

Gospel according to Matthew

Chapter 20

(Mt 20, 1-16) A landowner sent laborers into his vineyard.

[1] "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2] After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. [3] Going out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, [4] and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' [5] So they went off. (And) he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. [6] Going out about five o'clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' [7] They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' [8] When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' [9] When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. [10] So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. [11] And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, [12] saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' [13] He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? [14] Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? [15] (Or) am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?' [16] Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

(CCC 1060) At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ for ever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life. (CCC 1022) Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven - through a purification (Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 857-858; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304-1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820), or immediately (Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000-1001; John XXII, *Ne super his* (1334): DS 990), - or immediate and everlasting damnation (Cf. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1002). At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love (St. John of the Cross, *Dichos* 64).

(Mt 20, 17-19) The Son of Man will be crucified

[17] As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve (disciples) aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, [18] "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, [19]**

and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

(CCC 572) The Church remains faithful to the interpretation of "all the Scriptures" that Jesus gave both before and after his Passover: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26-27, 44-45). Jesus' sufferings took their historical, concrete form from the fact that he was "rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes", who handed "him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (Mk 8:31; Mt 20:19). (CCC 573) Faith can therefore try to examine the circumstances of Jesus' death, faithfully handed on by the Gospels (Cf. DV 19) and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption.

(Mt 20, 20-28) The Son of Man came to serve

[20] Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached him with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. [21] He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom." [22] Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" They said to him, "We can." [23] He replied, "My cup you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left (, this) is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." [24] When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers. [25] But Jesus summoned them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. [26] But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; [27] whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. [28] Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(CCC 2235) Those who exercise authority should do so as a service. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). The exercise of authority is measured morally in terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law. (CCC 440) Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man (Cf. Mt 16:16-23). He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Is 53:10-12). Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross (Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43). Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

(Mt 20, 29-34) Jesus heals two blind men

[29] As they left Jericho, a great crowd followed him. [30] Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "[Lord,] Son of David, have pity on us!" [31] The crowd warned them to be silent, but they called out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have pity on us!" [32] Jesus stopped and called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" [33] They answered him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." [34] Moved with pity, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight, and 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 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).

Chapter 21

(Mt 21, 1-11) Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem

[1] When they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, [2] saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them here to me. [3] And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, 'The master has need of them.' Then he will send them at once." [4] This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: [5] "Say to daughter Zion, 'Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" [6] The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them. [7] They brought the ass and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them. [8] The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. [9] The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." [10] And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, "Who is this?" [11] And the crowds replied, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."

(CCC 559) How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David" (Lk 1:32; cf. Mt 21:1-11; Jn 6:15). Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City

"riding on an ass" (Ps 24:7-10; Zech 9:9). Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth (Cf. Jn 18:37). And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds (Cf. Mt 21:15-16; cf. Ps 8:3; Lk 19:38; 2:14). Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Cf. Ps 118:26), is taken up by the Church in the "*Sanctus*" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover. (CCC 560) *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem* manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

(Mt 21, 12-17) Jesus drove merchants out of the temple

[12] Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all those engaged in selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. [13] And he said to them, "It is written: 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of thieves." [14] The blind and the lame approached him in the temple area, and he cured them. [15] When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wondrous things he was doing, and the children crying out in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant [16] and said to him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; and have you never read the text, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nurslings you have brought forth praise'?" [17] And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany, and there he spent the night.

(CCC 584) Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce (Cf. Mt 21:13). He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me'" (Jn 2:16-17; cf. Ps 69:10). After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple (Cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20, 21; etc).

(Mt 21, 18-22) The fig tree withered

[18] When he was going back to the city in the morning, he was hungry. [19] Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went over to it, but found nothing on it except leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again." **And immediately the fig tree withered.** [20] When the disciples saw this, they were amazed and said, "How was it that the fig tree withered immediately?" [21] Jesus said to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, if you have faith and do not waver, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. [22] Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive."

(CCC 2614) When Jesus openly entrusts to his disciples the mystery of prayer to the Father, he reveals to them what their prayer and ours must be, once he has

returned to the Father in his glorified humanity. What is new is to "ask *in his name*" (Jn 14:13). Faith in the Son introduces the disciples into the knowledge of the Father, because Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). Faith bears its fruit in love: it means keeping the word and the commandments of Jesus, it means abiding with him in the Father who, in him, so loves us that he abides with us. In this new covenant the certitude that our petitions will be heard is founded on the prayer of Jesus (Cf. Jn 14:13-14).

(Mt 21, 23-27) Jesus' authority

[23] When he had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "**By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?**" [24] Jesus said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things. [25] Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' [26] But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." [27] So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.

(CCC 668) "Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom 14:9). Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion", for the Father "has put all things under his feet" (Eph 1:20-22). Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are "set forth" and transcendentally fulfilled (Eph 1:10; cf. 4:10; 1 Cor 15:24, 27-28). (CCC 1063) In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find the expression "God of truth" (literally "God of the Amen"), that is, the God who is faithful to his promises: "He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth [amen]" (Isa 65:16). Our Lord often used the word "Amen," sometimes repeated (Cf. Mt 6:2, 5, 16; Jn 5:19), to emphasize the trustworthiness of his teaching, his authority founded on God's truth.

(Mt 21, 28-32) Parable of two sons

[28] "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' [29] He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went. [30] The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. [31] Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. [32] When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.

(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 546) Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching (Cf. Mk 4:33-34). Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything (Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14). Words are not enough, deeds are required (Cf. Mt 21:28-32). The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? (Cf. Mt 13:3-9). What use has he made of the talents he has received? (Cf. Mt 25:14-30). Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 13:11). For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic (Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15).

(Mt 21, 33-46) Parable of the wretched tenants

[33] "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. [34] When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. [35] But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. [36] Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. [37] Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' [38] But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' [39] They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. [40] What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" [41] They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." [42] Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes'? [43] Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit. [44] (The one who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.)" [45] When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. [46] And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.

(CCC 443) Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am" (Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62). Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels (Cf.

Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36). He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father", except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father'", and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father" (Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17). (CCC 755) "The Church is a *cultivated field*, the tillage of God. On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about again. That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing (LG 6; Cf. 1 Cor 39; Rom 11:13-26; Mt 21:32-43 and parallels; Isa 51-7; Jn 15:1-5). (CCC 1988) Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself (Cf. 1 Cor 12; Jn 15:1-4): [God] gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature.... For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized (St. Athanasius, *Ep. Serap.* 1, 24: PG 26, 585 and 588). (CCC 2074) Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren. His person becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

Chapter 22

(Mt 22, 1-14) Parable of the wedding banquet

[1] Jesus again in reply spoke to them in parables, saying, [2] "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. [3] He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. [4] A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' [5] Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. [6] The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. [7] The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. [8] Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. [9] Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' [10] The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. [11] But when the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. [12] He said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. [13] Then the king said to

his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' [14] Many are invited, but few are chosen."

(CCC 1243) The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15). The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father." (CCC 1244) *First Holy Communion*. Having become a child of God clothed with the wedding garment, the neophyte is admitted "to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9) and receives the food of the new life, the body and blood of Christ. The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed, even little children, recalling the Lord's words: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them" (Mk 10:14). The Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptized child brought to the altar for the praying of the Our Father. (CCC 1443) During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God (Cf. Lk 15; 19:9). (CCC 796) The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride. The theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist (Jn 3:29). The Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom" (Mk 2:19). The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him (Cf. Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 1 Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2). The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb (Cf. Rev 22:17; Eph 1:4; 5:27). "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her" (Eph 5:25-26). He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body (Cf. Eph 5:29): This is the whole Christ, head and body, one formed from many... whether the head or members speak, it is Christ who speaks. He speaks in his role as the head (*ex persona capitis*) and in his role as body (*ex persona corporis*). What does this mean? "The two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:31-32). And the Lord himself says in the Gospel: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Mt 19:6). They are, in fact, two different persons, yet they are one in the conjugal union,... *as head, he calls himself the bridegroom, as body, he calls himself "bride"* (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps. 74:4*: PL 36, 948-949).

(Mt 22, 15-22) Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar

[15] Then the Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap him in speech. [16] They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying,

"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. [17] 11 Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" [18] Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? [19] Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. [20] He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" [21] They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "**Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.**" [22] When they heard this they were amazed, and leaving him they went away.

(CCC 2239) It is the *duty of citizens* to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. The love and service of *one's country* follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity. Submission to legitimate authorities and service of the common good require citizens to fulfill their roles in the life of the political community. (CCC 2240) Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country: Pay to all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due (Rom 13:7). [Christians] reside in their own nations, but as resident aliens. They participate in all things as citizens and endure all things as foreigners.... They obey the established laws and their way of life surpasses the laws.... So noble is the position to which God has assigned them that they are not allowed to desert it (*Ad Diognetum* 5, 5 and 10; 6, 10; PG 2, 1173 and 1176). The Apostle exhorts us to offer prayers and thanksgiving for kings and all who exercise authority, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (1 Tim 2:2). (CCC 2242) The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21). "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29): When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel (GS 74 § 5).

(Mt 22, 23-33) The resurrection of the dead

[23] On that day Sadducees approached him, saying that there is no resurrection. They put this question to him, [24] saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies 16 without children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up descendants for his brother.' [25] Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died and, having no descendants, left his wife to his brother. [26] The same happened with the second and the third,

through all seven. [27] Finally the woman died. [28] Now at the resurrection, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had been married to her." [29] Jesus said to them in reply, "You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. [30] At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven. [31] And concerning *the resurrection of the dead*, have you not read what was said to you by God, [32] 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." [33] When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

(CCC 988) The Christian Creed - the profession of our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in God's creative, saving, and sanctifying action - culminates in the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead on the last day and in life everlasting. (CCC 989) We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day (Cf. Jn 6:39-40). Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11). (CCC 990) The term "flesh" refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality (Cf. Gen 6:3; Ps 56:5; Isa 40:6). The "resurrection of the flesh" (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our "mortal body" will come to life again (Rom 8:11). (CCC 991) Belief in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. "The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live" (Tertullian, *De res.* 1, 1: PL 2, 841). How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor 15:12-14).

(Mt 22, 34-40) The greatest commandment

[34] When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, [35] and one of them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking, [36] "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" [37] He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. [38] This is the greatest and the first commandment. [39] The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40] The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

(CCC 2055) When someone asks him, "Which commandment in the Law is the greatest?" (Mt 22:36) Jesus replies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Mt 22:37-40; cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). The Decalogue must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fullness of the Law: The commandments: "You shall not

commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:9-10). (CCC 1822) Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (CCC 1823) Jesus makes charity the *new commandment* (Cf. Jn 13:34). By loving his own "to the end" (Jn 13:1) he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." and again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:9, 12). (CCC 1824) Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (Jn 15:9-10; cf. Mt 22:40; Rom 13:8-10).

(Mt 22, 41-46) Jesus son and Lord of David

[41] While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them, [42] saying, "What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They replied, "David's." [43] He said to them, "How, then, does David, inspired by the Spirit, call him 'lord,' saying: [44] 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies under your feet"'? [45] **If David calls him 'lord,' how can he be his son?**" [46] No one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

(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 446) In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name YHWH, by which God revealed himself to Moses (Cf. Ex 3:14), is rendered as *Kyrios*, "Lord". From then on, "*Lord*" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "Lord" both for the Father and - what is new - for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself (Cf. 1 Cor 2:8). (CCC 447) Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of *Psalms* 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles (Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13). Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

Chapter 23

(Mt 23, 1-12) Whoever humbles himself will be exalted

[1] Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, [2] saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. [3] Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not

follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. [4] They tie up heavy burdens (hard to carry) and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. [5] All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. [6] They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, [7] greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' [8] As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. [9] Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. [10] Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Messiah. [11] The greatest among you must be your servant. [12] **Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

(CCC 1790) A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed. (CCC 1791) This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin" (GS 16). In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits. (CCC 1792) Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct. (CCC 1794) A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith" (1 Tim 5; cf. 3:9; 2 Tim 3; 1 Pet 3:21; Acts 24:16). The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct (GS 16). (CCC 1785) In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path (Cf. Ps 119:105), we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church (Cf. *DH* 14).

(Mt 23, 13-22) Scribes and Pharisees blind guides

[13] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You lock the kingdom of heaven before human beings. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter. [14]. [15] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him a child of Gehenna twice as much as yourselves. [16] "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If one swears by the temple, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gold of the temple, one is obligated.' [17] Blind fools, which is greater, the gold, or the temple that made the gold sacred? [18] And you say, 'If one swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gift on the altar, one is obligated.' [19] You blind ones, which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? [20] One who swears by the altar swears by it and all that is upon it; [21] one who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; [22] one

who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it.

(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 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 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 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.

(Mt 23, 23-28) Duplicity, hypocrisy, evildoing

[23] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. (But) these you should have done, without neglecting the others. [24] Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! [25] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. [26] Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean. [27] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth. [28] Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.

(CCC 2111) Superstition is the deviation of religious feeling and of the practices this feeling imposes. It can even affect the worship we offer the true God, e.g., when one attributes an importance in some way magical to certain practices otherwise lawful or necessary. To attribute the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental

signs to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition (Cf. Mt 23:16-22). (CCC 2464) The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant. (CCC 2465) The Old Testament attests that *God is the source of all truth*. His Word is truth. His Law is truth. His "faithfulness endures to all generations" (Ps 119:90; Cf. Prov 8:7; 2 Sam 7:28; Ps 119:142; Lk 1:50). Since God is "true," the members of his people are called to live in the truth (Rom 3:4; cf Ps 119:30). (CCC 2468) Truth as uprightness in human action and speech is called *truthfulness*, sincerity, or candor. Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy.

(Mt 23, 29-39) Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets

[29] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the memorials of the righteous, [30] and you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shedding the prophets' blood.' [31] Thus you bear witness against yourselves that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets; [32] now fill up what your ancestors measured out! [33] You serpents, you brood of vipers, how can you flee from the judgment of Gehenna? [34] Therefore, behold, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, [35] so that there may come upon you all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the righteous blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. [36] Amen, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. [37] "***Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling!*** [38] Behold, your house will be abandoned, desolate. [39] I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

(CCC 558) Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Mt 23:37). When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes" (Lk 19:41-42). (CCC 674) The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus (Rom 11:20-26; cf. Mt 23:39). St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom

heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Acts 3:19-21). St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" (Rom 11:15). The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:12, 25; cf. Lk 21:24), will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all" (Eph 4:13; 1 Cor 15:28).

Chapter 24

(Mt 24, 1-2) Prophecy of the destruction of the Temple

[1] Jesus left the temple area and was going away, when his disciples approached him to point out the temple buildings. [2] He said to them in reply, "You see all these things, do you not? Amen, I say to you, **there will not be left here a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.**"

(CCC 583) Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth (Lk 2:22-39). At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business (Cf. Lk 2 46-49). He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover (Cf. Lk 2 41). His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts (Cf. Jn 2:13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8:2; 10:22-23). (CCC 585) On the threshold of his Passion Jesus announced the coming destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain "one stone upon another" (Cf. Mt 24:1-2). By doing so, he announced a sign of the last days, which were to begin with his own Passover (Cf. Mt 24:3; Lk 13:35). But this prophecy would be distorted in its telling by false witnesses during his interrogation at the high priest's house, and would be thrown back at him as an insult when he was nailed to the cross (Cf. Mk 14:57-58; Mt 27:39-40). (CCC 593) Jesus venerated the Temple by going up to it for the Jewish feasts of pilgrimage, and with a jealous love he loved this dwelling of God among men. The Temple prefigures his own mystery. When he announces its destruction, it is as a manifestation of his own execution and of the entry into a new age in the history of salvation, when his Body would be the definitive Temple.

(Mt 24, 3-14) The Church's ultimate trial

[3] As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, "Tell us, when will this happen, and what sign will there be of your coming, and of the end of the age?" [4] Jesus said to them in reply, "See that no one deceives you. [5] For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many. [6] You will hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for these things must happen, but it will not yet be the end. [7] Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be famines and earthquakes from place to place. [8] All these are the beginning of the labor pains. [9] Then they will hand you over to persecution, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name. [10] And then many will be led into sin; they will betray and hate one another. [11] Many false prophets will arise and deceive

many; [12] and because of the increase of evildoing, the love of many will grow cold. [13] But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

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

(Mt 24, 15-25) There will be great tribulation

[15] "When you see the desolating abomination spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), [16] then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, [17] a person on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house, [18] a person in the field must not return to get his cloak. [19] Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days. [20] Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the sabbath, [21] for at that time **there will be great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be. [22] And if those days had not been shortened, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect they will be shortened. [23] If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. [24] False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect. [25] Behold, I have told it to you beforehand.

(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).

(Mt 24, 26-35) The Son of Man with power and glory

[26] So if they say to you, 'He is in the desert,' do not go out there; if they say, 'He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. [27] For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. [28] Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. [29] "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [30] And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, **and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.** [31] And he will send out his angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. [32] "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. [33] In the same way, when you see all these things, know that he is near, at the gates. [34] Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. [35] Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

(CCC 1040) The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Cf. *Song* 8:6).

(Mt 24, 36-44) Stay awake, the Son of Man will come

[36] "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. [37] For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. [38] In (those) days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. [39] They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be (also) at the coming of the Son of Man. [40] Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. [42] Therefore, **stay awake!** For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. [43] Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. [44] So too, you also must **be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.**

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

(Mt 24, 45-51) The parable of the two servants

[45] "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? [46] Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. [47] Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. [48] But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is long delayed,' [49] and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with drunkards, [50] the servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour [51] and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

(CCC 1021) Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10). The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23). (CCC 1051) Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead.

Chapter 25

(Mt 25, 1-13) Parable of the ten virgins: stay awake!

[1] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. [2] Five of them were foolish and five were wise. [3] The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, [4] but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. [5] Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. [6] At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' [7] Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. [8] The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [9] But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' [10] While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. [11] Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' [12] But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' [13] Therefore, **stay awake**, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

(CCC 672) Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel (Cf. Acts 1:6-7) which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love and peace (Cf. Is 11:1-9). According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by "distress" and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church (Cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 7:26; Eph 5:16; 1 Pt 4:17) and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching (Cf. Mt 25:1, 13; Mk 13:33-37; 1 Jn 2:18; 4:3; 1 Tim 4:1).

(Mt 25, 14-30) Parable of the talents

[14] "It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. [15] To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one - to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately [16] the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. [17] Likewise, the one who received two made another two. [18] But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. [19] After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. [20] The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' [21] His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' [22] (Then) the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' [23] His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' [24] Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; [25] so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' [26] His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? [27] Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? [28] Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. [29] For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [30] And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'

(CCC 2429) Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good (Cf. CA 32; 34). (CCC 1880) A *society* is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each man is established as an "heir" and receives certain "talents" that enrich his identity and whose fruits he must develop (Cf. Lk

19:13, 15). He rightly owes loyalty to the communities of which he is part and respect to those in authority who have charge of the common good.

(Mt 25, 31-36) The Last Judgment: you are blessed

[31] "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, [32] and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33] He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. [34] Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

(CCC 1040) The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Cf. *Song* 8:6). (CCC 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 1503) Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mt 4:24) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins (Cf. Mk 2:5-12); he has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (Cf. Mk 2:17). His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.

(Mt 25, 37-40) The Last Judgment: the righteous

[37] Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' [40] And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

(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). (CCC 1397) *The Eucharist commits us to the poor*. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren: You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother,... You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal.... God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor. 27*, 4: PG 61, 229-230; cf. Mt 25:40).

(Mt 25, 41-46) The Last Judgment: the accursed

[41] Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42] For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43] a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' [44] Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' [45] He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' [46] And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

(CCC 1039) In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare (Cf. Jn 12:49). The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life: All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When "our God comes, he does not keep silence." ... he will turn towards those at his left hand: ... "I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father - but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence" (St. Augustine, *Sermo 18*, 4: PL 38, 130-131; cf. Ps 50:3). (CCC 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 2463) How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt 25:45)?

Chapter 26

(Mt 26, 1-5) The consult to put Jesus to death.

[1] When Jesus finished all these words, he said to his disciples, [2] "You know that in two days' time it will be Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." [3] Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, [4] and they consulted together to arrest Jesus by treachery and put him to death. [5] But they said, "Not during the festival, that there may not be a riot among the people."

(CCC 569) Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf. Heb 12:3). (CCC 557) "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1). By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34).

(Mt 26, 6-13) Jesus anointed in Bethany

[6] Now when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, [7] a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil, and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table. [8] When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said, "Why this waste? [9] It could have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor." [10] Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. [11] The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me. [12] In pouring this perfumed oil upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. [13] Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her."

(CCC 1293) In treating the rite of Confirmation, it is fitting to consider the sign of *anointing* and what it signifies and imprints: a spiritual *seal*. Anointing, in Biblical and other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning: oil is a sign of abundance and joy (Cf. Deut 11:14; Pss 23:5; 104:15); it cleanses (anointing before and after a bath) and limbers (the anointing of athletes and wrestlers); oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds (Cf. Isa 1:6; Lk 10:34); and it makes radiant with beauty, health, and strength. (CCC 438) Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission, "for the name 'Christ' implies 'he who anointed', 'he who was anointed' and 'the very anointing with which he was anointed'. The one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing'" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 18, 3; PG 7/1, 934). His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power," "that he might be revealed to Israel" (Acts 10:38; Jn 1:31) as its Messiah. His works and words will manifest him as "the Holy One of God" (Mk 1:24; Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14).

(Mt 26, 14-16) Judas hands over Jesus

[14] Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests [15] and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, [16] and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

(CCC 599) Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God (Cf. Acts 3:13).

(Mt 26, 17-25) The Last Supper, Judas betrayer

[17] On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" [18] He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'"" [19] The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover. [20] When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. [21] And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." [22] Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" [23] He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. [24] The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." [25] Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."

(CCC 610) Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles "on the night he was betrayed" (*Roman Missal*, EP III; cf. Mt 26:20; 1 Cor 11:23). On the eve of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: "This is my body which is given for you." "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 22:19; Mt 26:28; cf. 1 Cor 5:7).

(Mt 26, 26-30) Jesus institutes the Eucharist

[26] While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." [27] Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, [28] for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. [29] I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father." [30] Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(CCC 1323) "At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again,

and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us'" (SC 47). (CCC 611) The Eucharist that Christ institutes at that moment will be the memorial of his sacrifice (1 Cor 11:25). Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it (Cf. Lk 22:19). By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth" (Jn 17:19; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1752; 1764).

(Mt 26, 31-35) All of you will have your faith in me shaken

[31] Then Jesus said to them, "***This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken***, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed'; [32] but after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." [33] Peter said to him in reply, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." [34] Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." [35] Peter said to him, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples spoke likewise.

(CCC 1851) It is precisely in the Passion, when the mercy of Christ is about to vanquish it, that sin most clearly manifests its violence and its many forms: unbelief, murderous hatred, shunning and mockery by the leaders and the people, Pilate's cowardice and the cruelty of the soldiers, Judas' betrayal - so bitter to Jesus, Peter's denial and the disciples' flight. However, at the very hour of darkness, the hour of the prince of this world (Cf. Jn 14:30), the sacrifice of Christ secretly becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly.

(Mt 26, 36-46) Jesus at Gethsemani

[36] Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." [37] He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. [38] Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." [39] He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." [40] When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? [41] Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." [42] Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!" [43] Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. [44] He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. [45] Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. [46] Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand."

(CCC 612) The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's

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

(Mt 26, 47-56) Jesus arrested

[47] While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people. [48] His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him." [49] Immediately he went over to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. [50] Jesus answered him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. [51] And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear. [52] Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. [53] Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? [54] But then how would the scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" [55] At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me. [56] But all this has come to pass that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

(CCC 600) To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of "predestination", he includes in it each person's free response to his grace: "In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place" (Acts 4:27-28; cf. Ps 2:1-2). For the sake of accomplishing his plan of salvation, God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness (Cf. Mt 26:54; Jn 18:36; 19:11; Acts 3:17-18). (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 26, 57-68) Jesus before chief priests and Sanhedrin

[57] Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. [58] Peter was following him at a distance as far as the high priest's courtyard, and going

inside he sat down with the servants to see the outcome. [59] The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, [60] but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward [61] who stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and within three days rebuild it.'" [62] The high priest rose and addressed him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" [63] But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God." [64] Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'" [65] Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy; [66] what is your opinion?" They said in reply, "He deserves to die!" [67] Then they spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, [68] saying, "Prophecy for us, Messiah: who is it that struck you?"

(CCC 591) Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished (Jn 10:36-38). But such an act of faith must go through a mysterious death to self, for a new "birth from above" under the influence of divine grace (Cf. Jn 3:7; 6:44). Such a demand for conversion in the face of so surprising a fulfilment of the promises (Cf. Is 53:1) allows one to understand the Sanhedrin's tragic misunderstanding of Jesus: they judged that he deserved the death sentence as a blasphemer (Cf. Mk 3:6; Mt 26:64-66). The members of the Sanhedrin were thus acting at the same time out of "ignorance" and the "hardness" of their "unbelief" (Cf. Lk 23 34; Acts 3: 17-18; Mk 3:5; Rom 11:25, 20). (CCC 443) Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am" (Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62). Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels (Cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36). He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father", except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father'", and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father" (Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17).

(Mt 26, 69-75) Peter denies Jesus three times

[69] Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." [70] But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" [71] As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." [72] Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" [73] A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." [74] At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. [75] Then

Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

(CCC 1432) The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart (Cf. Ezek 36:26-27). Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him: "Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!" (Lam 5:21). God gives us the strength to begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced (Cf. Jn 19:37; Zech 12:10): Let us fix our eyes on Christ's blood and understand how precious it is to his Father, for, poured out for our salvation, it has brought to the whole world the grace of repentance (St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Cor.* 7, 4: PG 1, 224). (CCC 1429) St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him (Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17). The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!" (Rev 2:5, 16). St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance" (St. Ambrose, *ep.* 41, 12: PL 16, 1116).

Chapter 27

(Mt 27, 1-10) Jesus handed over to Pilate, Judas' death

[1] When it was morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. [2] They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. [3] Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, [4] saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? Look to it yourself." [5] Flinging the money into the temple, he departed and went off and hanged himself. [6] The chief priests gathered up the money, but said, "It is not lawful to deposit this in the temple treasury, for it is the price of blood." [7] After consultation, they used it to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. [8] That is why that field even today is called the Field of Blood. [9] Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of a man with a price on his head, a price set by some of the Israelites, [10] and they paid it out for the potter's field just as the Lord had commanded me."

(CCC 2094) One can sin against God's love in various ways: - *indifference* neglects or refuses to reflect on divine charity; it fails to consider its prevenient goodness and denies its power. - *ingratitude* fails or refuses to acknowledge divine charity and to return him love for love. - *lukewarmness* is hesitation or negligence in responding to divine love; it can imply refusal to give oneself over to the prompting of charity. - *acedia* or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness. - *hatred of God* comes from pride. It is

contrary to love of God, whose goodness it denies, and whom it presumes to curse as the one who forbids sins and inflicts punishments.

(Mt 27, 11-23) Jesus stood before the governor Pilate

[11] Now Jesus stood before the governor, and he questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." [12] And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. [13] Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?" [14] But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed. [15] Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished. [16] And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called (Jesus) Barabbas. [17] So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which one do you want me to release to you, (Jesus) Barabbas, or Jesus called Messiah?" [18] For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. [19] While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him." [20] The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. [21] The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!" [22] Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" [23] But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!"

(CCC 596) The religious authorities in Jerusalem were not unanimous about what stance to take towards Jesus (Cf. Jn 9:16; 10:19). The Pharisees threatened to excommunicate his followers (Cf. Jn 9:22). To those who feared that "everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation", the high priest Caiaphas replied by prophesying: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (Jn 11:48-50). The Sanhedrin, having declared Jesus deserving of death as a blasphemer but having lost the right to put anyone to death, hands him over to the Romans, accusing him of political revolt, a charge that puts him in the same category as Barabbas who had been accused of sedition (Cf. Mt 26:66; Jn 18:31; Lk 23:2, 19). The chief priests also threatened Pilate politically so that he would condemn Jesus to death (Cf. Jn 19:12, 15, 21).

(Mt 27, 24-26) His blood be on us and our children

[24] When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." [25] And the whole people said in reply, "*His blood be upon us and upon our children.*" [26] Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

(CCC 597) The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global

reproaches contained in the apostles' calls to conversion after Pentecost (Cf. Mk 15:11; Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-14; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; 1 Th 2:14-15). Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept "the ignorance" of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders (Cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17). Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!", a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence (Mt 27:25; cf. Acts 5:28; 18:6). As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council:...[N]either all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion... [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture (NA 4). (CCC 598) In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured" (*Roman Catechism* I, 5, 11; cf. Heb 12:3). Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself (Cf. Mt 25:45; Acts 9:4-5), the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone: We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. And it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." We, however, profess to know him. And when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him (*Roman Catechism* I, 5, 11; cf. Heb 6:6; 1 Cor 2:8). Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins (St. Francis of Assisi, *Admonitio* 5, 3).

(Mt 27, 27-31) Jesus mocked and crowned of thorns

[27] Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. [28] They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. [29] Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [30] They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. [31] And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

(CCC 1708) By his Passion, Christ delivered us from Satan and from sin. He merited for us the new life in the Holy Spirit. His grace restores what sin had damaged in us. (CCC 272) Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:24-25). It is in Christ's Resurrection and

exaltation that the Father has shown forth "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe" (Eph 1:19-22).

(Mt 27, 32-44) Jesus crucified

[32] As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. [33] And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull), [34] they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. [35] After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; [36] then they sat down and kept watch over him there. [37] And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. [38] Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. [39] Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads [40] and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, (and) come down from the cross!" [41] Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, [42] "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. [43] He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" [44] The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

(CCC 580) The perfect fulfilment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son (Cf. Gal 4:4). In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but "upon the heart" of the Servant who becomes "a covenant to the people", because he will "faithfully bring forth justice" (Jer 31:33; Isa 42:3, 6). Jesus fulfils the Law to the point of taking upon himself "the curse of the Law" incurred by those who do not "abide by the things written in the book of the Law, and do them", for his death took place to redeem them "from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Gal 3:13; 3:10; Heb 9:15).

(Mt 27, 45-53) Jesus' death

[45] From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. [46] And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [47] Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." [48] Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. [49] But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." [50] But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. [51] And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, [52] tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. [53] And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

(CCC 613) Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:19), and the *sacrifice of the New*

Covenant, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28; cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 1 Cor 11:25). (CCC 614) This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices (Cf. Heb 10:10). First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience (Cf. Jn 10:17-18, 15:13; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 4:10). (CCC 615) "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an *offering for sin*", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities" (Is 53:10-12). Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529).

(Mt 27, 54-56) Truly, this was the Son of God

[54] The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" [55] There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. [56] Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

(CCC 444) The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son" (Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5). Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence (Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36). He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God" (Jn 3:18). In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39), that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning. (CCC 594) Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Saviour God himself (cf Jn 5:16-18). Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man (cf Jn 1:14), saw in him only a man who made himself God (Jn 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer. (CCC 571) The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all" (Heb 9:26) by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ.

(Mt 27, 57-61) A huge stone rolled across the entrance

[57] When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. [58] He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. [59] Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it (in) clean linen [60] and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. [61] But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

(CCC 624) "By the grace of God" Jesus tasted death "for every one" (Heb 2:9). In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only "die for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3) but should also "taste death", experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb (Cf. Jn 19:42), reveals God's great sabbath rest (Cf. Heb 4:7-9) after the fulfilment (Cf. Jn 19:30) of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe (Cf. Col 1: 18-20). (CCC 625) Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. The same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18): God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech.* 16: PG 45, 52D).

(Mt 27, 62-66) Tomb secured by seal and guard

[62] The next day, the one following the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate [63] and said, "Sir, we remember that this impostor while still alive said, 'After three days I will be raised up.' [64] Give orders, then, that the grave be secured until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him and say to the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' This last imposture would be worse than the first." [65] Pilate said to them, "The guard is yours; go secure it as best you can." [66] So they went and secured the tomb by fixing a seal to the stone and setting the guard.

(CCC 627) Christ's death was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union which the person of the Son retained with his body, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for "it was not possible for death to hold him" (Acts 2:24) and therefore "divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 51, 3). Both of these statements can be said of Christ: "He was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa 53:8), and "My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption" (Acts 2:26-27; cf. Ps 16:9-10). Jesus' Resurrection "on the third day" was the sign of this, also because bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death (Cf. 1 Cor 15:4; Lk 24:46; Mt 12:40; Jon 2:1; Hos 6:2; cf. Jn 11:39). (CCC 628) Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12; Eph 5:26). (CCC 629) To the benefit of every man, Jesus Christ tasted death (cf. Heb 2:9). It is truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried. (CCC 630) During Christ's period in the tomb, his divine person continued to assume both his soul and his body, although they were

separated from each other by death. For this reason the dead Christ's body "saw no corruption" (Acts 13:37).

Chapter 28

(Mt 28, 1-7) The tomb is empty

[1] After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. [2] And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. [3] His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. [4] The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. [5] Then the angel said to the women in reply, "Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. [6] He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. [7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you."

(CCC 640) "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Lk 24:5-6). The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise (Cf. Jn 20:13; Mt 28:11-15). Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter (Cf. Lk 24:3, 12, 22-23). The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered "the linen cloths lying there", "he saw and believed" (Jn 20:2, 6, 8). This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus (Cf. Jn 11:44; 20:5-7). (CCC 639) The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about a.d. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve..." (1 Cor 15:3-4). The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus (Cf. Acts 9:3-18).

(Mt 28, 8-10) Jesus met them on their way

[8] Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples. [9] And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. [10] Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

(CCC 641) Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One (Mk 16:1; Lk

24:1; Jn 19:31, 42). Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves (Cf. Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18). They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers (Cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32), and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34, 36). (CCC 2174) Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week" (Cf. Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1). Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath (Cf. Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1), it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day (*he kuriake hemera, dies dominica*) Sunday: We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead (St. Justin, *I Apol.* 67: PG 6, 429 and 432).

(Mt 28, 11-15) A story circulated among the Jews

[11] While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened. [12] They assembled with the elders and took counsel; then they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, [13] telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.' [14] And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy (him) and keep you out of trouble." [15] The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has circulated among the Jews to the present (day)

(CCC 644) Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. "In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering" (Lk 24:38-41). Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee "some doubted" (Cf. Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17). Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus. (CCC 643) Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold (Cf. Lk 22:31-32). The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ("looking sad" 1 Lk 24:17; cf. Jn 20:19) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an "idle tale" (Lk 24:11; cf. Mk 16:11, 13). When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, "he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen" (Mk 16:14).

(Mt 28, 16-17) The eleven disciples went to Galilee

[16] The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. [17] When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.

(CCC 646) Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven" (Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50). (CCC 645) By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion (Cf. Lk 24:30, 39-40, 41-43; Jn 20:20, 27; 21:9, 13-15). Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm (Cf. Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15, 36; Jn 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4). For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith (Cf. Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4, 7).

(Mt 28, 18-20) Go and make disciples of all nations

[18] Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] 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, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

(CCC 638) "We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus" (Acts 13:32-33). The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross: Christ is risen from the dead! Dying, he conquered death; To the dead, he has given life (Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter). (CCC 655) Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:20-22). The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfilment. In Christ, Christians "have tasted... the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5) and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they

may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor 5:15; cf. Col 3:1-3). (CCC 651) "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor 15:14). The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification if Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised.