk 6:5; 8:23; 10:16). In his name the apostles will do the same (Cf. Mk 16:18; Acts 5:12; 14:3). Even more pointedly, it is by the Apostles' imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given (Cf. Acts 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6). The *Letter to the Hebrews* lists the imposition of hands among the "fundamental elements" of its teaching (Cf. Heb 6:2). The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental epicleses. (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).

(Acts 14, 8-10) "Stand up straight on your feet."

[8] At Lystra there was a crippled man, lame from birth, who had never walked. [9] He listened to Paul speaking, who looked intently at him, saw that he had the faith to be healed, [10] and called out in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet." He jumped up and began to walk about.

(CCC 1500) Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death. (CCC 1501) Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him. (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). (CCC 1510) However, the apostolic Church has its own rite for the sick, attested to

by St. James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [*presbyters*] of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:14-15). Tradition has recognized in this rite one of the seven sacraments (Cf. Council of Constantinople II (553) DS 216; Council of Florence (1439) 1324-1325; Council of Trent (1551) 1695-1696; 1716-1717).

(Acts 14, 11-14) They called Barnabas "Zeus"

[11] When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they cried out in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in human form." [12] They called Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes," because he was the chief speaker. [13] And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, for he together with the people intended to offer sacrifice. [14] The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their garments when they heard this and rushed out into the crowd, shouting,

(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 14, 15-18) Turn from these idols to the living God

[15] "Men, why are you doing this? We are of the same nature as you, human beings. We proclaim to you good news that you should turn from these idols to the living God, 'who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them.' [16] In past generations he allowed all Gentiles to go their own ways; [17] yet, in bestowing his goodness, he did not leave himself without witness, for he gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filled you with nourishment and gladness for your hearts." [18] Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

(CCC 31) Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments", which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person. (CCC 35) Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man, and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to

reason. (CCC 1147) God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator (Cf. Wis 13:1; Rom 1:19 f; Acts 14:17). Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness.

(Acts 14, 19-22) Some Jews stoned Paul

[19] However, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. [20] But when the disciples gathered around him, he got up and entered the city. On the following day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. [21] After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. [22] They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

(CCC 571) The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all" (Heb 9:26) by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ. (CCC 572) The Church remains faithful to the interpretation of "all the Scriptures" that Jesus gave both before and after his Passover: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26-27, 44-45). Jesus' sufferings took their historical, concrete form from the fact that he was "rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes", who handed "him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (Mk 8:31; Mt 20:19). (CCC 2854) When we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past, and future, of which he is the author or instigator. In this final petition, the Church brings before the Father all the distress of the world. Along with deliverance from the evils that overwhelm humanity, she implores the precious gift of peace and the grace of perseverance in expectation of Christ's return. By praying in this way, she anticipates in humility of faith the gathering together of everyone and everything in him who has "the keys of Death and Hades," who "is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8, 18; cf. Rev 1:4; Eph 1:10). Deliver us, Lord, we beseech you, from every evil and grant us peace in our day, so that aided by your mercy we might be ever free from sin and protected from all anxiety, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. (*Roman Missal*, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer, 126: *Libera nos, quaesumus, Domine, ab omnibus malis, da propitius pacem in diebus nostris, ut, ope misericordiae tuae adiuti, et a peccato simus semper liberi, et ab omni perturbatione securi: expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi*).

(Acts 14, 23-28) Opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

[23] They appointed presbyters for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. [24] Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. [25] After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. [26] From

there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. [27] And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. [28] Then they spent no little time with the disciples.

(CCC 874) Christ is himself the source of ministry in the Church. He instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal: In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. The holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God... may attain to salvation (LG 18). (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 804) One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (LG 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (AG 1).