

Gospel according to Matthew

Chapter 10

(Mt 10, 1-4) Jesus constitutes the twelve apostles

[1] Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. [2] The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; [3] Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; [4] Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

(CCC 880) When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them" (LG 19; cf. Lk 6:13; Jn 21:15-17). Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another" (LG 22; cf. CIC, can. 330). (CCC 96) What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

(Mt 10, 5-10) Jesus sent out the twelve

[5] Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. [6] Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [7] As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' [8] Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. [9] Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; [10] no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep.

(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 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).

(Mt 10, 11-15) As you enter a house, wish it peace

[11] Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. [12] As you enter a house, wish it peace. [13] If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you. [14] Whoever will not receive you or listen to your words - go outside that house or town and shake the dust from your feet. [15] Amen, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

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

(Mt 10, 16-20) Like sheep in the midst of wolves

[16] "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. [17] But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, [18] and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. [19] When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. [20] For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

(CCC 852) *Missionary paths*. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist, "the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission" (John Paul II, *RMiss* 21). It is he who leads the Church on her missionary paths. "This mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor; so the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death, a death from which he emerged victorious by his resurrection" (AG 5). So it is that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 50, 13: PL 1, 603).

(Mt 10, 21-25) Whoever endures to the end will be saved

[21] Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. [22] You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved. [23] When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. [24] No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master. [25] It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, for the slave that he become like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of his household!

(CCC 161) Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation (Cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:36; 6:40 et al). "Since 'without faith it is impossible to please (God)' and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will

anyone obtain eternal life ‘but he who endures to the end.’” [*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3012; cf. Mt 10:22; 24:13 and Heb11:6; Council of trent DS 1532]. (CCC 765) The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head (Cf. Mk 3:14-15). Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 21:12-14). The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot (Cf. Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1-2; Mt 10:25; Jn 15:20). By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church.

(Mt 10, 26-28) Do not be afraid, speak in the light

[26] "Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. [27] What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. [28] And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.

(CCC 14) Those who belong to Christ through faith and Baptism must confess their baptismal faith before men. (Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9) First therefore the Catechism expounds revelation, by which God addresses and gives himself to man, and the faith by which man responds to God (*Section One*). The profession of faith summarizes the gifts that God gives man: as the Author of all that is good; as Redeemer; and as Sanctifier. It develops these in the three chapters on our baptismal faith in the one God: the almighty *Father*, the Creator; his *Son* Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour; and the *Holy Spirit*, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (*Section Two*). (CCC 1034) Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost (Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" (Mt 25:41). (CCC 363) In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human *life* or the entire human *person* (Cf. Mt 16:25-26; Jn 15:13; Acts 2:41). But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him (Cf. Mt 10:28; 26:38; Jn 12:27; 2 Macc 6: 30), that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the *spiritual principle* in man.

(Mt 10, 29-33) Acknowledge me before others

[29] Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. [30] Even all the hairs of your head are counted. [31] So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. [32] Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. [33] But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.

(CCC 995) To be a witness to Christ is to be a "witness to his Resurrection," to "[have eaten and drunk] with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 1:22; 10:41; cf. 4:33). Encounters with the risen Christ characterize the Christian hope of

resurrection. We shall rise like Christ, with him, and through him. (CCC 900) Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it (Cf. LG 33). (CCC 905) Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world" (LG 35 § 1, § 2). This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers . . . or to the faithful (AA 6 § 3; cf. AG 15).

(Mt 10, 34-39) I have not come to bring peace

[34] "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. [35] For I have come to set a man 'against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; [36] and one's enemies will be those of his household.' [37] "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; [38] and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. [39] Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

(CCC 2232) Family ties are important but not absolute. Just as the child grows to maturity and human and spiritual autonomy, so his unique vocation which comes from God asserts itself more clearly and forcefully. Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it. They must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to *follow Jesus*: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37; cf. 16:25). (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).

(Mt 10, 40-42) Whoever receives you receives me

[40] "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. [41] Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward. [42] And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to

drink because he is a disciple - amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

(CCC 858) Jesus is the Father's Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he "called to him those whom he desired;... And he appointed twelve, whom also he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:13-14). From then on, they would also be his "emissaries" (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ continues his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18). The apostles' ministry is the continuation of his mission; Jesus said to the Twelve: "he who receives you receives me" (Mt 10:40; cf. Lk 10:16). (CCC 850) *The origin and purpose of mission*. the Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (AG 2). The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love (Cf. John Paul II, *RMiss* 23).

Chapter 11

(Mt 11, 1-6) Go and tell John what you hear and see

[1] When Jesus finished giving these commands to his twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns. [2] When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him [3] with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" [4] Jesus said to them in reply, "**Go and tell John what you hear and see**: [5] the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. [6] And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

(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). (CCC 549) By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death (Cf. Jn 6:5-15; Lk 19:8; Mt 11:5), Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below (Cf. Lk 12:13-14; Jn 18:36), but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage (Cf. Jn 8:34-36).

(Mt 11, 7-15) John, more than a prophet

[7] As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? [8] Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. [9] Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and **more than a prophet**. [10] This is

the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.' [11] Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [12] From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. [13] All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. [14] And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. [15] Whoever has ears ought to hear.

(CCC 718) John is "Elijah [who] must come" (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Lk 1:78). The fire of the Spirit dwells in him and makes him the forerunner of the coming Lord. In John, the precursor, the Holy Spirit completes the work of "[making] ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17). (CCC 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 719) John the Baptist is "more than a prophet" (Lk 7:26). In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (Cf. Mt 11:13-14). He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the "voice" of the Consoler who is coming (Jn 1:23; cf. Isa 40:1-3). As the Spirit of truth will also do, John "came to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1:7; cf. Jn 15:26; 5:35). In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels (Cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12). "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.... Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:33-36).

(Mt 11, 16-19) This generation is like children

[16] ***"To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, [17] 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.'*** [18] For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' [19] The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

(CCC 2475) Christ's disciples have "put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). By "putting away falsehood," they are to "put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander" (Eph 4:25; 1 Pet 2:1). (CCC 2477) *Respect for the reputation* of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury (Cf. CIC, can. 220). He becomes guilty: - of *rash judgment* who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor; - of *detraction* who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons

who did not know them (Cf. Sir 21:28); - of *calumny* who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.

(Mt 11, 20-24) He began to reproach the towns

[20] **Then he began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented.** [21] "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. [22] But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. [23] And as for you, Capernaum: 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. [24] But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

(CCC 678) Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgement of the Last Day in his preaching (Cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3:19; Mt 3:7-12). Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (Cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (Cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (Cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (CCC 682) When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace.

(Mt 11, 25-27) You have revealed them to the childlike

[25] At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned **you have revealed them to the childlike.** [26] Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. [27] All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

(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).

(Mt 11, 28-30) My yoke is easy, and my burden light

[28] "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. [30] **For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.**"

(CCC 520) In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man" (GS 38; cf. Rom 15:5; Phil 2:5), who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way (Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12). (CCC 521) Christ enables us *to live in him* all that he himself lived, and *he lives it in us*. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man" (GS 22 § 2). We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model: We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. . . . For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us (St. John Eudes: *LH*, week 33, Friday, OR).

Chapter 12

(Mt 12, 1-8) The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath

[1] At that time Jesus was going through a field of grain on the sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. [2] When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath." [3] He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, [4] how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? [5] Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the sabbath and are innocent? [6] I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. [7] If you knew what this meant, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned these innocent men. [8] For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath."

(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.

(Mt 12, 9-13) It is lawful to do good on the sabbath

[9] Moving on from there, he went into their synagogue. [10] And behold, there was a man there who had a withered hand. They questioned him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. [11] He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out? [12] How much more valuable a person is than a sheep. **So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.**" [13] Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored as sound as the other.

(CCC 2173) The Gospel reports many incidents when Jesus was accused of violating the sabbath law. But Jesus never fails to respect the holiness of this day (Cf. Mk 1:21; Jn 9:16). He gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mk 2:27). With compassion, Christ declares the sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing (Cf. Mk 3:4). The sabbath is the day of the Lord of mercies and a day to honor God (Cf. Mt 12:5; Jn 7:23). "The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mk 2:28).

(Mt 12, 14-21) Behold, my servant whom I have chosen

[14] But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him to put him to death. [15] When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. Many (people) followed him, and he cured them all, [16] but he warned them not to make him known. [17] This was to fulfill what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet: [18] "**Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom I delight**; I shall place my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. [19] He will not contend or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. [20] A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. [21] And in his name the Gentiles will hope."

(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 acts of his 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 713) The Messiah's characteristics are revealed above all in the "Servant songs" (Cf. Isa 42:1-9; Mt 12:18-21; Jn 1:32-34; then cf. Isa 49:1-6; Mt 3:17; Lk 2:32; finally cf. Isa 50:4-10 and Isa 52:13-53:12). These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus' Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our "form as slave" (Phil 2:7). Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life.

(Mt 12, 22-29) Jesus and Beelzebul

[22] Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. [23] All the crowd was astounded, and said, "Could this perhaps be the Son of David?" [24] But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons." [25] But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. [26] And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? [27] And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. [28] But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [29] How can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

(CCC 439) Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to Israel (Cf Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15). Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political (Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21). (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*").

(Mt 12, 30-32) Whoever does not gather with me scatters

[30] Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. [31] Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. [32] And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

(CCC 590) Only the divine identity of Jesus' person can justify so absolute a claim as "He who is not with me is against me"; and his saying that there was in him "something greater than Jonah, . . . greater than Solomon", something "greater than the Temple"; his reminder that David had called the Messiah his Lord (Cf. Mt 12:6, 30, 36, 37, 41-42), and his affirmations, "Before Abraham was, I AM", and even "I and the Father are one" (Jn 8:58; 10:30). (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 1037) God predestines no one to go to hell (Cf. Council of Orange II (529): DS 397; Council of Trent (1547):1567); for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9): Father, accept this offering from your whole family. Grant us your peace in this life, save us from final damnation, and count us among those you have chosen [*Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 88].

(Mt 12, 33-37) A tree is known by its fruit

[33] "Either declare the tree good and its fruit is good, or declare the tree rotten and its fruit is rotten, **for a tree is known by its fruit.** [34] You brood of vipers, how can you say good things when you are evil? For from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. [35] A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness, but an evil person brings forth evil out of a store of evil. [36] I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. [37] By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

(CCC 214) God, "He who is", revealed himself to Israel as the one "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. "I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness" (Ps 138:2; cf. Ps 85:11). He is the Truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; "God is love", as the apostle John teaches (1 Jn 1:5; 4:8). (CCC 1954) Man participates in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator who gives him mastery over his acts and the ability to govern himself with a view to the true and the good. The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie: The natural law is written and engraved in the soul of each and every man, because it is human reason ordaining him to do good and forbidding him to sin . . . But this command of human reason would not have the force of law if it were not the voice and interpreter of a higher reason to which our spirit and our freedom must be submitted (Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, 597).

(Mt 12, 38-42) The sign of Jonah the prophet.

[38] Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." [39] He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except **the sign of Jonah the prophet.** [40] Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. [41] At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. [42] At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and

condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.

(CCC 625) Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. the same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18): God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech.* 16: PG 45, 52D). (CCC 681) On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history.

(Mt 12, 43-45) An unclean spirit returns

[43] "When **an unclean spirit goes out of a person** it roams through arid regions searching for rest but finds none. [44] **Then it says, 'I will return to my home from which I came.'** But upon returning, it finds it empty, swept clean, and put in order. [45] Then it goes and brings back with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they move in and dwell there; and the last condition of that person is worse than the first. Thus it will be with this evil generation."

(CCC 635) Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25; cf. Mt 12:40; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9). Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb 2:14-15; cf. Acts 3:15). Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades", so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10). Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. the earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . . He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve. . . . "I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead" (Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday: PG 43, 440A, 452C; *LH*, Holy Saturday, OR). (CCC 1707)"Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history" (GS 13 § 1). He succumbed to temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error: Man is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness (GS 13 § 2).

(Mt 12, 46-50) Here are my mother and my brothers

[46] While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. [47] (Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you.") [48] But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" [49] **And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.** [50] For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

(CCC 2233) Becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to God's *family*, to live in conformity with His way of life: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:49). Parents should welcome and respect with joy and thanksgiving the Lord's call to one of their children to follow him in virginity for the sake of the Kingdom in the consecrated life or in priestly ministry. (CCC 2232) Family ties are important but not absolute. Just as the child grows to maturity and human and spiritual autonomy, so his unique vocation which comes from God asserts itself more clearly and forcefully. Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it. They must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to *follow Jesus*: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37; cf. 16:25).

Chapter 13

(Mt 13, 1-9) Jesus speaks in parables: The sower

[1] On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. [2] Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. [3] And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. [5] Some 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. [8] But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. [9] Whoever has ears 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).

(Mt 13, 10-17) Why do you speak to them in parables?

[10] The disciples approached him and said, "**Why do you speak to them in parables?**" [11] He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. [12] To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [13] This is why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.' [14] Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: 'You shall indeed hear but not understand you shall indeed look but never see. [15] Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.' [16] "But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. [17] Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

(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).

(Mt 13, 18-23) Hear then the parable of the sower

[18] "**Hear then the parable of the sower.** [19] The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. [20] The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. [21] But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. [22] The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. [23] But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

(CCC 27) The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator (Vatican Council II, GS 19 § 1). (CCC 29) But this "intimate and vital bond of man to God" (GS 19,1) can

be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man (GS 19 § 1). Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call (Cf. GS 19-21; Mt 13:22; Gen 3:8-10; Jon 1:3).

(Mt 13, 24-30) His enemy came and sowed weeds

[24] He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. [25] While everyone was asleep **his enemy came and sowed weeds** all through the wheat, and then went off. [26] When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. [27] The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' [28] He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' [29] He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. [30] Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

(CCC 827) "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. the Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8 § 3; Cf. UR 3; 6; Heb 2:17; 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21). All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners (Cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10). In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time (Cf. Mt 13:24-30). Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness: The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Paul VI, CPG § 19).

(Mt 13, 31-35) Mustard seed and yeast

[31] He proposed another parable to them. "**The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed** that a person took and sowed in a field. [32] It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'" [33] He spoke to them another parable. "**The kingdom of heaven is like yeast** that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened." [34] All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, [35] to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation (of the world)."

(CCC 567) The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. "This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ" (LG 5). The Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter. (CCC 671) Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the King's return to earth (Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 25:31). This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover (Cf. 2 Th 2:7). Until everything is subject to him, "until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 2 Pt 3:13; Rom 8:19-22; 1 Cor 15:28). That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him (Cf. 1 Cor 11:26; 2 Pt 3:11-12): *Marana tha!* "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:17, 20). (CCC 770) The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it. It is only "with the eyes of faith" (Roman Catechism I, 10, 20) that one can see her in her visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life. (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.

(Mt 13, 36-43) Jesus explains the parable of the weeds

[36] Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." [37] He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, [38] the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, [39] and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. [40] Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. [41] The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. [42] They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. [43] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear.

(CCC 1021) Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10). The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23).

(Mt 13, 44-52) The kingdom: a treasure, pearls, a net

[44] "**The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure** buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. [45] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching **for fine pearls**. [46] When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. [47] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like **a net** thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. [48] When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. [49] Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous [50] and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. [51] "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." [52] And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

(CCC 1720) The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man: - the coming of the Kingdom of God (Cf. Mt 4:17); - the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8; cf. 1 Jn 2; 1 Cor 13:12) - entering into the joy of the Lord (Mt 25:21-23); - entering into God's rest (Cf. Heb 4:7-11): There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end? (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 22, 30, 5: PL 41, 804). (CCC 1721) God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life (2 Pet 1:4; cf. Jn 17:3). With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ (Cf. Rom 8:18) and into the joy of the Trinitarian life. (CCC 1722) Such beatitude surpasses the understanding and powers of man. It comes from an entirely free gift of God: whence it is called supernatural, as is the grace that disposes man to enter into the divine joy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that "man shall not see me and live," for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God's love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him.... For "what is impossible for men is possible for God" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 20, 5: PG 7/1, 1034-1035). (CCC 1035) The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire" (Cf. DS 76; 409; 411; 801; 858; 1002; 1351; 1575; Paul VI, CPG § 12). The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

(Mt 13, 53-58) And they took offense at him

[53] When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there. [54] He came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? [55] Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? [56] Are not his sisters all

with us? Where did this man get all this?" [57] **And they took offense at him.** But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." [58] And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

(CCC 501) Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love" (LG 63; cf. Jn 19:26-27; Rom 8:29; Rev 12:17). (CCC 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.). (CCC 480) Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men.

Chapter 14

(Mt 14, 1-12) John beheaded in the prison

[1] At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the reputation of Jesus [2] and said to his servants, "This man is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." [3] Now Herod had arrested John, bound (him), and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, [4] for John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." [5] Although he wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they regarded him as a prophet. [6] But at a birthday celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod [7] so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for. [8] Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." [9] The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests who were present, he ordered that it be given, [10] and he had John beheaded in the prison. [11] His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. [12] His disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him; and they went and told Jesus.

(CCC 720) Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," prefiguring what he would achieve with and in Christ. John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth (Cf. Jn 3:5). (CCC 2472) The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as *witnesses of the Gospel* and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known (Cf. Mt 18:16). All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at

Confirmation (AG 11). (CCC 2258) "*Human life is sacred* because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" (CDF, instruction, *Donum vitae*, intro. 5). (CCC 2261) Scripture specifies the prohibition contained in the fifth commandment: "Do not slay the innocent and the righteous" (Ex 23:7). The deliberate murder of an innocent person is gravely contrary to the dignity of the human being, to the golden rule, and to the holiness of the Creator. the law forbidding it is universally valid: it obliges each and everyone, always and everywhere.

(Mt 14, 13-21) Give them some food yourselves

[13] When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. [14] When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. [15] When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." [16] (Jesus) said to them, "**There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.**" [17] But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." [18] Then he said, "Bring them here to me," [19] and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. [20] They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over - twelve wicker baskets full. [21] Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

(CCC1335) 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 1936) On coming into the world, man is not equipped with everything he needs for developing his bodily and spiritual life. He needs others. Differences appear tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual or moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth (Cf. GS 29 § 2). The "talents" are not distributed equally (Cf. Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27). (CCC 1937) These differences belong to God's plan, who wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular "talents" share the benefits with those who need them. These differences encourage and often oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness, and sharing of goods; they foster the mutual enrichment of cultures: I distribute the virtues quite diversely; I do not give all of them to each person, but some to one, some to others.... I shall give principally charity to one; justice to another; humility to this one, a living faith to that one.... and so I have given many gifts and graces, both spiritual and temporal, with such

diversity that I have not given everything to one single person, so that you may be constrained to practice charity towards one another.... I have willed that one should need another and that all should be my ministers in distributing the graces and gifts they have received from me (St. Catherine of Siena, *Dial.* I, 7). (CCC 1939) The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood (Cf. John Paul II, SRS 38-40; CA 10). An error, "today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity and charity, dictated and imposed both by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity" (Pius XII, *Summi pontificatus*, October 20, 1939; AAS 31 (1939) 423 ff).

(Mt 14, 22-33) Jesus walking on the sea

[22] Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. [23] After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. [24] Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. [25] During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. [26] **When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.** "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. [27] At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." [28] Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." [29] He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. [30] But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" [31] Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" [32] After they got into the boat, the wind died down. [33] Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

(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). (CCC 514) Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted (Cf. Jn 20:30). What is written in the Gospels was set down there "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). (CCC 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.

(Mt 14, 34-36) All sick people healed in Gennesaret.

[34] After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. [35] When the men of that place recognized him, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought to him all those who were sick [36] and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak, and as many as touched it were healed.

(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.

Chapter 15

(Mt 15, 1-9) Your traditions nullify the word of God

[1] Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, [2] "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They do not wash (their) hands when they eat a meal." [3] He said to them in reply, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? [4] For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.' [5] But you say, 'Whoever says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is dedicated to God," [6] need not honor his father.' **You have nullified the word of God for the sake of your tradition.** [7] Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you when he said: [8] 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; [9] in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.'"

(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). (CCC 2215) Respect for parents (*filial piety*) derives from *gratitude* toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. "With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?" (Sir 7:27-28). (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).

(Mt 15, 10-20) Things coming from the heart defile

[10] He summoned the crowd and said to them, "Hear and understand. [11] It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles that person; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one." [12] Then his disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" [13] He said in reply, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. [14] Let them alone; they are blind guides (of the blind). If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit." [15] Then Peter said to him in reply, "Explain (this) parable to us." [16] He said to them, "Are even you still without understanding? [17] Do you not realize that everything that enters the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled into the latrine? [18] *But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile.* [19] For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. [20] These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

(CCC 2517) The heart is the seat of moral personality: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication...." (Mt 15:19). The struggle against carnal covetousness entails purifying the heart and practicing temperance: Remain simple and innocent, and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man's life (*Pastor Hermae*, Mandate 2, 1: PG 2, 916). (CCC 1849) Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 22: PL 42, 418; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 71, 6). (CCC 1853) Sins can be distinguished according to their objects, as can every human act; or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or according to the commandments they violate. They can also be classed according to whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself; they can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins, or again as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission. The root of sin is in the heart of man, in his free will, according to the teaching of the Lord: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man" (Mt 15:19-20). But in the heart also resides charity, the source of the good and pure works, which sin wounds.

(Mt 15, 21-28) O woman, great is your faith!

[21] Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. [22] And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented

by a demon." [23] But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." [24] He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [25] But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." [26] He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." [27] She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." [28] Then Jesus said to her in reply, "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.**" And her daughter was healed from that hour.

(CCC 446) In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name YHWH, by which God revealed himself to Moses (Cf. Ex 3:14), is rendered as *Kyrios*, "Lord". From then on, "*Lord*" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "Lord" both for the Father and - what is new - for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself (Cf. 1 Cor 2:8). (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.

(Mt 15, 29-31) Jesus healed mute deformed lame blind

[29] Moving on from there Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. [30] Great crowds came to him, having with them **the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others**. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. [31] The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

(CCC 1502) The man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is of God, Master of life and death, that he implores healing (Cf. Pss 6:3; 38; Isa 38). Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing (Cf. Pss 32:5; 38:5; 39:9, 12; 107:20; cf. Mk 2:5-12). It is the experience of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and that faithfulness to God according to his law restores life: "For I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex 15:26). The prophet intuits that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others (Cf. Isa 53:11). Finally Isaiah announces that God will usher in a time for Zion when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness (Cf. Isa 33:24). (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).

(Mt 15, 32-39) The second multiplication of the loaves

[32] Jesus summoned his disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way." [33] The disciples said to him, "Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?" [34] Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish." [35] He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. [36] Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. [37] They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over - seven baskets full. [38] Those who ate were four thousand men, not counting women and children. [39] And when he had dismissed the crowds, he got into the boat and came to the district of Magadan.

(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).

Chapter 16

(Mt 16, 1-4) Pharisees and Sadducees asked him a sign

[1] The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. [2] He said to them in reply, "(In the evening you say, 'Tomorrow will be fair, for the sky is red'; [3] and, in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to

judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times.) [4] An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

(CCC 1146) *Signs of the human world*. In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God. (CCC 156) What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe "because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived" (*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008). So "that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit" (*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3009). Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability "are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all"; they are "motives of credibility" (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind" (*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008-3010; Cf. Mk 16 20; Heb 2:4).

(Mt 16, 5-12) Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees

[5] In coming to the other side of the sea, the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. [6] Jesus said to them, "**Look out, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" [7] They concluded among themselves, saying, "It is because we have brought no bread." [8] When Jesus became aware of this he said, "You of little faith, why do you conclude among yourselves that it is because you have no bread? [9] Do you not yet understand, and do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many wicker baskets you took up? [10] Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you took up? [11] How do you not comprehend that I was not speaking to you about bread? **Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" [12] Then they understood that he was not telling them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

(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 acts of his 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).

(Mt 16, 13-20) Jesus Messiah, Son of the living God

[13] When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." [17] Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. [18] And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [20] Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

(CCC 441) In the Old Testament, "*son of God*" is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings (Cf. Dt 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; Job 1:6; Ex 4:22; Hos 2:1; 11:1; Jer 3:19; Sir 36:11; Wis 18:13; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 82:6). It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called "son of God", it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus "son of God", as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this (Cf. 1 Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7; Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47). (CCC 442) Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God", for Jesus responds solemnly: "Flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but *my Father* who is in heaven" (Mt 16:16-17). Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Gal 1:15-16). "And in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20). From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the centre of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation (Cf. 1 Th 1:10; Jn 20:31; Mt 16:18). (CCC 881) The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock (Cf. Mt 16:18-19; Jn 21:15-17). "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head" (LG 22 § 2). This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope. (CCC 1445) The words *bind and loose* mean: whomever you exclude from

your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.*

(Mt 16, 21-23) Jesus must suffer greatly and be killed

[21] From that time on, **Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly** from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, **and be killed** and on the third day be raised. [22] Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." [23] He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

(CCC 554) From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Mt 16:21). Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he (Cf. Mt 16:22-23; 17:23; Lk 9:45). In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain (Cf. Mt 17:1-8 and parallels; 2 Pt 1:16-18), before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Lk 9:35). (CCC 606) The Son of God, who came down "from heaven, not to do (his) own will, but the will of him who sent (him)" (Jn 6:38), said on coming into the world, "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:5-10). From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34). The sacrifice of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world"(1 Jn 2:2) expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "[for] I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (Jn 10:17; 14:31). (CCC 607) The desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus' whole life (Cf Lk 12:50; 22:15; Mt 16:21-23), for his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation. and so he asked, "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour" (Jn 12:27) and again, "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" (Jn 18:11). From the cross, just before "It is finished", he said, "I thirst" (Jn 19:30; 19:28).

(Mt 16, 24-28) Whoever loses his life for me will find it.

[24] Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. [25] For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.** [26] What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? [27] For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will

repay everyone according to his conduct. [28] Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

(CCC 616) It is love "to the end"(Jn 13:1) that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life (Cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25). Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor 5:14). No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice *for all*. (CCC 618) The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim 2:5). But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men (GS 22 § 5; cf. § 2). He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]" (Mt 16:24), for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps" (1 Pt 2:21). In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries (Cf. Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24). This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering (Cf. Lk 2:35). Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven (St. Rose of Lima: cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* (Louvain, 1668). (CCC 363) In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human *life* or the entire human *person* (Cf. Mt 16:25-26; Jn 15:13; Acts 2:41). But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him (Cf. Mt 10:28; 26:38; Jn 12:27; 2 Macc 6: 30), that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the *spiritual principle* in man. (CCC 226) *It means making good use of created things*: faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him: My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you. My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you. My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you (St. Nicholas of Flue; cf. Mt 5:29-30; 16:24-26).

Chapter 17

(Mt 17, 1-9) Jesus transfigured before Peter James John

[1] After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. [2] And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. [3] And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. [4] Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." [5] While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my

beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." [6] When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. [7] But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." [8] And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. [9] As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

(CCC 444) The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son" (Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5). Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence (Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36). He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God" (Jn 3:18). In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39), that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning. (CCC 554) From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Mt 16:21). Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he (Cf. Mt 16:22-23; 17:23; Lk 9:45). In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain (Cf. Mt 17:1-8 and parallels; 2 Pt 1:16-18), before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Lk 9:35). (CCC 555) For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter's confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to "enter into his glory" (Lk 24:26). Moses and Elijah had seen God's glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah's sufferings (Cf. Lk 24:27). Christ's Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God's servant (Cf. Is 42:1); The cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. "The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, ad 2). You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father (Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Transfiguration, *Kontakion*). (CCC 556) On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, ad 2). From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. the Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:21). But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22): Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the

mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33).

(Mt 17, 10-13) Jesus said: Elijah has already come

[10] Then the disciples asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" [11] He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; [12] but ***I tell you that Elijah has already come***, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." [13] Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

(CCC 718) John is "Elijah [who] must come" (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Lk 1:78). The fire of the Spirit dwells in him and makes him the forerunner of the coming Lord. In John, the precursor, the Holy Spirit completes the work of "[making] ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17). (CCC 720) Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," prefiguring what he would achieve with and in Christ. John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth (Cf. Jn 3:5).

(Mt 17, 14-21) Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out

[14] When they came to the crowd a man approached, knelt down before him, [15] and said, "Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into fire, and often into water. [16] I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." [17] Jesus said in reply, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him here to me." [18] ***Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him, and from that hour the boy was cured.*** [19] Then the disciples approached Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" [20] He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." [21].

(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 392) Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels (Cf. 2 Pt 2:4). This "fall" consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably *rejected* God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: "You will be like God (Gen 3:5)". The devil "has sinned from the beginning"; he is "a liar and the father of lies (1 Jn 3:8; Jn 8:44)." (CCC 421) Christians believe that "the world has been established and kept in being by the Creator's love; has fallen into slavery to sin but has been set free by Christ, crucified and risen to break the power of the evil one..." (GS 2 § 2). (CCC 447) Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of *Psalm* 110, but also in an explicit

way when he addresses his apostles (Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13). Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin. (CCC 409) This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one" (I Jn 5:19; cf. 1 Pt 5:8) makes man's life a battle: The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity (GS 37 § 2).

(Mt 17, 22-23) Jesus announces his Passion and death

[22] As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, [23] and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were overwhelmed with grief.

(CCC 609) By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 13:1; 15:13). In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men (Cf. Heb 2:10, 17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9). Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:18). Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death (Cf. Jn 18:4-6; Mt 26:53).

(Mt 17, 24-27) Jesus and Peter pay the Temple-tax

[24] When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" [25] "Yes," he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, "What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?" [26] When he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the subjects are exempt. [27] But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you."

(CCC 586) Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church (Cf. Mt 8:4; 16:18; 17:24-27; Lk 17:14; Jn 4:22; 18:20). He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men (Cf. Jn 2:21; Mt 12:6). Therefore his being put to bodily death (Cf. Jn 2:18-22) presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father" (Jn 4:21; cf. 4:23-24; Mt 27:5; Heb 9:11; Rev 21:22).

Chapter 18

(Mt 18, 1-5) The greatest in the kingdom of heaven

[1] At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "**Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?**" [2] He called a child over, placed it in their midst, [3] and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] **Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** [5] And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

(CCC 2785) Second, a *humble and trusting heart* that enables us "to turn and become like children" (Mt 18:3): for it is to "little children" that the Father is revealed (Cf. Mt 11:25). [The prayer is accomplished] by the contemplation of God alone, and by the warmth of love, through which the soul, molded and directed to love him, speaks very familiarly to God as to its own Father with special devotion (St. John Cassian, *Coll.* 9, 18 PL 49, 788C). Our Father: at this name love is aroused in us . . . and the confidence of obtaining what we are about to ask.... What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children? (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 2, 4, 16: PL 34, 1276). (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).

(Mt 18, 6-9) Scandal is to lead another to sin

[6] "**Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.** [7] Woe to the world because of things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come! [8] If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or crippled than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire. [9] And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into fiery Gehenna.

(CCC 2284) Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense. (CCC 2286) Scandal can be provoked by laws or institutions, by fashion or opinion. Therefore, they are guilty of scandal who establish laws or social structures leading to the decline of morals and the corruption of religious practice, or to "social conditions that, intentionally or not, make Christian conduct and obedience to the

Commandments difficult and practically impossible" (Pius XII, Discourse, June 1, 1941). This is also true of business leaders who make rules encouraging fraud, teachers who provoke their children to anger (Cf. Eph 6:4; Col. 3:21), or manipulators of public opinion who turn it away from moral values. (CCC 2285) Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized. It prompted our Lord to utter this curse: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mt 18:6; Cf. 1 Cor 8:10-13). Scandal is grave when given by those who by nature or office are obliged to teach and educate others. Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees on this account: he likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing (Cf. Mt 7:15).

(Mt 18, 10-11) Look upon the face of my heavenly Father

[10] "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven *always look upon the face of my heavenly Father*. [11].

(CCC 328) The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition. (CCC 329) St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel'" (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 103, 1, 15: PL 37, 1348). With their whole beings the angels are *servants* and messengers of God. Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word" (Mt 18:10; Ps 103:20). (CCC 330) As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness (Cf. Pius XII, *Humani generis*: DS 3891; Lk 20:36; Dan 10:9-12).

(Mt 18, 12-14) The lost sheep

[12] What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? [13] And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. [14] In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.

(CCC 604) By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10; 4:19). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). (CCC 605) At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt 18:14). He affirms that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us (Mt 20:28; cf. Rom 5:18-19). The

Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer" (Council of Quiercy (853): DS 624; cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Jn 2:2).

(Mt 18, 15-18) The office of binding and loosing

[15] "If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. [16] If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' [17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. [18] Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(CCC 2472) The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as *witnesses of the Gospel* and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known (Cf. Mt 18:16). All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation (AG 11). (CCC 1444) In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19; cf. Mt 18:18; 28:16-20). "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head" (LG 22 § 2). (CCC 1445) The words *bind and loose* mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.*

(Mt 18, 19-20) There am I in the midst of them

[19] Again, (amen,) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. [20] For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them.**"

(CCC 1373) "Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church (Rom 8:34; cf. LG 48): in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in my name" (Mt 18:20), in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned (Cf. Mt 25:31-46), in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But "he is present . . . most *especially in the Eucharistic species*" (SC 7).

(Mt 18, 21-22) Forgive seventy-seven times

[21] Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" [22] Jesus answered, "**I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.**"

(CCC 2844) Christian prayer extends to the *forgiveness of enemies* (Cf. Mt 5:43-44), transfiguring the disciple by configuring him to his Master. Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; only hearts attuned to God's compassion can receive the gift of prayer. Forgiveness also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin. The martyrs of yesterday and today bear this witness to Jesus. Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father and of men with one another (Cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21; John Paul II, DM 14). (CCC 2845) There is no limit or measure to this essentially divine forgiveness (Cf. Mt 18:21-22; Lk 17:3-4), whether one speaks of "sins" as in *Luke* (11:4), "debts" as in *Matthew* (6:12). We are always debtors: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another" (Rom 13:8). The communion of the Holy Trinity is the source and criterion of truth in every relationship. It is lived out in prayer, above all in the Eucharist (Cf. Mt 5:23-24; 1 Jn 3:19-24). God does not accept the sacrifice of a sower of disunion, but commands that he depart from the altar so that he may first be reconciled with his brother. For God can be appeased only by prayers that make peace. To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly concord, and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 23: PL 4, 535-536; cf. Mt 5:24). (CCC 982) There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. "There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest (Roman Catechism I, 11, 5). Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin (Cf. Mt 18:21-22).

(Mt 18, 23-35) Forgive your brother from your heart

[23] That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. [24] When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. [25] Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. [26] At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' [27] Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. [28] When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' [29] Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' [30] But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. [31] Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. [32] His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. [33] Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' [34] Then in anger his master handed him over to the

torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. [35] So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

(CCC 2842) This "as" is not unique in Jesus' teaching: "You, therefore, must be perfect, *as* your heavenly Father is perfect"; "Be merciful, even *as* your Father is merciful"; "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even *as* I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36; Jn 13:34). It is impossible to keep the Lord's commandment by imitating the divine model from outside; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and the mercy and the love of our God. Only the Spirit by whom we live can make "ours" the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Cf. Gal 5:25; Phil 2:1,5). Then the unity of forgiveness becomes possible and we find ourselves "forgiving one another, *as* God in Christ forgave" us (Eph 4:32). (CCC 2843) Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end (Cf. Jn 13:1), become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Cf. Mt 18:23-35). It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the *heart*," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

Chapter 19

(Mt 19, 1-9) The two shall become one flesh

[1] When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan. [2] Great crowds followed him, and he cured them there. [3] Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" [4] He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' [5] and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [6] So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." [7] They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?" [8] He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. [9] I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery."

(CCC 2364) The married couple forms "the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent" (GS 48 § 1). Both give themselves definitively and totally to one another. They are no longer two; from now on they form one flesh. The covenant they freely contracted imposes on the spouses the obligation to preserve it as unique and indissoluble (Cf. CIC, can. 1056). "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mk 10:9; cf. Mt 19:1-12; 1 Cor 7:10-11). (CCC 2382) The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the

Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble (Cf. Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mk 10 9; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11). He abrogates the accommodations that had slipped into the old Law (Cf. Mt 19:7-9). Between the baptized, "a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death" (CIC, can. 1141). (CCC 2384) *Divorce* is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery: If a husband, separated from his wife, approaches another woman, he is an adulterer because he makes that woman commit adultery, and the woman who lives with him is an adulteress, because she has drawn another's husband to herself (St. Basil, *Moralia* 73, 1: PG 31, 849-852). (CCC 2383) The *separation* of spouses while maintaining the marriage bond can be legitimate in certain cases provided for by canon law (Cf. CIC, cann. 1151-1155). If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense. (CCC 2386) It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage (Cf. FC 84).

(Mt 19, 10-12) Virginité and marriage

[10] [His] disciples said to him, "If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." [11] He answered, "Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted. [12] Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it."

(CCC 1618) Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social (Cf. Lk 14:26; Mk 10:28-31). From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming (Cf. Rev 14:4; 1 Cor 7:32; Mt 2:56). Christ himself has invited certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model: "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Mt 19:12). (CCC 1619) Virginité for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace, a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away (Cf. Mk 12:25; 1 Cor 7:31). (CCC 1620) Both the sacrament of Matrimony and virginité for the Kingdom of God come from the Lord himself. It is he who gives them meaning and grants them the grace which is indispensable for living them out in conformity with

his will (Cf. Mt 19:3-12). Esteem of virginity for the sake of the kingdom (Cf. LG 42; PC 12; OT 10) and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, and they reinforce each other: Whoever denigrates marriage also diminishes the glory of virginity. Whoever praises it makes virginity more admirable and resplendent. What appears good only in comparison with evil would not be truly good. The most excellent good is something even better than what is admitted to be good (St. John Chrysostom, *De virg.* 10, 1: PG 48, 540; Cf. John Paul II, *FC* 16).

(Mt 19, 13-15) Let the children come to me

[13] Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, [14] but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." [15] After he placed his hands on them, he went away.

(CCC 526) To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom (Cf. Mt 18:3-4). For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God" (Jn 3: 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12). Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us (Cf. Gal 4:19). Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange": O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity (*LH*, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st).

(Mt 19, 16-21) Sell what you have and give to (the) poor

[16] Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" [17] He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." [18] He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, " 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; [19] honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" [20] The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" [21] Jesus said to him, "***If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.***"

(CCC 2052) "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" To the young man who asked this question, Jesus answers first by invoking the necessity to recognize God as the "One there is who is good," as the supreme Good and the source of all good. Then Jesus tells him: "If you would enter life, keep the commandments." And he cites for his questioner the precepts that concern love of neighbor: "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother." Finally Jesus sums up these commandments positively: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 19:16-19). (CCC 2053) To this first reply Jesus adds a second: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). This reply does not do away with the first: following Jesus Christ involves keeping the Commandments. The Law has not been abolished (Cf. Mt 5:17), but rather man is invited to rediscover it in the person of his

Master who is its perfect fulfillment. In the three synoptic Gospels, Jesus' call to the rich young man to follow him, in the obedience of a disciple and in the observance of the Commandments, is joined to the call to poverty and chastity (Cf. Mt 19:6-12, 21, 23-29). The evangelical counsels are inseparable from the Commandments.

(Mt 19, 22-26) For God all things are possible

[22] When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. [23] Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. [24] Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." [25] When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" [26] Jesus looked at them and said, "**For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.**"

(CCC 222) Believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life. (CCC 226 *It means making good use of created things*: faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him: My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you. My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you. My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you (St. Nicholas of Flue; cf. Mt 5:29-30; 16:24-26). (CCC 276) Faithful to the witness of Scripture, the Church often addresses her prayer to the "almighty and eternal God" ("omnipotens sempiternus Deus..."), believing firmly that "nothing will be impossible with God" (Gen 18:14; Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26). (CCC 1058) The Church prays that no one should be lost: "Lord, let me never be parted from you." If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God "desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4), and that for him "all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). (CCC 268) of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is *loving*, for he is our Father, and *mysterious*, for only faith can discern it when it "is made perfect in weakness" (Cf. Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Mt 6:9; 2 Cor 12:9; cf. 1 Cor 1:18).

(Mt 19, 27-30) A hundred times more and eternal life

[27] Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" [28] Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name **will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.** [30] But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

(CCC 765) The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head (Cf. Mk 3:14-15). Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30;

Rev 21:12-14). The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot (Cf. Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1-2; Mt 10:25; Jn 15:20). By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church. (CCC 786) Finally, the People of God shares in the *royal* office of Christ. He exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself through his death and Resurrection (Cf. Jn 12:32). Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). For the Christian, "to reign is to serve him," particularly when serving "the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder" (LG 8; cf. 36). The People of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ. The sign of the cross makes kings of all those reborn in Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them as priests, so that, apart from the particular service of our ministry, all spiritual and rational Christians are recognized as members of this royal race and sharers in Christ's priestly office. What, indeed, is as royal for a soul as to govern the body in obedience to God? And what is as priestly as to dedicate a pure conscience to the Lord and to offer the spotless offerings of devotion on the altar of the heart? (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 4, 1: PL 54, 149). (CCC 1050) "When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise... according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom" (GS 39 § 3). God will then be "all in all" in eternal life (1 Cor 5:28): True and subsistent life consists in this: the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, pouring out his heavenly gifts on all things without exception. Thanks to his mercy, we too, men that we are, have received the inalienable promise of eternal life (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. illum.* 18, 29: PG 33, 1049). (CCC 1026) By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.