

Letter to James

James 1

(Jas 1, 1-4) Consider it all joy when you encounter trials

[1] James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings. [2] Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. [4] And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(CCC 2847) The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man (Cf. Lk. 8:13-15; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3-5; 2 Tim 3:12), and temptation, which leads to sin and death (Cf. Jas 1:14-15). We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable (Cf. Gen 3:6), when in reality its fruit is death. God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.... There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us (Origen, *De orat.* 29 PG 11, 544CD). (CCC 1820) Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The *beatitudes* raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul... that enters... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:19-20). Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us... put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8). It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

(Jas 1, 5-8) Ask God wisdom who gives to all generously

[5] But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will be given it. [6] But he should ask in faith, not doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, [8] since he is a man of two minds, unstable in all his ways.

(CCC 2632) Christian petition is centered on the desire and *search for the Kingdom to come*, in keeping with the teaching of Christ (Cf. Mt 6:10, 33; Lk 11:2, 13). There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (Cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how

the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer (Cf. Rom 10:1; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 19-11; Col 1:3-6; 4:3-4, 12). By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. (CCC 2633) When we share in God's saving love, we understand that *every need* can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name (Cf. Jn 14:13). It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray *at all times* (Cf. Jas 1:5-8; Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:16-17; 1 Thess 5:17-18).

(Jas 1, 9-13) Blessed is who perseveres in temptation

[9] The brother in lowly circumstances should take pride in his high standing, [10] and the rich one in his lowliness, for he will pass away "like the flower of the field." [11] For the sun comes up with its scorching heat and dries up the grass, its flower droops, and the beauty of its appearance vanishes. So will the rich person fade away in the midst of his pursuits. [12] Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who love him. [13] No one experiencing temptation should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God is not subject to temptation to evil, and he himself tempts no one.

(CCC 2846) This petition goes to the root of the preceding one, for our sins result from our consenting to temptation; we therefore ask our Father not to "lead" us into temptation. It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used by a single English word: the Greek means both "do not allow us to enter into temptation" and "do not let us yield to temptation" (Cf. Mt 26 41). "God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one" (Jas 1:13); on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. We are engaged in the battle "between flesh and spirit"; this petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength. (CCC 2516) Because man is a *composite being, spirit and body*, there already exists a certain tension in him; a certain struggle of tendencies between "spirit" and "flesh" develops. But in fact this struggle belongs to the heritage of sin. It is a consequence of sin and at the same time a confirmation of it. It is part of the daily experience of the spiritual battle: For the Apostle it is not a matter of despising and condemning the body which with the spiritual soul constitutes man's nature and personal subjectivity. Rather, he is concerned with the morally *good or bad* works, or better, the permanent dispositions - virtues and vices - which are the fruit of *submission* (in the first case) or of *resistance* (in the second case) to *the saving action of the Holy Spirit*. For this reason the Apostle writes: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (John Paul II, *DeV* 55; cf. Gal 5:25).

(Jas 1, 14) Each person is lured by his own desire

[14] Rather, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

(CCC 2514) St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life (Cf. 1 Jn 2:16). In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another's goods. (CCC 2515) Etymologically, "concupiscence" can refer to any intense form of human desire. Christian theology has given it a particular meaning: the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason. The apostle St.

Paul identifies it with the rebellion of the "flesh" against the "spirit" (Cf. Gal 5:16, 17, 24; Eph 2:3). Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man's moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins (Cf. Gen 3:11; Council of Trent: DS 1515). (CCC 2525) Christian purity requires a *purification of the social climate*. It requires of the communications media that their presentations show concern for respect and restraint. Purity of heart brings freedom from widespread eroticism and avoids entertainment inclined to voyeurism and illusion. (CCC 2526) So called *moral permissiveness* rests on an erroneous conception of human freedom; the necessary precondition for the development of true freedom is to let oneself be educated in the moral law. Those in charge of education can reasonably be expected to give young people instruction respectful of the truth, the qualities of the heart, and the moral and spiritual dignity of man.

(Jas 1, 15) Desire conceives and brings forth sin

[15] Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death.

(CCC 2528) "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28). (CCC 2529) The ninth commandment warns against lust or carnal concupiscence. (CCC 2522) Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled. Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet. (CCC 2523) There is a modesty of the feelings as well as of the body. It protests, for example, against the voyeuristic explorations of the human body in certain advertisements, or against the solicitations of certain media that go too far in the exhibition of intimate things. Modesty inspires a way of life which makes it possible to resist the allurements of fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies.

(Jas 1, 16-17) Every perfect gift is from the Father of lights

[16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: [17] all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change.

(CCC 212) Over the centuries, Israel's faith was able to manifest and deepen realization of the riches contained in the revelation of the divine name. God is unique; there are no other gods besides him (Cf. Isa 44:6). He transcends the world and history. He made heaven and earth: "They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment... but you are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps 102:26-27). In God "there is no variation or shadow due to change" (Jas 1:17). God is "He who Is", from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises. (CCC 2542) The Law entrusted to Israel never sufficed to justify those subject to it; it even became the instrument of "lust" (Cf. Rom 7:7). The gap between wanting and doing points to the conflict between God's Law which is the "law of my mind," and another law "making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Rom 7:23; cf. 7:10).

(Jas 1, 18-20) Everyone should be slow to wrath

[18] He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. [19] Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, [20] for the wrath of a man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.

(CCC 1762) The human person is ordered to beatitude by his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose him to it and contribute to it. (CCC 1771) The term "passions" refers to the affections or the feelings. By his emotions man intuitively feels the good and suspects evil. (CCC 1772) The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger. (CCC 1773) In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them. (CCC 1774) Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices. (CCC 2302) By recalling the commandment, "You shall not kill" (Mt 5:21), our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral. *Anger* is a desire for revenge. "To desire vengeance in order to do evil to someone who should be punished is illicit," but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution "to correct vices and maintain justice" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh II-II*, 158, 1 ad 3). If anger reaches the point of a deliberate desire to kill or seriously wound a neighbor, it is gravely against charity; it is a mortal sin. The Lord says, "Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Mt 5:22).

(Jas 1, 21) Put away all filth and evil excess

[21] Therefore, put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls.

(CCC 2530) The struggle against carnal lust involves purifying the heart and practicing temperance. (CCC 2521) Purity requires *modesty*, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity. (CCC 2524) The forms taken by modesty vary from one culture to another. Everywhere, however, modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. It is born with the awakening consciousness of being a subject. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.

(Jas 1, 22) Be doers of the word and not hearers only

[22] Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

(CCC 2700) Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: "Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls" (St. John Chrysostom, *Ecloga de oratione* 2: PG 63, 585). (CCC 2575) Here again the initiative is God's. From the midst of the burning bush he calls Moses (Ex 3:1-10). This event will remain one of the primordial images of prayer in the spiritual tradition of Jews and Christians alike. When "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" calls Moses to be his servant, it is because he is the living God who wants men to live. God reveals himself in order to save them, though he does not

do this alone or despite them: he calls Moses to be his messenger, an associate in his compassion, his work of salvation. There is something of a divine plea in this mission, and only after long debate does Moses attune his own will to that of the Savior God. But in the dialogue in which God confides in him, Moses also learns how to pray: he balks, makes excuses, above all questions: and it is in response to his question that the Lord confides his ineffable name, which will be revealed through his mighty deeds. (CCC 2576) "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex 33:11). Moses' prayer is characteristic of contemplative prayer by which God's servant remains faithful to his mission. Moses converses with God often and at length, climbing the mountain to hear and entreat him and coming down to the people to repeat the words of his God for their guidance. Moses "is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly, not in riddles," for "Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Num 12:3,7-8).

(Jas 1, 23) Who is a hearer of the word and not a doer...

[23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror.

(CCC 2577) From this intimacy with the faithful God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Cf. Ex 34:6), Moses drew strength and determination for his intercession. He does not pray for himself but for the people whom God made his own. Moses already intercedes for them during the battle with the Amalekites and prays to obtain healing for Miriam (Cf. Ex 17:8-12; Num 12:13-14). But it is chiefly after their apostasy that Moses "stands in the breach" before God in order to save the people (Ps 106:23; cf. Ex 32:1-34:9). The arguments of his prayer - for intercession is also a mysterious battle - will inspire the boldness of the great intercessors among the Jewish people and in the Church: God is love; he is therefore righteous and faithful; he cannot contradict himself; he must remember his marvellous deeds, since his glory is at stake, and he cannot forsake this people that bears his name. (CCC 2584) In their "one to one" encounters with God, the prophets draw light and strength for their mission. Their prayer is not flight from this unfaithful world, but rather attentiveness to the Word of God. At times their prayer is an argument or a complaint, but it is always an intercession that awaits and prepares for the intervention of the Savior God, the Lord of history (Cf. Am 7:2, 5; Isa 6:5, 8, 11; Jer 1:6; 15:15-18; 20:7-18). (CCC 2585) From the time of David to the coming of the Messiah texts appearing in these sacred books show a deepening in prayer for oneself and in prayer for others (Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 1:4-11; Jon 2:3-10; Tob 3:11-16; Jdt 9:2-14). Thus the psalms were gradually collected into the five books of the Psalter (or "Praises"), the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament. (CCC 2586) The Psalms both nourished and expressed the prayer of the People of God gathered during the great feasts at Jerusalem and each Sabbath in the synagogues. Their prayer is inseparably personal and communal; it concerns both those who are praying and all men. The Psalms arose from the communities of the Holy Land and the Diaspora, but embrace all creation. Their prayer recalls the saving events of the past, yet extends into the future, even to the end of history; it commemorates the promises God has already kept, and awaits the Messiah who will fulfill them definitively. Prayed by Christ and fulfilled in him, the Psalms remain essential to the prayer of the Church (Cf. GILH, nn. 100-109).

(Jas 1, 24) He forgets what he looked like

[24] He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like.

(CCC 2720) The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year. (CCC 2721) The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart. (CCC 2722) Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples. (CCC 2723) Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own in faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life. (CCC 2724) Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery. (CCC 2697) Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart "We must remember God more often than we draw breath" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat. Theo.*, 27, 1, 4: PG 36, 16). But we cannot pray "at all times" if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration. (CCC 2698) The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian's life of prayer.

(Jas 1, 25) A doer who acts, shall be blessed

[25] But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.

(CCC 2588) The Psalter's many forms of prayer take shape both in the liturgy of the Temple and in the human heart. Whether hymns or prayers of lamentation or thanksgiving, whether individual or communal, whether royal chants, songs of pilgrimage or wisdom meditations, the Psalms are a mirror of God's marvelous deeds in the history of his people, as well as reflections of the human experiences of the Psalmist. Though a given psalm may reflect an event of the past, it still possesses such direct simplicity that it can be prayed in truth by men of all times and conditions. (CCC 2589) Certain constant characteristics appear throughout the Psalms: simplicity and spontaneity of prayer; the desire for God himself through and with all that is good in his creation; the distraught situation of the believer who, in his preferential love for the Lord, is exposed to a host of enemies and temptations, but who waits upon what the faithful God will do, in the certitude of his love and in submission to his will. The prayer of the psalms is always sustained by praise; that is why the title of this collection as handed down to us is so fitting: "The Praises." Collected for the assembly's

worship, the Psalter both sounds the call to prayer and sings the response to that call: *Hallelu-Yah!* ("Alleluia"), "Praise the Lord!" What is more pleasing than a psalm? David expresses it well: "Praise the Lord, for a psalm is good: let there be praise of our God with gladness and grace!" Yes, a psalm is a blessing on the lips of the people, praise of God, the assembly's homage, a general acclamation, a word that speaks for all, the voice of the Church, a confession of faith in song (St. Ambrose, *In Psalmum 1 enarratio*, 1, 9: PL 14, 924; *LH*, Saturday, wk 10, OR).

(Jas 1, 26) Who deceives his heart, his religion is vain

[26] If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is vain.

(CCC 2477) *Respect for the reputation* of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury (Cf. CIC, can. 220). He becomes guilty: - of *rash judgment* who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor; - of *detraction* who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them (Cf. Sir 21:28); - of *calumny* who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them. (CCC 2492) Everyone should observe an appropriate reserve concerning persons' private lives. Those in charge of communications should maintain a fair balance between the requirements of the common good and respect for individual rights. Interference by the media in the private lives of persons engaged in political or public activity is to be condemned to the extent that it infringes upon their privacy and freedom. (CCC 2491) *Professional secrets* - for example, those of political office holders, soldiers, physicians, and lawyers - or confidential information given under the seal of secrecy must be kept, save in exceptional cases where keeping the secret is bound to cause very grave harm to the one who confided it, to the one who received it or to a third party, and where the very grave harm can be avoided only by divulging the truth. Even if not confided under the seal of secrecy, private information prejudicial to another is not to be divulged without a grave and proportionate reason. (CCC 2490) The *secret of the sacrament of reconciliation* is sacred, and cannot be violated under any pretext. "The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore, it is a crime for a confessor in any way to betray a penitent by word or in any other manner or for any reason" (CIC, Can. 983 § 1).

(Jas 1, 27) Religion pure is to care for orphans and widows

[27] Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

(CCC 2447) The *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities (Cf. Isa 58:6-7; Heb 13:3). Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God (Cf. Tob 4:5-11; Sir 17:22; Mt 6:2-4): He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise (Lk 3:11). But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you (Lk 11:41). If a brother or

sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (Jas 2:15-16; cf. 1 Jn 3:17). (CCC 2208) The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (Jas 1:27). (CCC 2207) The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

James 2

(Jas 2, 1-6) Did not God choose those who are poor?

[1] My brothers, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. [2] For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, [3] and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," [4] have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? [5] Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? [6] But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court?

(CCC 432) The name "Jesus" signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation (Cf. Jn 3:18; Acts 2:21; 5:41; 3 Jn 7; Rom 10:6-13), so that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; cf. 9:14; Jas 2:7). (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).

(Jas 2, 7) Is it not they who blaspheme the noble name?

[7] Is it not they who blaspheme the noble name that was invoked over you?

(CCC 2143) Among all the words of Revelation, there is one which is unique: the revealed name of God. God confides his name to those who believe in him; he reveals himself to them in his personal mystery. The gift of a name belongs to the order of trust and intimacy. "The Lord's name is holy." For this reason man must not abuse it. He must keep it in mind in silent, loving adoration. He will not introduce it into his own speech except to bless, praise, and glorify it (Cf. Zech 2:13; Ps 29:2; 96:2; 113:1-2). (CCC 2146) The second commandment *forbids the abuse of God's name*, i.e., every improper use of the names of God, Jesus Christ, but also of the Virgin Mary and all the saints. (CCC 2162) The second commandment forbids every improper use of God's name. Blasphemy is the use of the name of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Virgin Mary, and of the saints in an offensive way. (CCC 2148) *Blasphemy* is directly opposed to the second commandment. It consists in uttering against God - inwardly or outwardly - words of hatred, reproach, or defiance; in speaking ill of God; in failing in respect toward him in one's speech; in misusing God's name. St. James condemns those "who blaspheme that honorable name [of Jesus] by which you are called" (Jas 2:7). The prohibition of blasphemy extends to language against Christ's Church, the saints, and sacred things. It is also blasphemous to make use of God's name to cover up criminal practices, to reduce peoples to servitude, to torture persons or put them to death. The misuse of God's name to commit a crime can provoke others to repudiate religion. Blasphemy is contrary to the respect due God and his holy name. It is in itself a grave sin (Cf. CIC, can. 1369). (CCC 2149) *Oaths* which misuse God's name, though without the intention of blasphemy, show lack of respect for the Lord. The second commandment also forbids *magical use* of the divine name. [God's] name is great when spoken with respect for the greatness of his majesty. God's name is holy when said with veneration and fear of offending him (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 2, 5, 19: PL 34, 1278).

(Jas 2, 8-9) If you show partiality, you commit sin

[8] However, if you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. [9] But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

(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 1934) Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy

an equal dignity. (CCC 1935) The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design (GS 29 § 2).

(Jas 2, 10-11) You have become a transgressor of the law

[10] For whoever keeps the whole law, but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it. [11] For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not kill." Even if you do not commit adultery but kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.

(CCC 2069) The Decalogue forms a coherent whole. Each "word" refers to each of the others and to all of them; they reciprocally condition one another. The two tables shed light on one another; they form an organic unity. To transgress one commandment is to infringe all the others (Cf. Jas 2:10-11). One cannot honor another person without blessing God his Creator. One cannot adore God without loving all men, his creatures. The Decalogue brings man's religious and social life into unity. (CCC 2070) The Ten Commandments belong to God's revelation. At the same time they teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent in the nature of the human person. The Decalogue contains a privileged expression of the natural law: From the beginning, God had implanted in the heart of man the precepts of the natural law. Then he was content to remind him of them. This was the Decalogue (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 15, 1: PG 7/1, 1012). (CCC 2071) The commandments of the Decalogue, although accessible to reason alone, have been revealed. To attain a complete and certain understanding of the requirements of the natural law, sinful humanity needed this revelation: A full explanation of the commandments of the Decalogue became necessary in the state of sin because the light of reason was obscured and the will had gone astray (St. Bonaventure, *Comm. sent.* 4, 37, 1, 3). We know God's commandments through the divine revelation proposed to us in the Church, and through the voice of moral conscience. (CCC 2073) Obedience to the Commandments also implies obligations in matter which is, in itself, light. Thus abusive language is forbidden by the fifth commandment, but would be a grave offense only as a result of circumstances or the offender's intention.

(Jas 2, 12-13) Mercy triumphs over judgment

[12] So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. [13] For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

(CCC 545) Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17; cf. 1 Tim 1:15). He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Lk 15:7; cf. 7:11-32). The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). (CCC 2844) Christian prayer extends to the *forgiveness of enemies* (Cf. Mt 5:43-44), transfiguring the disciple by configuring him to his Master. Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; only hearts attuned to God's compassion can receive the gift of prayer. Forgiveness also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger

than sin. The martyrs of yesterday and today bear this witness to Jesus. Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father and of men with one another (Cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21; John Paul II, DM 14).

(Jas 2, 14-26) If faith does not have works, is dead

[14] What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? [15] If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, [16] and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? [17] So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. [18] Indeed someone might say, "You have faith and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. [19] You believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe that and tremble. [20] Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? [22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. [23] Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called "the friend of God." [24] See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. [25] And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? [26] For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

(CCC 1815) The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545). But "faith apart from works is dead" (Jas 2:26): when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body. (CCC 2447) The *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities (Cf. Isa 58:6-7; Heb 13:3). Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God (Cf. Tob 4:5-11; Sir 17:22; Mt 6:2-4): He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise (Lk 3:11). But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you (Lk 11:41). If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (Jas 2:15-16; cf. 1 Jn 3:17).

James 3

(Jas 3, 1-2) We all fall short in many respects

[1] Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you realize that we will be judged more strictly, [2] for we all fall short in many

respects. If anyone does not fall short in speech, he is a perfect man, able to bridle his whole body also.

(CCC 41) All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator" (Wis 13:5). (CCC 2028) "All Christians... are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 § 2). "Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Mos.*: PG 44, 300D). (CCC 1827) The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which "binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14); it is the *form of the virtues*; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love. (CCC 2013) "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 § 2). All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints (LG 40 § 2). (CCC 2015) The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle (Cf. 2 Tim 4). Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. in Cant.* 8: PG 44, 941C).

(Jas 3, 3-5) A small fire can set a huge forest ablaze

[3] If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide their whole bodies. [4] It is the same with ships: even though they are so large and driven by fierce winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot's inclination wishes. [5] In the same way the tongue is a small member and yet has great pretensions. Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze.

(CCC 407) The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; cf. Heb 2:14). Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action (Cf. John Paul II, CA 25) and morals. (CCC 1438) The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice (Cf. SC 109-110; CIC, cann. 1249-1253; CCEO, Cann. 880-883). These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises,

penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works). (CCC 2725) Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The "spiritual battle" of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.

(Jas 3, 6-8) The tongue is a restless evil

[6] The tongue is also a fire. It exists among our members as a world of malice, defiling the whole body and setting the entire course of our lives on fire, itself set on fire by Gehenna. [7] For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, [8] but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

(CCC 2479) Detraction and calumny destroy the *reputation and honor of one's neighbor*. Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of justice and charity.

(Jas 3, 9-12) From the mouth come blessing and cursing

[9] With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God. [10] From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This need not be so, my brothers. [11] Does a spring gush forth from the same opening both pure and brackish water? [12] Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a grapevine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh.

(CCC 2626) *Blessing* expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. (CCC 2627) Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer *ascends* in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father - we bless him for having blessed us (Cf. Eph 1:3-14; 2 Cor 1:3 7; 1 Pet 1:3-9); it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that *descends* through Christ from the Father - he blesses us (Cf. 2 Cor 13:14; Rom 15:5-6, 13; Eph 6:23-24). (CCC 2663) In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography. The Magisterium of the Church (Cf. DV 10) has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith; it is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning, always in relation to Jesus Christ.

(Jas 3, 13-16) The humility that comes from wisdom

[13] Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. [14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast

and be false to the truth. [15] Wisdom of this kind does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

(CCC 791) The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church" (LG 7 § 3). The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice" (LG 7 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 12:26). Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). (CCC 866) The Church is one: she acknowledges one Lord, confesses one faith, is born of one Baptism, forms only one Body, is given life by the one Spirit, for the sake of one hope (cf. Eph 4:3-5), at whose fulfillment all divisions will be overcome. (CCC 2791) For this reason, in spite of the divisions among Christians, this prayer to "our" Father remains our common patrimony and an urgent summons for all the baptized. In communion by faith in Christ and by Baptism, they ought to join in Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples (Cf. UR 8; 22).

(Jas 3, 17-18) The wisdom from above is pure, peaceable

[17] But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. [18] And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

(CCC 2500) The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos - which both the child and the scientist discover - "from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator," "for the author of beauty created them" (Wis 13:3, 5). [Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness (Wis 7:25-26). For [wisdom] is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail (Wis 7:29-30). I became enamored of her beauty (Wis 8:2). (CCC 2501) Created "in the image of God" (Gen 1:26), man also expresses the truth of his relationship with God the Creator by the beauty of his artistic works. Indeed, *art* is a distinctively human form of expression; beyond the search for the

necessities of life which is common to all living creatures, art is a freely given superabundance of the human being's inner riches. Arising from talent given by the Creator and from man's own effort, art is a form of practical wisdom, uniting knowledge and skill (Cf. Wis 7:16-17), to give form to the truth of reality in a language accessible to sight or hearing. To the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of beings, art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what he has created. Like any other human activity, art is not an absolute end in itself, but is ordered to and ennobled by the ultimate end of man (Cf. Pius XII, *Musicae sacrae disciplina*; Discourses of September 3 and December 25, 1950). (CCC 2513) The fine arts, but above all sacred art, "of their nature are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands. Their dedication to the increase of God's praise and of his glory is more complete, the more exclusively they are devoted to turning men's minds devoutly toward God" (SC 122).

James 4

(Jas 4, 1) Where do the conflicts among you come from?

[1] Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members?

(CCC 2327) Because of the evils and injustices that all war brings with it, we must do everything reasonably possible to avoid it. The Church prays: "From famine, pestilence, and war, O Lord, deliver us." (CCC 2307) The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war (Cf. GS 81 § 4). (CCC 2308) All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However, "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed" (GS 79 § 4). (CCC 2309) The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time: - the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; - all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; - there must be serious prospects of success; - the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the "just war" doctrine. The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.

(Jas 4, 2) You fight and wage war

[2] You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask.

(CCC 2317) Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building

up peace and avoiding war: Insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until Christ comes again; but insofar as they can vanquish sin by coming together in charity, violence itself will be vanquished and these words will be fulfilled: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (GS 78 § 6; cf. Isa 2:4). (CCC 2310) Public authorities, in this case, have the right and duty to impose on citizens *the obligations necessary for national defense*. Those who are sworn to serve their country in the armed forces are servants of the security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace (Cf. GS 79 § 5). (CCC 2311) Public authorities should make equitable provision for those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms; these are nonetheless obliged to serve the human community in some other way (Cf. GS 79 § 3). (CCC 2313) Non-combatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be respected and treated humanely. Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. Thus the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide. (CCC 2314) "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation" (GS 80 §3). A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons - to commit such crimes.

(Jas 4, 3-4) You ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions

[3] You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. [4] Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

(CCC 2330) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9). (CCC 2315) The *accumulation of arms* strikes many as a paradoxically suitable way of deterring potential adversaries from war. They see it as the most effective means of ensuring peace among nations. This method of deterrence gives rise to strong moral reservations. The *arms race* does not ensure peace. Far from eliminating the causes of war, it risks aggravating them. Spending enormous sums to produce ever new types of weapons impedes efforts to aid needy populations (Cf. Paul VI, PP 53); it thwarts the development of peoples. *Over-armament* multiplies reasons for conflict and increases the danger of escalation. (CCC 2316) *The production and the sale of arms* affect the common good of nations and of the international community. Hence public authorities have the right and duty to regulate them. The short-term pursuit of private or collective interests cannot legitimate undertakings that promote violence and conflict among nations and compromise the international juridical order. (CCC 2328) The Church and human reason assert the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflicts. Practices deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes. (CCC 2329) "The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured" (GS 81 § 3).

(Jas 4, 5) The spirit that dwells in us tends toward jealousy

[5] Or do you suppose that the scripture speaks without meaning when it says, "The spirit that he has made to dwell in us tends toward jealousy"?

(CCC 2737) "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (Jas 4:3; cf. The whole context: Jas 4:1-10; 1:5-8; 5:16). If we ask with a divided heart, we are "adulterers" (Jas 4:4); God cannot answer us, for he desires our well-being, our life. "Or do you suppose that it is in vain that the scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?'" (Jas 4:5). That our God is "jealous" for us is the sign of how true his love is. If we enter into the desire of his Spirit, we shall be heard. Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer (Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 34: PG 79, 1173). God wills that our desire should be exercised in prayer, that we may be able to receive what he is prepared to give (St. Augustine, *Ep.* 130, 8, 17: PL 33, 500).

(Jas 4, 6-10) Submit yourselves to God

[6] But he bestows a greater grace; therefore, it says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." [7] So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. [9] Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

(CCC 1784) The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

(Jas 4, 11a) Do not speak evil of one another

[11a] Do not speak evil of one another, brothers. Whoever speaks evil of a brother or judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law.

(CCC 2478) To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor's thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way: Every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to another's statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love. If that does not suffice, let the Christian try all suitable ways to bring the other to a correct interpretation so that he may be saved (St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 22).

(Jas 4, 11b-12) Who then are you to judge your neighbor?

[11b] If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. [12] There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save or to destroy. Who then are you to judge your neighbor?

(CCC 1961) God, our Creator and Redeemer, chose Israel for himself to be his people and revealed his Law to them, thus preparing for the coming of Christ.

The Law of Moses expresses many truths naturally accessible to reason. These are stated and authenticated within the covenant of salvation. (CCC 1967) The Law of the Gospel "fulfills," refines, surpasses, and leads the Old Law to its perfection (Cf. Mt 5:17-19). In the Beatitudes, the New Law *fulfills the divine promises* by elevating and orienting them toward the "kingdom of heaven." It is addressed to those open to accepting this new hope with faith - the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the pure of heart, those persecuted on account of Christ - and so marks out the surprising ways of the Kingdom.(CCC 1968) The Law of the Gospel *fulfills the commandments* of the Law. The Lord's Sermon on the Mount, far from abolishing or devaluing the moral prescriptions of the Old Law, releases their hidden potential and has new demands arise from them: it reveals their entire divine and human truth. It does not add new external precepts, but proceeds to reform the heart, the root of human acts, where man chooses between the pure and the impure (Cf. Mt 15:18-19), where faith, hope, and charity are formed and with them the other virtues. The Gospel thus brings the Law to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity (Cf. Mt 5:44,48).

(Jas 4, 13-16) All boasting in your arrogance is evil

[13] Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we shall go into such and such a town, spend a year there doing business, and make a profit" – [14] you have no idea what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears. [15] Instead you should say, "If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or that." [16] But now you are boasting in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

(CCC 305) Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?"... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6:31-33; cf. 10:29-31). (CCC 2115) God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future, and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it. Improvidence, however, can constitute a lack of responsibility. (CCC 2116) All forms of *divination* are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future (Cf. Deut 18:10; Jer 29:8). Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

(Jas 4, 17) Not to do the right thing one knows, it is a sin

[17] So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin.

(CCC 1853) Sins can be distinguished according to their objects, as can every human act; or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or according to the commandments they violate. They can also be classed according to whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself; they can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins, or again as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission. The

root of sin is in the heart of man, in his free will, according to the teaching of the Lord: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man" (Mt 15:19-20). But in the heart also resides charity, the source of the good and pure works, which sin wounds.

James 5

(Jas 5, 1-3) You have stored up treasure for the last days

[1] Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. [2] Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, [3] your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days.

(CCC 2444) "The Church's love for the poor... is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor (CA 57; cf. Lk 6:20-22, Mt 8:20; Mk 12:41-44). Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need" (Eph 4:28). It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty (Cf. CA 57). (CCC 2445) Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you (Jas 5:1-6). (CCC 1867) The catechetical tradition also recalls that there are "*sins that cry to heaven*": the blood of Abel (Cf. Gen 4:10), the sin of the Sodomites (Cf. Gen 18:20; 19:13), the cry of the people oppressed in Egypt (Cf. Ex 3:7-10), the cry of the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan (Cf. Ex 20:20-22), injustice to the wage earner (Cf. Deut 24:14-15; Jas 5:4). (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)?

(Jas 5, 4-6) You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure

[4] Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. [5] You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. [6] You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.

(CCC 2409) Even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others is against the seventh commandment: thus, deliberate retention of goods lent or of objects lost; business fraud; paying unjust wages; forcing up prices by taking advantage of the

ignorance or hardship of another (Cf. Deut 25:13-16; 24:14-15; Jas 5:4; Am 8:4-6). The following are also morally illicit: speculation in which one contrives to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must make decisions according to law; appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an enterprise; work poorly done; tax evasion; forgery of checks and invoices; excessive expenses and waste. Willfully damaging private or public property is contrary to the moral law and requires reparation. (CCC 2434) A *just wage* is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice (Cf. Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14-15; Jas 5:4). In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good" (GS 67 § 2). Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.

(Jas 5, 7-11) Be patient, until the coming of the Lord

[7] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. [8] You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Do not complain, brothers, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. [10] Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] Indeed we call blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, because "the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

(CCC 2822) Our Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4). He "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet 3:9; cf. Mt 18:14). His commandment is "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34; cf. 1 Jn 3; 4; Lk 10:25-37). This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses his entire will. (CCC 1048) "*We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men*" (GS 39 § 1). (CCC 524) When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (Cf. Rev 22:17). By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

(Jas 5, 12) Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth

[12] But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No," that you may not incur condemnation.

(CCC 2153) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained the second commandment: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all.... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Mt 5:33-34, 37; cf. Jas 5:12). Jesus teaches that every oath involves a reference to God and that God's presence and his truth must be honored in all speech. Discretion in calling upon God is allied with a respectful awareness of his presence, which all our assertions either witness to or mock. (CCC 2154) Following St. Paul (Cf. 2 Cor 1:23; Gal 1:20), the tradition of the Church has understood Jesus' words as not excluding oaths made for grave and right reasons (for example, in court). "An oath, that is the invocation of the divine name as a witness to truth, cannot be taken unless in truth, in judgment, and in justice" (CIC, can. 1199 § 1).

(Jas 5, 13-14) Anyone sick should summon the presbyters

[13] Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. [14] Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord,

(CCC 1514) The Anointing of the Sick "is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived" (SC 73; cf. CIC, Cann. 1004 § 1; 1005; 1007; CCEO, Can. 738). (CCC 1512) From ancient times in the liturgical traditions of both East and West, we have testimonies to the practice of anointings of the sick with blessed oil. Over the centuries the Anointing of the Sick was conferred more and more exclusively on those at the point of death. Because of this it received the name "Extreme Unction." Notwithstanding this evolution the liturgy has never failed to beg the Lord that the sick person may recover his health if it would be conducive to his salvation (Cf. Council of Trent (1551) DS 1696). (CCC 1513) The Apostolic Constitution *Sacram unktionem infirmorum* (Paul VI, November 30, 1972), following upon the Second Vatican Council (Cf. SC 73), established that henceforth, in the Roman Rite, the following be observed: The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with duly blessed oil - pressed from olives or from other plants - saying, only once: "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up" (Cf. CIC, Can. 847 § 1). (CCC 1515) If a sick person who received this anointing recovers his health, he can in the case of another grave illness receive this sacrament again. If during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious, the sacrament may be repeated. It is fitting to receive the Anointing of the Sick just prior to a serious operation. The same holds for the elderly whose frailty becomes more pronounced.

(Jas 5, 15) The prayer of faith will save the sick person

[15] and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

(CCC 1516) Only priests (bishops and presbyters) are ministers of the Anointing of the Sick (Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1697; 1719; CIC, Can. 1003; CCEO, Can. 739 § 1). It is the duty of pastors to instruct the faithful on the

benefits of this sacrament. The faithful should encourage the sick to call for a priest to receive this sacrament. The sick should prepare themselves to receive it with good dispositions, assisted by their pastor and the whole ecclesial community, which is invited to surround the sick in a special way through their prayers and fraternal attention. (CCC 1517) Like all the sacraments the Anointing of the Sick is a liturgical and communal celebration (Cf. SC 27), whether it takes place in the family home, a hospital or church, for a single sick person or a whole group of sick persons. It is very fitting to celebrate it within the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord's Passover. If circumstances suggest it, the celebration of the sacrament can be preceded by the sacrament of Penance and followed by the sacrament of the Eucharist. As the sacrament of Christ's Passover the Eucharist should always be the last sacrament of the earthly journey, the "viaticum" for "passing over" to eternal life. (CCC 1518) Word and sacrament form an indivisible whole. The Liturgy of the Word, preceded by an act of repentance, opens the celebration. The words of Christ, the witness of the apostles, awaken the faith of the sick person and of the community to ask the Lord for the strength of his Spirit. (CCC 1519) The celebration of the sacrament includes the following principal elements: the "priests of the Church" (Jas 5:14) - in silence - lay hands on the sick; they pray over them in the faith of the Church (Cf. Jas 5:15) - this is the epiclesis proper to this sacrament; they then anoint them with oil blessed, if possible, by the bishop. These liturgical actions indicate what grace this sacrament confers upon the sick.

(Jas 5, 16a) Therefore, confess your sins

[16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

(CCC 1520) *A particular gift of the Holy Spirit.* The first grace of this sacrament is one of strengthening, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age. This grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews trust and faith in God and strengthens against the temptations of the evil one, the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the face of death (Cf. Heb 2:15). This assistance from the Lord by the power of his Spirit is meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body if such is God's will (Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1325). Furthermore, "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:15; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1717). (CCC 1521) *Union with the passion of Christ.* By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ's Passion: in a certain way he is *consecrated* to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior's redemptive Passion. Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus. (CCC 1522) *An ecclesial grace.* The sick who receive this sacrament, "by freely uniting themselves to the passion and death of Christ," "contribute to the good of the People of God" (LG 11 § 2). By celebrating this sacrament the Church, in the communion of saints, intercedes for the benefit of the sick person, and he, for his part, through the grace of this sacrament, contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers herself through Christ to God the Father. (CCC 1523) *A preparation for the final journey.* If the sacrament of anointing of the sick is given to all who suffer from serious illness and infirmity, even more rightly is it given to those at the point of departing this life; so it is also

called *sacramentum exeuntium* (the sacrament of those departing) (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1698). The Anointing of the Sick completes our conformity to the death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it. It completes the holy anointings that mark the whole Christian life: that of Baptism which sealed the new life in us, and that of Confirmation which strengthened us for the combat of this life. This last anointing fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house (Council of Trent (1551): DS 1694).

(Jas 5, 16b-20) The fervent prayer is very powerful

The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. [17] Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land. [18] Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. [19] My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, [20] he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

(CCC 2582) Elijah is the "father" of the prophets, "the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob" (Ps 24:6). Elijah's name, "The Lord is my God," foretells the people's cry in response to his prayer on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:39). St. James refers to Elijah in order to encourage us to pray: "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (Jas 5:16b-18). (CCC 543) *Everyone* is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations (Cf. Mt 8:11; 10:5-7; 28:19). To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (LG 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32). (CCC 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 1444) In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19; cf. Mt 18:18; 28:16-20). "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head" (LG 22 § 2).