

# Gospel according to Mark

## Mark 1

(Mk 1, 1-8) John Baptist: baptism of repentance

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God). [2] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. [3] A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'" [4] John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. [6] John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. [7] And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. [8] I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit."

(CCC 422 "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). This is "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1): God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own "beloved Son" (Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 1:5, 68). (CCC 515) The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith (Cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24) and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery (Cf. Lk 2:7; Mt 27:48; Jn 20:7). His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission.

(Mk 1, 9-11) Jesus baptized in the Jordan by John

[9] It happened in those days that **Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John**. [10] On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. [11] And a voice came from the heavens, "**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**"

(CCC 151) For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him (Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7). The Lord himself said to his

disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me" (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). Because he "has seen the Father", Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27).

(Mk 1, 12-13) Jesus in the desert tempted by Satan.

[12] At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, [13] and **he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.**

(CCC 333) From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Heb 1:6). Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Lk 2:14). They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; 2 Macc 10:29-30; 11:8). Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection (Cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7). They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement. (Cf. Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9. (CCC 538) The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him (Cf. Mk 1:12-13). At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him "until an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). (CCC 539) The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder (Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27). Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.

(Mk 1, 14-15) Jesus proclaiming the gospel of God

[14] After John had been arrested, **Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:** [15] "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

(CCC 541) "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mk 1:14-15). "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth" (LG 3). Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life" (LG 2). He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth

the seed and beginning of that kingdoms" (LG 5). (CCC 1427) Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism (Cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

#### (Mk 1, 16-20) Jesus calls Simon Andrew James John

[16] As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. [17] Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." [18] Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. [19] He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. [20] Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

(CCC 787) From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings (Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Mt 13:10-17; Lk 10:17-20; 22:28-30). Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you.... I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:4-5) and he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56).

#### (Mk 1, 21-28) Jesus commands the unclean spirits

[21] Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. [22] The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. [23] In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; [24] he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" [25] Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" [26] The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. [27] All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? **A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.**" [28] His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

(CCC 1673) When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called *exorcism*. Jesus performed exorcisms and from him the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing (Cf. Mk 1:25-26; 3:15; 6:7, 13; 16:17). In a simple form, exorcism is performed at the celebration of Baptism. The solemn exorcism, called "a major exorcism," can be performed only by a priest and with the permission of the bishop. The priest must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church. Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic

possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church. Illness, especially psychological illness, is a very different matter; treating this is the concern of medical science. Therefore, before an exorcism is performed, it is important to ascertain that one is dealing with the presence of the Evil One, and not an illness (Cf. CIC, can. 1172).

#### (Mk 1, 29-34) Jesus cured many who were sick

[29] On leaving the synagogue he entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. [30] Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. [31] He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. [32] When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. [33] The whole town was gathered at the door. [34] **He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.**

(CCC 1503) Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (Cf. Mk 2:17). His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.

#### (Mk 1, 35-39) Went to a deserted place and prayed

[35] Rising very early before dawn, he left **and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.** [36] Simon and those who were with him pursued him [37] and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." [38] He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." [39] So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

(CCC 2602) Jesus often draws apart to pray *in solitude*, on a mountain, preferably at night (Cf. Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16). *He includes all men* in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself. Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them (Cf. Heb 2:12, 15; 4:15). It was for this that the Father sent him. His words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret.

#### (Mk 1, 40-45) Jesus hears the prayer of faith

[40] A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." [41] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." [42] The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. [43] Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. [44] Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your

cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." [45] The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

(CCC 2616) Prayer to *Jesus* is answered by him already during his ministry, through signs that anticipate the power of his death and Resurrection: Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) (Cf. Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Cf. Lk 23:39-43) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman) (Cf. Mk 25; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38). The urgent request of the blind men, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" or "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has been renewed in the traditional prayer to Jesus known as the *Jesus Prayer*: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Mt 9:27, Mk 10:48). Healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith: "Your faith has made you well; go in peace." St. Augustine wonderfully summarizes the three dimensions of Jesus' prayer: "He prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us" (St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 85, 1: PL 37, 1081; cf. GILH 7).

## Mark 2

(Mk 2, 1-12) The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins

[1] When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. [2] Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. [3] They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. [4] Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. [5] When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "**Child, your sins are forgiven.**" [6] Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, [7] "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" [8] Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? [9] Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?' [10] *But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth*" – [11] *he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.*" [12] He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

(CCC 1421) The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health (Cf. Mk 2:1-12), has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two

sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. (CCC 1446) Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace" (Tertullian, *De Paenit.* 4, 2: PL 1, 1343; cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1542). (CCC 1447) Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

### (Mk 2, 13-17) Jesus said to Levi "Follow me"

[13] Once again he went out along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he taught them. [14] As he passed by, **he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me."** And he got up and followed him. [15] While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. [16] Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [17] Jesus heard this and said to them (that), "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

(CCC 545) Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17; cf. 1 Tim 1:15). He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Lk 15:7; cf. 7:11-32). The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). (CCC 589) Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them (Cf. Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6). He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet (Cf. Lk 15:1-2, 22-32). But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to

demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk 2:7). By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name (Cf. Jn 5:18; 10:33; 17:6, 26).

### (Mk 2, 18-22) New wine is poured into fresh wineskins

[18] The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" [19] Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. [20] But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. [21] No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. [22] Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, ***new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.***"

(CCC 1969) The New Law *practices the acts of religion*: almsgiving, prayer and fasting, directing them to the "Father who sees in secret," in contrast with the desire to "be seen by men" (Cf. Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). Its prayer is the Our Father (Cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). (CCC 1434) The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving* (Cf. Tob 12:8; Mt 6:1-18), which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8; Cf. Jas 5:20).

### (Mk 2, 23-28) The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath

[23] As he was passing through a field of grain on the sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. [24] At this the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?" [25] He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry? [26] How he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat, and shared it with his companions?" [27] Then he said to them, "***The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. [28] That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.***"

(CCC 581) The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi (Cf. Jn 11:28; 3:2; Mt 22:23-24, 34-36). He often argued within the framework of rabbinical interpretation of the Law (Cf. Mt 12:5; 9:12; Mk 2:23-27; Lk 6:6-g; Jn 7:22-23). Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7:28-29). In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made

itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes (Cf. Mt 5:1). Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old... But I say to you..." (Mt 5:33-34). With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were "making void the word of God" (Mk 7:13; cf. 3:8). (CCC 582) Going even further, Jesus perfects the dietary law, so important in Jewish daily life, by revealing its pedagogical meaning through a divine interpretation: "Whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him... (Thus he declared all foods clean.). What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts..." (Mk 7:18-21; cf. Gal 3:24). In presenting with divine authority the definitive interpretation of the Law, Jesus found himself confronted by certain teachers of the Law who did not accept his interpretation of the Law, guaranteed though it was by the divine signs that accompanied it (Cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 12:37). This was the case especially with the sabbath laws, for he recalls, often with rabbinical arguments, that the sabbath rest is not violated by serving God and neighbor (Cf. Num 28:9; Mt 12:5; Mk 2:25-27; Lk 13:15-16; 14:3-4; Jn 7:22-24), which his own healings did.

## Mark 3

(Mk 3, 1-6) Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath?

[1] Again he entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand. [2] They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the sabbath so that they might accuse him. [3] He said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up here before us." [4] Then he said to them, "**Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil**, to save life rather than to destroy it?" But they remained silent. [5] Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and his hand was restored. [6] The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death.

(CCC 574) From the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, certain Pharisees and partisans of Herod together with priests and scribes agreed together to destroy him (Cf. Mk 3:6; 14:1). Because of certain of his acts--expelling demons, forgiving sins, healing on the sabbath day, his novel interpretation of the precepts of the Law regarding purity, and his familiarity with tax collectors and public sinners (Cf. Mt 12:24; Mk 2:7, 14-17; 3:1-6; 7:14-23) --some ill-intentioned persons suspected Jesus of demonic possession (Cf. Mk 3:22; Jn 8:48; 10:20). He is accused of blasphemy and false prophecy, religious crimes which the Law punished with death by stoning (Cf. Mk 2:7; Jn 5:18; 7:12; 7:52; 8:59; 10:31, 33). (CCC 575) Many of Jesus' deeds and words constituted a "sign of contradiction" (Lk 2:34), but more so for the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whom the Gospel according to John often calls simply "the Jews" (Cf. Jn 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19), than for the ordinary People of God (Jn 7:48-49). To be sure, Christ's relations with the Pharisees were not exclusively polemical. Some Pharisees warn him of the danger he was courting (Cf. Lk 13:31); Jesus praises some of them, like the scribe of *Mark*

12:34, and dines several times at their homes (Cf. Lk 7:36; 14:1). Jesus endorses some of the teachings imparted by this religious elite of God's people: the resurrection of the dead (Cf. Mt 22:23-34; Lk 20:39), certain forms of piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer) (Cf. Mt 6:18), the custom of addressing God as Father, and the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbour (Cf. Mk 12:28-34).

### (Mk 3, 7-12) Jesus cured many

[7] Jesus withdrew toward the sea with his disciples. A large number of people (followed) from Galilee and from Judea. [8] Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon. [9] He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. [10] He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him. [11] And whenever unclean spirits saw him they would fall down before him and shout, "You are the Son of God." [12] He warned them sternly not to make him known.

(CCC 1505) Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4). But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:4-6), of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.

### (Mk 3, 13-19) Jesus appointed the twelve

[13] He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. [14] He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach [15] and to have authority to drive out demons: [16] (he appointed the twelve:) Simon, whom he named Peter; [17] James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; [18] Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, [19] and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

(CCC 551) From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission (Cf. Mk 3:13-19). He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and "sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal" (Lk 9:2). They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church: As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:29-30). (CCC 552) Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve (Cf Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5); Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Christ, the "living Stone" (1 Pt 2:4), thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it (Cf. Lk 22:32).

### (Mk 3, 20-30) Jesus and Beelzebul

[20] He came home. Again (the) crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. [21] When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." [22] The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons." [23] Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan? [24] If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25] And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. [26] And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. [27] But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. [28] Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. [29] But whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin." [30] For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

(CCC 1864) "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven" (Mt 12:31; cf. Mk 3:29; Lk 12:10). There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit (Cf. John Paul II, *DeV* 46). Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss. (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).

### (Mk 3, 31-35) Here are my mother and my brothers

[31] His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. [32] A crowd seated around him told him, "Your

mother and your brothers (and your sisters) are outside asking for you." [33] But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and (my) brothers?" [34] And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. [35] (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

(CCC 496) From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived "by the Holy Spirit without human seed" (Council of the Lateran (649): DS 503; cf. DS 10-64). The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says: You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin,... he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate... he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan, 1889), II/2, 289-293; SCh 10, 154-156; cf. Rom 1:3; Jn 1:13). (CCC 498) People are sometimes troubled by the silence of St. Mark's Gospel and the New Testament Epistles about Jesus' virginal conception. Some might wonder if we were merely dealing with legends or theological constructs not claiming to be history. To this we must respond: Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus met with the lively opposition, mockery or incomprehension of non-believers, Jews and pagans alike (Cf. St. Justin, *Dial.* 99, 7: PG 6, 708-709; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1, 32, 69: PG 11, 720-721; *et al.*); so it could hardly have been motivated by pagan mythology or by some adaptation to the ideas of the age. The meaning of this event is accessible only to faith, which understands in it the "connection of these mysteries with one another" (*Dei Filius* 4: DS 3016) in the totality of Christ's mysteries, from his Incarnation to his Passover. St. Ignatius of Antioch already bears witness to this connection: "Mary's virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord's death escaped the notice of the prince of this world: these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God's silence" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph.* 19, 1: AF II/2 76-80; SCh 10, 88; cf. 1 Cor 2:8). (CCC 500) Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus (Cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19). The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary" (Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56). They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression (Cf. Gen 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc.).

## Mark 4

(Mk 4, 1-9) Parable of the sower

[1] On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. [2] And he taught

them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, [3] "Hear this! A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. [5] Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. [6] And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. [7] Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. [8] And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." [9] He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

(CCC 546) Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching (Cf. Mk 4:33-34). Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything (Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14). Words are not enough, deeds are required (Cf. Mt 21:28-32). The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? (Cf. Mt 13:3-9). What use has he made of the talents he has received? (Cf. Mt 25:14-30). Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 13:11). For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic (Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15). (CCC 2708) Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him. (CCC 547) Jesus accompanies his words with many "mighty works and wonders and signs", which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah (Acts 2:22; cf. Lk 7:18-23).

### (Mk 4, 10-13) The mystery of the kingdom of God

[10] And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. [11] He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables, [12] so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven.'" [13] Jesus said to them, "**Do you not understand this parable?** Then how will you understand any of the parables?"

(CCC 2088) The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith: *Voluntary doubt* about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. *Involuntary doubt* refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness. (CCC 2089) *Incredulity* is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. "*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and

catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; *apostasy* is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; *schism* is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (CIC, can. 751: emphasis added). (CCC 2090) When God reveals Himself and calls him, man cannot fully respond to the divine love by his own powers. He must hope that God will give him the capacity to love Him in return and to act in conformity with the commandments of charity. Hope is the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God; it is also the fear of offending God's love and of incurring punishment.

(Mk 4, 14-20) The sower sows the word.

[14] ***The sower sows the word.*** [15] These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them. [16] And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. [17] But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. [18] Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, [19] but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. [20] But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

(CCC 2707) There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower (Cf. Mk 4:4-7, 15-19). But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus. (CCC 2706) To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (CCC 2705) Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history--the page on which the "today" of God is written.

(Mk 4, 21-25) The parable of the lamp

[21] He said to them, ***"Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?"*** [22] For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light. [23] Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear." [24] He also told them, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you. [25]

To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

(CCC 1777) Moral conscience (Cf. Rom 2:14-16), present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil (Cf. Rom 1:32). It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. (CCC 1775) The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart." (CCC 1816) The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks" (LG 42; cf. DH 14). Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33).

#### (Mk 4, 26-29) Parable of the seed scattered on the land

[26] He said, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land [27] and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. [28] Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. [29] And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come."

(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 1228) Hence Baptism is a bath of water in which the "imperishable seed" of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect (1 Pet 1:23; cf. Eph 5:26). St. Augustine says of Baptism: "The word is brought to the material element, and it becomes a sacrament" (St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 80, 3: PL 35, 1840).

#### (Mk 4, 30-34) Parable of the mustard seed

[30] He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? [31] It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. [32] But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." [33] With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. [34] Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

(CCC 1147) God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator (Cf. Wis 13:1; Rom 1:19 f; Acts 14:17). Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness. (CCC 1151) *Signs taken up by Christ*. In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Cf. Lk 8:10). He performs healings and illustrates his preaching with physical signs or symbolic gestures (Cf. Jn 9:6; Mk 7:33 ff.; 8:22 ff). He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover (Cf. Lk 9:31; 22:7-20), for he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

### (Mk 4, 35-41) Even wind and sea obey him

[35] On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side." [36] Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. [37] A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. [38] Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" [39] He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm. [40] Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" [41] They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "**Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?**"

(CCC 548) The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him (cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 38). To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask (Cf. Mk 5:25-34; 10:52; etc.). So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God (Cf. Jn 10:31-38). But his miracles can also be occasions for "offense" (Mt 11:6); they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons (Cf. Jn 11:47-48; Mk 3:22).

## Mark 5

### (Mk 5, 1-20) Unclean spirit, come out of the man!

[1] They came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. [2] When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. [3] The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain. [4] In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. [5] Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. [6] Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him, [7] crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!" [8] (He had been saying to him, "**Unclean spirit, come out of the man!**") [9] He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name. There

are many of us." [10] And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory. [11] Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. [12] And they pleaded with him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter them." [13] And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned. [14] The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened. [15] As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear. [16] Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the swine. [17] Then they began to beg him to leave their district. [18] As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. [19] But he would not permit him but told him instead, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." [20] Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

(CCC 414) Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God. (CCC 550) The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:26, 28). Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31; cf. Lk 8:26-39). The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood" (LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn *Vexilla Regis*: "*Regnavit a ligno Deus*"). (CCC 447) ["*Lord*"] Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of *Psalms* 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles (Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13). Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

#### (Mk 5, 21-34) Daughter, your faith has saved you

[21] When Jesus had crossed again (in the boat) to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. [22] One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet [23] and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." [24] He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him. [25] There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. [26] She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. [27] She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. [28] She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." [29] Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. [30] Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out

from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?" [31] But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" [32] And he looked around to see who had done it. [33] The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. [34] He said to her, "**Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.**"

(CCC 1504) Often Jesus asks the sick to believe (Cf. Mk 5:34, 36; 9:23). He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands (Cf. Mk 7:32-36; 8:22-25), mud and washing (Cf. Jn 9:6-7). The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19; cf. Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56) and so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us. (CCC 1505) Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4). But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:4-6), of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion. (CCC 1503) Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (Cf. Mk 2:17). His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.

(Mk 5, 35-43) Little girl, I say to you, arise!

[35] While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" [36] Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." [37] He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. [38] When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. [39] So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." [40] And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. [41] He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "**Little girl, I say to you, arise!**" [42] **The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around.** (At that) they were utterly astounded. [43] He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

(CCC 413) "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living...It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world" (Wis 1:13; 2:24). (CCC 646) Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven" (Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50). (CCC 994) But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54). Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39). The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22). (CCC 997) *What is "rising"?* In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection.

## Mark 6

(Mk 6, 1-6) He was amazed at their lack of faith

[1] He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. [2] When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! [3] Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. [4] Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." [5] So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. [6] He was amazed at their lack of faith. He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.

(CCC 397) Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of (Cf. Gen 3:1-11; Rom 5:19). All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness. (CCC 398) In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own

good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to "be like God", but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*: PG 91, 1156C; cf. Gen 3:5). (CCC 399) Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness (Cf. Rom 3:23). They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image--that of a God jealous of his prerogatives (Cf. Gen 3:5-10).

### (Mk 6, 7-13) Jesus began to send the Twelve out

[7] He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. [8] He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick - no food, no sack, no money in their belts. [9] They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. [10] He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. [11] Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." [12] So they went off and preached repentance. [13] They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

(CCC 1506) Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn (Cf. Mt 10:38). By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associates them with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing: "So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mk 6:12-13). (CCC 1507) The risen Lord renews this mission ("In my name... They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" Mk 16:17-18.) and confirms it through the signs that the Church performs by invoking his name (Cf. Acts 9:34; 14:3). These signs demonstrate in a special way that Jesus is truly "God who saves" (Cf. Mt 1:21; Acts 4:12). (CCC 544) The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22); he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). To them - the "little ones" - the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned (Cf. Mt 11:25). Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation (Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:61; 19:28; Lk 9:58). Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom (Cf. Mt 25:31-46).

### (Mk 6, 14-18) Jesus, John the Baptist, King Herod

[14] King Herod heard about it, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." [15] Others were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets." [16] But when Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up." [17] *Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had*

*married. [18] John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."*

(CCC 1646) By its very nature conjugal love requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses. This is the consequence of the gift of themselves which they make to each other. Love seeks to be definitive; it cannot be an arrangement "until further notice." the "intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children, demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable union between them" (GS 48 § 1). (CCC 1639) The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself (Cf. Mk 10:9). From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, ... even in the eyes of society" (GS 48 § 1). The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love" (GS 48 § 2). (CCC 1645) "The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection" (GS 49 § 2). Polygamy is contrary to conjugal love which is undivided and exclusive (Cf. FC 19).

### **(Mk 6, 19-29) John the Baptist beheaded in the prison**

*[19] Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. [20] Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. [21] She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. [22] Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." [23] He even swore (many things) to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." [24] She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist." [25] The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." [26] The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. [27] So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. [28] He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. [29] When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

(CCC 523) *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way (Cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3). "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last (Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13). He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29). Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom (Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29). (CCC 524) When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the

Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (Cf. Rev 22:17). By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). (CCC 2473) *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110).

### (Mk 6, 30-44) The first multiplication of the loaves

[30] The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. [31] He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. [32] So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. [33] People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. [34] When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. [35] By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. [36] Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." [37] He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" [38] He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." [39] So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. [40] The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. [41] Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to (his) disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. [42] They all ate and were satisfied. [43] And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. [44] Those who ate (of the loaves) were five thousand men.

(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 1335) The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist (Cf. Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39).

The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus' glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ (Cf. Jn 2:11; Mk 14:25).

(Mk 6, 45-52) Jesus went off to the mountain to pray

[45] Then he made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. [46] And when he had taken leave of them, **he went off to the mountain to pray.** [47] When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore. [48] Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. [49] But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. [50] They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" [51] He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were (completely) astounded. [52] They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

(CCC 2602) Jesus often draws apart to pray *in solitude*, on a mountain, preferably at night (Cf. Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16). *He includes all men* in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself. Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them (Cf. Heb 2:12, 15; 4:15). It was for this that the Father sent him. His words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret. (CCC 2603) The evangelists have preserved two more explicit prayers offered by Christ during his public ministry. Each begins with thanksgiving. In the first, Jesus confesses the Father, acknowledges, and blesses him because he has hidden the mysteries of the Kingdom from those who think themselves learned and has revealed them to infants, the poor of the Beatitudes (Cf. Mt 11:25-27 and Lk 10:21-23). His exclamation, "Yes, Father!" expresses the depth of his heart, his adherence to the Father's "good pleasure," echoing his mother's *Fiat* at the time of his conception and prefiguring what he will say to the Father in his agony. The whole prayer of Jesus is contained in this loving adherence of his human heart to the mystery of the will of the Father (Cf. Eph 1:9). (CCC 426) "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever" (CT 5). To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him" (CT 5). Catechesis aims at putting "people... in communion... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity" (CT 5). 426

(Mk 6, 53-56) As many as touched it were healed

[53] After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. [54] As they were leaving the boat, people immediately

recognized him. [55] They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. [56] Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; **and as many as touched it were healed.**

(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 1504) Often Jesus asks the sick to believe (Cf. Mk 5:34, 36; 9:23). He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands (Cf. Mk 7:32-36; 8:22-25), mud and washing (Cf. Jn 9:6-7). The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19; cf. Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56) and so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us. (CCC 1509) "Heal the sick!" (Mt 10:8). The Church has received this charge from the Lord and strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick as well as by accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. She believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health (Cf. Jn 6:54, 58; 1 Cor 11:30).

## Mark 7

(Mk 7, 1-13) They teach as doctrines human precepts

[1] Now when the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, [2] they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. [3] (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. [4] And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles (and beds). [5] So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" [6] He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; [7] ***In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.***' [8] ***You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition.***" [9] He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! [10] For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.' [11] Yet you say, 'If a person says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is qorban"' (meaning, dedicated to God), [12] you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. [13] You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things."

(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 2072) Since they express man's fundamental duties towards God and towards his neighbor, the Ten Commandments reveal, in their primordial content, *grave* obligations. They are fundamentally immutable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them. The Ten Commandments are engraved by God in the human heart. (CCC 2247) "Honor your father and your mother" (Deut 5:16; Mk 7:10). (CCC 2218) The fourth commandment reminds grown children of their *responsibilities toward their parents*. As much as they can, they must give them material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness, or distress. Jesus recalls this duty of gratitude (Cf. Mk 7:10-12). For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother (Sir 3:2-6). O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him.... Whoever forsakes his father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers his mother is cursed by the Lord (Sir 3:12-13, 16).

#### (Mk 7, 14-23) All evils come from within and defile

[14] He summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. [15] Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." [16]. [17] When he got home away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable. [18] He said to them, "Are even you likewise without understanding? Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, [19] since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) [20] "But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. [21] From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, [22] adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. [23] All these evils come from within and they defile."

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

serving God and neighbor (Cf. Num 28:9; Mt 12:5; Mk 2:25-27; Lk 13:15-16; 14:3-4; Jn 7:22-24), which his own healings did.

### (Mk 7, 24-30) The faith of a Syrophenician woman

[24] From that place he went off to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. [25] Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. [26] The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. [27] He said to her, "Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." [28] She replied and said to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps." [29] Then he said to her, "For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter." [30] When the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

(CCC 2616) Prayer to *Jesus* is answered by him already during his ministry, through signs that anticipate the power of his death and Resurrection: Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) (Cf. Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Cf. Lk 23:39-43) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman) (Cf. Mk 25; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38). The urgent request of the blind men, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" or "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has been renewed in the traditional prayer to Jesus known as the *Jesus Prayer*: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Mt 9:27, Mk 10:48). Healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith: "Your faith has made you well; go in peace." St. Augustine wonderfully summarizes the three dimensions of Jesus' prayer: "He prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us" (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 85, 1: PL 37, 1081; cf. GILH 7).

### (Mk 7, 31-37) Jesus heals a deaf man

[31] Again he left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. [32] And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. [33] He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; [34] then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!") [35] And (immediately) the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. [36] He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. [37] They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and (the) mute speak."

(CCC 1504) Often Jesus asks the sick to believe (Cf. Mk 5:34, 36; 9:23). He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands (Cf. Mk 7:32-36; 8:22-25), mud and washing (Cf. Jn 9:6-7). The sick try to touch him, "for power came

forth from him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19; cf. Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56) and so in the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.

## Mark 8

### (Mk 8, 1-10) The second multiplication of the loaves

[1] In those days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, he summoned the disciples and said, [2] "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. [3] If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance." [4] His disciples answered him, "Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?" [5] Still he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied. [6] He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. [7] They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. [8] They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over - seven baskets. [9] There were about four thousand people. He dismissed them [10] and got into the boat with his disciples and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

(CCC 1327) In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 5: PG 7/1, 1028). (CCC 1335) The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist (Cf. Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39). The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus' glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ (Cf. Jn 2:11; Mk 14:25). (CCC 1329) The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9). The *Breaking of Bread*, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17). The *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34).

### (Mk 8, 11-13) No sign will be given to this generation

[11] The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. [12] He sighed from the depth of his

spirit and said, "**Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.**" [13] Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

(CCC 1286) In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission (Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Lk 4:16-22). The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God (Cf. Mt 3:13-17; Jn 1:33-34). He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him "without measure" (Jn 3:34). (CCC 1287) This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to *the whole messianic people* (Cf. Ezek 36:25-27; Joel 3:1-2). On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit (Cf. Lk 12:12; Jn 3:5-8; 7:37-39; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost (Cf. Jn 20:22; Acts 2:1-14). Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim "the mighty works of God," and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age (Acts 2:11; Cf. 2:17-18). Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn (Cf. Acts 2:38).

#### (Mk 8, 14-21) Guard against the leaven of the Pharisees

[14] They had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. [15] He enjoined them, "**Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.**" [16] They concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. [17] When he became aware of this he said to them, "Why do you conclude that it is because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? [18] Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? And do you not remember, [19] when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of fragments you picked up?" They answered him, "Twelve." [20] "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full baskets of fragments did you pick up?" They answered (him), "Seven." [21] He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

(CCC 2832) As leaven in the dough, the newness of the kingdom should make the earth "rise" by the Spirit of Christ (Cf. AA 5). This must be shown by the establishment of justice in personal and social, economic and international relations, without ever forgetting that there are no just structures without people who want to be just. (CCC 580) The perfect fulfilment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son (Cf. Gal 4:4). In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but "upon the heart" of the Servant who becomes "a covenant to the people", because he will "faithfully bring forth justice" (Jer 31:33; Isa 42:3, 6). Jesus fulfils the Law to the point of taking upon himself "the curse of the Law" incurred by those who do not "abide by the things written in the book of the Law, and do them", for his death took place to redeem them "from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Gal 3:13; 3:10; Heb 9:15). (CCC 579) This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led

many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal (Cf. Rom 10:2). This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry (Cf. Mt 15:31; Lk 11:39-54), could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfilment of the Law by the only Righteous One in place of all sinners (Cf. Isa 53:11; Heb 9:15).

### (Mk 8, 22-26) Jesus heals a blind man

[22] When they arrived at Bethsaida, they brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. [23] He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, "Do you see anything?" [24] Looking up he replied, "I see people looking like trees and walking." [25] Then he laid hands on his eyes a second time and he saw clearly; his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly. [26] Then he sent him home and said, "Do not even go into the village."

(CCC 2559) "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C). But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart? (Ps 130:1). He who humbles himself will be exalted (Cf. Lk 18:9-14); *humility* is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Rom 8:26), are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 56, 6, 9: PL 38, 381). (CCC 2564) Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man. (CCC 2621) In his teaching, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray with a purified heart, with lively and persevering faith, with filial boldness. He calls them to vigilance and invites them to present their petitions to God in his name. Jesus Christ himself answers prayers addressed to him.

### (Mk 8, 27-30) You are the Messiah

[27] Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" [28] They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." [29] And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "**You are the Messiah.**" [30] Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

(CCC 150) Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature (Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Ps 40:5; 146:3-4). (CCC 424) Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt 16:16). On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church. (CCC 440) Jesus accepted Peter's profession of

faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man (Cf. Mt 16:16-23). He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Is 53:10-12). Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross (Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43). Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

### (Mk 8, 31- 33) Get behind me, Satan

[31] He began to teach them that ***the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed***, and rise after three days. [32] He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. [33] At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, ***"Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."***

(CCC 540) Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him (Cf. Mt 16:21-23). This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb 4:15). By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (CCC 2119) *Tempting God* consists in putting his goodness and almighty power to the test by word or deed. Thus Satan tried to induce Jesus to throw himself down from the Temple and, by this gesture, force God to act (Cf. Lk 4:9). Jesus opposed Satan with the word of God: "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test" (Deut 6:16). The challenge contained in such tempting of God wounds the respect and trust we owe our Creator and Lord. It always harbors doubt about his love, his providence, and his power (Cf. 1 Cor 10:9; Ex 17:2-7; Ps 95:9).

### (Mk 8, 34-38) Take up his cross, and follow me.

[34] He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, ***"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."*** [35] For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. [36] What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? [37] What could one give in exchange for his life? [38] Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

(CCC 2541) The economy of law and grace turns men's hearts away from avarice and envy. It initiates them into desire for the Sovereign Good; it instructs them in the desires of the Holy Spirit who satisfies man's heart. The God of the promises always warned man against seduction by what from the beginning has seemed "good for food... a delight to the eyes... to be desired to make one wise"

(Gen 3:6). (CCC 2544) Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel (Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35). Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on (Cf. Lk 21:4). The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. (CCC 2545) All Christ's faithful are to "direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty" (LG 42 § 3).