

# Letters to Thessalonians

## 1Thessalonians 1

(1Thes 1,1) To the church and to you grace peace

[1] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace.

(CCC 752) In Christian usage, the word "church" designates the liturgical assembly (Cf. 1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28, 34, 35), but also the local community (Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1) or the whole universal community of believers (Cf. 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). These three meanings are inseparable. "The Church" is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body. (CCC 2026) The grace of the Holy Spirit can confer true merit on us, by virtue of our adoptive filiation, and in accordance with God's gratuitous justice. Charity is the principal source of merit in us before God. (CCC 2330) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9).

(1Thes 1, 2-3) We give thanks to God always for all

[2] We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly [3] calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father,

(CCC 2634) Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners (Cf. Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; 1 Tim 2:5-8). He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us... and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). (CCC 2636) The first Christian communities lived this form of fellowship intensely (Cf. Acts 12:5; 20:36; 21:5; 2 Cor 9:14). Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his ministry of preaching the Gospel (Cf. Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25) but also intercedes for them (Cf. 2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:3; Phil 1:3-4). The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: "for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions," for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel (2 Tim 2:1; cf. Rom 12:14; 10:1). (CCC 1813) The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity (Cf. 1 Cor 13:13). (CCC 1812) The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature (Cf. 2 Pet 1:4): for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.

## (1Thes 1, 4) Knowing how you were chosen

[4] Knowing, brothers loved by God, how you were chosen.

(CCC 516) Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7, "my beloved Son"). Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love... among us" (Jn 4:9). (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). (CCC 459) The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6). On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!" (Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5). Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example (Cf. Mk 8:34).

## (1Thes 1, 5) Our gospel did come to you in the holy Spirit

[5] For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit and (with) much conviction. You know what sort of people we were (among) you for your sake.

(CCC 131) "And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life" (DV 21). Hence "access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful" (DV 22). (CCC 276) Faithful to the witness of Scripture, the Church often addresses her prayer to the "almighty and eternal God" ("omnipotens sempiterna Deus..."), believing firmly that "nothing will be impossible with God" (Gen 18:14; Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26).

## (1Thes 1, 6-7) And you became imitators of the Lord

[6] And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the holy Spirit, [7] so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

(CCC 1820) Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The *beatitudes* raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul... that enters... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:19-20). Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us... put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8). It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire. (CCC 2734) Filial trust is tested - it proves itself - in tribulation (Cf. Rom 5:3-5). The principal difficulty concerns the

*prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it "efficacious"? (CCC 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).

(1Thes 1, 8-10) You turned to serve the living, true God

[8] For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and (in) Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. [9] For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God [10] and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from (the) dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

(CCC 198) Our profession of faith begins with *God*, for God is the First and the Last (Cf. Isa 44:6). The beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the *Father*, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works. (CCC 200) These are the words with which the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed begins. The confession of God's oneness, which has its roots in the divine revelation of the Old Covenant, is inseparable from the profession of God's existence and is equally fundamental. God is unique; there is only one God: "The Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance and essence" (*Roman Catechism*, I, 2, 2). (CCC 202) Jesus himself affirms that God is "the one Lord" whom you must love "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk 12:29-30). At the same time Jesus gives us to understand that he himself is "the Lord" (Cf. Mk 12:35-37). To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as "Lord and giver of life" introduce any division into the One God: We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal infinite (*immensus*) and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty and ineffable, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple (Lateran Council IV: DS 800).

## 1Thessalonians 2

(1Thes 2, 1-4) Not as trying to please human beings

[1] For you yourselves know, brothers, that our reception among you was not without effect. [2] Rather, after we had suffered and been insolently treated, as you know, in Philippi, we drew courage through our God to speak to you the gospel of God with much struggle. [3] Our exhortation was not from delusion or impure motives, nor did it work

through deception. [4] But as we were judged worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, that is how we speak, not as trying to please human beings, but rather God, who judges our hearts.

(CCC 2) So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mt 28:19-20) Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it." (Mk 16:20). (CCC 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 888) Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task "to preach the Gospel of God to all men," in keeping with the Lord's command (PO 4; cf. Mk 16:15). They are "heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers" of the apostolic faith "endowed with the authority of Christ" (LG 25).

### (1Thes 2, 5-12) We were gentle among you

[5] Nor, indeed, did we ever appear with flattering speech, as you know, or with a pretext for greed - God is witness - [6] nor did we seek praise from human beings, either from you or from others, [7] although we were able to impose our weight as apostles of Christ. Rather, we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children. [8] With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us. [9] You recall, brothers, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. [10] You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. [11] As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, [12] exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

(CCC 233) Christians are baptized in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their *names* (Cf. Profession of faith of Pope Vigilius I (552): DS 415), for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity. (CCC 858) Jesus is the Father's Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he "called to him those whom he desired;... And he appointed twelve, whom also he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:13-14). From then on, they would also be his "emissaries" (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ continues his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18). The apostles' ministry is the continuation of his mission; Jesus said to the Twelve: "he who receives you receives me" (Mt 10:40; cf. Lk 10:16).

### (1Thes 2, 13) You received not a human word

[13] And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.

(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 764) "This Kingdom shines out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ" (LG 5). To welcome Jesus' word is to welcome "the Kingdom itself" (LG 5). The seed and beginning of the Kingdom are the "little flock" of those whom Jesus came to gather around him, the flock whose shepherd he is (Lk 12:32; cf. Mt 10:16; 26:31; Jn 10:1-21). They form Jesus' true family (Cf. Mt 12:49). To those whom he thus gathered around him, he taught a new "way of acting" and a prayer of their own (Cf. Mt 5- 6).

### (1Thes 2, 14-20) Brothers, you suffer the same things

[14] For you, brothers, have become imitators of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you suffer the same things from your compatriots as they did from the Jews, [15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us; they do not please God, and are opposed to everyone, [16] trying to prevent us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved, thus constantly filling up the measure of their sins. But the wrath of God has finally begun to come upon them. [17] Brothers, when we were bereft of you for a short time, in person, not in heart, we were all the more eager in our great desire to see you in person. [18] We decided to go to you - I, Paul, not only once but more than once - yet Satan thwarted us. [19] For what is our hope or joy or crown to boast of in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming if not you yourselves? [20] For you are our glory and joy.

(CCC 771) "The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men" (LG 8 § 1). The Church is at the same time: - a "society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ; - the visible society and the spiritual community; - the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches" (LG 8). These dimensions together constitute "one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element" (LG 8): The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world, but as a pilgrim, so constituted that in her the human is directed toward and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, the object of our quest (SC 2, Cf. Heb 13:14). O humility! O sublimity! Both tabernacle of cedar and sanctuary of God; earthly dwelling and celestial palace; house of clay and royal hall; body of death and temple of light; and at last both object of scorn to the proud and bride of Christ! She is black but

beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, for even if the labor and pain of her long exile may have discolored her, yet heaven's beauty has adorned her (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Cant. Sermo 27:14 PL 183:920D*).

## 1Thessalonians 3

### (1Thes 3, 1-5) No one be disturbed in these afflictions

[1] That is why, when we could bear it no longer, we decided to remain alone in Athens [2] and sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, [3] so that no one be disturbed in these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. [4] For even when we were among you, we used to warn you in advance that we would undergo affliction, just as has happened, as you know. [5] For this reason, when I too could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had put you to the test and our toil might come to nothing.

(CCC 1717) The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints. (CCC 2157) The Christian begins his day, his prayers, and his activities with the Sign of the Cross: "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." The baptized person dedicates the day to the glory of God and calls on the Savior's grace which lets him act in the Spirit as a child of the Father. The sign of the cross strengthens us in temptations and difficulties. (CCC 2340) Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the *means* for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an ascesis adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity" (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 29, 40: PL 32, 796).

### (1Thes 3, 6-11) Stand firm in the Lord

[6] But just now Timothy has returned to us from you, bringing us the good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us and long to see us as we long to see you. [7] Because of this, we have been reassured about you, brothers, in our every distress and affliction, through your faith. [8] For we now live, if you stand firm in the Lord. [9] What thanksgiving, then, can we render to God for you, for all the joy we feel on your account before our God? [10] Night and day we pray beyond measure to see you in person and to remedy the deficiencies of your faith. [11] Now may God himself, our Father, and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you,

(CCC 162) Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have

made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim 1:18-19). To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith (Cf. Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5; 22:32); it must be "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church (Gal 5:6; Rom 15:13; cf. Jas 2:14-26). (CCC 1823) Jesus makes charity the *new commandment* (Cf. Jn 13:34). By loving his own "to the end" (Jn 13:1) he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." and again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:9, 12). (CCC 1824) Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (Jn 15:9-10; cf. Mt 22:40; Rom 13:8-10).

### (1Thes 3, 12-13) May you increase and abound in love

[12] And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, [13] so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. (Amen.)

(CCC 1051) Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead. (CCC 1059) "The holy Roman Church firmly believes and confesses that on the Day of Judgment all men will appear in their own bodies before Christ's tribunal to render an account of their own deeds" (Council of Lyons II [1274]: DS 859; cf. DS 1549). (CCC 1039) In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare (Cf. Jn 12:49). The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life: All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When "our God comes, he does not keep silence."... he will turn towards those at his left hand:... "I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father - but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 18, 4: PL 38, 130-131; cf. Ps 50:3). (CCC 1042) At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed: The Church... will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ (LG 48; Cf. Acts 3:21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

# 1Thessalonians 4

## (1Thes 4, 1-2) Conduct yourselves to please God

[1] Finally, brothers, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God - and as you are conducting yourselves - you do so even more. [2] For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

(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). (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).

## (1Thes 4, 3-10) This is the will of God, your holiness

[3] This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality, [4] that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honor, [5] not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not know God; [6] not to take advantage of or exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before and solemnly affirmed. [7] For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness. [8] Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human being but God, who (also) gives his holy Spirit to you. [9] On the subject of mutual charity you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. [10] Indeed, you do this for all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Nevertheless we urge you, brothers, to progress even more,

(CCC 2347) The virtue of chastity blossoms in *friendship*. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends (Cf. Jn 15:15), who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality. Chastity is expressed notably in *friendship with one's neighbor*. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion. (CCC 2343) Chastity has *laws of growth* which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man... day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth" (FC 34). (CCC 2344) Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a *cultural effort*, for there is "an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society" (GS 25 § 1). Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

**(1Thes 4, 11-12) Live a tranquil life, work with your hands**

[11] And to aspire to live a tranquil life, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your (own) hands, as we instructed you, [12] that you may conduct yourselves properly toward outsiders and not depend on anyone.

(CCC 2427) *Human work* proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another (Cf. Gen 1:28; GS 34; CA 31). Hence work is a duty: "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thess 3:10; Cf. 1 Thess 4:11). Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work (Cf. Gen 3:14-19) in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish (Cf. LE 27). Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. (CCC 2428) In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work (Cf. LE 6). Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community. (CCC 2429) Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good (Cf. CA 32; 34).

**(1Thes 4, 13-14) You may not grieve like the rest**

[13] We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

(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 649) As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise (Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34). Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:17-18). "We believe that Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thess 4:14). (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).

**(1Thes 4, 15-18) Thus we shall always be with the Lord**

[15] Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede

those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore, console one another with these words.

(CCC 1000) This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies: Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 4-5: PG 7/1, 1028-1029). (CCC 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). (CCC 1026) By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ. (CCC 1027) This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise: "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9).

## 1Thessalonians 5

(1Thes 5, 1-5) You are children of the light and of the day

[1] Concerning times and seasons, brothers, you have no need for anything to be written to you. [2] For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. [3] When people are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4] But you, brothers, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief. [5] For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness.

(CCC 1001) *When?* Definitely "at the last day," "at the end of the world" (Jn 6: 39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; LG 48 § 3). Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thess 4:16). (CCC 673) Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent (Cf. Rev 22:20), even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7; Cf. Mk 13:32). This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed" (Cf. Mt 24:44; 1 Th 5:2; 2 Th 2:3-12). (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).

### (1Thes 5, 6-8) Let us stay alert and sober

[6] Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober. [7] Those who sleep go to sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. [8] But since we are of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation.

(CCC 2849) Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony (Cf. Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-44). In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is "custody of the heart," and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: "Keep them in your name" (Jn 17:11; Cf. Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14:38; Lk 12:35-40). The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch (Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8). Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake" (Rev 16:15). (CCC 1820) Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The *beatitudes* raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul... that enters... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:19-20). Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us... put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8). It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

### (1Thes 5, 9-11) God did destine us to gain salvation

[9] For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him. [11] Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do.

(CCC 851) *Missionary motivation*. It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14; cf. AA 6; *RMiss* 11). Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the

prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

### **(1Thes 5, 12-13) Be at peace among yourselves**

[12] We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are laboring among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, [13] and to show esteem for them with special love on account of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

(CCC 1269) Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us (Cf. 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 5:15). From now on, he is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to "obey and submit" to the Church's leaders (Heb 13:17), holding them in respect and affection (Cf. Eph 5:21; 1 Cor 16:15-16; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Jn 13:12-15). Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church (Cf. LG 37; CIC, cann. 208-223; CCEO, can. 675:2).

### **(1Thes 5, 14-16) Always seek what is good for all**

[14] We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. [15] See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good (both) for each other and for all. [16] Rejoice always.

(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). (CCC 1435) Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right (Cf. Am 5:24; Isa 1:17), by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance (Cf. Lk 9:23).

### **(1Thes 5, 17-18) Pray without ceasing, give thanks**

[17] Pray without ceasing. [18] In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

(CCC 2757) "Pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17). It is always possible to pray. It is even a vital necessity. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 1174) The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist especially at the Sunday assembly, permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, "the divine office" (Cf. SC, ch. IV, 83-101). This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to "pray constantly," is "so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God" (SC 84; 1 Thess 5:17; Eph 6:18). In this "public prayer of the Church" (SC 98), the faithful (clergy, religious, and lay

people) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized. Celebrated in "the form approved" by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father (SC 84). (CCC 2648) Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter for thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one's whole life: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18).

### **(1Thes 5, 19-25) Do not quench the Spirit**

[19] Do not quench the Spirit. [20] Do not despise prophetic utterances. [21] Test everything; retain what is good. [22] Refrain from every kind of evil. [23] May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it. [25] Brothers, pray for us (too).

(CCC 243) Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously "spoken through the prophets", the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them "into all the truth" (Cf. Gen 1:2; Nicene Creed (DS 150); Jn 14:17, 26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father. (CCC 798) The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body" (Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: DS 3808). He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity (Cf. Eph 4:16): by God's Word "which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32); by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body (Cf. 1 Cor 12:13); by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts" (LG 7 § 2); by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (LG 12 § 2; cf. AA 3). (CCC 367) Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people "wholly", with "spirit and soul and body" kept sound and blameless at the Lord's coming (1 Th 5:23). The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul (Cf. Council of Constantinople IV (870): DS 657). "Spirit" signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God (Cf. Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*: DS 3005; GS 22 § 5; *Humani generis*: DS 3891).

### **(1Thes 5, 26-28) The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you**

[26] Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. [27] I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers. [28] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

(CCC 2003) Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are *sacramental graces*, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore *special graces*, also called *charisms* after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit" (Cf. LG 12). Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms

are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 12). (CCC 799) Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world. (CCC 800) Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms (Cf. 1 Cor 13). (CCC 801) It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. "Their office [is] not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good" (LG 12; cf. 30; 1 Thess 5:12, 19-21; John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 24), so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).

## 2Thessalonians 1

(2Thes 1, 1-4) We ought to thank God always for you

[1] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2] grace to you and peace from God (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] We ought to thank God always for you, brothers, as is fitting, because your faith flourishes ever more, and the love of every one of you for one another grows ever greater. [4] Accordingly, we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God regarding your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions you endure.

(CCC 224) *It means living in thanksgiving*: if God is the only One, everything we are and have comes from him: "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). "What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me?" (Ps 116:12). (CCC 940) "The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, lay people are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world" (AA 2 § 2). (CCC 941) Lay people share in Christ's priesthood: ever more united with him, they exhibit the grace of Baptism and Confirmation in all dimensions of their personal family, social and ecclesial lives, and so fulfill the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized.

(2Thes 1, 5-9) Considered worthy of the kingdom of God

[5] This is evidence of the just judgment of God, so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. [6] For it is surely just on God's part to repay with afflictions those who are afflicting you, [7] and to grant rest along with us to you who are undergoing afflictions, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels, [8] in blazing fire, inflicting punishment on those who do not acknowledge God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9] These will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power,

(CCC 942) By virtue of their prophetic mission, lay people "are called... to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind" (GS 43 § 4). (CCC 943) By virtue of their kingly mission, lay people have the power to uproot the rule of sin within themselves and in the world, by their self-denial and holiness of life (cf. LG 36). (CCC 1820) Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The *beatitudes* raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul... that enters... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:19-20). Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us... put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8). It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

### **(2Thes 1, 10-12) He comes to be glorified**

[10] When he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, for our testimony to you was believed. [11] To this end, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, [12] that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

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

## **2Thessalonians 2**

### **(2Thes 2, 1-2) The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**

[1] We ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, [2] not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.

(CCC 1040) The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of

its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Cf. *Song* 8:6). (CCC 674) The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus (Rom 11:20-26; cf. Mt 23:39). St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Acts 3:19-21). St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" (Rom 11:15). The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:12, 25; cf. Lk 21:24), will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all" (Eph 4:13; 1 Cor 15:28).

### (2Thes 2, 3-6) Let no one deceive you in any way

[3] Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one doomed to perdition, [4] who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so as to seat himself in the temple of God, claiming that he is a god – [5] do you not recall that while I was still with you I told you these things? [6] And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his time.

(CCC 675) Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers (Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12). The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth (Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20) will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh (Cf. 2 Th 2:4-12; 1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; 1 Jn 2:18, 22). (CCC 676) The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgement. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism (Cf. DS 3839), especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism (Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, condemning the "false mysticism" of this "counterfeit of the redemption of the lowly"; cf. GS 20-21). (CCC 677) The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection (Cf. Rev 19:1-9). The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven (Cf. Rev 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4). God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the

form of the Last Judgement after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world (Cf. Rev 20:12; 2 Pt 3:12-13).

### **(2Thes 2, 7-10) The Lord (Jesus) will kill with his breath**

[7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. But the one who restrains is to do so only for the present, until he is removed from the scene. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord (Jesus) will kill with the breath of his mouth and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming, [9] the one whose coming springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in signs and wonders that lie, [10] and in every wicked deceit for those who are perishing because they have not accepted the love of truth so that they may be saved.

(CCC 1038) The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15), will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29). Then Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him.... Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.... And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Mt 25:31, 32, 46). (CCC 1039) In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare (Cf. Jn 12:49). The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life: All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When "our God comes, he does not keep silence."... he will turn towards those at his left hand:... "I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father - but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 18, 4: PL 38, 130-131; cf. Ps 50:3).

### **(2Thes 2, 11-12) They may believe the lie**

[11] Therefore, God is sending them a deceiving power so that they may believe the lie, [12] that all who have not believed the truth but have approved wrongdoing may be condemned.

(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).

### **(2Thes 2, 13-14) You as the firstfruits for salvation**

[13] But we ought to give thanks to God for you always, brothers loved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in truth. [14] To this end he has (also) called you through our gospel to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(CCC 1045) *For man*, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been "in the nature of sacrament" (Cf. LG 1). Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, "the holy city" of God, "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:2, 9). She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community (Cf. Rev 21:27). The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion. (CCC 1044) In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men (Cf. Rev 21:5). "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). (CCC 1047) The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, "so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just," sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 32, 1 PG 7/2, 210).

### **(2Thes 2, 15-17) Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions**

[15] Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours. [16] May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and good hope through his grace, [17] encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word.

(CCC 1048) "*We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men*" (GS 39 § 1). (CCC 1046) *For the cosmos*, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man: For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay... We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:19-23). (CCC 1049) "Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from

the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society" (GS 39 § 2).

## 2Thessalonians 3

(2Thes 3, 1-3) The Lord guard you from the evil one

[1] Finally, brothers, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified, as it did among you, [2] and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for not all have faith. [3] But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

(CCC 2864) In the last petition, "but deliver us from evil," Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the "ruler of this world," Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation. (CCC 2851) In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ. (CCC 2854) When we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past, and future, of which he is the author or instigator. In this final petition, the Church brings before the Father all the distress of the world. Along with deliverance from the evils that overwhelm humanity, she implores the precious gift of peace and the grace of perseverance in expectation of Christ's return. By praying in this way, she anticipates in humility of faith the gathering together of everyone and everything in him who has "the keys of Death and Hades," who "is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8, 18; cf. Rev 1:4; Eph 1:10). Deliver us, Lord, we beseech you, from every evil and grant us peace in our day, so that aided by your mercy we might be ever free from sin and protected from all anxiety, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. (*Roman Missal*, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer, 126: *Libera nos, quaesumus, Domine, ab omnibus malis, da propitius pacem in diebus nostris, ut, ope misericordiae tuae adiuti, et a peccato simus semper liberi, et ab omni perturbatione securi: expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi*).

(2Thes 3, 4-6) May the Lord direct your hearts

[4] We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you, you (both) are doing and will continue to do. [5] May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ. [6] We instruct you, brothers, in the name of (our) Lord Jesus Christ, to shun any brother who conducts himself in a disorderly way and not according to the tradition they received from us.

(CCC 1464) Priests must encourage the faithful to come to the sacrament of Penance and must make themselves available to celebrate this sacrament each time Christians reasonably ask for it (Cf. CIC, can. 486; CCEO, can. 735; PO 13). (CCC 1465) When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and the instrument of God's

merciful love for the sinner. (CCC 1466) The confessor is not the master of God's forgiveness, but its servant. The minister of this sacrament should unite himself to the intention and charity of Christ (Cf. PO 13). He should have a proven knowledge of Christian behavior, experience of human affairs, respect and sensitivity toward the one who has fallen; he must love the truth, be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, and lead the penitent with patience toward healing and full maturity. He must pray and do penance for his penitent, entrusting him to the Lord's mercy.

### (2Thes 3, 7-9) To present ourselves as a model for you

[7] For you know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, [8] nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. [9] Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us.

(CCC 533) The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life: The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus - the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for *silence*, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us... A lesson on *family life*. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character... A lesson of *work*. Nazareth, home of the "Carpenter's Son", in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work.... To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern their brother who is God (Paul VI at Nazareth, 5 January 1964: *LH*, Feast of the Holy Family, OR). (CCC 564) By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work.

### (2Thes 3, 10-11) Neither should that one eat

[10] In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. [11] We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.

(CCC 2428) In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work (Cf. LE 6). Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community. (CCC 2426) The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice so as to correspond to God's plan for man (Cf. GS 64).

(2Thes 3, 12-13) To work quietly and to eat their own food

[12] Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food. [13] But you, brothers, do not be remiss in doing good.

(CCC 2430) *Economic life* brings into play different interests, often opposed to one another. This explains why the conflicts that characterize it arise (Cf. LE 11). Efforts should be made to reduce these conflicts by negotiation that respects the rights and duties of each social partner: those responsible for business enterprises, representatives of wage-earners (for example, trade unions), and public authorities when appropriate. (CCC 2434) A *just wage* is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice (Cf. Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14-15; Jas 5:4). In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good" (GS 67 § 2). Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.

(2Thes 3, 14-15) Admonish him as a brother

[14] If anyone does not obey our word as expressed in this letter, take note of this person not to associate with him, that he may be put to shame. [15] Do not regard him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.

(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). (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 2046) By living with the mind of Christ, Christians *hasten the coming of the Reign of God*, "a kingdom of justice, love, and peace" (*Roman Missal*, Preface of Christ the King). They do not, for all that, abandon their earthly tasks; faithful to their master, they fulfill them with uprightness, patience, and love.

(2Thes 3, 16-17) May the Lord give you peace at all times

[16] May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. [17] This greeting is in my own hand, Paul's. This is the sign in every letter; this is how I write.

(CCC 2305) Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the *peace of Christ*, the messianic "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:5). By the blood of his Cross, "in his own person he killed the hostility" (Eph 2:16 J.B.; cf. Col 1:20-22), he reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. "He is our peace" (Eph 2:14). He has declared: "Blessed

are the peacemakers" (Mt 5:9). (CCC 2304) Respect for and development of human life require *peace*. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquillity of order" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 19, 13, 1: PL 41, 640). Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity (Cf. Isa 32:17; cf. GS 78 §§ 1-2). (CCC 2306) Those who renounce violence and bloodshed and, in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defense available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other men and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death (Cf. GS 78 § 5).

### (2Thes 3, 18) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

[18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

(CCC1996) Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the *free and undeserved help* that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life (Cf. Jn 1:12-18; 17:3; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Pet 1:3-4). (CCC 1997) Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (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). (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).