

Gospel according to Luke

Luke 1

(Lk 1, 1-4) I have decided to write in an orderly sequence

[1] Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, [2] just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, [3] I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, [4] so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

(CCC 125) The *Gospels* are the heart of all the Scriptures "because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour" (DV 18). (CCC 126) We can distinguish three stages in the formation of the Gospels: 1. *The life and teaching of Jesus*. The Church holds firmly that the four Gospels, "whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up" (DV 19; cf. Acts 1:1-2). 2. *The oral tradition*. "For, after the ascension of the Lord, the apostles handed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but with that fuller understanding which they, instructed by the glorious events of Christ and enlightened by the Spirit of truth, now enjoyed" (DV 19). 3. *The written Gospels*. "The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form; others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches, the while sustaining the form of preaching, but always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus" (DV 19).

(Lk 1, 5-17) Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son

[5] In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. [6] Both were righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. [7] But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years. [8] Once when he was serving as priest in his division's turn before God, [9] according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. [10] Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, [11] the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. [12] Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him. [13] But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. [14] And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15] for he will be great in the sight of (the) Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He

will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, [16] and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. [17] He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

(CCC 331) Christ is the centre of the angelic world. They are *his* angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...." (Mt 25:31) They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Heb 1:14). (CCC 332) Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples (Cf. Job 38:7 (where angels are called "sons of God"); Gen 3:24; 19; 21:17; 22:11; Acts 7:53; Ex 23:20-23; Judg 13; 6:11-24; Isa 6:6; 1 Kings 19:5). Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself (Cf. Lk 1:11, 26). (CCC 696) *Fire*. While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. The prayer of the prophet Elijah, who "arose like fire" and whose "word burned like a torch," brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel (Sir 48:1; cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39). This event was a "figure" of the fire of the Holy Spirit, who transforms what he touches. John the Baptist, who goes "before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah," proclaims Christ as the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk 1:17; 3:16). Jesus will say of the Spirit: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). In the form of tongues "as of fire," the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself (Acts 2:3-4). The spiritual tradition has retained this symbolism of fire as one of the most expressive images of the Holy Spirit's actions (Cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 577 ff.). "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19).

(Lk 1, 18-25) You did not believe: you will be speechless

[18] Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." [19] And the angel said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. [20] But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time." [21] Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. [22] But when he came out, he was unable to speak to

them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was gesturing to them but remained mute. [23] Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home. [24] After this time his wife Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months, saying, [25] "So has the Lord done for me at a time when he has seen fit to take away my disgrace before others."

(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 2732) The most common yet most hidden temptation is our *lack of faith*. It expresses itself less by declared incredulity than by our actual preferences. When we begin to pray, a thousand labors or cares thought to be urgent vie for priority; once again, it is the moment of truth for the heart: what is its real love? Sometimes we turn to the Lord as a last resort, but do we really believe he is? Sometimes we enlist the Lord as an ally, but our heart remains presumptuous. In each case, our lack of faith reveals that we do not yet share in the disposition of a humble heart: "Apart from me, you can do *nothing*" (Jn 15:5). (CCC 2374) Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly. "What will you give me," asks Abraham of God, "for I continue childless?" (Gen 15:2) and Rachel cries to her husband Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" (Gen 30:1). (CCC 2379) The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord's Cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others.

(Lk 1, 26-38) "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."

[26] In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. [30] Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, [33] and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." [34] But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" [35] And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. [36] And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; [37] for nothing will be impossible for God." [38] Mary said, "Behold, I am the

handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

(CCC 721) Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the *dwelling place* where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary (Cf. Prov 8:1- 9:6; Sir 24). Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the "Seat of Wisdom." In her, the "wonders of God" that the Spirit was to fulfill in Christ and the Church began to be manifested. (CCC 722) The Holy Spirit *prepared* Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9) should herself be "full of grace." She was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty. It was quite correct for the angel Gabriel to greet her as the "Daughter of Zion": "Rejoice" (Cf. Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:14). It is the thanksgiving of the whole People of God, and thus of the Church, which Mary in her canticle (Cf. Lk 1:46-55) lifts up to the Father in the Holy Spirit while carrying within her the eternal Son. (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 724) In Mary, the Holy Spirit *manifests* the Son of the Father, now become the Son of the Virgin. She is the burning bush of the definitive theophany. Filled with the Holy Spirit she makes the Word visible in the humility of his flesh. It is to the poor and the first representatives of the gentiles that she makes him known (Cf. Lk 1:15-19; Mt 2:11). (CCC 725) Finally, through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men, the objects of God's merciful love (Cf. Lk 2:14), *into communion* with Christ. And the humble are always the first to accept him: shepherds, magi, Simeon and Anna, the bride and groom at Cana, and the first disciples. (CCC 726) At the end of this mission of the Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve ("mother of the living"), the mother of the "whole Christ" (Cf. Jn 19:25-27). As such, she was present with the Twelve, who "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer"(Acts 1:14), at the dawn of the "end time" which the Spirit was to inaugurate on the morning of Pentecost with the manifestation of the Church.

(Lk 1, 39-40) Mary entered the house of Zechariah

[39] During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, [40] where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

(CCC 2674) Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties" (LG 62). Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (*hodigitria*), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West. (CCC 2675) Beginning with Mary's unique

cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested in his mysteries. In countless hymns and antiphons expressing this prayer, two movements usually alternate with one another: the first "magnifies" the Lord for the "great things" he did for his lowly servant and through her for all human beings (Cf. Lk 1:46-55). The second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused.

(Lk 1, 41-44) Most blessed are you among women

[41] When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, [42] cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. [43] And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44] For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

(CCC 2676) This twofold movement of prayer to Mary has found a privileged expression in the *Ave Maria: Hail Mary [or Rejoice, Mary]*: the greeting of the angel Gabriel opens this prayer. It is God himself who, through his angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of his humble servant and to exult in the joy he finds in her (Cf. Lk 1:48; Zeph 3:17b). *Full of grace, the Lord is with thee*: These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice... O Daughter of Jerusalem... The Lord your God is in your midst" (Zeph 3:14, 17a). Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells. She is "the dwelling of God... with men" (Rev 21:3). Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to him who has come to dwell in her and whom she is about to give to the world. *Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus*. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "Filled with the Holy Spirit," Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed" (Lk 1:41, 48). "Blessed is she who believed...." (Lk 1:45). Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Abraham. Because of his faith, became a blessing for all the nations of the earth (cf. Gen 12:3). Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb."

(Lk 1, 45) Blessed are you who believed

[45] Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

(CCC 2677) *Holy Mary, Mother of God*: With Elizabeth we marvel, "and why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43). Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). By entrusting ourselves to her

prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done." *Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy," the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing (cf. Jn 19:27) to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise. (CCC 2682) Because of Mary's singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done for her, and to entrust supplications and praises to her.

(Lk 1, 46-56) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

[46] And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; [47] my spirit rejoices in God my savior. [48] For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. [49] The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. [50] His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. [51] He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. [52] He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. [53] The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. [54] He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, [55] according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." [56] Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

(CCC 971) "*All generations will call me blessed*": "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship" (Lk 1:48; Paul VI, MC 56). The Church rightly honors "the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration" (LG 66). The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an "epitome of the whole Gospel," express this devotion to the Virgin Mary (Cf. Paul VI, MC 42; SC 103). (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. (CCC 2679) Mary is the perfect *Orans* (pray-er), a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes (cf. Jn 19:27), for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope (cf. LG 68-69). (CCC 2678) Medieval piety in the West developed the prayer of the rosary as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany called the *Akathistos* and the *Paraclesis* remained closer to the choral office in the

Byzantine churches, while the Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac traditions preferred popular hymns and songs to the Mother of God. But in the *Ave Maria*, the *theotokia*, the hymns of St. Ephrem or St. Gregory of Narek, the tradition of prayer is basically the same. (CCC 2619) That is why the Canticum of Mary (Cf. Lk 1:46-55), The *Magnificat* (Latin) or *Megalynei* (byzantine) is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the "poor" whose hope is met by the fulfillment of the promises made to our ancestors, "to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

(Lk 1, 57-66) John is his name

[57] When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. [58] Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. [59] 18 When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, [60] but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." [61] But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." [62] So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. [63] He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. [64] Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. [65] Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. [66] All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

(CCC 717) "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (Jn 1:6). John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Lk 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people (Cf. Lk 1:68). (CCC 273) Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power (cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13). The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that "nothing will be impossible with God", and was able to magnify the Lord: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk 1:37, 49). (CCC 523) *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way (cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3). "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last (Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13). He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29). Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom (Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29).

(Lk 1, 67-80) Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel

[67] Then Zechariah his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: [68] "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. [69] He has raised up a horn for our

salvation within the house of David his servant, [70] even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: [71] salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, [72] to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant [73] and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, [74] rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him [75] in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. [76] And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, [77] to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, [78] because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us [79] to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace." [80] The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

(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). (CCC 720) Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," prefiguring what he would achieve with and in Christ. John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth (Cf. Jn 3:5). (CCC 2584) In their "one to one" encounters with God, the prophets draw light and strength for their mission. Their prayer is not flight from this unfaithful world, but rather attentiveness to the Word of God. At times their prayer is an argument or a complaint, but it is always an intercession that awaits and prepares for the intervention of the Savior God, the Lord of history (Cf. Am 7:2, 5; Isa 6:5, 8, 11; Jer 1:6; 15:15-18; 20:7-18).

Luke 2

(Lk 2, 1-7) Mary gave birth to her firstborn son

[1] In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. [2] This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. [3] So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. [4] And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, [5] to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. [6] While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, [7] and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(CCC 973) By pronouncing her "fiat" at the Annunciation and giving her consent to the Incarnation, Mary was already collaborating with the whole work her Son was to accomplish. She is mother wherever he is Savior and head of the Mystical

Body. (CCC 525) Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family (Cf. Lk 2:61). Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest (Cf. Lk 2:8-20). The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night: The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels and shepherds praise him and the magi advance with the star, For you are born for us, Little Child, God eternal! (*Kontakion* of Romanos the Melodist). (CCC 963) Since the Virgin Mary's role in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit has been treated, it is fitting now to consider her place in the mystery of the Church. "The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... She is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ'... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head" (LG 53; cf. St. Augustine, *De virg.* 6: PL 40, 399). "Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church" (Paul VI, *Discourse*, November 21, 1964).

(Lk 2, 8-14) Today a savior has been born for you

[8] Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. [9] The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. [10] The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. [11] For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. [12] And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: [14] "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

(CCC 333) From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Heb 1:6). Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Lk 2:14). They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; 2 Macc 10:29-30; 11:8). Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection (Cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7). They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement. (Cf. Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9. (CCC 334) In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels (Cf. Acts 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25).

(Lk 2, 15-20) The shepherds went to Bethlehem

[15] When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." [16] So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. [17]

When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. [18] All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. [19] And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. [20] Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

(CCC 495) Called in the Gospels "the mother of Jesus", Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as "the mother of my Lord"(Lk 1:43; Jn 2:1; 19:25; cf. Mt 13:55; *et al.*). In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*) (Council of Ephesus (431): DS 251). (CCC 496) From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived "by the Holy Spirit without human seed" (Council of the Lateran (649): DS 503; cf. DS 10-64). The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says: You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin,... he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate... he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *ad Smyrn.* 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan, 1889), II/2, 289-293; SCh 10, 154-156; cf. Rom 1:3; Jn 1:13). (CCC 497) The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility: (Mt 1 18-25; Lk 1:26-38) "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée (Mt 1:20). The Church sees here the fulfilment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Isa 7:14 (LXX), quoted in Mt 1:23 (Gk)). (CCC 975) "We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ" (Paul VI, CPG § 15).

(Lk 2, 21-28) He was named Jesus

[21] When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. [22] When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, [23] just as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," [24] and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord. [25] Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. [26] It had been revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. [27] He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents

brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, [28] he took him into his arms and blessed God,

(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). (CCC 423) We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He "came from God," (Jn 13:3) "descended from heaven" (Jn 3:13; 6:33), and "came in the flesh." (1 Jn 4:2). For "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.... And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace." (Jn 1:14,16).

(Lk 2, 29-38) The prophecies of Simeon and Anna

[29] "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, [30] for my eyes have seen your salvation, [31] which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." [33] The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; [34] and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted [35] (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." [36] There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, [37] and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. [38] And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

(CCC 529) *The presentation of Jesus in the temple* shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord (Cf. Lk 2:22-39; Ex 13:2, 12-13). With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its *encounter* with the Saviour - the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the "light to the nations" and the "glory of Israel", but also "a sign that is spoken against". The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had "prepared in the presence of all peoples". (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.

(CCC 972) After speaking of the Church, her origin, mission, and destiny, we can find no better way to conclude than by looking to Mary. In her we contemplate what the Church already is in her mystery on her own "pilgrimage of faith," and what she will be in the homeland at the end of her journey. There, "in the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity," "in the communion of all the saints" (LG 69). The Church is awaited by the one she venerates as Mother of her Lord and as her own mother. In the meantime the Mother of Jesus, in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God (LG 68; cf. 2 Pet 3:10).

(Lk 2, 39-40) They returned to Galilee, to Nazareth

[39] When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. [40] The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

(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 531) During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labour. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God (Cf. Gal 4:4), a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Lk 2:51-52). (CCC 964) Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death" (LG 57); it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion: Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her: to be given, by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: "Woman, behold your son" (LG 58; cf. Jn 19:26-27).

(Lk 2, 41-52) The finding of Jesus in the temple

[41] Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, [42] and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. [43] After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. [44] Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, [45] but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. [46] After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking

them questions, [47] and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. [48] When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." [49] And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" [50] But they did not understand what he said to them. [51] He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. [52] And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

(CCC 583) Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth (Lk 2:22-39). At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business (Cf. Lk 2 46-49). He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover (Cf. Lk 2 41). His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts (Cf. Jn 2:13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8:2; 10:22-23). (CCC 534) *The finding of Jesus in the temple* is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus (Cf. Lk 2:41-52). Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?" (Lk 2:49 alt). Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary "kept all these things in her heart" during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life. (CCC 968) Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. "In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace" (LG 61). (CCC 532) Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will..." (Lk 22:42). The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed (Cf. Rom 5:19).

Luke 3

(Lk 3, 1-6) All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

[1] In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, [2] during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. [3] He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, [4] as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. [5] Every valley

shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, [6] and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

(CCC 717) "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (Jn 1:6). John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"(Lk 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people (Cf. Lk 1:68). (CCC 718) John is "Elijah [who] must come" (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Lk 1:78). The fire of the Spirit dwells in him and makes him the forerunner of the coming Lord. In John, the precursor, the Holy Spirit completes the work of "[making] ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17). (CCC 1217) In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, *during the blessing of the baptismal water*, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of Baptism: Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs, which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power. In Baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water). (CCC 1218) Since the beginning of the world, water, so humble and wonderful a creature, has been the source of life and fruitfulness. Sacred Scripture sees it as "overshadowed" by the Spirit of God (Cf. Gen 1:2): At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water). (CCC 1219) The Church has seen in Noah's ark a prefiguring of salvation by Baptism, for by it "a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water" (1 Pet 3:20): The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of Baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water).

(Lk 3, 7-9) Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees

[7] He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [8] Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. [9] Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

(CCC 720) Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," prefiguring what he would achieve with and in Christ. John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth (Cf. Jn 3:5). (CCC 208) Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance. Before the burning bush, Moses takes off his sandals and veils his face in the presence of God's holiness (Cf. Ex 3:5-6). Before the glory of the thrice-holy God, Isaiah cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8). But because God is holy, he can forgive the man who realizes that he is a sinner before him: "I will not execute my fierce anger... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst" (Hos 11:9). The apostle John says likewise: "We shall... reassure our

hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 Jn 3:19-20). (CCC 1220) If water springing up from the earth symbolizes life, the water of the sea is a symbol of death and so can represent the mystery of the cross. By this symbolism Baptism signifies communion with Christ's death. (CCC 1221) But above all, the crossing of the Red Sea, literally the liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, announces the liberation wrought by Baptism: You freed the children of Abraham from the slavery of Pharaoh, bringing them dry-shod through the waters of the Red Sea, to be an image of the people set free in Baptism (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water: "Abrahae filios per mare Rubrum sicco vestigio transire fecisti, ut plebs, a Pharaonis servitute liberata, populum baptizatorum praefiguraret").

(Lk 3, 10-14) What then should we do?

[10] And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" [11] He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." [12] Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" [13] He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." [14] Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

(CCC 827) "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8 § 3; Cf. UR 3; 6; Heb 2:17; 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21). All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners (Cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10). In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time (Cf. Mt 13:24-30). Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness: The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Paul VI, CPG § 19). (CCC 853) On her pilgrimage, the Church has also experienced the "discrepancy existing between the message she proclaims and the human weakness of those to whom the Gospel has been entrusted" (GS 43 § 6). Only by taking the "way of penance and renewal," the "narrow way of the cross," can the People of God extend Christ's reign (LG 8 § 3; 15; AG 1 § 3; cf. *RMiss* 12-20). For "just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men" (LG 8 § 3).

(Lk 3, 15-18) He who baptizes with the holy Spirit

[15] Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. [16] John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I

am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. [17] His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." [18] Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

(CCC 719) John the Baptist is "more than a prophet" (Lk 7:26). In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (Cf. Mt 11:13-14). He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the "voice" of the Consoler who is coming (Jn 1:23; cf. Isa 40:1-3). As the Spirit of truth will also do, John "came to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1:7; cf. Jn 15:26; 5:35). In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels (Cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12). "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.... Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:33-36). (CCC 1222) Finally, Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the People of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Covenant. (CCC 1223) All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan (Cf. Mt 3:13). After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: "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" (Mt 28:19-20; cf. Mk 16:15-16).

(Lk 3, 19-20) Herod put John in prison

[19] Now Herod the tetrarch, who had been censured by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil deeds Herod had committed, [20] added still another to these by (also) putting John in prison.

(CCC 524) When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (cf. Rev 22:17). By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). (CCC 2473) *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110). (CCC 2506) The Christian is not to "be ashamed of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8) in deed and word. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith.

(Lk 3, 21) Jesus also had been baptized

[21] After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,

(CCC 1276) "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" (Mt 28:19-20). (CCC 1275) Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ. (CCC 1277) Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism. (CCC 1278) The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 1279) The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ. (CCC 1280) Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character Baptism cannot be repeated (cf. DS 1609 and DS 1624). (CCC 1281) Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, are saved even if they have not been baptized (cf. LG 16).

(Lk 3, 22) You are my beloved Son

Heaven was opened [22] and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

(CCC 444) The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son" (Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5). Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence (Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36). He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God" (Jn 3:18). In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39), that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning. (CCC 536) The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:12). Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death (Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Already he is coming to "fulfil all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins (Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39). The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son (Cf. Lk 3:22; Isa 42:1). The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him" (Jn 1:32-33; cf. Isa 11:2). Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" (Mt 3:16) - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation. (CCC

1272) Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation (Cf. Rom 8:29; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609-1619). Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated. (CCC 1273) Incorporated into the Church by Baptism, the faithful have received the sacramental character that consecrates them for Christian religious worship (Cf. LG 11). The baptismal seal enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the holy liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity (Cf. LG 10).

(Lk 3, 23-38) Jesus' genealogy

[23] When Jesus began his ministry he was about thirty years of age. He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, [24] the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, [25] the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, [26] the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, [27] the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, [28] the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, [29] the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, [30] the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, [31] the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, [32] the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, [33] the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, [34] the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, [35] the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, [36] the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, [37] the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, [38] the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

(CCC 417) Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin". (CCC 69) God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words. (CCC 70) Beyond the witness to himself that God gives in created things, he manifested himself to our first parents, spoke to them and, after the fall, promised them salvation (cf. Gen 3:15) and offered them his covenant. (CCC 71) God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf. Gen 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts. (CCC 72) God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity. (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 60) The people descended from Abraham would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church (Cf. Rom 11:28; Jn 11:52; 10:16). They would be the root on to which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe (Cf. Rom 11:17-18, 24).

Luke 4

(Lk 4, 1-12) Jesus tempted by the devil in the desert

[1] Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert [2] for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. [3] The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." [4] Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" [5] Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. [6] The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. [7] All this will be yours, if you worship me." [8] Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'" [9] Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, [10] for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' [11] and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" [12] Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

(CCC 538) The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him (Cf. Mk 1:12-13). At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him "until an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). (CCC 539) The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder (Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27). Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience

of his filial love for the Father. (CCC 2096) Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve," says Jesus, citing *Deuteronomy* (Lk 4:8; Cf. Deut 6:13).

(Lk 4, 13) The devil departed from him for a time

[13] When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

(CCC 540) Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him (Cf. Mt 16:21-23). This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb 4:15). By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (CCC 2753) In the battle of prayer we must confront erroneous conceptions of prayer, various currents of thought, and our own experience of failure. We must respond with humility, trust, and perseverance to these temptations which cast doubt on the usefulness or even the possibility of prayer. (CCC 2755) Two frequent temptations threaten prayer: lack of faith and *acedia* - a form of depression stemming from lax ascetical practice that leads to discouragement. (CCC 2733) Another temptation, to which presumption opens the gate, is *acedia*. The spiritual writers understand by this a form of depression due to lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, carelessness of heart. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). The greater the height, the harder the fall. Painful as discouragement is, it is the reverse of presumption. The humble are not surprised by their distress; it leads them to trust more, to hold fast in constancy. (CCC 2863) When we say "lead us not into temptation" we are asking God not to allow us to take the path that leads to sin. This petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength; it requests the grace of vigilance and final perseverance.

(Lk 4, 14-15) Jesus taught in synagogues praised by all

[14] Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. [15] He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

(CCC 541) "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mk 1:14-15). "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth" (LG 3). Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life" (LG 2). He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms" (LG 5). (CCC 40) Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking. (CCC 39) In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with

philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists. (CCC 38) This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also "about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error" (Pius XII, *Humani generis*, 561: DS 3876; cf. *Dei Filius* 2: DS 3005; DV 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 1, 1).

(Lk 4, 16-21) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me

[16] He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read [17] and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: [18] "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, [19] and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." [20] Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. [21] He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

(CCC 690) Jesus is Christ, "anointed," because the Spirit is his anointing, and everything that occurs from the Incarnation on derives from this fullness (Cf. Jn 3:34). When Christ is finally glorified (Jn 7:39), he can in turn send the Spirit from his place with the Father to those who believe in him: he communicates to them his glory (Cf. Jn 17:22), that is, the Holy Spirit who glorifies him (Cf. Jn 16:14). From that time on, this joint mission will be manifested in the children adopted by the Father in the Body of his Son: the mission of the Spirit of adoption is to unite them to Christ and make them live in him: The notion of anointing suggests... that there is no distance between the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, just as between the surface of the body and the anointing with oil neither reason nor sensation recognizes any intermediary, so the contact of the Son with the Spirit is immediate, so that anyone who would make contact with the Son by faith must first encounter the oil by contact. In fact there is no part that is not covered by the Holy Spirit. That is why the confession of the Son's Lordship is made in the Holy Spirit by those who receive him, the Spirit coming from all sides to those who approach the Son in faith (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16: PG 45, 1321A-B). (CCC 1286) In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission (Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Lk 4:16-22). The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God (Cf. Mt 3:13-17; Jn 1:33-34). He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him "without measure" (Jn 3:34). (CCC 2610) Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us *filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mk 11:24). Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23; cf. Mt 21:22). Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith" of his own disciples (Cf. Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26) as he is

struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman (Cf. Mt 8:10; 15:28).

(Lk 4, 22-30) All spoke highly of him and were amazed

[22] And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" [23] He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" [24] And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. [25] Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. [26] It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. [27] Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." [28] When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. [29] They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. [30] But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

(CCC 167) "I believe" (*Apostles' Creed*) is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during Baptism. "We believe" (*Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*) is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. "I believe" is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both "I believe" and "We believe". (CCC 168) It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith. Everywhere, it is the Church that first confesses the Lord: "Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you", as we sing in the hymn *Te Deum*; with her and in her, we are won over and brought to confess: "I believe", "We believe". It is through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by Baptism. In the *Rituale Romanum*, the minister of Baptism asks the catechumen: "What do you ask of God's Church?" and the answer is: "Faith." "What does faith offer you?" "Eternal life" (*Roman Ritual*, Rite of baptism of adults). (CCC 169) Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother: "We believe the Church as the mother of our new birth, and not *in* the Church as if she were the author of our salvation" (Faustus of Riez, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1, 2: PL 62, 11). Because she is our mother, she is also our teacher in the faith. (CCC 170) We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. "The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities [which they express]" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 1,2, ad 2). All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more.

(Lk 4, 31-37) "Be quiet! Come out of him!"

[31] Jesus then went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath, [32] and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority. [33] In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit

of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice, [34] "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" [35] Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm. [36] They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." [37] And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

(CCC 561) "The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfilment of Revelation" (John Paul II, CT 9). (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 447) Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of *Psalms* 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles (Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13). Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin. (CCC 177) "To believe" has thus a twofold reference: to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it. (CCC 176) Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words. (CCC 175) "We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966).

(Lk 4, 38-41) He cured people sick with various diseases

[38] After he left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her. [39] He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them. [40] At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. [41] And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Messiah.

(CCC 1151) *Signs taken up by Christ.* In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Cf. Lk 8:10). He performs healings and illustrates his preaching with physical signs or symbolic gestures (Cf. Jn 9:6; Mk 7:33 ff.; 8:22 ff). He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover

(Cf. Lk 9:31; 22:7-20), for he himself is the meaning of all these signs. (CCC 1503) Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (Cf. Mk 2:17). His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them. (CCC 1511) The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the Anointing of the Sick: This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1695; cf. Mk 6:13; Jas 5:14-15). (CCC 1499) "By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ" (LG 11; cf. Jas 5:14-16; Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Pet 4:13).

(Lk 4, 42) They tried to prevent him from leaving them

[42] At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them.

(CCC 44) Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God. (CCC 45) Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795). (CCC 46) When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything. (CCC 47) The Church teaches that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human reason (cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 § 1: DS 3026). (CCC 48) We really can name God, starting from the manifold perfections of his creatures, which are likenesses of the infinitely perfect God, even if our limited language cannot exhaust the mystery. (CCC 43) Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall that "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude" (Lateran Council IV: DS 806); and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG I*, 30).

(Lk 4, 43-44) Preaching in the synagogues of Judea

[43] But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." [44] And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

(CCC 55) This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. "After the fall, [God] buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing" (DV 3; cf. Gen 3:15; Rom 2:6-7). Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death... Again and again you offered a covenant to man (*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 118). (CCC 581) The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi (Cf. Jn 11:28; 3:2; Mt 22:23-24, 34-36). He often argued within the framework of rabbinical interpretation of the Law (Cf. Mt 12:5; 9:12; Mk 2:23-27; Lk 6:6-9; Jn 7:22-23). Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7:28-29). In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes (Cf. Mt 5:1). Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old... But I say to you..." (Mt 5:33-34). With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were "making void the word of God" (Mk 7:13; cf. 3:8). (CCC 543) *Everyone* is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations (Cf. Mt 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19). To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (LG 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32).

Luke 5

(Lk 5, 1-11) From now on you will be catching men

[1] While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. [2] He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. [3] Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. [4] After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." [5] Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." [6] When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. [7] They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. [8] When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord,

for I am a sinful man." [9] For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, [10] and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." [11] When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

(CCC 208) Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance. Before the burning bush, Moses takes off his sandals and veils his face in the presence of God's holiness (Cf. Ex 3:5-6). Before the glory of the thrice-holy God, Isaiah cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8). But because God is holy, he can forgive the man who realizes that he is a sinner before him: "I will not execute my fierce anger... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst" (Hos 11:9). The apostle John says likewise: "We shall... reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 Jn 3:19-20). (CCC 763) It was the Son's task to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason for his being sent (Cf. LG 3; AG 3). "The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures" (LG 5). To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The Church "is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery" (LG 3). (CCC 765) The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head (Cf. Mk 3:14-15). Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 21:12-14). The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot (Cf. Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1-2; Mt 10:25; Jn 15:20). By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church.

(Lk 5, 12-14) The leprosy left him immediately

[12] Now there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where he was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." [13] Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do will it. Be made clean." And the leprosy left him immediately. [14] Then he ordered him not to tell anyone, but "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

(CCC 2448) "In its various forms - material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death - *human misery* is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a *preferential love* on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation

through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere" (CDF, instruction, *Libertatis conscientia*, 68).

(Lk 5, 15-16) Withdraw to deserted places to pray

[15] The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, [16] but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

(CCC 2599) The Son of God who became Son of the Virgin learned to pray according to his human heart. He learns the formulas of prayer from his mother, who kept in her heart and meditated upon all the "great things" done by the Almighty (Cf. Lk 1:49; 2:19; 2:51). He learns to pray in the words and rhythms of the prayer of his people, in the synagogue at Nazareth and the Temple at Jerusalem. But his prayer springs from an otherwise secret source, as he intimates at the age of twelve: "I must be in my Father's house" (Lk 2:49). Here the newness of prayer in the fullness of time begins to be revealed: his *filial prayer*, which the Father awaits from his children, is finally going to be lived out by the only Son in his humanity, with and for men. (CCC 2600) The Gospel according to St. Luke emphasizes the action of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of prayer in Christ's ministry. Jesus prays *before* the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion (Cf. Lk 3:21; 9:28; 22:41-44). He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as "the Christ of God," and again that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted (Cf. Lk 6:12; 9:18-20; 22:32). Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father. (CCC 2602) Jesus often draws apart to pray *in solitude*, on a mountain, preferably at night (Cf. Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16). *He includes all men* in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself. Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them (Cf. Heb 2:12, 15; 4:15). It was for this that the Father sent him. His words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret.

(Lk 5, 17-26) As for you, your sins are forgiven

[17] One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. [18] And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set (him) in his presence. [19] But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. [20] When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven." [21] Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" [22] Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? [23] Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and

walk'? [24] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." [25] He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. [26] Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, "We have seen incredible things today."

(CCC 1) God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life. (CCC 30) "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice" (Ps 105:3). Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God. You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1, 1, 1: PL 32, 659-661). (CCC 1116) Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ (Cf. Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46), which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. (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.

(Lk 5, 27-32) He said to Levi "Follow me"

[27] After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." [28] And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. [29] Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. [30] The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" [31] Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. [32] I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

(CCC 588) Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves (Cf. Lk 5:30; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1). Against those among them "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised

others", Jesus affirmed: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 18:9; 5:32; cf. Jn 7:49; 9:34). He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves (Cf. Jn 8:33-36; 9:40-41). (CCC 589) Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them (Cf. Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6). He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet (Cf. Lk 15:1-2, 22-32). But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk 2:7). By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name (Cf. Jn 5:18; 10:33; 17:6, 26).

(Lk 5, 33-35) Your disciples eat and drink

[33] And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink." [34] Jesus answered them, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? [35] But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

(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 1384) The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn 6:53). (CCC 1385) To respond to this invitation we must *prepare ourselves* for so great and so holy a moment. St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor 11:27-29). Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming

to communion. (CCC 1387) To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church (Cf. CIC, can. 919). Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.

(Lk 5, 36-39) New wine poured into fresh wineskins

[36] And he also told them a parable. "No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. [37] Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. [38] Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. [39] (And) no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

(CCC 1999) The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification (Cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38-39): Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself (2 Cor 5:17-18). (CCC 670) Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfilment. We are already at "the last hour" (1 Jn 2:18; cf. 1 Pt 4:7). "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 10:11). Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church (Cf. Mk 16:17-18, 20). (CCC 853) On her pilgrimage, the Church has also experienced the "discrepancy existing between the message she proclaims and the human weakness of those to whom the Gospel has been entrusted" (GS 43 § 6). Only by taking the "way of penance and renewal," the "narrow way of the cross," can the People of God extend Christ's reign (LG 8 § 3; 15; AG 1 § 3; cf. *RMiss* 12-20). For "just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men" (LG 8 § 3).

Luke 6

(Lk 6, 1-5) The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath

[1] While he was going through a field of grain on a sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. [2] Some Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?" [3] Jesus said to them in reply, "Have you not read what David did when he and those (who were) with him were hungry? [4] (How) he went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions." [5] Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

(CCC 347) Creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation (Cf.

Gen 1:14). As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over "the work of God", that is, solemn worship (St. Benedict, *Regula* 43, 3: PL 66, 675-676). This indicates the right order of human concerns. (CCC 348) The sabbath is at the heart of Israel's law. To keep the commandments is to correspond to the wisdom and the will of God as expressed in his work of creation. (CCC 582) [...] 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. (CCC 349) *The eighth day*. But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation (Cf. *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 24, prayer after the first reading). (CCC 1382) The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us. (CCC 1389) The Church obliges the faithful "to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days" and, prepared by the sacrament of Reconciliation, to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season (OE 15; CIC, can. 920). But the Church strongly encourages the faithful to receive the holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days, or more often still, even daily.

(Lk 6, 6-11) Jesus heals in sabbath

[6] On another sabbath he went into the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. [7] The scribes and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if he would cure on the sabbath so that they might discover a reason to accuse him. [8] But he realized their intentions and said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up and stand before us." And he rose and stood there. [9] Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" [10] Looking around at them all, he then said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so and his hand was restored. [11] But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

(CCC 345) *The sabbath - the end of the work of the six days*. The sacred text says that "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done", that the "heavens and the earth were finished", and that God "rested" on this day and sanctified and blessed it (Gen 2:1-3). These inspired words are rich in profitable instruction: (CCC 346) In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant (Cf. Heb 4:3-4; Jer 31:35-

37; 33:19-26). For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it. (CCC 2168) The third commandment of the Decalogue recalls the holiness of the sabbath: "The seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD" (Ex 31:15). (CCC 2169) In speaking of the sabbath Scripture recalls creation: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex 20:11). (CCC 2170) Scripture also reveals in the Lord's day *a memorial of Israel's liberation* from bondage in Egypt: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (Deut 5:15). (CCC 2171) God entrusted the sabbath to Israel to keep as a *sign of the irrevocable covenant* (Cf. Ex 31:16). The sabbath is for the Lord, holy and set apart for the praise of God, his work of creation, and his saving actions on behalf of Israel. (CCC 2172) God's action is the model for human action. If God "rested and was refreshed" on the seventh day, man too ought to "rest" and should let others, especially the poor, "be refreshed" (Ex 31:17; cf. 23:12). The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money (Cf. Neh 13:15-22; 2 Chr 36:21). (CCC 2173) The Gospel reports many incidents when Jesus was accused of violating the sabbath law. But Jesus never fails to respect the holiness of this day (Cf. Mk 1:21; Jn 9:16). He gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mk 2:27). With compassion, Christ declares the sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing (Cf. Mk 3:4). The sabbath is the day of the Lord of mercies and a day to honor God (Cf. Mt 12:5; Jn 7:23). "The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mk 2:28).

(Lk 6, 12-16) He chose Twelve, whom named apostles

[12] In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. [13] When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles: [14] Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, [15] Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, [16] and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

(CCC 1575) Christ himself chose the apostles and gave them a share in his mission and authority. Raised to the Father's right hand, he has not forsaken his flock but he keeps it under his constant protection through the apostles, and guides it still through these same pastors who continue his work today (Cf. *Roman Missal*, Preface of the Apostles I). Thus, it is Christ whose gift it is that some be apostles, others pastors. He continues to act through the bishops (Cf. LG 21; Eph 4:11). (CCC 1576) Since the sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament of the apostolic ministry, it is for the bishops as the successors of the apostles to hand on the "gift of the Spirit" (LG 21 § 2), the "apostolic line" (LG 20). Validly ordained bishops, i.e., those who are in the line of apostolic succession, validly confer the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders (Cf. DS 794 and Cf. DS 802; CIC, can. 1012; CCEO, can. 744; 747). (CCC 1578) No one has a *right* to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no

one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God (Cf. Heb 5:4). Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be *received* only as an unmerited gift.

(Lk 6, 17-19) A power came forth from him and healed all

[17] And he came down with them and stood on a stretch of level ground. A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon [18] came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. [19] Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

(CCC 1116) Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ (Cf. Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46), which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. (CCC 1504) Often Jesus asks the sick to believe (Cf. Mk 5:34, 36; 9:23). He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands (Cf. Mk 7:32-36; 8:22-25), mud and washing (Cf. Jn 9:6-7). The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19; cf. Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56) and so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us. (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.

(Lk 6, 20-23) Blessed are you

[20] And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. [21] Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. [22] Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they

exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. [23] Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

(CCC 2546) "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3). The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs (Cf. Lk 6:20): The Word speaks of voluntary humility as "poverty in spirit"; the Apostle gives an example of God's poverty when he says: "For your sakes he became poor" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* 1: PG 44, 1200D; cf. 2 Cor 8:9). (CCC 544) The kingdom belongs to the poor and lowly, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22); he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). To them - the "little ones" - the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned (Cf. Mt 11:25). Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation (Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:61; 19:28; Lk 9:58). Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). (CCC 16) The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it - through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God's law and grace (*Section One*), and through conduct that fulfils the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God's Ten Commandments (*Section Two*). (CCC 2833) "Our" bread is the "one" loaf for the "many." In the Beatitudes "poverty" is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to communicate and share both material and spiritual goods, not by coercion but out of love, so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others (Cf. 2 Cor 8:1-15).

(Lk 6, 24-26) But woe to you who are rich

[24] But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. [25] But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. [26] Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

(CCC 2556) Detachment from riches is necessary for entering the Kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (CCC 29) But this "intimate and vital bond of man to God" (GS 19,1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man (GS 19 § 1). Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call (Cf. GS 19-21; Mt 13:22; Gen 3:8-10; Jon 1:3). (CCC 2547) The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods (Lk 6:24). "Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 1, 1, 3: PL 34, 1232). Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow (Cf. Mt 6:25-34). Trust in God is a preparation

for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God. (CCC 1941) Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this. (CCC 2241) The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him. Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.

(Lk 6, 27-35) Love your enemies and do good to them

[27] "But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. [29] To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. [30] Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. [31] Do to others as you would have them do to you. [32] For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. [33] And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. [34] If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit (is) that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. [35] But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

(CCC 1965) The New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural and revealed. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit and through him it becomes the interior law of charity: "I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel.... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Heb 8:8, 10; cf. Jer 31:31-34). (CCC 1967) The Law of the Gospel "fulfills," refines, surpasses, and leads the Old Law to its perfection (Cf. Mt 5:17-19). In the Beatitudes, the New Law *fulfills the divine promises* by elevating and orienting them toward the "kingdom of heaven." It is addressed to those open to accepting this new hope with faith - the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the pure of heart, those persecuted on account of Christ - and so marks out the surprising ways of the Kingdom. (CCC 1970) The Law of the Gospel requires us to make the decisive choice between "the two ways" and to put into practice the words of the Lord (Cf. Mt 7:13-14,21-27). It is summed up in the *Golden Rule*, "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; this is

the law and the prophets" (Mt 7:12; cf. Lk 6:31). The entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the "*new commandment*" of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us (Cf. Jn 15:12; 13:34).

(Lk 6, 36-38) Be merciful and forgive

[36] Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful. [37] "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. [38] Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

(CCC 2842) This "as" is not unique in Jesus' teaching: "You, therefore, must be perfect, *as* your heavenly Father is perfect"; "Be merciful, even *as* your Father is merciful"; "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even *as* I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36; Jn 13:34). It is impossible to keep the Lord's commandment by imitating the divine model from outside; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and the mercy and the love of our God. Only the Spirit by whom we live can make "ours" the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Cf. Gal 5:25; Phil 2:1,5). Then the unity of forgiveness becomes possible and we find ourselves "forgiving one another, *as* God in Christ forgave" us (Eph 4:32). (CCC 679) Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgement on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgement to the Son" (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1). Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself (Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26). By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31). (CCC 2843) Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end (Cf. Jn 13:1), become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Cf. Mt 18:23-35). It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the *heart*," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession. (CCC 1829) The *fruits* of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest (St. Augustine, *In ep. Jo.* 10, 4: PL 35, 2057).

(Lk 6, 39-42) No disciple is superior to the teacher

[39] And he told them a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? [40] No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. [41] Why do you

notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? [42] How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

(CCC 2466) In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. "Full of grace and truth," he came as the "light of the world," he *is the Truth* (Jn 1:14; 8:12; cf. 14:6). "Whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46). The disciple of Jesus continues in his word so as to know "the truth [that] will make you free" and that sanctifies (Jn 8:32; cf. 17:17). To follow Jesus is to live in "the Spirit of truth," whom the Father sends in his name and who leads "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes or No.'" (Mt 5:37). (CCC 2543) "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" (Rom 3:21-22). Henceforth, Christ's faithful "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"; they are led by the Spirit and follow the desires of the Spirit (Gal 5:24; cf. Rom 8:14, 27).

(Lk 6, 43-45) Every tree is known by its own fruit

[43] "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. [44] For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. [45] A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

(CCC 1832) The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity" (Gal 5:22-23 Vulg.). (CCC 737) The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *prepares* men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to *bring them into communion* with God, that they may "bear much fruit" (Jn 15:8, 16). (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). (CCC 740) These "mighty works of God," offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit.

(Lk 6, 46-47) Listens to my words, and acts on them.

[46] "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command? [47] I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them.

(CCC 462) The *Letter to the Hebrews* refers to the same mystery: Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10:5-7, citing Ps 40:6-8 ([7-9] LXX). (CCC 802) Christ Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own" (Titus 2:14). (CCC 803) "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9).

(Lk 6, 48-49) Laid the foundation on rock

[48] That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. [49] But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed."

(CCC 424) Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt 16:16). On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church. (CCC 552) Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve (Cf. Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5); Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Christ, the "living Stone" (1 Pt 2:4), thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it (Cf. Lk 22:32).

Luke 7

(Lk 7, 1-5) He loves our nation, he built our synagogue

[1] When he had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum. [2] A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him. [3] When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. [4] They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, [5] for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us."

(CCC 2084) God makes himself known by recalling his all-powerful loving, and liberating action in the history of the one he addresses: "I brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The first word contains the first commandment of the Law: "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him.... You shall not go after other gods" (Deut 6:13-14). God's first call and just demand is that man accept him and worship him. (CCC 2085) The one and true God first reveals his glory to Israel (Cf. Ex 19:16-25; 24:15-18). The revelation of the vocation and truth of man is linked to the revelation of God. Man's vocation is to make God manifest by acting in conformity with his creation "in the image and likeness of God": There will never be another God, Trypho, and there has been no other since the world began... than he who made and ordered the universe. We do not think that our God is different from yours. He is the same who brought your fathers out of Egypt "by his powerful hand and his outstretched arm." We do not place our hope in some other god, for there is none, but in the same God as you do: the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryphone Judaeo* 11, 1: PG 6, 497). (CCC 2086) "The first commandment embraces faith, hope, and charity. When we say 'God' we confess a constant, unchangeable being, always the same, faithful and just, without any evil. It follows that we must necessarily accept his words and have complete faith in him and acknowledge his authority. He is almighty, merciful, and infinitely beneficent.... Who could not place all hope in him? Who could not love him when contemplating the treasures of goodness and love he has poured out on us? Hence the formula God employs in the Scripture at the beginning and end of his commandments: 'I am the LORD'" (*Roman Catechism* 3, 2,4).

(Lk 7, 6-10) Not even in Israel have I found such faith

[6] And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. [7] Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed. [8] For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." [9] When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." [10] When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

(CCC 2610) Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us *filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mk 11:24). Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23; cf. Mt 21:22). Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith" of his own disciples (Cf. Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26) as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman (Cf. Mt 8:10; 15:28). (CCC 26) We begin our profession of faith by saying: "I believe" or "We believe". Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and

gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search, then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man, and finally the response of. (CCC 150) Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature (Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Ps 40:5; 146:3-4). (CCC 151) For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him (Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7). The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me" (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). Because he "has seen the Father", Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27). (CCC 152) One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For "no one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3), who "searches everything, even the depths of God.... No one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:10-11). Only God knows God completely: we believe *in* the Holy Spirit because he is God. *The Church never ceases to proclaim her faith in one only God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

(Lk 7, 11-17) "Young man, I tell you, arise!"

[11] Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. [12] As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. [13] When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." [14] He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" [15] The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. [16] Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people." [17] This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

(CCC 1006) "It is in regard to death that man's condition is most shrouded in doubt" (GS 18). In a sense bodily death is natural, but for faith it is in fact "the wages of sin" (Rom 6:23; cf. Gen 2:17). For those who die in Christ's grace it is a participation in the death of the Lord, so that they can also share his Resurrection (Cf. Rom 6:3-9; Phil 3:10-11). (CCC 996) From the beginning, Christian faith in the resurrection has met with incomprehension and opposition (Cf. Acts 17:32; 12Cor 15:12-13). "On no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body" (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 88, 5: PL 37, 1134). It is very commonly accepted that the life of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death. But how can we believe that this body, so clearly mortal, could rise to everlasting life? (CCC 998) *Who will rise?* All the dead will rise, "those who have

done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:29; cf. Dan 12:2). (CCC 999) *How?* Christ is raised with his own body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Lk 24:39); but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, "all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear," but Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body," into a "spiritual body" (Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 801; Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 15:44): But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel.... What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.... The dead will be raised imperishable.... For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality (1 Cor 15:35-37, 42, 52, 53). (CCC 1000) This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies: Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 4-5: PG 7/1, 1028-1029).

(Lk 7, 18-23) Are you the one who is to come?

[18] The disciples of John told him about all these things. John summoned two of his disciples [19] and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" [20] When the men came to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'" [21] At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind. [22] And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. [23] And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

(CCC 453) The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (Lk 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). (CCC 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). (CCC 423) We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He "came from God," (Jn 13:3) "descended from heaven" (Jn 3:13; 6:33), and "came in the flesh." (1 Jn 4:2). For "the Word became flesh and dwelt

among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.... And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.” (Jn 1:14,16). (CCC 424) Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16:16). On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church (Cf. Mt 16:18; St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 4, 3: PL 54, 150-152; 51, 1: PL 54, 308-309; 62, 2: PL 54, 350-351; 83, 3: PL 54, 431-432).

(Lk 7, 24-28) I am sending my messenger ahead of you

[24] When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. "What did you go out to the desert to see - a reed swayed by the wind? [25] Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces. [26] Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. [27] This is the one about whom scripture says: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.' [28] I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

(CCC 523) *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way (cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3). "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last (Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13). He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29). Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom (Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29). (CCC 524) When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (Cf. Rev 22:17). By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). (CCC 717) "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (Jn 1:6). John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"(Lk 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people (Cf. Lk 1:68). (CCC 718) John is "Elijah [who] must come" (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Lk 1:78). The fire of the Spirit dwells in him and makes him the forerunner of the coming Lord. In John, the precursor, the Holy Spirit completes the work of "[making] ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17). (CCC 719) John the Baptist is "more than a prophet" (Lk 7:26). In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (Cf. Mt 11:13-14). He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the "voice" of the Consoler who is coming (Jn 1:23; cf. Isa 40:1-3). As the Spirit of truth will also do, John "came to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1:7; cf. Jn 15:26; 5:35). In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels (Cf. 1 Pet

1:10-12). "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.... Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:33-36).

(Lk 7, 29-35) Wisdom is vindicated by all her children

[29] (All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; [30] but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.) [31] "Then to what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? [32] They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not weep.' [33] For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' [34] The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' [35] But wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

(CCC 2500) The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos - which both the child and the scientist discover - "from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator," "for the author of beauty created them" (Wis 13:3, 5). [Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness (Wis 7:25-26). For [wisdom] is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail (Wis 7:29-30). I became enamored of her beauty (Wis 8:2). (CCC 30) "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice" (Ps 105:3). Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God. You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1, 1, 1: PL 32, 659-661). (CCC 51) "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to

the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature." (DV 2; cf. Eph 1:9; 2:18; 2 Pt 1:4).

(Lk 7, 36-43) Which of them will love him more?

[36] A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. [37] Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, [38] she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. [39] When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." [40] Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. [41] "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. [42] Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" [43] Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly."

(CCC 2616) Prayer to *Jesus* is answered by him already during his ministry, through signs that anticipate the power of his death and Resurrection: Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) (Cf. Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Cf. Lk 23:39-43) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman) (Cf. Mk 25; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38). The urgent request of the blind men, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" or "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has been renewed in the traditional prayer to Jesus known as the *Jesus Prayer*: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Mt 9:27, Mk 10:48). Healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith: "Your faith has made you well; go in peace." St. Augustine wonderfully summarizes the three dimensions of Jesus' prayer: "He prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us" (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 85, 1: PL 37, 1081; cf. GILH 7). (CCC 2712) Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more (Cf. Lk 7:36-50; 19:1-10). But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God. Contemplative prayer is the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved Son. (CCC 2713) Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a *gift*, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a *covenant* relationship established by God within our hearts (Cf. Jer 31:33). Contemplative prayer is a *communion* in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness."

(Lk 7, 44-50) Your faith and great love saved you

[44] Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. [45] You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. [46] You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. [47] So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." [48] He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." [49] The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" [50] But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

(CCC 1440) Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Cf. LG 11). (CCC 1446) Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace" (Tertullian, *De Paenit.* 4, 2: PL 1, 1343; cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1542). (CCC 1450) "Penance requires... the sinner to endure all things willingly, be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practice complete humility and fruitful satisfaction" (*Roman Catechism* II, V, 21; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1673). (CCC 1451) Among the penitent's acts contrition occupies first place. Contrition is "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again" (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1676). (CCC 1452) When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called "perfect" (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible (Cf. Council of Trent : DS 1677). (CCC 1448) Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same *fundamental structure* is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion. (CCC 1449) The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church expresses the essential elements of this sacrament: the Father of mercies is the source of all forgiveness. He effects the reconciliation of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church: "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit

among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (OP 46: formula of absolution).

Luke 8

(Lk 8, 1-3) Accompanying Jesus were some women

[1] Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve [2] and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, [3] Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

(CCC 64) Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts (Cf Isa 2:2-4; Jer 31:31-34; Heb 10:16). The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations (Cf. Ezek 36; Isa 49:5-6; 53:11). Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary (Cf. Zeph 2:3; Lk 1:38). (CCC 489) Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women *prepared* for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living (Cf. Gen 3:15, 20). By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age (Cf. Gen 18:10-14; 21:1-2). Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women (Cf. 1 Cor 1:17; 1 Sam 1). Mary "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established"(LG 55). (CCC 641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31, 42). Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves (Cf. Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18). They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers (Cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32), and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34, 36). (CCC 965) After her Son's Ascension, Mary "aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers" (LG 69). In her association with the apostles and several women, "we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation" (LG 59).

(Lk 8, 4-8) A sower went out to sow his seed

[4] When a large crowd gathered, with people from one town after another journeying to him, he spoke in a parable. [5] "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. [6] Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. [7] Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. [8] And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

(CCC 543) *Everyone* is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations (Cf. Mt 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19). To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (LG 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32). (CCC 2707) There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower (Cf. Mk 4:4-7, 15-19). But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus. (CCC 2731) Another difficulty, especially for those who sincerely want to pray, is *dryness*. Dryness belongs to contemplative prayer when the heart is separated from God, with no taste for thoughts, memories, and feelings, even spiritual ones. This is the moment of sheer faith clinging faithfully to Jesus in his agony and in his tomb. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). If dryness is due to the lack of roots, because the word has fallen on rocky soil, the battle requires conversion (Cf. Lk 8:6, 13).

(Lk 8, 9-15) The meaning of this parable

[9] Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be. [10] He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.' [11] "This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. [12] Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. [13] Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial. [14] As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit. [15] But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit through perseverance.

(CCC 546) Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching (Cf. Mk 4:33-34). Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything (Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14). Words are not enough, deeds are required (Cf. Mt 21:28-32). The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? (Cf. Mt 13:3-9). What use has he made of the talents he has received? (Cf. Mt 25:14-30). Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 13:11). For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic (Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15). (CCC 161) Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation (Cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:36; 6:40 *et al.*). "Since 'without faith it is impossible to please (God)' and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life 'but he who endures to the end.'" [*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3012; cf. Mt 10:22; 24:13 and Heb11:6; Council of Trent DS 1532].

(Lk 8, 16-18) To anyone who has, more will be given

[16] "No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. [17] For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light. [18] Take care, then, how you hear. To anyone who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away."

(CCC 160) To be human, "man's response to God by faith must be free, and... therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act" (DH 10; cf. CIC, can. 748 § 2). "God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced... This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus" (DH 11). Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. "For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom... grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself" (DH 11; cf. Jn 18:37; 12:32). (CCC 166) Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbour impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

(Lk 8, 19-21) Mother and brothers who act the Word

[19] Then his mother and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd. [20] He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you." [21] He said to them

in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

(CCC 501) Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love" (LG 63; cf. Jn 19:26-27; Rom 8:29; Rev 12:17). (CCC 541) "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel"" (Mk 1:14-15). "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth" (LG 3). Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life" (LG 2). He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms" (LG 5). (CCC 542) Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the "family of God". By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery - his death on the cross and his Resurrection - he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Into this union with Christ all men are called (Jn 12:32; cf. LG 3). (CCC 959) *In the one family of God*. "For if we continue to love one another and to join in praising the Most Holy Trinity - all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ - we will be faithful to the deepest vocation of the Church" (LG 51; cf. Heb 3:6).

(Lk 8, 22-25) Even the winds and the sea obey him

[22] One day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, "Let us cross to the other side of the lake." So they set sail, [23] and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A squall blew over the lake, and they were taking in water and were in danger. [24] They came and woke him saying, "Master, master, we are perishing!" He awakened, rebuked the wind and the waves, and they subsided and there was a calm. [25] Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?" But they were filled with awe and amazed and said to one another, "Who then is this, who commands even the winds and the sea, and they obey him?"

(CCC 227) *It means trusting God in every circumstance*, even in adversity. A prayer of St. Teresa of Jesus wonderfully expresses this trust: Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you Everything passes / God never changes Patience / Obtains all Whoever has God / Wants for nothing God alone is enough (St. Teresa of Jesus, *Poesias* 30 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. III, tr. K. Kavanaugh OCD and O. Rodriguez OCD (Washington DC Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985), 386 no. 9. tr. John Wall). (CCC 301) With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence: For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have

made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living (Wis 11:24-26). (CCC 2743) *It is always possible to pray*: the time of the Christian is that of the risen Christ who is with us always, no matter what tempests may arise (Cf. Mt 28:20; Lk 8:24). Our time is in the hands of God: It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop,... while buying or selling,... or even while cooking (St. John Chrysostom, *Ecloga de oratione* 2: PG 63, 585).

(Lk 8, 26-32) Many demons had entered a man

[26] Then they sailed to the territory of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. [27] When he came ashore a man from the town who was possessed by demons met him. For a long time he had not worn clothes; he did not live in a house, but lived among the tombs. [28] When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him; in a loud voice he shouted, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" [29] For he had ordered the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (It had taken hold of him many times, and he used to be bound with chains and shackles as a restraint, but he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into deserted places.) [30] Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. [31] And they pleaded with him not to order them to depart to the abyss. [32] A herd of many swine was feeding there on the hillside, and they pleaded with him to allow them to enter those swine; and he let them.

(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 416) By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings. (CCC 419) "We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, "by propagation, not by imitation" and that it is... 'proper to each'" (Paul VI, CPG § 16). (CCC 403) Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul" (Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1512). Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin (Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1514). (CCC 404) How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo* 4, 1). By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected *the human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state* (Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1511-1512). It is a sin which

will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act. (CCC 406) The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine's reflections against Pelagianism, and in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam's fault to bad example. The first Protestant reformers, on the contrary, taught that original sin has radically perverted man and destroyed his freedom; they identified the sin inherited by each man with the tendency to evil (*concupiscentia*), which would be insurmountable. The Church pronounced on the meaning of the data of Revelation on original sin especially at the second Council of Orange (529) (DS 371-372) and at the Council of Trent (1546) (Cf. DS 1510-1516).

(Lk 8, 33-39) The demons came out of the man

[33] The demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. [34] When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. [35] People came out to see what had happened and, when they approached Jesus, they discovered the man from whom the demons had come out sitting at his feet. He was clothed and in his right mind, and they were seized with fear. [36] Those who witnessed it told them how the possessed man had been saved. [37] The entire population of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them because they were seized with great fear. So he got into a boat and returned. [38] The man from whom the demons had come out begged to remain with him, but he sent him away, saying, [39] "Return home and recount what God has done for you." The man went off and proclaimed throughout the whole town what Jesus had done for him.

(CCC 1237) Since Baptism signifies liberation from sin and from its instigator the devil, one or more *exorcisms* are pronounced over the candidate. The celebrant then anoints him with the oil of catechumens, or lays his hands on him, and he explicitly renounces Satan. Thus prepared, he is able *to confess the faith of the Church*, to which he will be "entrusted" by Baptism (Cf. Rom 6:17). (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 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).

(Lk 8, 40-48) I know that power has gone out from me

[40] When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. [41] And a man named Jairus, an official of the synagogue, came forward. He fell at the feet of Jesus and begged him to come to his house, [42] because he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. As he went, the crowds almost crushed him. [43] And a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years, who (had spent her whole livelihood on doctors and) was unable to be cured by anyone, [44] came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped. [45] Jesus then asked, "Who touched me?" While all were denying it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are pushing and pressing in upon you." [46] But Jesus said, "Someone has touched me; for I know that power has gone out from me." [47] When the woman realized that she had not escaped notice, she came forward trembling. Falling down before him, she explained in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been healed immediately. [48] He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace."

(CCC 1116) Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ (Cf. Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46), which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. (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. (CCC 143) *By faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God (Cf. DV 5). With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, "the obedience of faith" (Cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26). (CCC 150) Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature (Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Ps 40:5; 146:3-4).

(Lk 8, 49-56) "Child, arise!" and she immediately arose

[49] While he was still speaking, someone from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." [50] On hearing this, Jesus answered him, "Do not be afraid; just have faith and she will be saved." [51] When he arrived at the house he allowed no one to enter with him except Peter and John and James, and the child's father and mother. [52] All were weeping and mourning for her, when he said, "Do not weep any longer, for she is not dead, but sleeping." [53] And they ridiculed him, because they knew that she was dead. [54] But he took her by the hand and called to her, "Child, arise!" [55] Her breath returned and she immediately arose. He then directed that she should be given something to eat. [56] Her parents were astounded, and he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

(CCC 457) The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God*, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world", and "he was revealed to take away sins" (I Jn 4:10; 4:14; 3:5). Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Saviour; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech* 15: PG 45, 48B). (CCC 646) Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven" (Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50). (CCC 326) The Scriptural expression "heaven and earth" means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: "the earth" is

the world of men, while "heaven" or "the heavens" can designate both the firmament and God's own "place" - "our Father in heaven" and consequently the "heaven" too which is eschatological glory. Finally, "heaven" refers to the saints and the "place" of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God (Ps 115:16; 19:2; Mt 5:16). (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).