

Second Letter to Corinthians

2Corinthians 1

(2Cor 1, 1-4) Blessed be the God and Father

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, with all the holy ones throughout Achaia: [2] grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, [4] who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.

(CCC 2626) *Blessing* expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. (CCC 2627) Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer *ascends* in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father - we bless him for having blessed us (Cf. Eph 1:3-14; 2 Cor 1:3 7; 1 Pet 1:3-9); it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that *descends* through Christ from the Father - he blesses us (Cf. 2 Cor 13:14; Rom 15:5-6, 13; Eph 6:23-24).

(2Cor 1, 5-6) We are encouraged for your encouragement

[5] For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. [6] If we are afflicted, it is for your encouragement and salvation; if we are encouraged, it is for your encouragement, which enables you to endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

(CCC 2734) Filial trust is tested - it proves itself - in tribulation (Cf. Rom 5:3-5). The principal difficulty concerns the *prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it "efficacious"? (CCC 2735) In the first place, we ought to be astonished by this fact: when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions. What is the image of God that motivates our prayer: an instrument to be used? or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

(2Cor 1, 7) Our hope for you is firm

[7] Our hope for you is firm, for we know that as you share in the sufferings, you also share in the encouragement.

(CCC 556) On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III,

45, 4, ad 2). From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:21). But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22): Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33).

(2Cor 1, 8-9) We might trust in God who raises the dead

[8] We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction that came to us in the province of Asia; we were utterly weighed down beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life. [9] Indeed, we had accepted within ourselves the sentence of death, that we might trust not in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

(CCC 1748) "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). (CCC 1741) *Liberation and salvation*. By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5: 1). In him we have communion with the "truth that makes us free" (Cf. In 8:32). The Holy Spirit has been given to us and, as the Apostle teaches, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). Already we glory in the "liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). (CCC 1742) *Freedom and grace*. The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world: Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness take away from us all that is harmful, so that, made ready both in mind and body, we may freely accomplish your will (*Roman Missal*, 32nd Sunday, Opening Prayer: *Omnipotens et misericors Deus, universa nobis adversantia propitiatus exclude, ut, mente et corpore pariter expediti, quae tua sunt liberis mentibus exsequamur*).

(2Cor 1, 10-11) He will continue to rescue us

[10] He rescued us from such great danger of death, and he will continue to rescue us; in him we have put our hope (that) he will also rescue us again, [11] as you help us with prayer, so that thanks may be given by many on our behalf for the gift granted us through the prayers of many.

(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*).

(2Cor 1, 12-18) With the simplicity and sincerity of God

[12] For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with the simplicity and sincerity of God, (and) not by human wisdom but by the grace of God. [13] For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand, and I hope that you will understand completely, [14] as you have come to understand us partially, that we are your boast as you also are ours, on the day of (our) Lord Jesus. [15] With this confidence I formerly intended to come to you so that you might receive a double favor, [16] namely, to go by way of you to Macedonia, and then to come to you again on my return from Macedonia, and have you send me on my way to Judea. [17] So when I intended this, did I act lightly? Or do I make my plans according to human considerations, so that with me it is "yes, yes" and "no, no"? [18] As God is faithful, our word to you is not "yes" and "no."

(CCC 1065) Jesus Christ himself is the "Amen" (Rev 3:14). He is the definitive "Amen" of the Father's love for us. He takes up and completes our "Amen" to the Father: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God" (2 Cor 1:20): Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, God, for ever and ever. AMEN. (CCC 2153) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained the second commandment: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all.... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Mt 5:33-34, 37; cf. Jas 5:12). Jesus teaches that every oath involves a reference to God and that God's presence and his truth must be honored in all speech. Discretion in calling upon God is allied with a respectful awareness of his presence, which all our assertions either witness to or mock.

(2Cor 1, 19) Jesus Christ was not "yes" and "no", but "yes"

[19] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy and me, was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him.

(CCC 1063) In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find the expression "God of truth" (literally "God of the Amen"), that is, the God who is faithful to his promises: "He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth [amen]" (Isa 65:16). Our Lord often used the word "Amen," sometimes repeated (Cf. Mt 6:2, 5, 16; Jn 5:19), to emphasize the trustworthiness of his teaching, his authority founded on God's truth. (CCC 215) "The sum of your word

is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever" (Ps 119:160) "and now, O LORD God, you are God, and your words are true" (2 Sam 7:28); this is why God's promises always come true (Cf. Dt 7:9). God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. The beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness and faithfulness. (CCC 422) "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). This is "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1): God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own "beloved Son" (Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 1:5, 68).

(2Cor 1, 20) Amen from us goes through him to God

[20] For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him; therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory.

(CCC 1061) The Creed, like the last book of the Bible (Cf. Rev 22:21), ends with the Hebrew word amen. This word frequently concludes prayers in the New Testament. The Church likewise ends her prayers with "Amen." (CCC 1062) In Hebrew, amen comes from the same root as the word "believe." This root expresses solidity, trustworthiness, faithfulness. And so we can understand why "Amen" may express both God's faithfulness towards us and our trust in him.

(2Cor 1, 21) Who anointed us is God

[21] But the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God;

(CCC 695) *Anointing*. The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit (Cf. 1 Jn 2:20:27; 2 Cor 1:21), to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew "*messiah*") means the one "anointed" by God's Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David (Cf. Ex 30:22-32; 1 Sam 16:13). But Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established him as "Christ" (Cf. Lk 4: 18-19; Isa 61:1). The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth, and prompted Simeon to come to the temple to see the Christ of the Lord (Cf. Lk 2:11, 26-27). The Spirit filled Christ and the power of the Spirit went out from him in his acts of healing and of saving (Cf. Lk 4:1; 6:19; 8:46). Finally, it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11). Now, fully established as "Christ" in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute - in their union with the humanity of the Son of God - that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13; cf. Acts 2:36): "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression.

(2Cor 1, 22-24) He has also put his seal upon us

[22] He has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment. [23] But I call upon God as witness, on my

life, that it is to spare you that I have not yet gone to Corinth. [24] Not that we lord it over your faith; rather, we work together for your joy, for you stand firm in the faith.

(CCC 698) *The seal* is a symbol close to that of anointing. "The Father has set his seal" on Christ and also seals us in him (Jn 6:27; cf. 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). Because this seal indicates the indelible effect of the anointing with the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the image of the seal (*sphragis*) has been used in some theological traditions to express the indelible "character" imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments. (CCC 1296) Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal (Cf. Jn 6:27). Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4, 30). This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial (Cf. Rev 7:2-3; 9:4; Ezek 9:4-6). (CCC 1107) The Holy Spirit's transforming power in the liturgy hastens the coming of the kingdom and the consummation of the mystery of salvation. While we wait in hope he causes us really to anticipate the fullness of communion with the Holy Trinity. Sent by the Father who hears the epiclesis of the Church, the Spirit gives life to those who accept him and is, even now, the "guarantee" of their inheritance (Cf. Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22). (CCC 735) He, then, gives us the "pledge" or "first fruits" of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as "God [has] loved us" (1 Jn 4:11-12; cf. Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:21). This love (the "charity" of 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received "power" from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; cf. 1 Cor 13).

2Corinthians 2

(2Cor 2, 1-3) That my joy is that of all of you

[1] For I decided not to come to you again in painful circumstances.
[2] For if I inflict pain upon you, then who is there to cheer me except the one pained by me? [3] And I wrote as I did so that when I came I might not be pained by those in whom I should have rejoiced, confident about all of you that my joy is that of all of you.

(CCC 1762) The human person is ordered to beatitude by his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose him to it and contribute to it. (CCC 1763) The term "passions" belongs to the Christian patrimony. Feelings or passions are emotions or movements of the sensitive appetite that incline us to act or not to act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil. (CCC 1764) The passions are natural components of the human psyche; they form the passageway and ensure the connection between the life of the senses and the life of the mind. Our Lord called man's heart the source from which the passions spring (Cf. Mk 7:21). (CCC 1765) There are many passions. The most fundamental passion is love, aroused by the attraction of the good. Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it; this movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy of the good possessed. The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil; this movement ends in sadness at some present evil, or in the anger that resists it. (CCC 1766) "To love is to will the good of another" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 26, 4, *corp. art.*). All other affections

have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved (Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trin.*, 8, 3, 4: PL 42, 949-950). Passions "are evil if love is evil and good if it is good" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14, 7, 2: PL 41, 410).

(2Cor 2, 4-5) Out of much affliction and anguish of heart

[4] For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that you might be pained but that you might know the abundant love I have for you. [5] If anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure (not to exaggerate) to all of you.

(CCC 1767) In themselves passions are neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will. Passions are said to be voluntary, "either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 24, 1 *corp. art.*). It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason (Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 24, 3). (CCC 1768) Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case. The upright will orders the movements of the senses it appropriates to the good and to beatitude; an evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them. Emotions and feelings can be taken up into the *virtues* or perverted by the *vices*. (CCC 1769) In the Christian life, the Holy Spirit himself accomplishes his work by mobilizing the whole being, with all its sorrows, fears and sadness, as is visible in the Lord's agony and passion. In Christ human feelings are able to reach their consummation in charity and divine beatitude. (CCC 1770) Moral perfection consists in man's being moved to the good not by his will alone, but also by his sensitive appetite, as in the words of the psalm: "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God" (Ps 84:2).

(2Cor 2, 6-9) Reaffirm your love for him

[6] This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person, [7] so that on the contrary you should forgive and encourage him instead, or else the person may be overwhelmed by excessive pain. [8] Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. [9] For this is why I wrote, to know your proven character, whether you were obedient in everything.

(CCC 2608) From the *Sermon on the Mount* onwards, Jesus insists on *conversion of heart*: reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar, love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors, prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases, prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart, purity of heart, and seeking the Kingdom before all else (Cf. Mt 5:23-24, 44-45; 6:7, 14-15, 21, 25, 33). This filial conversion is entirely directed to the Father. (CCC 986) By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance. (CCC 987) "In the forgiveness of sins, both priests and sacraments are instruments which our Lord Jesus Christ, the only author and liberal giver of salvation, wills to use in order to efface our sins and give us the grace of justification" (*Roman Catechism*, I, 11, 6). (CCC 1694) Incorporated into *Christ* by Baptism, Christians are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord (Rom 6:11 and cf. 6:5; cf. Col 2:12). Following Christ and united with him (Cf. Jn 15:5), Christians

can strive to be "imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love" (Eph 5:1-2) by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the "mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), and by following his example (Cf. Jn 13:12-16).

(2Cor 2, 10-11a) Not be taken advantage of by Satan

[10] Whomever you forgive anything, so do I. For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for you in the presence of Christ, [11a] so that we might not be taken advantage of by Satan,

(CCC 414) Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God. (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 394) Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning", who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father (Jn 8:44; cf. Mt 4:1-11). "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (I Jn 3:8). In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (CCC 395) The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8:28).

(2Cor 2, 11b) We are not unaware of his purposes

[11b] for we are not unaware of his purposes.

(CCC 550) The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:26, 28). Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31; cf. Lk 8:26-39). The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood" (LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn *Vexilla Regis*: "*Regnavit a ligno Deus*"). (CCC 636) By the expression "He descended into hell", the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death" (Heb 2:14). (CCC 2853) Victory over the "prince of this world" (Jn 14:30) was won once for all at the Hour when Jesus freely gave himself up to death to give us his life. This is the judgment of this world, and the prince of this world is "cast out" (Jn 12:31; Rev 12:10). "He pursued the woman" (Rev 12:13-169) but had no hold on her: the new Eve, "full of grace" of the Holy Spirit, is preserved from sin and the corruption of death (the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God, Mary, ever virgin). "Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring" (Rev 12:17). Therefore the Spirit and the Church pray: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:17,20), since his coming will deliver us from the Evil One.

(2Cor 2, 12-14) The odor of the knowledge of him

[12] When I went to Troas for the gospel of Christ, although a door was opened for me in the Lord, [13] I had no relief in my spirit because I did not find my brother Titus. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. [14] But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests through us the odor of the knowledge of him in every place.

(CCC 1241) The *anointing with sacred chrism*, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one "anointed" by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king (Cf. RBC 62). (CCC 1242) In the liturgy of the Eastern Churches, the post-baptismal anointing is the sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation). In the Roman liturgy the post-baptismal anointing announces a second anointing with sacred chrism to be conferred later by the bishop-Confirmation, which will as it were "confirm" and complete the baptismal anointing.

(2Cor 2, 15-16) We are the aroma of Christ for God

[15] For we are the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, [16] to the latter an odor of death that leads to death, to the former an odor of life that leads to life. Who is qualified for this?

(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. (CCC 1294) Anointing with oil has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening; the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, that is, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off "the aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:15).

(2Cor 2, 17) In the presence of God we speak in Christ

[17] For we are not like the many who trade on the word of God; but as out of sincerity, indeed as from God and in the presence of God, we speak in Christ.

(CCC 53) The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously "by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" (DV 2) and shed light on each another. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one

another: the Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 20, 2: PG 7/1, 944; cf. 3, 17, 1; 4, 12, 4; 4, 21, 3). (CCC 2) So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mt 28:19-20) Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it." (Mk 16:20). (CCC 3) Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer (Acts 2:42).

2Corinthians 3

(2Cor 3, 1-4) Letter of Christ written by the Spirit of God

[1] Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you? [2] You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, [3] shown to be a letter of Christ administered by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are hearts of flesh. [4] Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

(CCC 700) *The finger.* "It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons" (Lk 11:20). If God's law was written on tablets of stone "by the finger of God," then the "letter from Christ" entrusted to the care of the apostles, is written "with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts" (Ex 31:18; 2 Cor 3:3). (The hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* invokes the Holy Spirit as the "*finger of the Father's right hand*" (*LH*, Easter Season after Ascension, Hymn at Vespers: *Digitus paternae dexterae*).

(2Cor 3, 5-11) The letter brings death the Spirit gives life

[5] Not that of ourselves we are qualified to take credit for anything as coming from us; rather, our qualification comes from God, [6] who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives life. [7] Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, was so glorious that the Israelites could not look intently at the face of Moses because of its glory that was going to fade, [8] how much more will the ministry of the Spirit be glorious? [9] For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, the ministry of righteousness will abound much more in glory. [10] Indeed, what was endowed with glory has come to have no glory in this respect because of the glory that surpasses it. [11] For if what was going to fade was glorious, how much more will what endures be glorious.

(CCC 859) Jesus unites them to the mission he received from the Father. As "the Son can do nothing of his own accord," but receives everything from the

Father who sent him, so those whom Jesus sends can do nothing apart from him (Jn 5:19, 30; cf. 15:5), from whom they received both the mandate for their mission and the power to carry it out. Christ's apostles knew that they were called by God as "ministers of a new covenant," "servants of God," "ambassadors for Christ," "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 5:20; 1 Cor 4:1). (CCC 860) In the office of the apostles there is one aspect that cannot be transmitted: to be the chosen witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection and so the foundation stones of the Church. But their office also has a permanent aspect. Christ promised to remain with them always. The divine mission entrusted by Jesus to them "will continue to the end of time, since the Gospel they handed on is the lasting source of all life for the Church. Therefore,... the apostles took care to appoint successors" (LG 20; cf. Mt 28:20).

(2Cor 3, 12-17) The Spirit of the Lord is freedom

[12] Therefore, since we have such hope, we act very boldly [13] and not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not look intently at the cessation of what was fading. [14] Rather, their thoughts were rendered dull, for to this present day the same veil remains unlifted when they read the old covenant, because through Christ it is taken away. [15] To this day, in fact, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, [16] but whenever a person turns to the Lord the veil is removed. [17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

(CCC 702) From the beginning until "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), the joint mission of the Father's Word and Spirit remains *hidden*, but it is at work. God's Spirit prepares for the time of the Messiah. Neither is fully revealed but both are already promised, to be watched for and welcomed at their manifestation. So, for this reason, when the Church reads the Old Testament, she searches there for what the Spirit, "who has spoken through the prophets," wants to tell us about Christ (Cf. 2 Cor 3:14; Jn 5:39, 46). By "prophets" the faith of the Church here understands all whom the Holy Spirit inspired in living proclamation and in the composition of the sacred books, both of the Old and the New Testaments. Jewish tradition distinguishes first the Law (the five first books or Pentateuch), then the Prophets (our historical and prophetic books) and finally the Writings (especially the wisdom literature, in particular the Psalms) (Cf. Lk 24:44).

(2Cor 3, 18) Into the same image from glory to glory

[18] All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.

(CCC 1094) It is on this harmony of the two Testaments that the Paschal catechesis of the Lord is built (Cf. DV 14-16; Lk 24:13-49), and then, that of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. This catechesis unveils what lay hidden under the letter of the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ. It is called "typological" because it reveals the newness of Christ on the basis of the "figures" (types) which announce him in the deeds, words, and symbols of the first covenant. By this re-reading in the Spirit of Truth, starting from Christ, the figures are unveiled (Cf. 2 Cor 3:14-16). Thus the flood and Noah's ark prefigured salvation by Baptism (Cf. 1 Pet 3:21), as did the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea. Water from the rock was the figure of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and manna

in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, "the true bread from heaven" (Jn 6:32; cf. 1 Cor 10:1-6). (CCC 1741) *Liberation and salvation*. By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5: 1). In him we have communion with the "truth that makes us free" (Cf. In 8:32). The Holy Spirit has been given to us and, as the Apostle teaches, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). Already we glory in the "liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). (CCC 693) Besides the proper name of "Holy Spirit," which is most frequently used in the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the Epistles, we also find in St. Paul the titles: the Spirit of the promise (Cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13), the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:17), and the Spirit of God (Rom 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1 Cor 6:11; 7:40), - and, in St. Peter, the Spirit of glory (1 Pet 4:14).

2Corinthians 4

(2Cor 4, 1-4) Christ who is the image of the invisible God

[1] Therefore, since we have this ministry through the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged. [2] Rather, we have renounced shameful, hidden things; not acting deceitfully or falsifying the word of God, but by the open declaration of the truth we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. [3] And even though our gospel is veiled, it is veiled for those who are perishing, [4] in whose case the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(CCC 1701) "Christ,... in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation" (GS 22). It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Savior, that the divine image, disfigured in man by the first sin, has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God (Cf. GS 22).

(2Cor 4, 5-7) The knowledge of the glory of God

[5] For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus. [6] For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of (Jesus) Christ. [7] But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us.

(CCC 298) Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them (Cf. Ps 51:12), and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17). And since God was able to make light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him (Cf. Gen 1:3; 2 Cor 4:6). (CCC 1420) Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God" (2 Cor 4:7; Col 3:3). We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death (2 Cor 5:1). This new life as

a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. 1420 Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God" (2 Cor 4:7; Col 3:3). We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death (2 Cor 5:1). This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. (CCC 2583 After Elijah had learned mercy during his retreat at the Wadi Cherith, he teaches the widow of Zarephath to believe in the Word of God and confirms her faith by his urgent prayer: God brings the widow's child back to life (Cf. 1 Kings 17:7-24). The sacrifice on Mount Carmel is a decisive test for the faith of the People of God. In response to Elijah's plea, "Answer me, O LORD, answer me," the Lord's fire consumes the holocaust, at the time of the evening oblation. The Eastern liturgies repeat Elijah's plea in the Eucharistic *epiclesis*. Finally, taking the desert road that leads to the place where the living and true God reveals himself to his people, Elijah, like Moses before him, hides "in a cleft of the rock" until the mysterious presence of God has passed by (Cf. 1 Kings 19:1-14; cf. Ex 33:19-23). But only on the mountain of the Transfiguration will Moses and Elijah behold the unveiled face of him whom they sought; "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Christ," crucified and risen (2 Cor 4:6; cf. Lk 9:30-35).

(2Cor 4, 8-15) The life of Jesus be manifested in our body

[8] We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; [9] persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body. [11] For we who live are constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12] So death is at work in us, but life in you. [13] Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we too believe and therefore speak, [14] knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence. [15] Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.

(CCC 1821) We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will (Cf. Rom 8:28-30; Mt 7:21). In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" (Mt 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1541) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4). She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven: Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end (St. Teresa of Avila, *Excl.* 15:3). (CCC 989) We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day (Cf. Jn 6:39-40). Our resurrection, like his own, will be the

work of the Most Holy Trinity: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11).

(2Cor 4, 16-18) What is unseen is eternal

[16] Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17] For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

(CCC 42) God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, imagebound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God --"the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable"-- with our human representations (*Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora*). Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God. (CCC 50) By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation (Cf. *Dei Filius*: DS 3015). Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 260) The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity (Cf. Jn 17:21-23). But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: "If a man loves me", says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him": (Jn 14:23). O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action (*Prayer of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity*).

2Corinthians 5

(2Cor 5, 1-5) We have a dwelling eternal from God

[1] For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven. [2] For in this tent we groan, longing to be further clothed with our heavenly habitation [3] if indeed, when we have taken it off, we shall not be found naked. [4] For while we are in this tent we groan and are weighed down, because we do not wish to be unclothed 4 but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. [5] Now the one who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a first installment.

(CCC 1420) Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God" (2 Cor 4:7; Col 3:3). We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death (2 Cor 5:1). This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. (CCC 2796) When the Church prays "our Father who art in heaven," she is professing that we are the People of God, already seated "with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" and "hidden with Christ in God" (Eph 2:6; Col 3:3); yet at the same time, "here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor 5:2; cf. Phil 3:20; Heb 13:14). [Christians] are in the flesh, but do not live according to the flesh. They spend their lives on earth, but are citizens of heaven (*Ad Diognetum* 5: PG 2, 1173). (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).

(2Cor 5, 6-11) We walk by faith, not by sight

[6] So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight. [8] Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. [9] Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil. [11] Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we are clearly apparent to God, and I hope we are also apparent to your consciousness.

(CCC 164) Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7); we perceive God as "in a mirror, dimly" and only "in part" (1 Cor 13:12). Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it. (CCC 1005) To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must "be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body (Cf. Phil 1:23). It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead (Cf. Paul VI, CPG § 28). (CCC 1021) Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10). The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the

soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23).

(2Cor 5, 12-14) The love of Christ impels us

[12] We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you an opportunity to boast of us, so that you may have something to say to those who boast of external appearance rather than of the heart. [13] For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are rational, it is for you. [14] For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died.

(CCC 615) "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an *offering for sin*", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:10-12). Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529). (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.

(2Cor 5, 15-16) To live for him who died and was raised

[15] He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. [16] Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer.

(CCC 604) By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10; 4:19). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). (CCC 605) At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt 18:14). He affirms that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us (Mt 20:28; cf. Rom 5:18-19). The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer" (Council of Quiercy (853): DS 624; cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Jn 2:2). (CCC 655) Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself - is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor

15:20-22). The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfilment. In Christ, Christians "have tasted... the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5) and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor 5:15; cf. Col 3:1-3).

(2Cor 5, 17) Whoever is in Christ is a new creation

[17] So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

(CCC 1212) The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. "The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity" (Paul VI, *Divinae consortium natura*, cf. RCIA Introduction 1-2). (CCC 1215) This sacrament is also called "*the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit*," for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one "can enter the kingdom of God" (Titus 3:5; Jn 3:5). (CCC 1265) Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4; cf. Gal 4:5-7), member of Christ and coheir with him (Cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 12:27; Rom 8:17), and a temple of the Holy Spirit (Cf. 1 Cor 6:19). (CCC 1266) The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*: - enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues; - giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit; - allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues. Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

(2Cor 5, 18) God has reconciled us to himself

[18] And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation,

(CCC 981) After his Resurrection, Christ sent his apostles "so that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations" (Lk 24:47). The apostles and their successors carry out this "ministry of reconciliation," not only by announcing to men God's forgiveness merited for us by Christ, and calling them to conversion and faith; but also by communicating to them the forgiveness of sins in Baptism, and reconciling them with God and with the Church through the power of the keys, received from Christ (2 Cor 5:18): [The Church] has received the keys of the Kingdom of heaven so that, in her, sins may be forgiven through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit's action. In this Church, the soul dead through sin comes back to life in order to live with Christ, whose grace has saved us (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 214, 11: PL 38, 1071-1072). (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 1461) Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation (Cf. Jn 20:23; 2 Cor 5:18), bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

(2Cor 5, 19) Reconciling the world to himself in Christ

[19] namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

(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 620) Our salvation flows from God's initiative of love for us, because "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). (CCC 2844) Christian prayer extends to the *forgiveness of enemies* (Cf. Mt 5:43-44), transfiguring the disciple by configuring him to his Master. Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; only hearts attuned to God's compassion can receive the gift of prayer. Forgiveness also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin. The martyrs of yesterday and today bear this witness to Jesus. Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father and of men with one another (Cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21; John Paul II, DM 14).

(2Cor 5, 20-21) We implore you, be reconciled to God

[20] So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

(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). (CCC 1422) "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion" (LG 11 § 2). (CCC 1423) It is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father (Cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 15:18) from whom one has strayed by sin. It is called the

sacrament of Penance, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction. (CCC 1424) It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession" - acknowledgment and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man. It is called the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace" (*OP* 46: formula of absolution). It is called the *sacrament of Reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother" (Mt 5:24).

2Corinthians 6

(2Cor 6, 1-3) Now is the day of salvation

[1] Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. [2] For he says: "In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. [3] We cause no one to stumble in anything, in order that no fault may be found with our ministry;

(CCC 1041) The message of the Last Judgment calls men to conversion while God is still giving them "the acceptable time,... the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). It inspires a holy fear of God and commits them to the justice of the Kingdom of God. It proclaims the "blessed hope" of the Lord's return, when he will come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all who have believed" (Titus 2:13; 2 Thess 1:10). (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).

(2Cor 6, 4-10) We commend ourselves as ministers of God

[4] On the contrary, in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, through much endurance, in afflictions, hardships, constraints, [5] beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts; [6] by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, [7] in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left; [8] through glory and dishonor, insult and praise. We are treated as deceivers and yet are truthful; [9] as unrecognized and yet acknowledged; as dying and behold we live; as chastised and yet not put to death; [10] as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.

(CCC 557) "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1). By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Lk 13:33;

cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34). (CCC 858) Jesus is the Father's Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he "called to him those whom he desired;... And he appointed twelve, whom also he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:13-14). From then on, they would also be his "emissaries" (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ continues his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18). The apostles' ministry is the continuation of his mission; Jesus said to the Twelve: "he who receives you receives me" (Mt 10:40; cf. Lk 10:16). (CCC 1808) *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song" (Ps 118:14). "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

(2Cor 6, 11-13) Our heart is open wide

[11] We have spoken frankly to you, Corinthians; our heart is open wide. [12] You are not constrained by us; you are constrained by your own affections. [13] As recompense in kind (I speak as to my children), be open yourselves.

(CCC 2212) The fourth commandment *illuminates other relationships in society*. In our brothers and sisters we see the children of our parents; in our cousins, the descendants of our ancestors; in our fellow citizens, the children of our country; in the baptized, the children of our mother the Church; in every human person, a son or daughter of the One who wants to be called "our Father." In this way our relationships with our neighbors are recognized as personal in character. The neighbor is not a "unit" in the human collective; he is "someone" who by his known origins deserves particular attention and respect. (CCC 2220) For Christians a special gratitude is due to those from whom they have received the gift of faith, the grace of Baptism, and life in the Church. These may include parents, grandparents, other members of the family, pastors, catechists, and other teachers or friends. "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you" (2 Tim 1:5).

(2Cor 6, 14-18) You shall be sons and daughters to me

[14] Do not be yoked with those who are different, with unbelievers. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? [15] What accord has Christ with Beliar? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? [16] What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said: "I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. [17] Therefore, come forth from them and be separate," says the Lord, "and touch nothing unclean; then I will receive you [18] and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

(CCC 797) "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 267, 4: PL 38, 1231D). "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their

exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members" (Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: DS 3808). The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21): Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted.... In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God.... For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966). (CCC 1179) The worship "in Spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24) of the New Covenant is not tied exclusively to any one place. The whole earth is sacred and entrusted to the children of men. What matters above all is that, when the faithful assemble in the same place, they are the "living stones," gathered to be "built into a spiritual house" (1 Pet 2:4-5). For the Body of the risen Christ is the spiritual temple from which the source of living water springs forth: incorporated into Christ by the Holy Spirit, "we are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16). (CCC 270) God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ("I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty") (2 Cor 6:18; cf. Mt 6:32): finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

2Corinthians 7

(2Cor 7, 1-7) Making holiness perfect in the fear of God

[1] Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God. [2] Make room for us; we have not wronged anyone, or ruined anyone, or taken advantage of anyone. [3] I do not say this in condemnation, for I have already said that you are in our hearts, that we may die together and live together. [4] I have great confidence in you, I have great pride in you; I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction. [5] For even when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way - external conflicts, internal fears. [6] But God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus, [7] and not only by his arrival but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in regard to you, as he told us of your yearning, your lament, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

(CCC 714) This is why Christ inaugurates the proclamation of the Good News by making his own the following passage from Isaiah (Isa 61:1-2; cf. Lk 4:18-19): The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor. (CCC 715) The prophetic texts that directly concern the sending of the Holy Spirit are oracles by which God speaks to the heart of his people in the language of the promise, with the accents of "love and fidelity" (Cf. Ezek 11:19; 36:25-28; 37:1-14; Jer 31:31-34; and cf. Joel 3:1-5). St. Peter will proclaim their fulfillment on the

morning of Pentecost (Cf. Acts 2:17-21). According to these promises, at the "end time" the Lord's Spirit will renew the hearts of men, engraving a new law in them. He will gather and reconcile the scattered and divided peoples; he will transform the first creation, and God will dwell there with men in peace. (CCC 716) The People of the "poor" (Cf. Zeph 2:3; Pss 22:27; 34:3; Isa 49:13; 61:1; etc.) - those who, humble and meek, rely solely on their God's mysterious plans, who await the justice, not of men but of the Messiah - are in the end the great achievement of the Holy Spirit's hidden mission during the time of the promises that prepare for Christ's coming. It is this quality of heart, purified and enlightened by the Spirit, which is expressed in the Psalms. In these poor, the Spirit is making ready "a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17).

(2Cor 7, 8-11) You were saddened into repentance

[8] For even if I saddened you by my letter, I do not regret it; and if I did regret it ((for) I see that that letter saddened you, if only for a while), [9] I rejoice now, not because you were saddened, but because you were saddened into repentance; for you were saddened in a godly way, so that you did not suffer loss in anything because of us. [10] For godly sorrow produces a salutary repentance without regret, but worldly sorrow produces death. [11] For behold what earnestness this godly sorrow has produced for you, as well as readiness for a defense, and indignation, and fear, and yearning, and zeal, and punishment. In every way you have shown yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

(CCC 1431) Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart) (Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1676-1678; 1705; cf. *Roman Catechism*, II, V, 4). (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 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).

(2Cor 7, 12) Your concern for us might be made plain

[12] So then even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, or on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your concern for us might be made plain to you in the sight of God.

(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). (CCC 239) By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood (Cf. Isa 66:13; Ps 131:2), which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard (Cf. Ps 27:10; Eph 3:14; Isa 49:15): no one is father as God is Father.

(2Cor 7, 13-16) I have confidence in you in every respect

[13] For this reason we are encouraged. And besides our encouragement, we rejoice even more because of the joy of Titus, since his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. [14] For if I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame. No, just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. [15] And his heart goes out to you all the more, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, when you received him with fear and trembling. [16] I rejoice, because I have confidence in you in every respect.

(CCC 886) "The individual *bishops* are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches" (LG 23). As such, they "exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them" (LG 23), assisted by priests and deacons. But, as a member of the episcopal college, each bishop shares in the concern for all the Churches (Cf. CD 3). The bishops exercise this care first "by ruling well their own Churches as portions of the universal Church," and so contributing "to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches" (LG 23). They extend it especially to the poor (Cf. Gal 2:10), to those persecuted for the faith, as well as to missionaries who are working throughout the world.