

Gospel according to Matthew

Matthew 1

(Mt 1, 1-17) Genealogy of Jesus Christ

[1] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. [2] Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. [3] Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, [4] Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, [6] Jesse the father of David the king. David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. [7] Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph. [8] Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. [9] Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. [10] Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. [11] Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile. [12] After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, [13] Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, [14] Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, [15] Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, [16] Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah. [17] Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

(CCC 422) “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4-5). This is “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1): God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own “beloved Son” (Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 1:55, 68). (CCC 423) We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He “came from God,” (Jn 13:3) “descended from heaven,” (Jn 3:13; 6:33), and “came in the flesh.” (1 Jn 4:2). For “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.... And from his

fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.” (Jn 1:14,16) (CCC 424) Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16:16). On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church. (CCC 425) The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) And they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. and we are writing this that our joy may be complete. (1 Jn 1:1-4)

(Mt 1, 18) Found with child through the holy Spirit

[18] Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit.

(CCC 497) The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility: (Mt 1 18-25; Lk 1:26-38) "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée (Mt 1:20). The Church sees here the fulfilment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" [Is 7:14 (LXX), quoted in Mt 1:23 (Gk)].

(Mt 1, 19-21) He will save his people from their sins

[19] Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. [20] Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. [21] She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

(CCC 430) Jesus means in Hebrew: "*God saves*." At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission (Cf. Lk 1:31). Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, "will save his people from their sins"(Mt 1:21; cf. 2:7). In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.

(Mt 1, 22-23) Emmanuel: "God is with us"

[22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: [23] "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

(CCC 452) The name Jesus means "God saves". The child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21): "there is

no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). (CCC 2666) But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: "Jesus," "YHWH saves" (Cf. Ex 3:14; 33: 19-23; Mt 1:21). The name "Jesus" contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him (Rom 10:13; Acts 2:21; 3:15-16; Gal 2:20). (CCC 744) In the fullness of time the Holy Spirit completes in Mary all the preparations for Christ's coming among the People of God. By the action of the Holy Spirit in her, the Father gives the world Emmanuel "God-with-us" (Mt 1:23). (CCC 723) In Mary, the Holy Spirit *fulfills* the plan of the Father's loving goodness. Through the Holy Spirit, the Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. By the Holy Spirit's power and her faith, her virginity became uniquely fruitful (Cf. Lk 1:26-38; Rom 4:18-21; Gal 4:26-28). (CCC 721) Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the *dwelling place* where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary (Cf. Prov 8:1- 9:6; Sir 24). Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the "Seat of Wisdom." In her, the "wonders of God" that the Spirit was to fulfill in Christ and the Church began to be manifested.

(Mt 1, 24-25) Christ "with all his angels"

[24] When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. [25] He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

(CCC 437) To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:11). From the beginning he was "the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world", conceived as "holy" in Mary's virginal womb (Jn 10:36; cf. Lk 1:35). God called Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit," so that Jesus, "who is called Christ," should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic lineage of David (Mt 1:20; cf. 1:16; Rom 1:1; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16). (CCC 331) Christ is the centre of the angelic world. They are *his* angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...." (Mt 25:31) They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Heb 1:14). (CCC 333) From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Heb

1:6). Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Lk 2:14). They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; 2 Macc 10:29-30; 11:8). Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection (Cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7). They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement. (Cf. Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9).

Matthew 2

(Mt 2, 1-2) Magi arrived in Jerusalem

[1] When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

(CCC 528) The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. the great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee (Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon at the Canticle of Mary). In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations (Cf. Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16). Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament (Cf. Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6). The Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini* 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third Reading) (is made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

(Mt 2, 3-11) King Herod was greatly troubled

[3] When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. [4] Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. [5] They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: [6] 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" [7] Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. [8] He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." [9] After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had

seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. [10] They were overjoyed at seeing the star, [11] and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(CCC 306) God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan. (CCC 307) To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it (Cf. Gen 1:26-28). God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers and their sufferings (Cf. Col 1:24). They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom (I Cor 3:9; I Thess 3:2; Col 4:11). (CCC 308) The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13; cf. I Cor 12:6). Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes" (GS 36 § 3). Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace (Cf. Mt 19:26; Jn 15:5; 14:13). (CCC 309) If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of creation, the drama of sin and the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments and his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. *There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.*

(Mt 2, 12-18) Flight into Egypt, massacre of the boys

[12] And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way. [13] When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." [14] Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. [15] He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son." [16] When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He

ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. [17] Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: [18] "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more."

(CCC 530) The *flight into Egypt* and the massacre of the innocents (Cf. Mt 2:13-18) make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn 1:11). Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him (Cf. Jn 15:20). Jesus' departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people (Cf. Mt 2:15; Hos 11:1). (CCC 2473) Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110). (CCC 2474) The Church has painstakingly collected the records of those who persevered to the end in witnessing to their faith. These are the acts of the Martyrs. They form the archives of truth written in letters of blood: "Neither the pleasures of the world nor the kingdoms of this age will be of any use to me. It is better for me to die [in order to unite myself] to Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for us; I desire him who rose for us. My birth is approaching..." (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 6, 1-2 SCh 10, 114). "I bless you for having judged me worthy from this day and this hour to be counted among your martyrs.... You have kept your promise, God of faithfulness and truth. For this reason and for everything, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Through him, who is with you and the Holy Spirit, may glory be given to you, now and in the ages to come. Amen." (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 14,2-3 PG 5,1040; SCh 10,228).

(Mt 2, 19-23) They went and dwelt in Nazareth

[19] When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt [20] and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." [21] He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. [22] But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. [23] He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

(CCC 332) Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples (Cf. Job 38:7 (where angels are called "sons of

God"); Gen 3:24; 19; 21:17; 22:11; Acts 7:53; Ex 23:20-23; Judg 13; 6:11-24; Isa 6:6; 1 Kings 19:5). Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself (Cf. Lk 1:11, 26). (CCC 334) In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels (Cf. Acts 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25). (CCC 335) In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*. . . ["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]. Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels). (CCC 336) From its beginning until death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession (Cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Ps 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12). "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life" (St. Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* III, I: PG 29, 656B). Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

Matthew 3

(Mt 3, 1-3) John the Baptist

[1] In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea [2] (and) saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" [3] It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: "A voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'"

(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).

(Mt 3, 4-15) I am baptizing you with water

[4] John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. [5] At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him [6] and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. [7] When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [8] Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. [9] And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. [10] Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. [11] I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the

one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. [12] His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." [13] Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. [14] John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" [15] Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him.

(CCC 717) "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (Jn 1:6). John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"(Lk 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people (Cf. Lk 1:68). (CCC 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 535) Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan (Cf. Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22). John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3). A crowd of sinners (Cf. Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7; 21:32) - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes - come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." the Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son" (Mt 3:13-17). This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God. (CCC 536) The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:12). Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death (Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Already he is coming to "fulfil all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins (Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39). The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son (Cf. Lk 3:22; Isa 42:1). The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him" (Jn 1:32-33; cf. Isa 11:2). Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" (Mt 3:16) - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

(Mt 3, 16-17) This is my beloved Son

[16] After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened (for him), and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (and) coming upon him. [17] And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

(CCC 1286) In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission (Cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Lk 4:16-22). The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God (Cf. Mt 3:13-17;

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

Matthew 4

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

[1] Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. [2] He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. [3] The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." [4] He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"

(CCC 566) The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father. (CCC 394) Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning", who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father (Jn 8:44; cf. Mt 4:1-11). "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (I Jn 3:8). In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (CCC 395) The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8:28). (CCC 2849) Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony (Cf. Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-44). In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is "custody of the heart," and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: "Keep them in your name" (Jn 17:11; Cf. Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14:38; Lk 12:35-40). The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch (Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8). Finally, this petition takes

on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake" (Rev 16:15).

(Mt 4, 5-11) The Lord, your God, shall you worship

[5] Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, [6] and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" [7] Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" [8] Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, [9] and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." [10] At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" [11] Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

(CCC 2135) "You shall worship the Lord your God" (Mt 4:10). Adoring God, praying to him, offering him the worship that belongs to him, fulfilling the promises and vows made to him are acts of the virtue of religion which fall under obedience to the first commandment. (CCC 2083) Jesus summed up man's duties toward God in this saying: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37; cf. Lk 10:27: ". . . and with all your strength"). This immediately echoes the solemn call: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut 6:4). God has loved us first. the love of the One God is recalled in the first of the "ten words." the commandments then make explicit the response of love that man is called to give to his God. (CCC 2096) Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve," says Jesus, citing *Deuteronomy* (Lk 4:8; Cf. Deut 6:13).

(Mt 4, 12-17) The kingdom of heaven is at hand

[12] When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. [13] He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, [14] that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: [15] "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, [16] the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." [17] From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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

the seed and beginning of that kingdoms" (LG 5). (CCC 543) Everyone is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations (Cf. Mt 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19). To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (LG 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32). (CCC 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 4, 18-22) Come after me

[18] As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. [19] He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." [20] At once they left their nets and followed him. [21] He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, [22] and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

(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 859) Jesus unites them to the mission he received from the Father. As "the Son can do nothing of his own accord," but receives everything from the Father who sent him, so those whom Jesus sends can do nothing apart from him (Jn 5:19, 30; cf. 15:5), from whom they received both the mandate for their mission and the power to carry it out. Christ's apostles knew that they were called by God as "ministers of a new covenant," "servants of God," "ambassadors for Christ," "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 5:20; 1 Cor 4:1).

(Mt 4, 23-25) Teaching the gospel and curing disease

[23] He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. [24] His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who

were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. [25] And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

(CCC 547) Jesus accompanies his words with many "mighty works and wonders and signs", which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah (Acts 2:22; cf. Lk 7:18-23). (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.

Matthew 5

(Mt 5, 1-12) The Beatitudes

[1] When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. [2] He began to teach them, saying: [3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. [5] Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. [6] Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. [7] Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. [8] Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. [10] Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(CCC 1716) The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to the Kingdom of heaven: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven (Mt 5:3-12). (CCC 1717) The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on

the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints. (CCC 1718) The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it: We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated (St. Augustine, *De moribus eccl.* 1, 3, 4: PL 32,1312). How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 20: PL 32, 791). God alone satisfies (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in symb. apost.* I). (CCC 1719) The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith.

(Mt 5, 13-16) Salt of the earth, light of the world

[13] "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. [14] You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. [16] Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

782 The People of God is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political, or cultural groups found in history: - It is the *People of God*: God is not the property of any one people. But he acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not a people: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet 2:9). - One becomes a *member* of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:3-5), that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism. - This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people." - "The *status* of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple." - "Its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us" (Cf. Jn 13:34). This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:2; Gal 5:25). - Its *mission* is to be salt of the earth and light of the world (Cf. Mt 5:13-16). This people is "a most sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race." -Its *destiny*, finally, "is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by him at the end of time" (LG 9 § 2).

(Mt 5, 17-19) I have come to fulfill

[17] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. [18] Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will

pass from the law, until all things have taken place. [19] Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(CCC 577) At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus issued a solemn warning in which he presented God's law, given on Sinai during the first covenant, in light of the grace of the New Covenant: Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law, until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:17-19). (CCC 592) Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf. Mt 5:17-19) with such perfection (cf. Jn 8:46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf. Mt 5:33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf. Heb 9:15). (CCC 1966) The New Law is the *grace of the Holy Spirit* given to the faithful through faith in Christ. It works through charity; it uses the Sermon on the Mount to teach us what must be done and makes use of the sacraments to give us the grace to do it: If anyone should meditate with devotion and perspicacity on the sermon our Lord gave on the mount, as we read in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, he will doubtless find there . . . the perfect way of the Christian life.... This sermon contains ... all the precepts needed to shape one's life (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom.* 1, 1: PL 34, 1229-1230). (CCC 1968) The Law of the Gospel *fulfills the commandments* of the Law. the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, far from abolishing or devaluing the moral prescriptions of the Old Law, releases their hidden potential and has new demands arise from them: it reveals their entire divine and human truth. It does not add new external precepts, but proceeds to reform the heart, the root of human acts, where man chooses between the pure and the impure (Cf. Mt 15:18-19), where faith, hope, and charity are formed and with them the other virtues. The Gospel thus brings the Law to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity (Cf. Mt 5:44,48). (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 5, 20-26) "You have heard, but I say to you"

[20] I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. [21] "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' [22] But I say to you, whoever is angry with his

brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. [23] Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, [24] leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. [25] Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. [26] Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

(CCC 2054) Jesus acknowledged the Ten Commandments, but he also showed the power of the Spirit at work in their letter. He preached a "righteousness [which] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt 5:20) as well as that of the Gentiles (Cf. Mt 5:46-47). He unfolded all the demands of the Commandments. "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill.' . . . But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Mt 5:21-22). (CCC 2262) In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord recalls the commandment, "You shall not kill" (Mt 5:21) and adds to it the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance. Going further, Christ asks his disciples to turn the other cheek, to love their enemies (Cf. Mt 5:22-39; 5:44). He did not defend himself and told Peter to leave his sword in its sheath (Cf. Mt 26:52).

(Mt 5, 27-32) Adultery divorce scandal

[27] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [28] But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. [31] "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.' [32] But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

(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 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 2336) Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman

lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:27-28). What God has joined together, let not man put asunder (Cf. Mt 19:6). The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality. (CCC 2380) *Adultery* refers to marital infidelity. When two partners, of whom at least one is married to another party, have sexual relations - even transient ones - they commit adultery. Christ condemns even adultery of mere desire (Cf. Mt 5:27-28). The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely (Cf. Mt 5:32; 19:6; Mk 10:11; 1 Cor 6:9-10). The prophets denounce the gravity of adultery; they see it as an image of the sin of idolatry (Cf. Hos 2:7; Jer 5:7; 13:27). (CCC 2381) Adultery is an injustice. He who commits adultery fails in his commitment. He does injury to the sign of the covenant which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. He compromises the good of human generation and the welfare of children who need their parents' stable union.

(Mt 5, 33-37) Do not swear at all

[33] "Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.' [34] But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; [35] nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. [37] Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one.

(CCC 2153) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained the second commandment: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all.... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Mt 5:33-34, 37; cf. Jas 5:12). Jesus teaches that every oath involves a reference to God and that God's presence and his truth must be honored in all speech. Discretion in calling upon God is allied with a respectful awareness of his presence, which all our assertions either witness to or mock. (CCC 2154) Following St. Paul (Cf. 2 Cor 1:23; Gal 1:20), the tradition of the Church has understood Jesus' words as not excluding oaths made for grave and right reasons (for example, in court). "An oath, that is the invocation of the divine name as a witness to truth, cannot be taken unless in truth, in judgment, and in justice" (CIC, can. 1199 § 1). (CCC 2155) The holiness of the divine name demands that we neither use it for trivial matters, nor take an oath which on the basis of the circumstances could be interpreted as approval of an authority unjustly requiring it. When an oath is required by illegitimate civil authorities, it may be refused. It must be refused when it is required for purposes contrary to the dignity of persons or to ecclesial communion. (CCC 2150) The second commandment *forbids false oaths*. Taking an oath or swearing is to take God as witness to what one affirms. It is to invoke the divine truthfulness as a pledge of one's own truthfulness. An oath engages the Lord's name. "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him, and swear by his name" (Deut 6:13). (CCC 2151) Rejection of false oaths is a duty toward God. As Creator and Lord, God is the norm of all truth. Human speech is either in accord with or in opposition to God who is Truth itself. When it is truthful and legitimate, an oath

highlights the relationship of human speech with God's truth. A false oath calls on God to be witness to a lie. (CCC 2152) A person commits *perjury* when he makes a promise under oath with no intention of keeping it, or when after promising on oath he does not keep it. Perjury is a grave lack of respect for the Lord of all speech. Pledging oneself by oath to commit an evil deed is contrary to the holiness of the divine name.

(Mt 5, 38-42) Forgive, give to the one who asks of you

[38] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39] But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. [40] If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. [41] Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. [42] Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

(CCC 2843) Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end (Cf. Jn 13:1), become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Cf. Mt 18:23-35). It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the *heart*," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession. (CCC 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 2443) God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 5:42; 10:8). It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones (Cf. Mt 25:31-36). When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence (Mt 11:5; cf. Lk 4:18).

(Mt 5, 43-48) Love your enemies

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. [46] For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? [48] So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

(CCC 1825) Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies" (Rom 5:10). The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself (Cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 10:27-37; Mk 9:37; Mt 25:40, 45). The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:4-7). (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 1932) The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (CCC 1933) This same duty extends to those who think or act differently from us. the teaching of Christ goes so far as to require the forgiveness of offenses. He extends the commandment of love, which is that of the New Law, to all enemies (Cf. Mt 5:43-44). Liberation in the spirit of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred of one's enemy as a person, but not with hatred of the evil that he does as an enemy.

Matthew 6

(Mt 6, 1-4) Your almsgiving may be secret

[1] "(But) take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. [2] When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. [3] But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, [4] so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

(CCC 1969) The New Law *practices the acts of religion*: almsgiving, prayer and fasting, directing them to the "Father who sees in secret," in contrast with the desire to "be seen by men" (Cf. Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). Its prayer is the Our Father (Cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). (CCC 1434) The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving* (Cf. Tob 12:8; Mt 6:1-18), which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8; Cf. Jas 5:20). (CCC 2447) The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities (Cf. Isa 58:6-7; Heb 13:3). Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God (Cf. Tob 4:5-11; Sir 17:22; Mt 6:2-4): He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise (Lk 3:11). But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you (Lk 11:41). If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (Jas 2:15-16; cf. 1 Jn 3:17).

(Mt 6, 5-6) Pray to your Father in secret

[5] "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

(CCC 2598) The drama of prayer is fully revealed to us in the Word who became flesh and dwells among us. To seek to understand his prayer through what his witnesses proclaim to us in the Gospel is to approach the holy Lord Jesus as Moses approached the burning bush: first to contemplate him in prayer, then to hear how he teaches us to pray, in order to know how he hears our prayer. (CCC 2664) There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray "in the name" of Jesus. the sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father. (CCC 2740) The prayer of Jesus makes Christian prayer an efficacious petition. He is its model, he prays in us and with us. Since the heart of the Son seeks only what pleases the Father, how could the prayer of the children of adoption be centered on the gifts rather than the Giver?

(Mt 6, 7-8) Your Father knows what you need

[7] In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. [8] Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

(CCC 2759) Jesus "was praying at a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'" (Lk 11:1). In response to this request the Lord entrusts to his disciples and to his Church the fundamental Christian prayer. St. Luke presents a brief text of five petitions (Cf. Lk 11:2-4), while St. Matthew gives a more developed version of seven petitions (Cf. Mt 6:9-13). The liturgical tradition of the Church has retained St. Matthew's text: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (CCC 2761) The Lord's Prayer "is truly the summary of the whole gospel" (Tertullian, *De orat.* 1: PL 1, 1155). "Since the Lord . . . after handing over the practice of prayer, said elsewhere, 'Ask and you will receive,' and since everyone has petitions which are peculiar to his circumstances, the regular and appropriate prayer [the Lord's Prayer] is said first, as the foundation of further desires" (Tertullian, *De orat.* 10: PL 1, 1165; cf. Lk 11:9).

(Mt 6, 9) The Lord's Prayer: "Father"

[9] "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

(CCC 2765) The traditional expression "the Lord's Prayer" - *oratio Dominica* - means that the prayer to our Father is taught and given to us by the Lord Jesus. The prayer that comes to us from Jesus is truly unique: it is "of the Lord." On the one hand, in the words of this prayer the only Son gives us the words the Father gave him (Cf. Jn 17:7): he is the master of our prayer. On the other, as Word incarnate, he knows in his human heart the needs of his human brothers and sisters and reveals them to us: he is the model of our prayer. (CCC 2780) We can invoke God as "Father" because *he is revealed to us* by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The personal relation of the Son to the Father is something that man cannot conceive of nor the angelic powers even dimly see: and yet, the Spirit of the Son grants a participation in that very relation to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God (Cf. Jn 1:1; 1 Jn 5:1). (CCC 2781) When we pray to the Father, we are *in communion with him* and with his Son, Jesus Christ (Cf. 1 Jn 1:3). Then we know and recognize him with an ever new sense of wonder. The first phrase of the Our Father is a blessing of adoration before it is a supplication. For it is the glory of God that we should recognize him as "Father," the true God. We give him thanks for having revealed his name to us, for the gift of believing in it, and for the indwelling of his Presence in us. (CCC 2782) We can adore the Father because he has caused us to be reborn to his life by *adopting* us as his children in his only Son: by Baptism, he incorporates us into the Body of his Christ; through the anointing of his Spirit who flows from the head to the members, he makes us other "Christs." God, indeed, who has predestined us to adoption as his sons, has conformed us to the glorious Body of Christ. So then you who have become

sharers in Christ are appropriately called "Christs" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.* 3, 1: PG 33, 1088A). The new man, reborn and restored to his God by grace, says first of all, "Father!" because he has now begun to be a son (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 9: PL 4, 525A). (CCC 2784) The free gift of adoption requires on our part continual conversion and *new life*. Praying to our Father should develop in us two fundamental dispositions: First, *the desire to become like him*: though created in his image, we are restored to his likeness by grace; and we must respond to this grace. We must remember . . . and know that when we call God "our Father" we ought to behave as sons of God (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 11: PL 4:526B). You cannot call the God of all kindness your Father if you preserve a cruel and inhuman heart; for in this case you no longer have in you the marks of the heavenly Father's kindness (St. John Chrysostom, *De orat Dom.* 3: PG 51, 44). We must contemplate the beauty of the Father without ceasing and adorn our own souls accordingly (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De orat. Dom.* 2: PG 44, 1148B).

(Mt 6, 9) The Lord's Prayer: "Our" Father

[9] "Our" Father

(CCC 2786) "Our" Father refers to God. the adjective, as used by us, does not express possession, but an entirely new relationship with God. (CCC 2787) When we say "our" Father, we recognize first that all his promises of love announced by the prophets are fulfilled in the *new and eternal covenant* in his Christ: we have become "his" people and he is henceforth "our" God. This new relationship is the purely gratuitous gift of belonging to each other: we are to respond to "grace and truth" given us in Jesus Christ with love and faithfulness (Jn 1:17; Cf. Hos 2:21-22; 6:1-6). (CCC 2788) Since the Lord's Prayer is that of his people in the "endtime," this "our" also expresses the certitude of our hope in God's ultimate promise: in the new Jerusalem he will say to the victor, "I will be his God and he shall be my son" (Rev 21:7). (CCC 2789) When we pray to "our" Father, we personally address the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By doing so we do not divide the Godhead, since the Father is its "source and origin," but rather confess that the Son is eternally begotten by him and the Holy Spirit proceeds from him. We are not confusing the persons, for we confess that our communion is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, in their one Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is consubstantial and indivisible. When we pray to the Father, we adore and glorify him together with the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2791) For this reason, in spite of the divisions among Christians, this prayer to "our" Father remains our common patrimony and an urgent summons for all the baptized. In communion by faith in Christ and by Baptism, they ought to join in Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples (Cf. UR 8; 22). (CCC 2792) Finally, if we pray the Our Father sincerely, we leave individualism behind, because the love that we receive frees us from it. the "our" at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, like the "us" of the last four petitions, excludes no one. If we are to say it truthfully, our divisions and oppositions have to be overcome (Cf. Mt 5:23-24; 6:14-15). (CCC 2793) The baptized cannot pray to "our" Father without bringing before him all those for whom he gave his beloved Son. God's love has no bounds, neither should our prayer (Cf. NA 5). Praying "our" Father opens to us the dimensions of his love revealed in Christ: praying with and for all who do not yet know him, so that Christ may "gather into one the children of God" (Jn 11:52). God's care for all men and for the whole of

creation has inspired all the great practitioners of prayer; it should extend our prayer to the full breadth of love whenever we dare to say "our" Father.

(Mt 6, 9) Our Father "in heaven"

[9] Our Father in heaven

(CCC 2794) This biblical expression does not mean a place ("space"), but a way of being; it does not mean that God is distant, but majestic. Our Father is not "elsewhere": he transcends everything we can conceive of his holiness. It is precisely because he is thrice holy that he is so close to the humble and contrite heart. "Our Father who art in heaven" is rightly understood to mean that God is in the hearts of the just, as in his holy temple. At the same time, it means that those who pray should desire the one they invoke to dwell in them (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 2, 5, 18: PL 34, 1277). "Heaven" could also be those who bear the image of the heavenly world, and in whom God dwells and tarries (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.* 5:11: PG 33, 1117). (CCC 2795) The symbol of the heavens refers us back to the mystery of the covenant we are living when we pray to our Father. He is in heaven, his dwelling place; the Father's house is our homeland. Sin has exiled us from the land of the covenant (Cf. Gen 3), but conversion of heart enables us to return to the Father, to heaven (Jer 3:19-4:1a; Lk 15:18, 21). In Christ, then, heaven and earth are reconciled (Cf. Isa 45:8; Ps 85:12), for the Son alone "descended from heaven" and causes us to ascend there with him, by his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension (Jn 3:13; 12:32; 14 2-3; 16:28; 20:17; Eph 4:9-10; Heb 1:3; 2:13). (CCC 2796) When the Church prays "our Father who art in heaven," she is professing that we are the People of God, already seated "with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" and "hidden with Christ in God" (Eph 2:6; Col 3:3); yet at the same time, "here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor 5:2; cf. Phil 3:20; Heb 13:14). [Christians] are in the flesh, but do not live according to the flesh. They spend their lives on earth, but are citizens of heaven (*Ad Diognetum* 5: PG 2, 1173).

(Mt 6, 9) Hallowed be your name

[9] Hallowed be your name

(CCC 2803) After we have placed ourselves in the presence of God our Father to adore and to love and to bless him, the Spirit of adoption stirs up in our hearts seven petitions, seven blessings. The first three, more theological, draw us toward the glory of the Father; the last four, as ways toward him, commend our wretchedness to his grace. "Deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7). (CCC 2807) The term "to hallow" is to be understood here not primarily in its causative sense (only God hallows, makes holy), but above all in an evaluative sense: to recognize as holy, to treat in a holy way. And so, in adoration, this invocation is sometimes understood as praise and thanksgiving (Cf. Ps 111:9; Lk 1:49). But this petition is here taught to us by Jesus as an optative: a petition, a desire, and an expectation in which God and man are involved. Beginning with this first petition to our Father, we are immersed in the innermost mystery of his Godhead and the drama of the salvation of our humanity. Asking the Father that his name be made holy draws us into his plan of loving kindness for the fullness of time, "according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ," that we might "be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph 1:9, 4). (CCC 2809) The

holiness of God is the inaccessible center of his eternal mystery. What is revealed of it in creation and history, Scripture calls "glory," the radiance of his majesty (Cf. Ps 8; Isa 6:3). In making man in his image and likeness, God "crowned him with glory and honor," but by sinning, man fell "short of the glory of God" (Ps 8:5; Rom 3:23; cf. Gen 1:26). From that time on, God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his Creator (Col 3:10). (CCC 2814) The sanctification of his name among the nations depends inseparably on our life and our prayer: We ask God to hallow his name, which by its own holiness saves and makes holy all creation It is this name that gives salvation to a lost world. But we ask that this name of God should be hallowed in us through our actions. For God's name is blessed when we live well, but is blasphemed when we live wickedly. As the Apostle says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." We ask then that, just as the name of God is holy, so we may obtain his holiness in our souls (St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 71, 4: PL 52:402A; cf. Rom 2:24; Ezek 36:20-22). When we say "hallowed be thy name," we ask that it should be hallowed in us, who are in him; but also in others whom God's grace still awaits, that we may obey the precept that obliges us to pray for everyone, even our enemies. That is why we do not say expressly "hallowed be thy name 'in us,'" for we ask that it be so in all men (Tertullian, *De orat.* 3: PL 1:1157A).

(Mt 6, 10) Your kingdom come

[10] your kingdom come,

(CCC 2816) In the New Testament, the word *basileia* can be translated by "kingship" (abstract noun), "kingdom" (concrete noun) or "reign" (action noun). The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near in the Word incarnate, it is proclaimed throughout the whole Gospel, and it has come in Christ's death and Resurrection. the Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst. The kingdom will come in glory when Christ hands it over to his Father: It may even be . . . that the Kingdom of God means Christ himself, whom we daily desire to come, and whose coming we wish to be manifested quickly to us. For as he is our resurrection, since in him we rise, so he can also be understood as the Kingdom of God, for in him we shall reign (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 13 PL 4, 528A). (CCC 2818) In the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come" refers primarily to the final coming of the reign of God through Christ's return (Cf. Titus 2:13). But, far from distracting the Church from her mission in this present world, this desire commits her to it all the more strongly. Since Pentecost, the coming of that Reign is the work of the Spirit of the Lord who "complete[s] his work on earth and brings us the fullness of grace" (*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 118). (CCC 2819) "The kingdom of God [is] righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit. Ever since Pentecost, a decisive battle has been joined between "the flesh" and the Spirit (Cf. Gal 5:16-25). Only a pure soul can boldly say: "Thy kingdom come." One who has heard Paul say, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies," and has purified himself in action, thought, and word will say to God: "Thy kingdom come!" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.* 5, 13: PG 33, 1120A; cf. Rom 6:12). (CCC 2820) By a discernment according to the Spirit, Christians have to distinguish between the growth of the Reign of God and the progress of the culture and society in

which they are involved. This distinction is not a separation. Man's vocation to eternal life does not suppress, but actually reinforces, his duty to put into action in this world the energies and means received from the Creator to serve justice and peace (Cf. GS 22; 32; 39; 45; EN 31).

(Mt 6, 10) Your will be done

[10] your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

(CCC 2822) Our Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4). He "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet 3:9; cf. Mt 18:14). His commandment is "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34; cf. 1 Jn 3; 4; Lk 10:25-37). This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses his entire will. (CCC 2823) "He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ . . . to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will" (Eph 1:9-11). We ask insistently for this loving plan to be fully realized on earth as it is already in heaven. (CCC 2824) In Christ, and through his human will, the will of the Father has been perfectly fulfilled once for all. Jesus said on entering into this world: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10:7; Ps 40:7). Only Jesus can say: "I always do what is pleasing to him" (Jn 8:29). In the prayer of his agony, he consents totally to this will: "not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42; cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). For this reason Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4). "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). (CCC 2826) By prayer we can discern "what is the will of God" and obtain the endurance to do it (Rom 12:2; cf. Eph 5:17; cf. Heb 10:36). Jesus teaches us that one enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing "the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

(Mt 6, 11) Give us today our daily bread

[11] Give us today our daily bread;

(CCC 2828) "*Give us*": the trust of children who look to their Father for everything is beautiful. "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45). He gives to all the living "their food in due season" (PS 104:27). Jesus teaches us this petition, because it glorifies our Father by acknowledging how good he is, beyond all goodness. (CCC 2829) "Give us" also expresses the covenant. We are his and he is ours, for our sake. But this "us" also recognizes him as the Father of all men and we pray to him for them all, in solidarity with their needs and sufferings. (CCC 2830) "*Our bread*": the Father who gives us life cannot not but give us the nourishment life requires - all appropriate goods and blessings, both material and spiritual. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists on the filial trust that cooperates with our Father's providence (Cf. Mt 6:25-34). He is not inviting us to idleness (Cf. 2 Thess 3:6-13), but wants to relieve us from nagging worry and preoccupation. Such is the filial surrender of the children of God: To those who seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he has promised to give all else besides. Since everything indeed belongs to God, he who possesses God wants for

nothing, if he himself is not found wanting before God (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 21 PL 4, 534A). (CCC 2833) "Our" bread is the "one" loaf for the "many." In the Beatitudes "poverty" is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to communicate and share both material and spiritual goods, not by coercion but out of love, so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others (Cf. 2 Cor 8:1-15).

(Mt 6, 12) Forgive us our debts, as we forgive

[12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;

(CCC 2839) With bold confidence, we began praying to our Father. In begging him that his name be hallowed, we were in fact asking him that we ourselves might be always made more holy. But though we are clothed with the baptismal garment, we do not cease to sin, to turn away from God. Now, in this new petition, we return to him like the prodigal son and, like the tax collector, recognize that we are sinners before him (Cf. Lk 15:11-32, 18:13). Our petition begins with a "confession" of our wretchedness and his mercy. Our hope is firm because, in his Son, "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14; Eph 1:7). We find the efficacious and undoubted sign of his forgiveness in the sacraments of his Church (Cf. Mt 26:28; Jn 20:23). (CCC 2840) Now - and this is daunting - this outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see (Cf. 1 Jn 4:20). In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace.

(Mt 6, 13) And lead us not into temptation

[13] and do not subject us to the final test,

(CCC 2846) This petition goes to the root of the preceding one, for our sins result from our consenting to temptation; we therefore ask our Father not to "lead" us into temptation. It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used by a single English word: the Greek means both "do not allow us to enter into temptation" and "do not let us yield to temptation" (Cf. Mt 26 41). "God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one" (Jas 1:13); on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. We are engaged in the battle "between flesh and spirit"; this petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength. (CCC 2847) The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man (Cf. Lk. 8:13-15; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3-5; 2 Tim 3:12), and temptation, which leads to sin and death (Cf. Jas 1:14-15). We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable (Cf. Gen 3:6), when in reality its fruit is death. God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.... There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us (Origen, *De orat.* 29 PG 11, 544CD).

(Mt 6, 13) Deliver us from the evil one

[13] but deliver us from the evil one.

(CCC 2850) The last petition to our Father is also included in Jesus' prayer: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). It touches each of us personally, but it is always "we" who pray, in communion with the whole Church, for the deliverance of the whole human family. The Lord's Prayer continually opens us to the range of God's economy of salvation. Our interdependence in the drama of sin and death is turned into solidarity in the Body of Christ, the "communion of saints" (Cf. RP 16). (CCC 2851) In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. the devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.

(Mt 6, 14-15) Forgiving

[14] If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

(CCC 2608) From the *Sermon on the Mount* onwards, Jesus insists on *conversion of heart*: reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar, love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors, prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases, prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart, purity of heart, and seeking the Kingdom before all else (Cf. Mt 5:23-24, 44-45; 6:7, 14-15, 21, 25, 33). This filial conversion is entirely directed to the Father.

(Mt 6, 16-18) When you fast, anoint your head

[16] "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. [17] But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18] so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

(CCC 1969) The New Law *practices the acts of religion*: almsgiving, prayer and fasting, directing them to the "Father who sees in secret," in contrast with the desire to "be seen by men" (Cf. Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). Its prayer is the Our Father (Cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). (CCC 2043) The fourth precept ("You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church") ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart (Cf. CIC, can. 1249-1251; CCEO, can. 882). The fifth precept ("You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church") means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability (Cf. CIC, can. 222; CCEO, can. 25; *Furthermore, episcopal conferences can establish ecclesiastical precepts for their own territories* (Cf. CIC, can. 455).

(Mt 6, 19-21) Store up treasures in heaven

[19] "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. [20] But store up treasures in

heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

(CCC 2544) Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel (Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35). Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on (Cf. Lk 21:4). The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

(Mt 6, 22-23) The lamp of the body is the eye

[22] "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; [23] but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be".

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

(Mt 6, 24) You cannot serve God and mammon

[24] "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

(CCC 2113) Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" (Cf. Rev 13-14) refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God (Cf. Gal 5:20; Eph 5:5). (CCC 2114) Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2, 40: PG 11, 861).

(Mt 6, 25-32) Your heavenly Father knows

[25] "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat (or drink), or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? [26] Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? [27] Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? [28] Why are you anxious

about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. [29] But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. [30] If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? [31] So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' [32] All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

(CCC 2830) "*Our bread*": the Father who gives us life cannot not but give us the nourishment life requires - all appropriate goods and blessings, both material and spiritual. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists on the filial trust that cooperates with our Father's providence (Cf. Mt 6:25-34). He is not inviting us to idleness (Cf. 2 Thess 3:6-13), but wants to relieve us from nagging worry and preoccupation. Such is the filial surrender of the children of God: To those who seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he has promised to give all else besides. Since everything indeed belongs to God, he who possesses God wants for nothing, if he himself is not found wanting before God (St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 21 PL 4, 534A). (CCC 320) God created the universe and keeps it in existence by his Word, the Son "upholding the universe by his word of power" (Heb 1:3), and by his Creator Spirit, the giver of life. (CCC 321) Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end. (CCC 322) Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf Mt 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you" (I Pt 5:7; cf. Ps 55:23).

(Mt 6, 33-34) Seek first the kingdom of God

[33] But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. [34] Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

(CCC 632) The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was "raised from the dead" presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection (Acts 3:15; Rom 8:11; I Cor 15:20; cf. Heb 13:20). This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there (Cf. I Pt 3:18-19). (CCC 305) Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'. . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6:31-33; cf 10:29-31). (CCC 270) God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ("I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty") (2 Cor 6:18; cf. Mt 6:32): finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

Matthew 7

(Mt 7, 1-5) Stop judging, that you may not be judged

[1] "Stop judging, that you may not be judged. [2] For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you. [3] Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? [4] How can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove that splinter from your eye,' while the wooden beam is in your eye? [5] You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye".

(CCC 679) Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgement on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. the Father has given "all judgement to the Son" (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1). Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself (Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26). By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31). (CCC 1806) *Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going" (Prov 14:15). "Keep sane and sober for your prayers" (1 Pet 4:7). Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 47, 2). It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

(Mt 7, 6) Do not give what is holy to dogs

[6] "Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces.

(CCC 2144) Respect for his name is an expression of the respect owed to the mystery of God himself and to the whole sacred reality it evokes. *The sense of the sacred* is part of the virtue of religion: Are these feelings of fear and awe Christian feelings or not? . . . I say this, then, which I think no one can reasonably dispute. They are the class of feelings we *should* have - yes, have to an intense degree - if we literally had the sight of Almighty God; therefore they are the class of feelings which we shall have, *if* we realize His presence. In proportion as we believe that He is present, we shall have them; and not to have them, is not to realize, not to believe that He is present (John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* V, 2 [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907] 21-22). (CCC 2142) The second commandment *prescribes respect for the Lord's name*. Like the first commandment, it belongs to the virtue of religion and more particularly it governs our use of speech

in sacred matters. (CCC 1806) *Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going" (Prov 14:15). "Keep sane and sober for your prayers" (1 Pet 4:7). Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 47, 2). It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

(Mt 7, 7-11) Ask and it will be given to you

[7] "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. [9] Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, [10] or a snake when he asks for a fish? [11] If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him".

(CCC 2610) Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us *filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mk 11:24). Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23; cf. Mt 21:22). Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith" of his own disciples (Cf. Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26) as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman (Cf. Mt 8:10; 15:28).

(Mt 7, 12) "Golden Rule" and "new commandment"

[12] "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets".

(CCC 1970) The Law of the Gospel requires us to make the decisive choice between "the two ways" and to put into practice the words of the Lord (Cf. Mt 7:13-14,21-27). It is summed up in the *Golden Rule*, "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; this is the law and the prophets" (Mt 7:12; cf. Lk 6:31). The entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the "*new commandment*" of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us (Cf. Jn 15:12; 13:34).

(Mt 7, 13-14) Enter through the narrow gate

[13] "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. [14] How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few".

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

(CCC 1036) The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a *call to the responsibility* incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent *call to conversion*: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt 7:13-14). Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where "men will weep and gnash their teeth" (LG 48 § 3; Mt 22:13; cf. Heb 9:27; Mt 25:13, 26, 30, 31 46).

(Mt 7, 15-20) Beware of false prophets

[15] "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. [16] By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17] Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] So by their fruits you will know them."

(CCC 2584) In their "one to one" encounters with God, the prophets draw light and strength for their mission. Their prayer is not flight from this unfaithful world, but rather attentiveness to the Word of God. At times their prayer is an argument or a complaint, but it is always an intercession that awaits and prepares for the intervention of the Savior God, the Lord of history (Cf. Am 7:2, 5; Isa 6:5, 8, 11; Jer 1:6; 15:15-18; 20:7-18). (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 7, 21-23) To do the will of the Father in heaven

[21] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. [22] Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' [23] Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'

(CCC 2611) The prayer of faith consists not only in saying "Lord, Lord," but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father (Cf. Mt 7:21). Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan (Cf. Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2; Jn 4:34). (CCC 1816) The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it:

"All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks" (LG 42; cf. DH 14). Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33).

(Mt 7, 24-27) The house built on rock.

[24] "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. [25] The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. [26] And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. [27] The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

(CCC 764) "This Kingdom shines out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ" (LG 5). To welcome Jesus' word is to welcome "the Kingdom itself" (LG 5). The seed and beginning of the Kingdom are the "little flock" of those whom Jesus came to gather around him, the flock whose shepherd he is (Lk 12:32; cf. Mt 10:16; 26:31; Jn 10:1-21). They form Jesus' true family (Cf. Mt 12:49). To those whom he thus gathered around him, he taught a new "way of acting" and a prayer of their own (Cf. Mt 5- 6). (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 424) Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt 16:16). On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church. (CCC 552) Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve (Cf. Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5); Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Christ, the "living Stone" (1 Pt 2:4), thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it (Cf. Lk 22:32).

(Mt 7, 28-29) Taught them as one having authority

[28] When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, [29] for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

(CCC 581) The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi (Cf. Jn 11:28; 3:2; Mt 22:23-24, 34-36). He often argued within the framework

of rabbinical interpretation of the Law (Cf. Mt 12:5; 9:12; Mk 2:23-27; Lk 6:6-g; Jn 7:22-23). Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7:28-29). In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes (Cf. Mt 5:1). Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old. . . But I say to you. . ." (Mt 5:33-34). With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were "making void the word of God" (Mk 7:13; cf. 3:8).

Matthew 8

(Mt 8, 1-4) Jesus said to him: Be made clean

[1] When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. [2] And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." [3] He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. [4] Then Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

(CCC 448) Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as "Lord". This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing (Cf Mt 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; *et al.*). At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "Lord" expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus (Cf. Lk 1:43; 2:11). In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: "My Lord and my God!" It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: "It is the Lord!" (Jn 20:28; 21:7). (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).

(Mt 8, 5-13) As you have believed, let it be done

[5] When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, [6] saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." [7] He said to him, "I will come and cure him." [8] The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. [9] For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." [10] When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. [11] I say to you, many will come from the east and the

west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, [12] but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth." [13] And Jesus said to the centurion, "You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you." And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

(CCC 142 *By his Revelation*, "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company" (DV 2; cf. Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15; Bar 3:38 (Vulg.)). The adequate response to this invitation is faith. (CCC 151) For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him (Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7). The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me" (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). Because he "has seen the Father", Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27).

(Mt 8, 14-17) Jesus touched her hand the fever left her

[14] Jesus entered the house of Peter, and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. [15] He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she rose and waited on him. [16] When it was evening, they brought him many who were possessed by demons, and he drove out the spirits by a word and cured all the sick, [17] to fulfill what had been said by Isaiah the prophet: "He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."

(CCC 1500) Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death. (CCC 1505) Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4). But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:4-6), of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.

(Mt 8, 18-22) Jesus answered him, "Follow me"

[18] When Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side. [19] A scribe approached and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." [20] Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." [21] Another of (his) disciples said to him, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." [22] But Jesus answered him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."

(CCC 561) "The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfilment of Revelation" (John Paul II, CT 9). (CCC 562) Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf Gal 4:19). "For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him" (LG 7 § 4).

(Mt 8, 23-27) Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea

[23] He got into a boat and his disciples followed him. [24] Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves; but he was asleep. [25] They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" [26] He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. [27] The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"

(CCC 1151) *Signs taken up by Christ.* In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Cf. Lk 8:10). He performs healings and illustrates his preaching with physical signs or symbolic gestures (Cf. Jn 9:6; Mk 7:33ff.; 8:22ff). He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover (Cf. Lk 9:31; 22:7-20), for he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

(Mt 8, 28-34) The kingdom of God has come upon you

[28] When he came to the other side, to the territory of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who were coming from the tombs met him. They were so savage that no one could travel by that road. [29] They cried out, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?" [30] Some distance away a herd of many swine was feeding. [31] The demons pleaded with him, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of swine." [32] And he said to them, "Go then!" They came out and entered the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned. [33] The swineherds ran away, and when they came to the town they reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. [34] Thereupon the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district.

(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*").

Matthew 9

(Mt 9, 1-8) Courage, child, your sins are forgiven

[1] He entered a boat, made the crossing, and came into his own town. [2] And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven." [3] At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." [4] Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why do you harbor evil thoughts? [5] Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? [6] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he then said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." [7] He rose and went home. [8] When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to human beings.

(CCC 1441) Only God forgives sins (Cf. Mk 2:7). Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven" (Mk 2:5, 10; Lk 7:48). Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name (Cf. Jn 20:21-23).

(Mt 9, 9-13) Jesus said to Matthew "Follow me."

[9] As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. [10] While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. [11] The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. [13] Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

(CCC 589) Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them (Cf. Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6). He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet (Cf. Lk 15:1-2, 22-32). But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk 2:7). By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name (Cf. Jn 5:18; 10:33; 17:6, 26).

(Mt 9, 14-17) Conversion of the heart

[14] Then the disciples of John approached him and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast (much), but your disciples do not fast?" [15] Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. [16] No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. [17] People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the

skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

(CCC 1430) Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at the *conversion of the heart, interior conversion*. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance (Cf. Joel 2:12-13; Isa 1:16-17; Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). (CCC 1972) The New Law is called a *law of love* because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear; a *law of grace*, because it confers the strength of grace to act, by means of faith and the sacraments; a *law of freedom*, because it sets us free from the ritual and juridical observances of the Old Law, inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity and, finally, lets us pass from the condition of a servant who "does not know what his master is doing" to that of a friend of Christ - "For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" - or even to the status of son and heir (Jn 15:15; cf. Jas 1:25; 2:12; Gal 4:1-7. 21-31; Rom 8:15).

(Mt 9, 18-26) The girl is not dead but sleeping.

[18] While he was saying these things to them, an official came forward, knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live." [19] Jesus rose and followed him, and so did his disciples. [20] A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. [21] She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured." [22] Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you." And from that hour the woman was cured. [23] When Jesus arrived at the official's house and saw the flute players and the crowd who were making a commotion, [24] he said, "Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." And they ridiculed him. [25] When the crowd was put out, he came and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose. [26] And news of this spread throughout all that land.

(CCC 1501) Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him. (CCC 1505) Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4). But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Isa 53:4-6), of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion. (CCC 994) But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54). Already now in

this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39). The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22).

(Mt 9, 27-31) Jesus heals two blind men

[27] And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed (him), crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" [28] When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. [29] Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." [30] And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." [31] But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

(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 178) We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 179) Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 180) "Believing" is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.

(Mt 9, 32-34) Jesus drives demons out of persons

[32] As they were going out, a demoniac who could not speak was brought to him, [33] and when the demon was driven out the mute person spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." [34] But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons."

(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 our 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). (CCC 539) The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder (Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27). Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father. (CCC 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).

(Mt 9, 35-38) Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom

[35] Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. [36] At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; [38] so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

(CCC 849) *The missionary mandate*. "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men" (AG 1; cf. Mt 16:15): "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age" (Mt 28:19-20). (CCC 1565 Through the sacrament of Holy Orders priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission, "but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation 'to the end of the earth'" (PO 10; OT 20; cf. Acts 1:8), "prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere" (OT 20).