

Letter to Galatians

Galatians 1

(Gal 1, 1-2) Paul, an apostle through Jesus Christ

[1] Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, [2] and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

(CCC 857) The Church is apostolic because she is founded on the apostles, in three ways: - she was and remains built on "the foundation of the Apostles" (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14); the witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ himself (Cf. Mt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:7-8; Gal 1:1; etc.); - with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching (Cf. Acts 2:42), the "good deposit," the salutary words she has heard from the apostles (Cf. 2 Tim 1:13-14); - she continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, "assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor" (AG 5): You are the eternal Shepherd who never leaves his flock untended. Through the apostles you watch over us and protect us always. You made them shepherds of the flock to share in the work of your Son.... (*Roman Missal*, Preface of the Apostles I).

(Gal 1, 3-5) Grace to you and peace from God our Father

[3] grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] who gave himself for our sins that he might rescue us from the present evil age in accord with the will of our God and Father, [5] to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

(CCC 2824) In Christ, and through his human will, the will of the Father has been perfectly fulfilled once for all. Jesus said on entering into this world: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10:7; Ps 40:7). Only Jesus can say: "I always do what is pleasing to him" (Jn 8:29). In the prayer of his agony, he consents totally to this will: "not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42; cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). For this reason Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4). "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). (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).

(Gal 1, 6-9) You are so quickly forsaking

[6] I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by (the) grace (of Christ) for a different gospel [7] (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! [9] As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

(CCC 514) Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted (Cf. Jn 20:30). What is written in the Gospels was set down there "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). (CCC 1463) Certain particularly grave sins incur excommunication, the most severe ecclesiastical penalty, which impedes the reception of the sacraments and the exercise of certain ecclesiastical acts, and for which absolution consequently cannot be granted, according to canon law, except by the Pope, the bishop of the place or priests authorized by them (Cf. CIC, cann. 1331; 1354-1357; CCEO, can. 1431; 1434; 1420). In danger of death any priest, even if deprived of faculties for hearing confessions, can absolve from every sin and excommunication (Cf. CIC, can. 976; CCEO, can. 725).

(Gal 1, 10) Am I seeking to please people?

[10] Am I now currying favor with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

(CCC 139) The four Gospels occupy a central place because Christ Jesus is their center. (CCC 515) The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith (Cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24) and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery (Cf. Lk 2:7; Mt 27:48; Jn 20:7). His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission.

(Gal 1, 11-12) The gospel is not of human origin

[11] Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. [12] For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

(CCC 659) "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mk 16:19). Christ's body

was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys (Cf. Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19, 26). But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity (Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:41; Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Jn 20:14-15; 21:4). Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand (Cf. Acts 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; Lk 9:34-35; 24:51; Ex 13:22; Mk 16:19; Ps 110:1). Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul "as to one untimely born", in a last apparition that established him as an apostle (1 Cor 15:8; cf. 9:1; Gal 1:16).

(Gal 1, 13-14) I persecuted the church of God

[13] For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, [14] and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions.

(CCC 752) In Christian usage, the word "church" designates the liturgical assembly (Cf. 1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28, 34, 35), but also the local community (Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1) or the whole universal community of believers (Cf. 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). These three meanings are inseparable. "The Church" is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body.

(Gal 1, 15-17) God was pleased to reveal his Son to me

[15] But when (God), who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased [16] to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, [17] nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.

(CCC 153) When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17; cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25). *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.* "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth'" (DV 5; cf. DS 377; 3010). (CCC 442) [...] 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).

(Gal 1, 18-19) I saw only James *the brother of the Lord*

[18] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Kephas and remained with him for fifteen days. [19] But I did not see any other of the apostles, only *James the brother of the Lord*.

(CCC 499) The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man (Cf. DS 291; 294; 427; 442; 503; 571; 1880). In fact, Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it" (LG 57) and so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the "Ever-virgin" (Cf. LG 52). (CCC 500) Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus (Cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19). The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary" (Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56). They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression (Cf. Gen 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc.).

(Gal 1, 20) Before God, I am not lying

[20] (As to what I am writing to you, behold, before God, I am not lying.)

(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. (CCC 2154) Following St. Paul (Cf. 2 Cor 1:23; Gal 1:20), the tradition of the Church has understood Jesus' words as not excluding oaths made for grave and right reasons (for example, in court). "An oath, that is the invocation of the divine name as a witness to truth, cannot be taken unless in truth, in judgment, and in justice" (CIC, can. 1199 § 1). (CCC 2155) The holiness of the divine name demands that we neither use it for trivial matters, nor take an oath which on the basis of the circumstances could be interpreted as approval of an authority unjustly requiring it. When an oath is required by illegitimate civil authorities, it may be refused. It must be refused when it is required for purposes contrary to the dignity of persons or to ecclesial communion.

(Gal 1, 21-24) I was unknown personally to the churches

[21] Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. [22] And I was unknown personally to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; [23] they only kept hearing that "the one who once was persecuting us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." [24] So they glorified God because of me.

(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 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.

Galatians 2

(Gal 2, 1-5) Not even Titus was circumcised

[1] Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. [2] I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles - but privately to those of repute - so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. [3] Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, [4] but because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us – [5] to them we did not submit even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain intact for you.

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

(Gal 2, 6-10) They gave me and Barnabas their right hands

[6] But from those who were reputed to be important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) - those of repute made me add nothing. [7] On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised, [8] for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles, [9] and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Kephias and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [10] Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do.

(CCC 884) "The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council" (CIC, can. 337 § 1). But "there never is an ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least recognized as such by Peter's successor" (LG 22). (CCC 885) "This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head" (LG 22). (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. (CCC 887) Neighboring particular Churches who share the same culture form ecclesiastical provinces or larger groupings called patriarchates or regions (Cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* 34). The bishops of these groupings can meet in synods or provincial councils. "In a like fashion, the episcopal conferences at the present time are in a position to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegiate spirit" (LG 23 § 3).

(Gal 2, 11-14) In line with the truth of the gospel

[11] And when Kephias came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong. [12] For, until some people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to draw back and separated himself, because he was afraid of the circumcised. [13] And the rest of the Jews (also) acted hypocritically along with him, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that they were not on the right road in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Kephias in front of all, "If you, though a Jew, are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

(CCC 1987) The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism (Rom 3:22; cf. 6:3-4): But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:8-11).). (CCC 1994) Justification is the *most excellent work of God's love* made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit. It is the opinion of St. Augustine that "the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth," because "heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away" (St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 72, 3: PL 35, 1823). He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy.

(Gal 2, 15-16) We may be justified by faith in Christ

[15] We, who are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles, [16] (yet) who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

(CCC 1992) Justification has been *merited for us by the Passion of Christ* who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529): But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:21-26).

(Gal 2, 17-19) I have been crucified with Christ

[17] But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? Of course not! [18] But if I am building up again those things that I tore down, then I show myself to be a transgressor. [19] For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ;

(CCC 2666) But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: "Jesus," "YHWH saves" (Cf. Ex 3:14; 33: 19-23; Mt 1:21). The name "Jesus" contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him (Rom 10:13; Acts 2:21; 3:15-16; Gal 2:20). (CCC 1380) It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end" (Jn 13:1), even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us (Cf. Gal 2:20), and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love: The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease (John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 3).

(Gal 2, 20-21) The Son of God who has given himself up

[20] yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. [21] I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

(CCC 478) Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God. . . loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation (Cf. Jn 19:34), "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that. . . love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception (Pius XII, Enc. *Haurietis aquas* (1956): DS 3924; cf. DS 3812). (CCC 616) It is love "to the end"(Jn 13:1) that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life (Cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25). Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor 5:14). No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice *for all*.

Galatians 3

(Gal 3, 1-5) Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed

[1] O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? [2] I want to learn only this from you: did you receive the Spirit from works of the law, or from faith in what you heard? [3] Are you so stupid? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? [4] Did you experience so many things in vain? - if indeed it was in vain. [5] Does, then, the one who supplies the Spirit to you and works mighty deeds among you do so from works of the law or from faith in what you heard?

(CCC 79) The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church: "God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the Spouse of his beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church - and through her in the world - leads believers to the full truth, and makes the Word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness" (DV 8 § 3; cf. Col 3:16). (CCC 475) Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation (Cf. Council of Constantinople III (681): DS 556-559). Christ's human will "does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will" (Council of Constantinople III: DS 556). (CCC 476) Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity, Christ's body was finite (Cf. Council of the Lateran (649): DS 504). Therefore the human face of Jesus can be portrayed; at the

seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea II in 787) the Church recognized its representation in holy images to be legitimate (Cf. Gal 3:1; cf. Council of Nicaea II (787): DS 600-603). (CCC 477) At the same time the Church has always acknowledged that in the body of Jesus "we see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see" (*Roman Missal*, Preface of Christmas I). The individual characteristics of Christ's body express the divine person of God's Son. He has made the features of his human body his own, to the point that they can be venerated when portrayed in a holy image, for the believer "who venerates the icon is venerating in it the person of the one depicted" (Council of Nicaea II: DS 601).

(Gal 3, 6-9) Those who have faith are blessed

[6] Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." [7] Realize then that it is those who have faith who are children of Abraham. [8] Scripture, which saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, "Through you shall all the nations be blessed." [9] Consequently, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham who had faith.

(CCC 59) In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house (Gen 12:1), and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 17:5; 12:3 (LXX); cf. Gal 3:8). (CCC 61) The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honoured as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions. (CCC 66) "The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (DV 4; cf. 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13). Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries. (CCC 67) Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church. Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such "revelations".

(Gal 3, 10-12) The one who is righteous by faith will live

[10] For all who depend on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not persevere in doing all the things written in the book of the law." [11] And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for "the one who is righteous by faith will live." [12] But the law does not depend on faith; rather, "the one who does these things will live by them."

(CCC 578) Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfil the Law by keeping it in its all embracing detail - according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments" (Mt

5:19). He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly (Cf. Jn 8:46). On their own admission the Jews were never able to observe the Law in its entirety without violating the least of its precepts (Cf. Jn 7:19; Acts 13:38-41; 15:10). This is why every year on the Day of Atonement the children of Israel ask God's forgiveness for their transgressions of the Law. The Law indeed makes up one inseparable whole, and St. James recalls, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it". (Jas 2:10; cf. Gal 3:10; 5:3). (CCC 580) The perfect fulfilment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son (Cf. Gal 4:4). In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but "upon the heart" of the Servant who becomes "a covenant to the people", because he will "faithfully bring forth justice" (Jer 31:33; Isa 42:3, 6). Jesus fulfils the Law to the point of taking upon himself "the curse of the Law" incurred by those who do not "abide by the things written in the book of the Law, and do them", for his death took place to redeem them "from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Gal 3:13; 3:10; Heb 9:15).

(Gal 3, 13-14) We might receive the promise of the Spirit

[13] Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree," [14] that the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

(CCC 706) Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit (Cf. Gen 18:1-15; Lk 1:26-38. 54-55; Jn 1:12-13; Rom 4:16-21). In Abraham's progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself (Cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:16), in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Cf. In 11:52). God commits himself by his own solemn oath to giving his beloved Son and "the promised Holy Spirit... [who is] the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it" (Eph 1:13-14; cf. Gen 22:17-19; Lk 1:73; Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32; Gal 3:14). (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).

(Gal 3, 15-18) "And to your descendant," who is Christ

[15] Brothers, in human terms I say that no one can annul or amend even a human will once ratified. [16] Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say, "And to descendants," as referring to many, but as referring to one, "And to your descendant," who is Christ. [17] This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to cancel the promise. [18] For if the inheritance comes from the law, it is no longer from a promise; but God bestowed it on Abraham through a promise.

(CCC 410) After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and

his restoration from his fall (Cf. Gen 3:9, 15). This passage in Genesis is called the *Protoevangelium* ("first gospel"): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers. (CCC 411) The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam (Cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45; Phil 2:8; Rom 5:19-20). Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the "*Proto-evangelium*" as Mary, the mother of Christ, the "new Eve". Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life (Cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: DS 2803; Council of Trent: DS 1573). (CCC 705) Disfigured by sin and death, man remains "in the image of God," in the image of the Son, but is deprived "of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) of his "likeness." The promise made to Abraham inaugurates the economy of salvation, at the culmination of which the Son himself will assume that "image" (Cf. Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7) and restore it in the Father's "likeness" by giving it again its Glory, the Spirit who is "the giver of life."

(Gal 3, 19-23) Through faith in Jesus Christ

[19] Why, then, the law? It was added for transgressions, until the descendant came to whom the promise had been made; it was promulgated by angels at the hand of a mediator. [20] Now there is no mediator when only one party is involved, and God is one. [21] Is the law then opposed to the promises (of God)? Of course not! For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law. [22] But scripture confined all things under the power of sin, that through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe. [23] Before faith came, we were held in custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed.

(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 711) "Behold, I am doing a new thing" (Isa 43:19). Two prophetic lines were to develop, one leading to the expectation of the Messiah, the other pointing to the announcement of a new Spirit. They converge in the small Remnant, the people of the poor, who await in hope the "consolation of Israel" and "the redemption of Jerusalem" (Cf. Zeph 2:3; Lk 2:25, 38). We have seen earlier how Jesus fulfills the prophecies

concerning himself. We limit ourselves here to those in which the relationship of the Messiah and his Spirit appears more clearly.

(Gal 3, 24) That we might be justified by faith

[24] Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

(CCC 708) This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law (Cf. Ex 19- 20; Deut 1-11; 29-30). God gave the Law as a "pedagogue" to lead his people towards Christ (Gal 3:24). But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine "likeness," along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts (Cf. Rom 3:20), enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit. The lamentations of the Psalms bear witness to this. (CCC 1963) According to Christian tradition, the Law is holy, spiritual, and good (Cf. Rom 7:12, 14, 16), yet still imperfect. Like a tutor (Cf. Gal 3:24) it shows what must be done, but does not of itself give the strength, the grace of the Spirit, to fulfill it. Because of sin, which it cannot remove, it remains a law of bondage. According to St. Paul, its special function is to denounce and *disclose sin*, which constitutes a "law of concupiscence" in the human heart (Cf. Rom 7). However, the Law remains the first stage on the way to the kingdom. It prepares and disposes the chosen people and each Christian for conversion and faith in the Savior God. It provides a teaching which endures for ever, like the Word of God.

(Gal 3, 25-26) You are all children of God in Christ Jesus

[25] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian. [26] For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

(CCC 582) Going even further, Jesus perfects the dietary law, so important in Jewish daily life, by revealing its pedagogical meaning through a divine interpretation: "Whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him... (Thus he declared all foods clean.). What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts..." (Mk 7:18-21; cf. Gal 3:24). In presenting with divine authority the definitive interpretation of the Law, Jesus found himself confronted by certain teachers of the Law who did not accept his interpretation of the Law, guaranteed though it was by the divine signs that accompanied it (Cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 12:37). This was the case especially with the sabbath laws, for he recalls, often with rabbinical arguments, that the sabbath rest is not violated by serving God and neighbor (Cf. Num 28:9; Mt 12:5; Mk 2:25-27; Lk 13:15-16; 14:3-4; Jn 7:22-24), which his own healings did.

(Gal 3, 27) You have clothed yourselves with Christ

[27] For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

(CCC 1227) According to the Apostle Paul, the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ's death, is buried with him, and rises with him: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4; cf. Col 2:12). The baptized have "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies (Cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13). (CCC 1243) The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), has

risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15). The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father." (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.

(Gal 3, 28-29) For you are all one in Christ Jesus

[28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

(CCC 791) The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church" (LG 7 § 3). The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice" (LG 7 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 12:26). Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). (CCC 2348) All the baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), the model for all chastity. All Christ's faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. At the moment of his Baptism, the Christian is pledged to lead his affective life in chastity.

Galatians 4

(Gal 4, 1-2) The heir not of age is no different from a slave

[1] I mean that as long as the heir is not of age, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything, [2] but he is under the supervision of guardians and administrators until the date set by his father.

(CCC 1972) The New Law is called a *law of love* because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear; a *law of grace*, because it confers the strength of grace to act, by means of faith and the sacraments; a *law of freedom*, because it sets us free from the ritual and juridical observances of the Old Law, inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity and, finally, lets us pass from the condition of a servant who "does not know what his master is doing" to that of a friend of Christ - "For all that I have

heard from my Father I have made known to you" - or even to the status of son and heir (Jn 15:15; cf. Jas 1:25; 2:12; Gal 4:1-7. 21-31; Rom 8:15).

(Gal 4, 3) Enslaved to the elemental powers of the world

[3] In the same way we also, when we were not of age, were enslaved to the elemental powers of the world.

(CCC 1973) Besides its precepts, the New Law also includes the *evangelical counsels*. The traditional distinction between God's commandments and the evangelical counsels is drawn in relation to charity, the perfection of Christian life. The precepts are intended to remove whatever is incompatible with charity. The aim of the counsels is to remove whatever might hinder the development of charity, even if it is not contrary to it (Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 184, 3). (CCC 1974) The evangelical counsels manifest the living fullness of charity, which is never satisfied with not giving more. They attest its vitality and call forth our spiritual readiness. The perfection of the New Law consists essentially in the precepts of love of God and neighbor. The counsels point out the more direct ways, the readier means, and are to be practiced in keeping with the vocation of each: [God] does not want each person to keep all the counsels, but only those appropriate to the diversity of persons, times, opportunities, and strengths, as charity requires; for it is charity, as queen of all virtues, all commandments, all counsels, and, in short, of all laws and all Christian actions that gives to all of them their rank, order, time, and value (St. Francis de Sales, *Love of God* 8, 6).

(Gal 4, 4) God sent his Son, born of a woman

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

(CCC 484) The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), the time of the fulfilment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the "whole fullness of deity" would dwell "bodily" (Col 2:9). The divine response to her question, "How can this be, since I know not man?", was given by the power of the Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:34-35 Gk.). (CCC 485) The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son (Cf. Jn 16:14-15). The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of Life", is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own.

(Gal 4, 5) To ransom those under the law

[5] To ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption.

(CCC 491) Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God (Lk 1:28), was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854: DS 2803). (CCC 492) The "splendour of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits

of her Son" (LG 53, 56). The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Cf. Eph 1:3-4). (CCC 493) The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature" (LG 56). By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long. (CCC 509) Mary is truly "Mother of God" since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.

(Gal 4, 6-7) You are no longer a slave but a child

[6] As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

(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). (CCC 689) The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God (Cf. Gal 4:6). Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church's faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him.

(Gal 4, 8-9) Do you want to be slaves again?

[8] At a time when you did not know God, you became slaves to things that by nature are not gods; [9] but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and destitute elemental powers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over again?

(CCC 2114) Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2, 40: PG 11, 861). (CCC 2129) The divine injunction included the prohibition of every representation of God by the hand of man. *Deuteronomy* explains: "Since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act

corruptly by making a graven image for yourselves, in the form of any figure...." (Deut 4:15-16). It is the absolutely transcendent God who revealed himself to Israel. "He is the all," but at the same time "he is greater than all his works" (Sir 43:27-28). He is "the author of beauty" (Wis 13:3).

(Gal 4, 10-11) You are observing days, months, seasons

[10] You are observing days, months, seasons, and years. [11] I am afraid on your account that perhaps I have labored for you in vain.

(CCC 1729 The beatitude of heaven sets the standards for discernment in the use of earthly goods in keeping with the law of God. (CCC 2097) To adore God is to acknowledge, in respect and absolute submission, the "nothingness of the creature" who would not exist but for God. To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to humble oneself, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name (cf. Lk 1:46-49). The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.

(Gal 4, 12-17) I originally preached the gospel to you

[12] I implore you, brothers, be as I am, because I have also become as you are. You did me no wrong; [13] you know that it was because of a physical illness that I originally preached the gospel to you, [14] and you did not show disdain or contempt because of the trial caused you by my physical condition, but rather you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. [15] Where now is that blessedness of yours? Indeed, I can testify to you that, if it had been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. [16] So now have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? [17] They show interest in you, but not in a good way; they want to isolate you, so that you may show interest in them.

(CCC 1695) "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (2 Cor 6:11), "sanctified ... (and) called to be saints" (1 Cor 1:2), Christians have become the temple of the *Holy Spirit* (Cf. 1 Cor 6:19). This "Spirit of the Son" teaches them to pray to the Father (Cf. Gal 4:6) and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22, 25) by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation (Cf. Eph 4:23). He enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true" (Eph 5:8, 9). (CCC 2766) But Jesus does not give us a formula to repeat mechanically (Cf. Mt 6:7; 1 Kings 18:26-29). As in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father. Jesus not only gives us the words of our filial prayer; at the same time he gives us the Spirit by whom these words become in us "spirit and life" (Jn 6:63). Even more, the proof and possibility of our filial prayer is that the Father "sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6). Since our prayer sets forth our desires before God, it is again the Father, "he who searches the hearts of men," who "knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:27). The prayer to Our Father is inserted into the mysterious mission of the Son and of the Spirit. (CCC 2767) This indivisible gift of the Lord's words and of the Holy Spirit who gives life to them in the hearts of believers has been received and lived by the Church from the beginning. The first communities prayed the Lord's Prayer

three times a day (cf. *Didache* 8, 3), in place of the "Eighteen Benedictions" customary in Jewish piety.

(Gal 4, 18-20) My children, for whom I am again in labor

[18] Now it is good to be shown interest for good reason at all times, and not only when I am with you. [19] My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you! [20] I would like to be with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed because of you.

(CCC 526) To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom (Cf. Mt 18:3-4). For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God" (Jn 3: 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12). Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us (Cf. Gal 4:19). Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange": O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity (*LH*, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st). (CCC 562) Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf. Gal 4:19). "For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him" (LG 7 § 4). (CCC 793) *Christ unites us with his Passover*: all his members must strive to resemble him, "until Christ be formed" in them (Gal 4:19). "For this reason we ... are taken up into the mysteries of his life, ... associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified" (LG 7 § 4; cf. Phil 3:21; Rom 8:17).

(Gal 4, 21-25) Do you not listen to the law?

[21] Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? [22] For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. [23] The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. [24] Now this is an allegory. These women represent two covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. [25] Hagar represents Sinai, a mountain in Arabia; it corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery along with her children.

(CCC 1093) In the sacramental economy the Holy Spirit fulfills what was prefigured in *the Old Covenant*. Since Christ's Church was "prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and in the Old Covenant" (LG 2), the Church's liturgy has retained certain elements of the worship of the Old Covenant as integral and irreplaceable, adopting them as her own: -notably, reading the Old Testament; -praying the Psalms; -above all, recalling the saving events and significant realities which have found their fulfillment in the mystery of Christ (promise and covenant, Exodus and Passover, kingdom and temple, exile and return). (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).

(Gal 4, 26-31) We are children of the freeborn woman

[26] But the Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother. [27] For it is written: "Rejoice, you barren one who bore no children; break forth and shout, you who were not in labor; for more numerous are the children of the deserted one than of her who has a husband." [28] Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of the promise. [29] But just as then the child of the flesh persecuted the child of the spirit, it is the same now. [30] But what does the scripture say? "Drive out the slave woman and her son! For the son of the slave woman shall not share the inheritance with the son" of the freeborn. [31] Therefore, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman but of the freeborn woman.

(CCC 753) In Scripture, we find a host of interrelated images and figures through which Revelation speaks of the inexhaustible mystery of the Church. The images taken from the Old Testament are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body (Cf. Eph 1:22; Col 1:18; LG 9). Around this center are grouped images taken "from the life of the shepherd or from cultivation of the land, from the art of building or from family life and marriage" (LG 6). (CCC 723) In Mary, the Holy Spirit *fulfills* the plan of the Father's loving goodness. Through the Holy Spirit, the Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. By the Holy Spirit's power and her faith, her virginity became uniquely fruitful (Cf. Lk 1:26-38; Rom 4:18-21; Gal 4:26-28). (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 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).

Galatians 5

(Gal 5, 1-6) For freedom Christ set us free

[1] For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. [2] It is I, Paul, who am telling you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. [3] Once again I declare to every man who has himself circumcised that he is bound to observe the entire law. [4] You are separated from Christ, you who are trying to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. [5] For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness. [6] For in

Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

(CCC 1743) "God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel (cf. Sir 15:14), so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him" (GS 17 § 1). (CCC 1744) Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in its acts when directed toward God, the sovereign Good. (CCC 1745) Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It makes the human being responsible for acts of which he is the voluntary agent. His deliberate acts properly belong to him. (CCC 1748) "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). (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*).

(Gal 5, 7-12) Who hindered you from following (the) truth?

[7] You were running well; who hindered you from following (the) truth? [8] That enticement does not come from the one who called you. [9] A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. [10] I am confident of you in the Lord that you will not take a different view, and that the one who is troubling you will bear the condemnation, whoever he may be. [11] As for me, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. [12] Would that those who are upsetting you might also castrate themselves!

(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). (CCC 1814) Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God" (DV 5). For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work[s] through charity" (Rom 1:17; Gal 5:6). (CCC 1815) The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545). But "faith apart from works is dead" (Jas 2:26): when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

(Gal 5, 13-15) You shall love your neighbor as yourself

[13] For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. [14] For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [15] But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

(CCC 1748) "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). (CCC 1822) Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (CCC 1823) Jesus makes charity the *new commandment* (Cf. Jn 13:34). By loving his own "to the end" (Jn 13:1) he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." and again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:9, 12). (CCC 1824) Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (Jn 15:9-10; cf. Mt 22:40; Rom 13:8-10).

(Gal 5, 16-21) The flesh has desires against the Spirit

[16] I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. [17] For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. [18] But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [19] Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, [20] idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, [21] occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(CCC 2514) St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life (Cf. 1 Jn 2:16). In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another's goods. (CCC 2515) Etymologically, "concupiscence" can refer to any intense form of human desire. Christian theology has given it a particular meaning: the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason. The apostle St. Paul identifies it with the rebellion of the "flesh" against the "spirit" (Cf. Gal 5:16, 17, 24; Eph 2:3). Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man's moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins (Cf. Gen 3:11; Council of Trent: DS 1515). (CCC 1852) There are a great many kinds of sins. Scripture provides several lists of them. The *Letter to the Galatians* contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21; cf. Rom 1:28-32; 1 Cor 9-10; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5-8; 1 Tim 9-10; 2 Tim 2-5).

(Gal 5, 22-26) Let us also follow the Spirit

[22] In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. [24] Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. [25] If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. [26] Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

(CCC 2819) "The kingdom of God [is] righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit. Ever since Pentecost, a decisive battle has been joined between "the flesh" and the Spirit (Cf. Gal 5:16-25). Only a pure soul can boldly say: "Thy kingdom come." One who has heard Paul say, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies," and has purified himself in action, thought, and word will say to God: "Thy kingdom come!" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.* 5, 13: PG 33, 1120A; cf. Rom 6:12). (CCC 2555) Christ's faithful "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24); they are led by the Spirit and follow his desires. (CCC 1695) "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (2 Cor 6:11), "sanctified ... (and) called to be saints" (1 Cor 1:2), Christians have become the temple of the *Holy Spirit* (Cf. 1 Cor 6:19). This "Spirit of the Son" teaches them to pray to the Father (Cf. Gal 4:6) and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22, 25) by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation (Cf. Eph 4:23). He enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true" (Eph 5:8, 9). (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).

Galatians 6

(Gal 6, 1-6) Each one must examine his own work

[1] Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. [2] Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. [3] For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. [4] Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; [5] for each will bear his own load. [6] One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor.

(CCC 2012) "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him... For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among

many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Rom 8:28-30). (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).

(Gal 6, 7-9) A person will reap only what he sows

[7] Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows, [8] because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. [9] Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.

(CCC 2005) Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace *escapes our experience* and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1533-1534). However, according to the Lord's words - "Thus you will know them by their fruits" (Mt 7:20) - reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty. A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges: "Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there'" (Acts of the trial of St. Joan of Arc).

(Gal 6, 10) Let us do good to all

[10] So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.

(CCC 2007) With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality, for we have received everything from him, our Creator. (CCC 2009) Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow *true merit* on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "co-heirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life" (Council of Trent (1547): DS 1546). The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1548). "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God's gifts" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 298, 4-5: PL 38, 1367). (CCC 2010) Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

(Gal 6, 11-14) May I never boast except in the cross

[11] See with what large letters I am writing to you in my own hand! [12] It is those who want to make a good appearance in the flesh who are trying to compel you to have yourselves circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. [13] Not even those having themselves circumcised observe the law themselves; they only want you to be circumcised so that they may boast of your flesh. [14] But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

(CCC 2011) *The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits* before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men. The saints have always had a lively awareness that their merits were pure grace. After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your *love alone*.... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own *justice* and to receive from your *love* the eternal possession of *yourself* [St. Therese of Lisieux, "Act of Offering" in *Story of a Soul*, tr. John Clarke (Washington Dc: ICS, 1981), 277]. (CCC 2014) Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments - "the holy mysteries" - and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.

(Gal 6, 15-18) I bear the marks of Jesus on my body

[15] For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. [16] Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God. [17] From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. [18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

(CCC 2028) "All Christians... are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 § 2). "Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Mos.*: PG 44, 300D). (CCC 2029) "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24).