

1 Letter of John

1John 1

(1Jn 1, 1-4) We have seen it and testify and proclaim

[1] What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life – [2] for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us – [3] what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. [4] We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.

(CCC 425) The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) And they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete (1 Jn 1:1-4). (CCC 2781) When we pray to the Father, we are *in communion with him* and with his Son, Jesus Christ (Cf. 1 Jn 1:3). Then we know and recognize him with an ever new sense of wonder. The first phrase of the Our Father is a blessing of adoration before it is a supplication. For it is the glory of God that we should recognize him as "Father," the true God. We give him thanks for having revealed his name to us, for the gift of believing in it, and for the indwelling of his Presence in us.

(1Jn 1, 5-7) God is light, and in him there is no darkness

[5] Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. [6] If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie and do not act in truth. [7] But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

(CCC 214) God, "He who is", revealed himself to Israel as the one "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. "I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness" (Ps 138:2; cf. Ps 85:11). He is the Truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; "God is love", as the apostle John teaches (1 Jn 1:5; 4:8). (CCC 2470) The disciple of Christ consents to "live in the truth,"

that is, in the simplicity of a life in conformity with the Lord's example, abiding in his truth. "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth" (1 Jn 1:6). (CCC 2631) The first movement of the prayer of petition is *asking forgiveness*, like the tax collector in the parable: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Lk 18:13). It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that "we receive from him whatever we ask" (1 Jn 3:22; cf. 1:7-2:2). Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.

(1Jn 1, 8-10) He will forgive our sins and cleanse us

[8] If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. [10] If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

(CCC 1425) "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). One must appreciate the magnitude of the gift God has given us in the sacraments of Christian initiation in order to grasp the degree to which sin is excluded for him who has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). But the apostle John also says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8). And the Lord himself taught us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses" (Cf. Lk 11:4; Mt 6:12), linking our forgiveness of one another's offenses to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us. (CCC 1847) "God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923). To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 8-9). (CCC 827) "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8 § 3; Cf. UR 3; 6; Heb 2:17; 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21). All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners (Cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10). In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time (Cf. Mt 13:24-30). Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness: The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Paul VI, CPG § 19).

1John 2

(1Jn 2, 1) We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus

[1] My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

(CCC 519) All Christ's riches "are for every individual and are everybody's property" (John Paul II, RH II). Christ did not live his life for himself but *for us*, from his Incarnation "for us men and for our salvation" to his death "for our sins" and Resurrection "for our justification" (Cor 15:3; Rom 4:25). He is still "our advocate with the Father", who "always lives to make intercession" for us (1 Jn 2:1; Heb 7:25). He remains ever "in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us" (Heb 9:24). (CCC 2634) Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners (Cf. Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; 1 Tim 2:5-8). He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us... and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27).

(1Jn 2, 2) He is expiation for the sins of the whole world

[2] He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.

(CCC 604) By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10; 4:19). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). (CCC 606) The Son of God, who came down "from heaven, not to do (his) own will, but the will of him who sent (him)" (Jn 6:38), said on coming into the world, "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:5-10). From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34). The sacrifice of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world"(1 Jn 2:2) expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "[for] I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (Jn 10:17; 14:31).

(1Jn 2, 3-6) The love of God is truly perfected in him

[3] The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. [4] Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [5] But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: [6] whoever claims to abide in him ought to live (just) as he lived.

(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).

(1Jn 2, 7-8) I do write a new commandment to you

[7] Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. [8] And yet I do write a new commandment to you, which holds true in him and among you, for the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

(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).

(1Jn 2, 9-11) Whoever hates his brother is in darkness

[9] Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. [10] Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall. [11] Whoever hates his brother is in darkness; he walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(CCC 2303) Deliberate *hatred* is contrary to charity. Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil. Hatred of the neighbor is a grave sin when one deliberately desires him grave harm. "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:44-45). (CCC 2862) The fifth petition begs God's mercy for our offences, mercy which can penetrate our hearts only if we have learned to forgive our enemies, with the example and help of Christ.

(1Jn 2, 12-14) Your sins have been forgiven

[12] I am writing to you, children, because your sins have been forgiven for his name's sake. [13] I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one. [14] I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

(CCC 2222) Parents must regard their children as *children of God* and respect them as *human persons*. Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, they educate their children to fulfill God's law. (CCC 2225) Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children*. Parents should initiate their children

at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the "first heralds" for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church (LG 11 § 2). A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life. (CCC 2216) Filial respect is shown by true docility and *obedience*. "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.... When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you" (Prov 6:20-22). "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke" (Prov 13:1).

(1Jn 2, 15-17) Who does the will of God remains forever

[15] Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever.

(CCC 397) Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of (Cf. Gen 3:1-11; Rom 5:19). All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness. (CCC 398) In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to "be like God", but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*: PG 91, 1156C; cf. Gen 3:5). (CCC 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 1869) Thus sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them. Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. "Structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a "social sin" (John Paul II, RP 16).

(1Jn 2, 18-19) It is the last hour; the antichrist is coming

[18] Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. Thus we know this is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not really of our number; if they had been, they would have remained with us. Their desertion shows that none of them was of our number.

(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).

(1Jn 2, 20) But you have the anointing from the holy one

[20] But you have the anointing that comes from the holy one, and you all have knowledge.

(CCC 1241) The *anointing with sacred chrism*, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one "anointed" by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king (Cf. RBC 62). (CCC 1289) Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (*chrism*) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38). This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason the Eastern Churches call this sacrament *Chrismation*, anointing with chrism, or *myron* which means "chrism." In the West, the term *Confirmation* suggests that this sacrament both confirms baptism, and strengthens baptismal grace. (CCC 1294) Anointing with oil has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening; the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, that is, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off "the aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:15). (CCC 1831) The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David (Cf. Isa 11:1-2). They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path (Ps 143:10). For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:14 17).

(1Jn 2, 21-23) Every lie is alien to the truth

[21] I write to you not because you do not know the truth but because you do, and because every lie is alien to the truth. [22] Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the

Father and the Son, this is the antichrist. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.

(CCC 91) All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them (Cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27) and guides them into all truth (Cf. Jn 16:13). (CCC 92) "The whole body of the faithful... cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals" (LG 12; cf. St. Augustine, *De praed. sanct.* 14, 27: PL 44, 980). (CCC 93) "By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*),... receives... the faith, once for all delivered to the saints.... The People unflinchingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life" (LG 12; cf. Jude 3). (CCC 2482) "A *lie* consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving" (St. Augustine, *De mendacio* 4, 5: PL 40: 491). The Lord denounces lying as the work of the devil: "You are of your father the devil,... there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). (CCC 678) Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgement of the Last Day in his preaching (cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3:19; Mt 3:7-12). Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

(1Jn 2, 24-26) The promise that he made us: eternal life

[24] Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made us: eternal life. [26] I write you these things about those who would deceive you.

(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 1053) "We believe that the multitude of those gathered around Jesus and Mary in Paradise forms the Church of heaven, where in eternal blessedness they see God as he is and where they are also, to various degrees, associated with the holy angels in the divine governance exercised by Christ in glory, by interceding for us and helping our weakness by their fraternal concern" (Paul VI, CPG § 29). (CCC 1054) Those who die in God's grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God.

(1Jn 2, 27-29) The anointing that you received from him

[27] As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, so that you do not need anyone to teach you. But his anointing

teaches you about everything and is true and not false; just as it taught you, remain in him. [28] And now, children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame by him at his coming. [29] If you consider that he is righteous, you also know that everyone who acts in righteousness is begotten by him.

(CCC 695) *Anointing*. The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit (Cf. 1 Jn 2:20:27; 2 Cor 1:21), to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew "*messiah*") means the one "anointed" by God's Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David (Cf. Ex 30:22-32; 1 Sam 16:13). But Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established him as "Christ" (Cf. Lk 4: 18-19; Isa 61:1). The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth, and prompted Simeon to come to the temple to see the Christ of the Lord (Cf. Lk 2:11, 26-27). The Spirit filled Christ and the power of the Spirit went out from him in his acts of healing and of saving (Cf. Lk 4:1; 6:19; 8:46). Finally, it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11). Now, fully established as "Christ" in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute - in their union with the humanity of the Son of God - that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13; cf. Acts 2:36): "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression. (CCC 2778) This power of the Spirit who introduces us to the Lord's Prayer is expressed in the liturgies of East and of West by the beautiful, characteristically Christian expression: *parrhesia*, straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved (Cf. Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19; 1 Jn 2:28; 3:21; 5:14).

1John 3

(1Jn 3, 1) We may be called the children of God, so we are

[1] See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

(CCC 1692) The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God" (Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:1). "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer. (CCC 1691) "Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God" (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 21 in nat. Dom.*, 3: PL 54, 192C).

(1Jn 3, 2) What we shall be has not yet been revealed

[2] Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

(CCC 163) Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God "face to face", "as he is" (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). So faith is already the beginning of eternal life: When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy (St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15, 36: PG 32, 132; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 4, 1). (CCC 1023) Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face (1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4): By virtue of our apostolic authority, we define the following: According to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints... and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's holy Baptism (provided they were not in need of purification when they died,... or, if they then did need or will need some purification, when they have been purified after death,...) already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment - and this since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven - have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature (Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000; cf. LG 49). (CCC 1720) The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man: - the coming of the Kingdom of God (Cf. Mt 4:17); - the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8; cf. 1 Jn 2; 1 Cor 13:12) - entering into the joy of the Lord (Mt 25:21-23); - entering into God's rest (Cf. Heb 4:7-11): There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end? (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 22, 30, 5: PL 41, 804). (CCC 1721) God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life (2 Pet 1:4; cf. 1 Jn 17:3). With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ (Cf. Rom 8:18) and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.

(1Jn 3, 3) Who has this hope makes himself pure

[3] Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

(CCC 2771) In the Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer also reveals the *eschatological* character of its petitions. It is the proper prayer of "the end-time," the time of salvation that began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and will be fulfilled with the Lord's return. The petitions addressed to our Father, as distinct from the prayers of the old covenant, rely on the mystery of salvation already accomplished, once for all, in Christ crucified and risen. (CCC 2772) From this unshakeable faith springs forth the hope that sustains each of the seven petitions, which express the groanings of the present age, this time of patience and expectation during which "it does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn 3:2; cf.

Col 3:4). The Eucharist and the Lord's Prayer look eagerly for the Lord's return, "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

(1Jn 3, 4) Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness

[4] Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.

(CCC 1850) Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight" (Ps 51:4). Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods" (Gen 3:5), knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14, 28: PL 41, 436). In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation (cf. Phil 2:6-9). (CCC 1849) Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 22: PL 42, 418; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 71, 6).

(1Jn 3, 5-7) No one who remains in him sins

[5] You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. [6] No one who remains in him sins; no one who sins has seen him or known him. [7] Children, let no one deceive you. The person who acts in righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous.

(CCC 457) The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God*, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world", and "he was revealed to take away sins" (1 Jn 4:10; 4:14; 3:5). Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Saviour; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech* 15: PG 45, 48B). (CCC 458) The Word became flesh *so that thus we might know God's love*: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (1 Jn 4:9). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16). (CCC 460) The Word became flesh to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pt 1:4): "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939). "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God" (St. Athanasius, *De inc.* 54, 3: PG 25, 192B). "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57, 1-4).

(1Jn 3, 8-10) No one who is begotten by God commits sin

[8] Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is begotten by God commits sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. [10] In this way, the children of God and the children of the devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.

(CCC 413) "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.... It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world" (Wis 1:13; 2:24). (CCC 414) Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God. (CCC 394) Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning", who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father (Jn 8:44; cf. Mt 4:1-11). "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (I Jn 3:8). In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (CCC 395) The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8:28).

(1Jn 3, 11-15) Who hates his brother is a murderer

[11] For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another, [12] unlike Cain who belonged to the evil one and slaughtered his brother. Why did he slaughter him? Because his own works were evil, and those of his brother righteous. [13] Do not be amazed, (then,) brothers, if the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him.

(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). (CCC 1033) We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Cf. Mt

25:31-46). To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

(1Jn 3, 16-18) He laid down his life for us

[16] The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? [18] Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

(CCC 2446) St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs" (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Lazaro* 2, 5: PG 48, 992). "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity" (AA 8 § 5): When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice (St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*. 3, 21: PL 77, 87). (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).

(1Jn 3, 19-21) God is greater than our hearts

[19] (Now) this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him [20] in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. [21] Beloved, if (our) hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God

(CCC 208) Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance. Before the burning bush, Moses takes off his sandals and veils his face in the presence of God's holiness (Cf. Ex 3:5-6). Before the glory of the thrice-holy God, Isaiah cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8). But because God is holy, he can forgive the man who realizes that he is a sinner before him: "I will not execute my fierce anger... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst" (Hos 11:9). The apostle John says likewise: "We shall... reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 Jn 3:19-20). (CCC 1781) Conscience enables one to assume *responsibility* for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. The verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good

that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God: We shall... reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything (1 Jn 3:19-20).

(1Jn 3, 22-23) Believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ

[22] and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. [23] And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us.

(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 178) We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 176) Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words. (CCC 182) We believe all "that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed" (Paul VI, CPG § 20). (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).

(1Jn 3, 24) Who keeps his commandments remains in him

[24] Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.

(CCC 1197) Christ is the true temple of God, "the place where his glory dwells"; by the grace of God, Christians also become the temples of the Holy Spirit, living stones out of which the Church is built. (CCC 1704) The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good" (GS 15 § 2). (CCC 739) Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body. (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).

1John 4

(1Jn 4, 1) Test the spirits, whether they belong to God

[1] Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

(CCC 2008) The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit. (CCC 306) God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan. (CCC 970) "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men... flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it" (LG 60). "No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source" (LG 62).

(1Jn 4, 2) How you can know the Spirit of God

[2] This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God,

(CCC 463) Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1 Jn 4:2). Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings "the mystery of our religion": "He was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). (CCC 465) The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh". (Cf. 1 Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7). But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father", and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father. (Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126). (CCC 480)

Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men. (CCC 483) The Incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word.

(1Jn 4, 3) The spirit of the antichrist is already in the world

[3] And every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world.

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

(1Jn 4, 4) You belong to God, children

[4] You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

(CCC 420) The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). (CCC 539) The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder (Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27). Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father. (CCC 2864) In the last petition, "but deliver us from evil," Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already

won by Christ, over the "ruler of this world," Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation.

(1Jn 4, 5) They belong to the world

[5] They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them.

(CCC 408) The consequences of original sin and of all men's personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition aptly described in St. John's expression, "the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). This expression can also refer to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins (Cf. John Paul II, RP 16). (CCC 1865) Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root.

(1Jn 4, 6) Anyone who knows God listens to us

[6] We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

(CCC 216) God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world (Cf. Wis 13:1-9). God, who alone made heaven and earth, can alone impart true knowledge of every created thing in relation to himself (Cf. Ps 115:15; Wis 7:17-21). (CCC 215) "The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever" (Ps 119:160) "and now, O LORD God, you are God, and your words are true" (2 Sam 7:28); this is why God's promises always come true (Cf. Dt 7:9). God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. The beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness and faithfulness. (CCC 217) God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is "true instruction" (Mal 2:6). When he sends his Son into the world it will be "to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37): "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true" (1 Jn 5:20; cf. Jn 17:3). (CCC 1797) For the man who has committed evil, the verdict of his conscience remains a pledge of conversion and of hope. (CCC 1714) Man, having been wounded in his nature by original sin, is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising his freedom.

(1Jn 4, 7-8) God is love

[7] Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. [8] Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

(CCC 733) "God is Love" (1 Jn 4:8,16) and love is his first gift, containing all others. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). (CCC 214) God, "He who is", revealed himself to Israel as the one "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. "I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness" (Ps 138:2; cf. Ps 85:11).

He is the Truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; "God is love", as the apostle John teaches (1 Jn 1:5; 4:8). (CCC 221) But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8, 16): God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret (Cf. 1 Cor 2:7-16; Eph 3:9-12): God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange. (CCC 1428) Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8 § 3). This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a "contrite heart," drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first (Ps 51:17; cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32; 1 Jn 4:10).

(1Jn 4, 9) The love of God was revealed to us

[9] In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.

(CCC 458) The Word became flesh *so that thus we might know God's love*: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (1 Jn 4:9). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16). (CCC 516) Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7, "my beloved Son"). Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love... among us" (Jn 4:9). (CCC 517) Christ's whole life is a mystery of *redemption*. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross (Cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 2 Pt 1:18-19), but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life: - already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty (Cf. 2 Cor 8:9); - in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience (Cf. Lk 2:51); - in his word which purifies its hearers (Cf. Jn 15:3); - in his healings and exorcisms by which "he took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4); - and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us (Cf. Rom 4:25).

(1Jn 4, 10) God sent his Son as expiation for our sins

[10] In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

(CCC 604) By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10; 4:19). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). (CCC 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 620) Our salvation flows from

God's initiative of love for us, because "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19).

(1Jn 4, 11-12) If we love one another God remains in us

[11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

(CCC 735) He, then, gives us the "pledge" or "first fruits" of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as "God [has] loved us" (1 Jn 4:11-12; cf. Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:21). This love (the "charity" of 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received "power" from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; cf. 1 Cor 13). (CCC 736) By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit:... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25; cf. Mt 16:24-26). Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory (St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15, 36: PG 32, 132).

(1Jn 4, 13-14) We know that we remain in him and he in us

[13] This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. [14] Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world.

(CCC 456) With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." (CCC 459) The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6). On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!" (Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5). Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example (Cf. Mk 8:34). (CCC 1428) Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8 § 3). This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a "contrite heart," drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first (Ps 51:17; cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32; 1 Jn 4:10).

(1Jn 4, 15-18) Who remains in love remains in God

[15] Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. [16] We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. [17] In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love

drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love.

(CCC 231) The God of our faith has revealed himself as He who is; and he has made himself known as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). God's very being is Truth and Love. (CCC 220) God's love is "everlasting" (Isa 54:8): "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you" (Isa 54: 10; cf. 54:8). Through Jeremiah, God declares to his people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jer 31:3). (CCC 733) "God is Love" (1 Jn 4:8,16) and love is his first gift, containing all others. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). (CCC 605) At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt 18:14). He affirms that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us (Mt 20:28; cf. Rom 5:18-19). The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer" (Council of Quiercy (853): DS 624; cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Jn 2:2).

(1Jn 4, 19-21) Who loves God must also love his brother

[19] We love because he first loved us. [20] If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

(CCC 1844) By charity, we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for love of God. Charity, the form of all the virtues, "binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). (CCC 1828) The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us" (Cf. 1 Jn 4:19): If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages,... we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands... we are in the position of children (St. Basil, *Reg. fus. tract., prol.* 3 PG 31, 896 B). (CCC 25) To conclude [...], it is fitting to recall this pastoral principle stated by the *Roman Catechism*: The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (*Roman Catechism*, Preface 10; cf. 1 Cor 13: 8).

1John 5

(1Jn 5, 1-3) His commandments are not burdensome

[1] Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the father loves (also) the one begotten by

him. [2] In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. [3] For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome,

(CCC 2780) We can invoke God as "Father" because *he is revealed to us* by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The personal relation of the Son to the Father is something that man cannot conceive of nor the angelic powers even dimly see: and yet, the Spirit of the Son grants a participation in that very relation to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God (Cf. Jn 1:1; 1 Jn 5:1). (CCC 2790) Grammatically, "our" qualifies a reality common to more than one person. There is only one God, and he is recognized as Father by those who, through faith in his only Son, are reborn of him by water and the Spirit (Cf. 1 Jn 5:1; Jn 3:5). The *Church* is this new communion of God and men. United with the only Son, who has become "the firstborn among many brethren," she is in communion with one and the same Father in one and the same Holy Spirit (Rom 8:29; Cf. Eph 4:4-6). In praying "our" Father, each of the baptized is praying in this communion: "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32).

(1Jn 5, 4-5) Who is begotten by God conquers the world

[4] for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. [5] Who (indeed) is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

(CCC 410) After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall (Cf. Gen 3:9, 15). This passage in Genesis is called the *Protoevangelium* ("first gospel"): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers. (CCC 411) The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam (Cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45; Phil 2:8; Rom 5:19-20). Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the "*Proto-evangelium*" as Mary, the mother of Christ, the "new Eve". Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life (Cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: DS 2803; Council of Trent: DS 1573).

(1Jn 5, 6-8) Jesus Christ came through water and blood

[6] This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth. [7] So there are three that testify, [8] the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and the three are of one accord.

(CCC 1225) In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to be baptized (Mk 10:38; cf. Lk 12:50). The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life (Cf. Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6-8). From then on, it is possible "to be born of water and the Spirit" (Cf. Jn 3:5) in order to enter the Kingdom of God. See where you are baptized,

see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved (St. Ambrose, *De sacr.* 2, 2, 6: PL 16, 444; cf. Jn 3:5). (CCC 694) *Water*. The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified (Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8) as its source and welling up in us to eternal life (Cf. Jn 4:10-14; 7:38; Ex 17:1-6; Isa 55:1; Zech 14:8; 1 Cor 10:4; Rev 21:6; 22:17).

(1Jn 5, 9-11) The testimony of God is surely greater

[9] If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this, that he has testified on behalf of his Son. [10] Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar by not believing the testimony God has given about his Son. [11] And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

(CCC 2466) In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. "Full of grace and truth," he came as the "light of the world," he *is the Truth* (Jn 1:14; 8:12; cf. 14:6). "Whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46). The disciple of Jesus continues in his word so as to know "the truth [that] will make you free" and that sanctifies (Jn 8:32; cf. 17:17). To follow Jesus is to live in "the Spirit of truth," whom the Father sends in his name and who leads "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes or No.'" (Mt 5:37). (CCC 2506) The Christian is not to "be ashamed of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8) in deed and word. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith.

(1Jn 5, 12-13) You may know that you have eternal life

[12] Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life. [13] I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

(CCC 994) But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54). Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39). The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22).

(1Jn 5, 14-15) What we have asked him for is ours

[14] And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. [15] And if we know that he hears us in

regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours.

(CCC 2778) This power of the Spirit who introduces us to the Lord's Prayer is expressed in the liturgies of East and of West by the beautiful, characteristically Christian expression: *parrhesia*, straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved (Cf. Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19; 1 Jn 2:28; 3:21; 5:14). (CCC 2827) "If any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him" (Jn 9:31; cf. 1 Jn 5:14). Such is the power of the Church's prayer in the name of her Lord, above all in the Eucharist. Her prayer is also a communion of intercession with the all-holy Mother of God (Cf. Lk 1:38, 49) and all the saints who have been pleasing to the Lord because they willed his will alone: It would not be inconsistent with the truth to understand the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," to mean: "in the Church as in our Lord Jesus Christ himself"; or "in the Bride who has been betrothed, just as in the Bridegroom who has accomplished the will of the Father" (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom.* 2, 6, 24: PL 34, 1279).

(1Jn 5, 16-17) There is sin that is not deadly

[16] If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, he should pray to God and he will give him life. This is only for those whose sin is not deadly. There is such a thing as deadly sin, about which I do not say that you should pray. [17] All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.

(CCC 1488) To the eyes of faith no evil is graver than sin and nothing has worse consequences for sinners themselves, for the Church, and for the whole world. (CCC 1864) "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven" (Mt 12:31; cf. Mk 3:29; Lk 12:10). There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit (Cf. John Paul II, *DeV* 46). Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss. (CCC 1862) One commits *venial sin* when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full knowledge or without complete consent. (CCC 1863) Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment. Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. However venial sin does not break the covenant with God. With God's grace it is humanly repairable. "Venial sin does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, and consequently eternal happiness" (John Paul II, RP 17 § 9). While he is in the flesh, man cannot help but have at least some light sins. But do not despise these sins which we call "light": if you take them for light when you weigh them, tremble when you count them. A number of light objects makes a great mass; a number of drops fills a river; a number of grains makes a heap. What then is our hope? Above all, confession... (St. Augustine, *In ep. Jo.* 1, 6: PL 35, 1982).

(1Jn 5, 18-19) The one begotten by God he protects

[18] We know that no one begotten by God sins; but the one begotten by God he protects, and the evil one cannot touch him. [19] We

know that we belong to God, and the whole world is under the power of the evil one.

(CCC 2852) "A murderer from the beginning,... a liar and the father of lies," Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world" (Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9). Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death" (*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 125). Now "we know that anyone born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one" (1 Jn 5:18-19). The Lord who has taken away your sin and pardoned your faults also protects you and keeps you from the wiles of your adversary the devil, so that the enemy, who is accustomed to leading into sin, may not surprise you. One who entrusts himself to God does not dread the devil. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 5, 4, 30: PL 16, 454; cf. Rom 8:31).

(1Jn 5, 20-21) We are in the one who is true his Son Jesus

[20] We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to know the one who is true. And we are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. [21] Children, be on your guard against idols.

(CCC 217) God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is "true instruction" (Mal 2:6). When he sends his Son into the world it will be "to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37): "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true" (1 Jn 5:20; cf. Jn 17:3). (CCC 2087) Our moral life has its source in faith in God who reveals his love to us. St. Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26) as our first obligation. He shows that "ignorance of God" is the principle and explanation of all moral deviations (cf. Rom 1:18-32). Our duty toward God is to believe in him and to bear witness to him. (CCC 2097) To adore God is to acknowledge, in respect and absolute submission, the "nothingness of the creature" who would not exist but for God. To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to humble oneself, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name (cf. Lk 1:46-49). The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.

2 Letter of John

(2Jn vv. 1-4) Your children walking in the truth

[1] The Presbyter to the chosen Lady and to her children whom I love in truth - and not only I but also all who know the truth - [2] because of the truth that dwells in us and will be with us forever. [3] Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son in truth and love. [4] I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth just as we were commanded by the Father.

(CCC 851) *Missionary motivation.* It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14; cf. AA 6; *RMiss* 11). Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the

knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

(2Jn vv. 5-6) Let us love one another

[5] But now, Lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing a new commandment but the one we have had from the beginning: let us love one another. [6] For this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, as you heard from the beginning, in which you should walk.

(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).

(2Jn vv. 7-13) Deceivers have gone out into the world

[7] Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh; such is the deceitful one and the antichrist. [8] Look to yourselves that you do not lose what we worked for but may receive a full recompense. [9] Anyone who is so "progressive" as not to remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son. [10] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him in your house or even greet him; [11] for whoever greets him shares in his evil works. [12] Although I have much to write to you, I do not intend to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and to speak face to face so that our joy may be complete. [13] The children of your chosen sister send you greetings.

(CCC 465) The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh". (Cf. 1 Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7). But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father", and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father. (Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126). (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; 1 Jn 2:18, 22).

3 Letter of John

(3Jn vv. 1-4) My children are walking in the truth

[1] The Presbyter to the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth. [2] Beloved, I hope you are prospering in every respect and are in good health, just as your soul is prospering. [3] I rejoiced greatly when some of the brothers came and testified to how truly you walk in the truth. [4] Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

(CCC 2470) The disciple of Christ consents to "live in the truth," that is, in the simplicity of a life in conformity with the Lord's example, abiding in his truth. "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth" (1 Jn 1:6). (CCC 2469) "Men could not live with one another if there were not mutual confidence that they were being truthful to one another" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II 109, 3 ad 1). The virtue of truth gives another his just due. Truthfulness keeps to the just mean between what ought to be expressed and what ought to be kept secret: it entails honesty and discretion. In justice, "as a matter of honor, one man owes it to another to manifest the truth" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 109, 3, corp. Art).

(3Jn vv. 5-8) They have testified to your love

[5] Beloved, you are faithful in all you do for the brothers, especially for strangers; [6] they have testified to your love before the church. Please help them in a way worthy of God to continue their journey. [7] For they have set out for the sake of the Name and are accepting nothing from the pagans. [8] Therefore, we ought to support such persons, so that we may be co-workers in the truth.

(CCC 1826) "If I... have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I... have not charity, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:1-4). Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But *the greatest of these is charity*" (1 Cor 13:13). (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.

(3Jn vv. 9-15) Do not imitate evil but imitate good

[9] I wrote to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves to dominate, does not acknowledge us. [10] Therefore, if I come, I will draw attention to what he is doing, spreading evil nonsense about us. And not content with that, he will not receive the brothers, hindering those who wish to do so and expelling them from the church. [11] Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does what is good is of God; whoever does what is evil has never seen God. [12] Demetrius receives a good report from all, even from the truth itself. We give our testimonial as well, and you know our testimony is true. [13] I have much to write to you, but I do not wish to write with pen and ink. [14] Instead, I hope to see you soon, when we can talk face to face. [15] Peace be with you. The friends greet you; greet the friends there each by name.

(CCC 1732) As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of *choosing between good and evil*, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach. (CCC 1733) The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin" (Cf. Rom 6:17). (CCC 1739) *Freedom and sin*. Man's freedom is limited and fallible. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom. (CCC 1748) "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1).

Letter of Jude

(Jude, vv. 1-3) To encourage you to contend for the faith

[1] Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ: [2] may mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance. [3] Beloved, although I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel a need to write to encourage you to contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones.

(CCC 171) The Church, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth", faithfully guards "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints". She guards the memory of Christ's words; it is she who from generation to generation hands on the apostles' confession of faith (I Tim 3:15; Jude 3). As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith. (CCC 170) We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. "The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities [which they express]" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 1,2, ad 2). All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more. (CCC 172) Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God and Father (Cf. Eph 4:4-6). St. Irenaeus of Lyons, a witness of this faith, declared.

(Jude, vv. 4-6) I wish to remind you

[4] For there have been some intruders, who long ago were designated for this condemnation, godless persons, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. [5] I wish to remind you, although you know all things, that (the) Lord who once saved a people from the land of Egypt later destroyed those who did not believe. [6] The angels too, who did not keep to their own domain but deserted their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains, in gloom, for the judgment of the great day.

(CCC 173) "Indeed, the Church, though scattered throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, having received the faith from the apostles and their disciples... guards [this preaching and faith] with care, as dwelling in but a single house, and similarly believes as if having but one soul and a single heart, and preaches, teaches and hands on this faith with a unanimous voice, as if possessing only one mouth" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 1, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 549-552). (CCC 174) "For though languages differ throughout the world, the content of the Tradition is one and the same. The Churches established in Germany have no other faith or Tradition, nor do those of the Iberians, nor those of the Celts, nor those of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, nor those established at the centre of the world..." (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 1, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 552-553). The Church's message "is true and solid, in which one and the same way of salvation appears throughout the whole world" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 20, 1: PG 7/2, 1177). (CCC 175) "We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966).

(Jude, vv. 7-8) These dreamers defile the flesh

[7] Likewise, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. [8] Similarly, these dreamers nevertheless also defile the flesh, scorn lordship, and revile glorious beings.

(CCC 1037) God predestines no one to go to hell (Cf. Council of Orange II (529): DS 397; Council of Trent (1547):1567); for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9): Father, accept this offering from your whole family. Grant us your peace in this life, save us from final damnation, and count us among those you have chosen [*Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 88].

(Jude, vv. 9-11) They revile what they do not understand

[9] Yet the archangel Michael, when he argued with the devil in a dispute over the body of Moses, did not venture to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him but said, "May the Lord rebuke you!" [10] But these people revile what they do not understand and are destroyed by what they know by nature like irrational animals. [11] Woe to them! They followed the way of Cain, abandoned themselves to Balaam's error for the sake of gain, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

(CCC 1038) The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15), will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29). Then Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him.... Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.... And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Mt 25:31, 32, 46).

(Jude, vv. 12-16) The Lord has come to execute judgment

[12] These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they carouse fearlessly and look after themselves. They are waterless clouds blown about by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead and uprooted. [13] They are like wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameless deeds, wandering stars for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved forever. [14] Enoch, of the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied also about them when he said, "Behold, the Lord has come with his countless holy ones [15] to execute judgment on all and to convict everyone for all the godless deeds that they committed and for all the harsh words godless sinners have uttered against him." [16] These people are complainers, disgruntled ones who live by their desires; their mouths utter bombast as they fawn over people to gain advantage.

(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).

(Jude, vv. 17-19) Remember the words spoken beforehand

[17] But you, beloved, remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, [18] for they told you, "In (the) last time there will be scoffers who will live according to their own godless desires." [19] These are the ones who cause divisions; they live on the natural plane, devoid of the Spirit.

(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).

(Jude, vv. 20-23) Keep yourselves in the love of God

[20] But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the holy Spirit. [21] Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. [22] On those who waver, have mercy; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; on others have mercy with fear, abhorring even the outer garment stained by the flesh.

(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). (CCC 2672) The Holy Spirit, whose anointing permeates our whole being, is the interior Master of Christian prayer. He is the artisan of the living tradition of prayer. To be sure, there are as many paths of prayer as there are persons who pray, but it is the same Spirit acting in all and with all. It is in the communion of the Holy Spirit that Christian prayer is prayer in the Church. (CCC 2670) "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace. Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action. If the Spirit should not be worshiped, how can he divinize me through Baptism? If he should be worshiped, should he not be the object of adoration? (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, 31, 28; PG 36, 165). ***

(Jude, vv. 24-25) To Jesus Christ be glory, majesty, power

[24] To the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you unblemished and exultant, in the presence of his glory, [25] to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority from ages past, now, and for ages to come. Amen.

(CCC 1042) At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed: The Church... will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ (LG 48; cf. Acts 3:21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Pet 3:10-13). (CCC 2641) "[Address] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart" (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). Like the inspired writers of the New Testament, the first Christian communities read the Book of Psalms in a new way, singing in it the mystery of Christ. In the newness of the Spirit, they also composed hymns and canticles in the light of the unheard-of event that God accomplished in his Son: his Incarnation, his death which conquered death, his Resurrection, and Ascension to the right hand of the Father (Cf. Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; Eph 5:14; 1 Tim 3:16; 6:15-16; 2 Tim 2:11-13). Doxology, the praise of God, arises from this "marvelous work" of the whole economy of salvation (Cf. Eph 1:3-14; Rom 16:25-27; Eph 3:20-21; Jude 24-25).