

# Letter to Philippians

## Philippians 1

(Phil 1, 1-2) To all the holy ones in Christ Jesus

[1] 1 Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers: [2] grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(CCC 2019) Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man. (CCC 2023) Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. (CCC 2024) Sanctifying grace makes us "pleasing to God." Charisms, special graces of the Holy Spirit, are oriented to sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. God also acts through many actual graces, to be distinguished from habitual grace which is permanent in us. (CCC 2045) Because they are members of the Body whose Head is Christ (Cf. Eph 1:22), Christians contribute to *building up the Church* by the constancy of their convictions and their moral lives. The Church increases, grows, and develops through the holiness of her faithful, until "we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13; cf. LG 39). (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).

(Phil 1, 3-6) Praying always with joy in my every prayer

[3] I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, [4] praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, [5] because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. [6] I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

(CCC 2637) Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head. (CCC 2636) The first Christian communities lived this form of fellowship intensely (Cf. Acts 12:5; 20:36; 21:5; 2 Cor 9:14). Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his ministry of preaching the Gospel (Cf. Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25) but also intercedes for them (Cf. 2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:3; Phil 1:3-4). The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: "for all men, for kings and all who are in

high positions," for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel (2 Tim 2:1; cf. Rom 12:14; 10:1).

### (Phil 1, 7-11) That your love may increase ever more

[7] It is right that I should think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, you who are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8] For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9] And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, [10] to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

(CCC 2632) Christian petition is centered on the desire and *search for the Kingdom to come*, in keeping with the teaching of Christ (Cf. Mt 6:10, 33; Lk 11:2, 13). There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (Cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer (Cf. Rom 10:1; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 19-11; Col 1:3-6; 4:3-4, 12). By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. (CCC 2633) When we share in God's saving love, we understand that *every need* can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name (Cf. Jn 14:13). It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray *at all times* (Cf. Jas 1:5-8; Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:16-17; 1 Thess 5:17-18).

### (Phil 1, 12-17) Dare more than ever to proclaim the word

[12] I want you to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the gospel, [13] so that my imprisonment has become well known in Christ throughout the whole praetorium and to all the rest, [14] and so that the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly. [15] Of course, some preach Christ from envy and rivalry, others from good will. [16] The latter act out of love, aware that I am here for the defense of the gospel; [17] the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not from pure motives, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.

(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 1808) *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in

defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song" (Ps 118:14). "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

### (Phil 1, 18-20) Christ will be magnified in my body

[18] What difference does it make, as long as in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed? And in that I rejoice. Indeed I shall continue to rejoice, [19] for I know that this will result in deliverance for me through your prayers and support from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. [20] My eager expectation and hope is that I shall not be put to shame in any way, but that with all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

(CCC 618) The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim 2:5). But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men (GS 22 § 5; cf. § 2). He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]" (Mt 16:24), for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps" (1 Pt 2:21). In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries (Cf. Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24). This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering (Cf. Lk 2:35). Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven (St. Rose of Lima: cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis*, (Louvain, 1668).

### (Phil 1, 21-22) For to me life is Christ and death is gain

[21] For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. [22] If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose.

(CCC 1010) Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). "The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him (2 Tim 2:11). What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already "died with Christ" sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this "dying with Christ" and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act: It is better for me to die in (*eis*) Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him it is I seek - who died for us. Him it is I desire - who rose for us. I am on the point of giving birth.... Let me receive pure light; when I shall have arrived there, then shall I be a man (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.*, 6, 1-2: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 217-220). (CCC 1011) In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Phil 1:23). He can transform his own death into an act of obedience and love towards the Father, after the example of Christ (Cf. Lk 23:46): My earthly desire has been crucified; . . . there is living water in me, water that murmurs and says within me: Come to the Father (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.*, 6, 1- 2: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 223-224). I want to see God and, in order to see him, I must die (St. Teresa of Avila, *Life*, chap. 1). I am not dying; I am entering life (St. Therese of Lisieux, *The Last Conversations*).

### **(Phil 1, 23-26) Be with Christ is far better**

[23] I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, (for) that is far better. [24] Yet that I remain (in) the flesh is more necessary for your benefit. [25] And this I know with confidence, that I shall remain and continue in the service of all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, [26] so that your boasting in Christ Jesus may abound on account of me when I come to you again.

(CCC 1012) The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church (Cf. 1 Thess 4:13-14): Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven (*Roman Missal*, Preface of Christian Death I). (CCC 1005) To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must "be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). In that "departure" which is death the soul is separated from the body (Cf. Phil 1:23). It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead (Cf. Paul VI, CPG § 28). (CCC 1021) Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10). The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23). (CCC 1025) To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." The elect live "in Christ" (Phil 1:23; cf. Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17) but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name (Cf. Rev 2:17). For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom (St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A).

### **(Phil 1, 27-28a) A way worthy of the gospel of Christ**

[27] Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear news of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind struggling together for the faith of the gospel, [28] not intimidated in any way by your opponents.

(CCC 1692) The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God" (Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:1). "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer.

### **(Phil 1, 28b-30) To believe in him but also to suffer for him**

[28] This is proof to them of destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. [29] For to you has been granted, for the sake of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him. [30] Yours is the same struggle as you saw in me and now hear about me.

(CCC 1696) The way of Christ "leads to life"; a contrary way "leads to destruction" (Mt 7:13; cf. Deut 30: 15-20). The Gospel parable of the *two ways* remains ever present in the catechesis of the Church; it shows the importance of moral decisions for our salvation: "There are two ways, the one of life, the other of death; but between the two, there is a great difference" (*Didache* 1, 1: SCh 248, 140).

## Philippians 2

(Phil 2, 1-4) The same mind the same love united in heart

[1] If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. [3] Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, [4] each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others.

(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 2635) Since Abraham, intercession - asking on behalf of another - has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God's mercy. In the age of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ's, as an expression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm (Phil 2:4; cf. Acts 7:60; Lk 23:28, 34).

(Phil 2, 5) Have among yourselves the same attitude

[5] Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,

(CCC 520) In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man" (GS 38; cf. Rom 15:5; Phil 2:5), who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way (Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12). (CCC 1694) Incorporated into *Christ* by Baptism, Christians are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord (Rom 6:11 and cf. 6:5; cf. Col 2:12). Following Christ and united with him (Cf. Jn 15:5), Christians can strive to be "imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love" (Eph 5:1-2) by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the "mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), and by following his example (Cf. Jn 13:12-16).

(Phil 2, 6-7) He emptied himself taking the form of a slave

[6] Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. [7] Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance,

(CCC 602) Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake" (1 Pet 1:18-20). Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death (Cf. Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:56). By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Phil 2:7; Rom 8:3). (CCC 472) This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Lk 2:52), and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience (Cf. Mk 6 38; 8:27; Jn 11:34; etc.). This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking "the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7). (CCC 713) The Messiah's characteristics are revealed above all in the "Servant songs" (Cf. Isa 42:1-9; Mt 12:18-21; Jn 1:32-34; then cf. Isa 49:1-6; Mt 3:17; Lk 2:32; finally cf. Isa 50:4-10 and Isa 52:13-53:12). These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus' Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our "form as slave" (Phil 2:7). Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life. (CCC 1224) Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to "fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying (Cf. Phil 2:7). The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his "beloved Son" (Mt 3:16-17).

(Phil 2, 8) He humbled himself becoming obedient to death

[8] he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

(CCC 612) The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani (Cf. Mt 26:42; Lk 22:20), making himself "obedient unto death". Jesus prays: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Phil 2:8; Mt 26:39; cf. Heb 5:7-8). Thus he expresses the horror that death represented for his human nature. Like ours, his human nature is destined for eternal life; but unlike ours, it is perfectly exempt from sin, the cause of death (Cf. Rom 5:12; Heb 4:15). Above all, his human nature has been assumed by the divine person of the "Author of life", the "Living One" (Cf. Acts 3:15; Rev 1:17; Jn 1:4; 5:26). By accepting in his human will that the Father's will be done, he accepts his death as redemptive, for "he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pt 2:24; cf. Mt 26:42). (CCC 623) By his

loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfils the atoning mission (cf. Isa 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11; cf. Rom 5:19). (CCC 908) By his obedience unto death (Cf. Phil 2:8-9), Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of royal freedom, so that they might "by the self-abnegation of a holy life, overcome the reign of sin in themselves" (LG 36): That man is rightly called a king who makes his own body an obedient subject and, by governing himself with suitable rigor, refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul, for he exercises a kind of royal power over himself. And because he knows how to rule his own person as king, so too does he sit as its judge. He will not let himself be imprisoned by sin, or thrown headlong into wickedness (St. Ambrose, *Psal 118*:14:30; PL 15:1476).

**(Phil 2, 9) Because of this, God greatly exalted him**

**[9] Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,**

(CCC 2666) But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: "Jesus," "YHWH saves" (Cf. Ex 3:14; 33: 19-23; Mt 1:21). The name "Jesus" contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him (Rom 10:13; Acts 2:21; 3:15-16; Gal 2:20). (CCC 2667) This simple invocation of faith developed in the tradition of prayer under many forms in East and West. The most usual formulation, transmitted by the spiritual writers of the Sinai, Syria, and Mt. Athos, is the invocation, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners." It combines the Christological hymn of *Philippians* 2:6-11 with the cry of the publican and the blind men begging for light (Cf. Mk 10:46-52; Lk 18:13). By it the heart is opened to human wretchedness and the Savior's mercy.

**(Phil 2, 10) At the name of Jesus every knee should bend**

**[10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

(CCC 2668) The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases (Cf. Mt 6:7). But holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience" (Cf. Lk 8:15). This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus. (CCC 2669) The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the *Heart of Jesus* just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. Christian prayer loves to follow *the way of the cross* in the Savior's steps. The stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world. (CCC 434) Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Saviour God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28). The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his

disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name (Cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16). (CCC 435) The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words "through our Lord Jesus Christ". The *Hail Mary* reaches its high point in the words "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." the Eastern prayer of the heart, the *Jesus Prayer*, says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word "Jesus" on their lips.

**(Phil 2, 11) Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**  
**[11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

(CCC 461) Taking up St. John's expression, "The Word became flesh", (Jn 1:14). The Church calls "Incarnation" the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation: Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:5-8; cf. *LH*, Saturday, Canticle at Evening Prayer). (CCC 449) By attributing to Jesus the divine title "Lord", the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honour and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because "he was in the form of God" (Cf. Acts 2:34 - 36; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Rev 5:13; Phil 2:6), and the Father manifested the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting him into his glory (Cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11). (CCC 2812) Finally, in Jesus the name of the Holy God is revealed and given to us, in the flesh, as Savior, revealed by what he is, by his word, and by his sacrifice (Cf. Mt 1:21; Lk 1:31; Jn 8:28; 17:8; 17:17-19). This is the heart of his priestly prayer: "Holy Father... for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (Jn 17:11, 19). Because he "sanctifies" his own name, Jesus reveals to us the name of the Father (Cf. Ezek 20:39; 36:20-21; Jn 17:6). At the end of Christ's Passover, the Father gives him the name that is above all names: "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).

**(Phil 2, 12-13) God works in you both to desire and to work**  
**[12] then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. [13] For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.**

(CCC 308) The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13; cf. 1 Cor 12:6). Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes" (GS 36 § 3). Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace (Cf. Mt 19:26; Jn 15:5; 14:13).

**(Phil 2, 14) Do everything without grumbling**

**[14] Do everything without grumbling or questioning,**

(CCC 2477) *Respect for the reputation* of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury (Cf. CIC, can. 220). He becomes guilty: - of *rash judgment* who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor; - of *detraction* who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them (Cf. Sir 21:28); - of *calumny* who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them. (CCC 2479) Detraction and calumny destroy the *reputation and honor of one's neighbor*. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity. (CCC 2487) Every offense committed against justice and truth entails the *duty of reparation*, even if its author has been forgiven. When it is impossible publicly to make reparation for a wrong, it must be made secretly. If someone who has suffered harm cannot be directly compensated, he must be given moral satisfaction in the name of charity. This duty of reparation also concerns offenses against another's reputation. This reparation, moral and sometimes material, must be evaluated in terms of the extent of the damage inflicted. It obliges in conscience.

**(Phil 2, 15-18) That you may be blameless and innocent**

**[15] that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, [16] as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. [17] But, even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you. [18] In the same way you also should rejoice and share your joy with me.**

(CCC 1070) In the New Testament the word "liturgy" refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity (Cf. Lk 1:23; Acts 13:2; Rom 15:16, 27; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:14-17, 25, 30). In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbor. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one "*leitourgos*" (Cf. Heb 8:2, 6); she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity): The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In its full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree (SC 7 § 2-3). (CCC 1243) The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15). The newly baptized is now, in the

only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father."

**(Phil 2, 19-24) I am confident in the Lord**

[19] I hope, in the Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be heartened by hearing news of you. [20] For I have no one comparable to him for genuine interest in whatever concerns you. [21] For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. [22] But you know his worth, how as a child with a father he served along with me in the cause of the gospel. [23] He it is, then, whom I hope to send as soon as I see how things go with me, [24] but I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.

(CCC 876) Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is *its character as service*. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly "slaves of Christ" (Cf. Rom 1:1) in the image of him who freely took "the form of a slave" for us (Phil 2:7). Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all (Cf. 1 Cor 9:19). (CCC 877) Likewise, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a *collegial character*. In fact, from the beginning of his ministry, the Lord Jesus instituted the Twelve as "the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy" (AG 5). Chosen together, they were also sent out together, and their fraternal unity would be at the service of the fraternal communion of all the faithful: they would reflect and witness to the communion of the divine persons (Cf. Jn 17:21-23). For this reason every bishop exercises his ministry from within the episcopal college, in communion with the bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter and head of the college. So also priests exercise their ministry from within the *presbyterium* of the diocese, under the direction of their bishop. (CCC 878) Finally, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a *personal character*. Although Christ's ministers act in communion with one another, they also always act in a personal way. Each one is called personally: "You, follow me" (Jn 21:22; Cf. Mt 4:19. 21; Jn 1:4) in order to be a personal witness within the common mission, to bear personal responsibility before him who gives the mission, acting "in his person" and for other persons: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."; "I absolve you...."

**(Phil 2, 25-26) You heard that he was ill**

[25] With regard to Epaphroditus, my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister in my need, I consider it necessary to send him to you. [26] For he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was ill.

(CCC 1500) Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death. (CCC 1501) Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him. (CCC 1502) The man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is of God, Master of life and death, that he implores

healing (Cf. Pss 6:3; 38; Isa 38). Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing (Cf. Pss 32:5; 38:5; 39:9, 12; 107:20; cf. Mk 2:5-12). It is the experience of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and that faithfulness to God according to his law restores life: "For I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex 15:26). The prophet intuitively understands that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others (Cf. Isa 53:11). Finally Isaiah announces that God will usher in a time for Zion when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness (Cf. Isa 33:24).

**(Phil 2, 27-30) Close to death but God had mercy on him**

[27] He was indeed ill, close to death; but God had mercy on him, not just on him but also on me, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. [28] I send him therefore with the greater eagerness, so that, on seeing him, you may rejoice again, and I may have less anxiety. [29] Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy and hold such people in esteem, [30] because for the sake of the work of Christ he came close to death, risking his life to make up for those services to me that you could not perform.

(CCC 1007) *Death is the end of earthly life.* Our lives are measured by time, in the course of which we change, grow old and, as with all living beings on earth, death seems like the normal end of life. That aspect of death lends urgency to our lives: remembering our mortality helps us realize that we have only a limited time in which to bring our lives to fulfillment: Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth,... before the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:1, 7). (CCC 1009) *Death is transformed by Christ.* Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will (Cf. Mk 14:33-34; Heb 5:7-8). The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing (Cf. Rom 5:19-21).

## **Philippians 3**

**(Phil 3, 1-2) My brothers, rejoice in the Lord**

[1] Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. Writing the same things to you is no burden for me but is a safeguard for you. [2] Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the mutilation!

(CCC 823) "The Church... is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God" (LG 39; Cf. Eph 5:25-26). The Church, then, is "the holy People of God" (LG 12) and her members are called "saints" (Acts 9:13; 1 Cor 6:1; 16:1). (CCC 824) United with Christ, the Church is sanctified by him; through him and with him she becomes sanctifying. "All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God" (SC 10). It is in the Church that "the fullness of the means of salvation" (UR 3 § 5) has been deposited. It is in her that "by the grace of God we acquire holiness" (LG 48). (CCC 825) "The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect" (LG 48 §

3). In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired: "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state - though each in his own way - are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect" (LG 11 § 3).

### (Phil 3, 3-6) We who worship through the Spirit of God

[3] For we are the circumcision, we who worship through the Spirit of God, who boast in Christ Jesus and do not put our confidence in flesh, [4] although I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. [5] Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, [6] in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless.

(CCC 829) "But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary" (LG 65; Cf. Eph 5:26-27): in her, the Church is already the "all-holy." (CCC 828) By *canonizing* some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors (Cf. LG 40; 48-51). "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history" (John Paul II, CL 16, 3). Indeed, "holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of her apostolic activity and missionary zeal" (CL 17, 3).

### (Phil 3, 7-9) The supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus

[7] (But) whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. [8] More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith

(CCC 133) The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ' (DV 25; cf. Phil 3:8 and St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii* prol.: PL 24, 17B). (CCC 134) "All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ, because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ" (Hugh of St. Victor, *De arca Noe* 2, 8; cf. *ibid.* PL 176, 642; 2, 9: PL 176, 642-643). (CCC 428) Whoever is called "to teach Christ" must first seek "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"; he must suffer "the loss of all things... " in order to "gain Christ and be found in him", and "to know him and the power of his resurrection, and [to] share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible [he] may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:8-11).

### (Phil 3, 10-11) The power of his resurrection

[10] to know him and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, [11] if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

(CCC 648) Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. The Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1 3-4; cf. Acts 2:24). St. Paul insists on the manifestation of God's power (Cf. Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-22; Heb 7:16). through the working of the Spirit who gave life to Jesus' dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship. (CCC 989) We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day (Cf. Jn 6:39-40). Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11). (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).

### (Phil 3, 12-14) Straining forward to what lies ahead

[12] It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). [13] Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

(CCC 1028) Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory "the beatific vision": How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honored with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God,... to delight in the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of heaven with the righteous and God's friends (St. Cyprian, *Ep.* 58, 10, 1: CSEL 3/2, 665). (CCC 1022) Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven - through a purification (Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 857-858; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304-1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820), or immediately (Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000-1001; John XXII, *Ne super his* (1334): DS 990), - or immediate and everlasting damnation (Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1002). At the evening of life, we shall be judged on

our love (St. John of the Cross, *Dichos* 64). (CCC 1029) In the glory of heaven the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him "they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev 22:5; cf. Mt 25:21, 23).

### **(Phil 3, 15-19) Continue on the same course**

[15] Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. [16] Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course. [17] Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. [18] For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things.

(CCC 560) *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem* manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week. (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 562) Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf. Gal 4:19). "For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him" (LG 7 § 4). (CCC 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).

### **(Phil 3, 20) Our citizenship is in heaven**

[20] But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(CCC 1003) United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3; cf. Phil 3:20). The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). (CCC 2796) When the Church prays "our Father who art in heaven," she is professing that we are the People of God, already seated "with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" and "hidden with Christ in God" (Eph 2:6; Col 3:3); yet at the same time, "here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor 5:2; cf. Phil 3:20; Heb 13:14). [Christians] are in the flesh, but do not live according to the flesh. They spend their lives on earth, but are citizens

of heaven (*Ad Diognetum* 5: PG 2, 1173). (CCC 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).

(Phil 3, 21) To conform with his glorified body

[21] He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.

(CCC 556) On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, ad 2). From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:21). But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22): Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33).

## Philippians 4

(Phil 4, 1-3) Stand firm in the Lord, beloved

[1] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved. [2] I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to a mutual understanding in the Lord. [3] Yes, and I ask you also, my true yokemate, to help them, for they have struggled at my side in promoting the gospel, along with Clement and my other co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

(CCC 75) "Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline" (DV 7; cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15). (CCC 2) So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go

therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mt 28:19-20) Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it." (Mk 16:20).

#### (Phil 4, 4-5) Rejoice in the Lord always

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! [5] Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.

(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 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).

#### (Phil 4, 6-7) Have no anxiety at all

[6] Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. [7] Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(CCC 2632) Christian petition is centered on the desire and *search for the Kingdom to come*, in keeping with the teaching of Christ (Cf. Mt 6:10, 33; Lk 11:2, 13). There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (Cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer (Cf. Rom 10:1; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 19-11; Col 1:3-6; 4:3-4, 12). By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. (CCC 2633) When we share in God's saving love, we understand that *every need* can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name (Cf. Jn 14:13). It is with this

confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray *at all times* (Cf. Jas 1:5-8; Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:16-17; 1 Thess 5:17-18).

### (Phil 4, 8-12) Keep on doing what you have learned

[8] Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. [9] Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you. [10] I rejoice greatly in the Lord that now at last you revived your concern for me. You were, of course, concerned about me but lacked an opportunity. [11] Not that I say this because of need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient. [12] I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need.

(CCC 1803) "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil 4:8). A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, 1: PG 44, 1200D). (CCC 1804) *Human virtues* are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

### (Phil 4, 13-18) It was kind of you to share in my distress

[13] I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me. [14] Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. [15] You Philippians indeed know that at the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, not a single church shared with me in an account of giving and receiving, except you alone. [16] For even when I was at Thessalonica you sent me something for my needs, not only once but more than once. [17] It is not that I am eager for the gift; rather, I am eager for the profit that accrues to your account. [18] I have received full payment and I abound. I am very well supplied because of what I received from you through Epaphroditus, "a fragrant aroma," an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

(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 309) If God the Father almighty, the Creator of

the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of creation, the drama of sin and the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments and his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. *There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.*

**(Phil 4, 19-23) God will fully supply whatever you need**

[19] My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. [20] To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen. [21] Give my greetings to every holy one in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings; [22] all the holy ones send you their greetings, especially those of Caesar's household. [23] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

(CCC 54) "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning" (DV 3; cf. Jn 1:3; Rom 1:19-20). He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice. (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 1998) This vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature (Cf. 1 Cor 2:7-9).