

# Catholic 101

*The Basics of Catholicism*

Emily M. DeArdo



© 2017 Emily M. DeArdo

All Rights Reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review. Printed in the United States of America.

First Printing, 2017

Cover design © 2017 Emily M. DeArdo

Cover photo: “The Ascension”, mosaic at the Franciscans of the Holy Land Monastery, Washington, D.C. © 2015 Emily M. DeArdo

All Biblical quotations are from the Holy Bible, Revised Standard Catholic Edition.

Catholic 101:  
The Basics of Catholicism

Emily M. DeArdo

For my parents, who kept the faith.

*Holiness is a beautiful struggle.*

—Mother Mary Angelica, PCPA

## Introduction

The idea for a Catholic 101 blog series came to me at the end of 2015. I'd been teaching first grade CCD for two and a half years at that point. What surprised me the most thus far was that many adult Catholics had no idea about the things I was teaching to first graders. "Oh, you're teaching them *that*?" Adults would ask. "*I don't know that stuff!*"

These adults can't define grace,<sup>1</sup> or what a virtue actually is.<sup>2</sup> They don't know how the twelve apostles died. They don't understand that people don't become angels when they die— they become saints (assuming they make it to heaven). And sometimes they're not even sure how a person *becomes* a saint. They don't understand papal infallibility, and some of them aren't aware that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. They're not just missing the nice details—they're missing some of the key components of our faith!

So, during a long post-Christmas bubble bath, I decided that every Monday on my blog ([emilymdeardo.com](http://emilymdeardo.com)), I'd go through my class lesson plan and do a post about what we teach the kids about a certain topic. We cover a lot in first grade: all the sacraments, the life of Jesus, the liturgical year, the twelve apostles, the Ten Commandments, saints, some of the Old Testament, and more. It's a great introduction to Christianity and Catholicism and, if I and their parents teach them right, it lays the groundwork for a

tremendous lifelong adventure of faith.

After the series ended, my dad suggested that I should take the essays and combine them into an e-book, which is what you have here. I've added some additional content, too. But the idea is still the same: to provide the basics of Catholicism, entry points into our faith that will hopefully lead to more study, more discoveries, and an increase in the reader's understanding and *joy* in what we believe.

Will there be a "Catholic 202" series, as some readers have asked? I don't know. But I'm very happy to present this first course, as it were, to you.

## Table of Contents

### **Introduction**

### **Part One: The basics**

- Why did God make us?
- “In the Beginning”: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Fall
- “Who Built the Ark?” (And other Old Testament Figures)
- The Ten Commandments
- Jesus’ Life and Ministry
- The Twelve (Screwball) Apostles
- Jesus’ Death
- The Resurrection and Ascension
- Hail, Mary
- The Trinity
- The Four Last Things
- Angels

### **Part Two: The Liturgical Year / Holidays / Holy Days**

- The Liturgical Year: Overview
- Advent: Feasts, Saints’ Days, and Customs
- Christmastide: The Feasts, Solemnities, and Celebrations



- Ordinary Time
- Lent : Overview and the Three Pillars
- Lenten Practices
- Laetarae Sunday, Passiontide, and Holy Week
- The Triduum
- Eastertide

### **Part Three: Beliefs / Practices / Sacraments**

- Prayer
- More Thoughts on Prayer (Or: Why God Isn't a Vending Machine)
- The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy
- The Rosary
- The Sacraments: An Introduction
  - Baptism
  - The Holy Eucharist and First Communion
  - Confirmation
  - Confession
  - Anointing of the Sick
  - Marriage: "What Brings Us Together Today"
  - Holy Orders
- Saints Alive: The Canonization Process

- Relics
- Who's in Charge Here?: Apostolic Succession, The Papacy, and the Magisterium

## **Part IV: Resources and Prayers**

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory Be

Hail, Holy Queen

Memorare

Guardian Angel Prayer

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

The Creeds: Nicene and Apostles'

The Angelus

Regina Coeli

St. Gertrude Prayer

St. Andrew Novena

**Resources**

**Bibliography**

**Acknowledgements**

**About the Author**

Part I:  
The Basics

## Why Did God Make Us?

The very first thing I taught the kids (after asking the kids what religion we are—we want to make sure they know that we’re Catholics) is why God made us.

The official answer is that **God created me to know him, love him, and serve him in this world, and be happy with him forever in the next.**<sup>3</sup>

That’s it. That’s why God made you.

He made you to **know** him: to realize he is God; to know about his son, Jesus, and his work of salvation; to know him in his Church and in his sacraments.

To **love** him: To pray to him, to give him the devotion he is due, to follow his commandments.

To **serve** him: To “be his body”, as St. Teresa of Ávila wrote. To serve our neighbors, to demonstrate Christ’s love to the world, and to do the work he gives us to do well and cheerfully.

**Be happy with him forever in the next:** To live with him in Heaven forever.

Our goal in life? To be saints. (Everyone in Heaven, canonized or not, is a saint.)

We get to be saints by knowing, loving, and serving God.

All of the Church’s doctrines, sacraments, rites, rituals, ceremonies, and hierarchy are designed to help us achieve this goal.

## “In The Beginning”: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Fall

When you teach first graders, crafts come with the territory. And in fact, it’s the one part of teaching where I was a huge fail. I like to paint, and sketch, and knit, but I cannot, for the life of me, do little-kid crafts. (This may be because I failed cutting in kindergarten.)

Fortunately, I was saved by two things: the fact that we often had a very large class (20-30 kids), in which case it’s just impractical to do a lot of crafting, because it becomes chaos, and that my co-catechist had some great crafts that we *did* pull out every year, and the kids loved.

One of them is the creation craft. The kids made a chart illustrating the days of creation on a big piece of construction paper, and they got to let their imaginations run wild as they illustrated what happened on each day. (I remember one year where I was watching the kids drawing, and I saw something interesting on one student’s paper.

“(Student), what is that?”

“It’s a SEA MONSTER!”

“What’s it doing on land?”

“Eating the people!”

Well, OK then.

You never know what you’re going to get in first grade.)

Since the kids can’t read (usually), this is a great way to take them through the beginning of Genesis, including the story of Adam and Eve, and original sin.

There is some debate about what the “fruit” the first people ate actually was. In Europe it became an apple, but some people think it was probably a pomegranate. It doesn’t really matter. What matters is that they ate it, and paradise was over. The Fall-- when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge-- ended that idyllic existence

in Eden.

One of my favorite poems is Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and this is how he starts his masterwork:

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe...<sup>4</sup>

See, before the Fall, there was no sin. There was no death. There was no pain. Adam and Eve didn't fear anything on earth—they lived in perfect harmony with all the animals in the garden. And then, *bam!* Original sin--and everything was lost. Everything was irrevocably changed.

Sin is defined in the Catechism as, “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.”<sup>5</sup> Sin also sets us against God's love for us—we turn our back on God and do what *we* want, instead of what is *right*. That's what Adam and Eve did.

Sin always has consequences. Maybe not as drastic as what happened to Adam and Eve, but every sin causes a small death in us. Grace (God's life in our soul) is diminished. Our love for God grows colder. We move farther away from him.

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. But God hadn't abandoned them, or us—he just revealed himself to humanity in new ways.

(We interrupt this program for a bit of Catholicism 202: a note on evolution.

Catholicism has never pronounced, definitively, on if the world was created in six literal twenty-four hour days. Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis* states that

Catholics must believe that: God created each human soul, leading to the uniqueness of each person; that all people are descended from Adam and Eve, and that this couple transmitted original sin to all of humanity<sup>6</sup>.

Pope St. John Paul II, in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, said that *Humani generis* affirmed that there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of the faith regarding man and his vocation, provided that we do not lose sight of certain fixed points. [i.e., that God created each human soul.]

The Church, in general, likes science. St. Albert the Great, O.P., created the scientific method. Genetics got its start with the Augustinian monk Gregor Mendel. But the Church has never definitively said, anywhere, that the world was created in *six literal days*.

Obviously, this isn't stuff we get into with first graders. But it's something I thought I'd note for an adult Catholic audience, since this stuff tends to come up from time to time.)

## Who Built the Ark? (And Other Old Testament Figures)

(And in case you didn't know that song as a kid, the answer is, "Noah! Noah!")

After we cover Adam and Eve, we move on to three major Old Testament figures: Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Noah is essentially the story of the ark and the 40 days he and his family were on it with all the animals. Forty of anything is a theme that came up a lot, so we tried to emphasize it when we could, and made connections between the events as the year progressed.

Abraham is next, and we talk about how God asked him to sacrifice his only son, Issac, in order to demonstrate how faithful Abraham was to God's commands<sup>7</sup>. We do mention to the kids, though, that God is unlikely to ask them to sacrifice their family members on a mountaintop, so they don't freak out. The takeaway lesson is that we have to love God more than we love our own family members. God has to be first.

Lastly, we talk about Moses. I loved telling the story of Moses to the kids. They may have seen the films *Prince of Egypt* or *The Ten Commandments* but usually there were a few who hadn't, so I got to tell them all about Pharaoh wanting to kill the Hebrew baby boys, and how Moses' mom set him off down the Nile River in a basket, to be found by....Pharaoh's daughter. (The kids always gasped when we got there.) We moved on quickly through his desert years and marriage, in order to get to the burning bush, the plagues, the Israelites' crossing through the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. Finally, we discussed God's giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. (The book really just talked about the Ten Commandments, but I think the kids need to know the whole story, because it's important!)

After we covered these three people in class, we headed into the New Testament, starting with John the Baptist, the last prophet before Jesus came. A **prophet** is *a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God*. The prophetic books of



the Bible are divided into “major” and “minor” prophets.

**Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.<sup>8</sup>

**Minor prophets:** Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The difference between the the major and minor prophets? Length. The major prophets’ books are much longer. (Isaiah has sixty-six chapters!)<sup>9</sup>

But before *we* move on to the New Testament, we’re going to discuss the Ten Commandments.

## The Ten Commandments

The time has come...for the rules. That's right: The Ten Commandments.

In case you need a refresher<sup>10</sup>:

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have any strange gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods<sup>11</sup>.

Now, God didn't decide that people were having too much fun and he wanted to stop it. The Ten Commandments are rules, yes, but they're rules like the rules for playing music, or learning to dance, or driving a car. Without the rules, you don't have freedom. You have a sort of quasi-freedom, but not the freedom of a child of God. God instituted these rules for *our good*, not for his.

Think about it. The only way you can learn to drive a car is if you know how the car works. These are the "rules", so to speak. If you don't put your foot on the brake, no matter how much you may want to, you're not going to be able to shift out of park. If you don't turn the wheel, you can't turn the car. You have to know how the car works, and how to use those parts to get where you want to go without killing or damaging anyone

(or anything).

Thus, you have to know how the car works—and you can start to get from point A to point B. If you decide that you don't want to obey the rules of the road—either by not getting oil changes when you should, or by going 90 on the freeway, or ignoring red lights—you will run into trouble at some point. Guaranteed. And then your freedom to drive will be taken away.

So it is with the Ten Commandments. These are the rules for the good life—the rules that lead to the *eternally* good life.

The Catechism calls the Ten Commandments (also known as the Decalogue, the “ten words”), “fundamentally immutable”, and “oblige always and everywhere.” They are “*grave* obligations” “<sup>12</sup>engraved by God in the human heart<sup>13</sup>.” They reveal the fundamental duties we have toward God and our neighbors.

At this point in the year, the kids knew what sin was, and they knew that sin caused your soul to have a little less grace than it did before. We didn't cover venial versus mortal sins in first grade. (We will, here, when we talk about confession in Part III.)

I also told them that a sin is when they do something they know is wrong--and believe me, first graders can sin. We saw it all the time when they kept doing something we'd told them not to do, and I'm sure all you parents know this. When you tell a two-year-old not to grab the cat, she might not understand why. The cat is fun and fluffy and makes such a nice noise when it's grabbed! But a six-year-old knows that she should listen to her parents, and is old enough to understand that the “nice” noise the cat makes doesn't mean the cat *likes* being grabbed. If she decides not to listen, and instead, keeps grabbing the cat, or hitting her brother, or not going to bed, she is being disobedient, and this is a sin.

The Church puts the age of reason at seven, but that *doesn't* mean that kids can't

sin. They might not fully understand all the moral ramifications, but they know when they are doing something they shouldn't.

So: we have the Ten Commandments— but what do they actually means? Let's find out.

### **I am the Lord your God, thou shalt not have any strange gods before me.**

Today, we're not exactly bowing down to statues of Ba'al or a golden calf, like in the Old Testament. But do we put other things before God? Do we put sleeping in on Sunday before going to Mass? Do we choose to binge on Netflix instead of taking time for daily prayer? Do we read the latest bestseller, but not the Bible?

We need to put God first in all things. He's more important than spouses, parents, siblings, or friends. We shouldn't put our trust in things other than him—like money, or fame, or power—and he shouldn't be the last thing on our daily schedule, assuming he makes the cut at all.

We shouldn't worship at the altar of our phone, or streaming video, or social media. The thing we worship is God. By putting God first, all our other loves are perfected. When we love God first, we love each other better.

This does not mean that created things *are not good*. God created them, so they are, inherently, good. But how we *choose to use them* is not always good.

### **Thou Shalt Not Take The Name of the Lord Thy God In Vain**

God's name isn't a swear word. Don't use it as one.

### **Remember To Keep Holy the Sabbath Day**

Whole books have been written about the importance of the Sabbath (some of which are in the resources section at the end of this book), but we'll keep it basic here.

This commandment means, primarily, go to Mass<sup>14</sup>.

But the commandment also means don't shop or do work, unless it's absolutely necessary—the Sabbath is a day of relaxation of body, mind, and spirit. It's meant to be used as such. And by not shopping, or going to the movies, or otherwise participating in commerce, you're showing businesses that you think it's important for workers to have a Sabbath rest, too. Of course, some people can't have Sunday off all the time (doctors, nurses, firemen), and they have to find an alternate day of the week for their sabbath.

So, go to Mass, and then go home and relax. Try (this is the operative word) to clean the house on Saturday and run errands during the week, so you can have a relaxing, restful Sunday. If God rested after creating the world, how much more do we need to rest?

### **Honor Thy Father And Mother**

For kids, this means you have to listen to them. Obey them. Do what they tell you! For adults, it means respecting your parents, treating them well, and giving them the deference that they're due. It doesn't mean that you have to do everything they tell you as an adult—if you want to buy a Mazda and your parents say you should buy a Chevy, you aren't obligated to obey them! It also means that, as our parents grow older, that we take care of them and make sure they're provided for, that we help them as best we can, and that we respect their inherent dignity even as they age.

### **Thou Shall Not Kill**

Killing isn't always wrong. If you kill in self-defense, you're not sinning<sup>15</sup>. If you're in the military, or are a police officer, killing can be part of your job. *Murder* is the taking of a life without just reason. That's what the commandment is talking about.

In regards to capital punishment, the *Catechism* allows for a very limited

application of it:

“Assuming that the guilty party’s identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

“If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

“Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm - without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself - the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity ‘are very rare, if not practically nonexistent<sup>16</sup>.’”

Abortion is never permissible<sup>17</sup>, nor is euthanasia<sup>18</sup>.

### **Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery**

(This was always a fun one to explain to little kids.)

This is a straightforward one: don’t have sexual relations with people to whom you are not married. This also includes fornication (a word we don’t hear much anymore) — sexual relations/ acts among unmarried people (i.e., premarital sex). This also includes things like pornography, rape, group sex, incest, and masturbation.

### **Thou Shalt Not Steal**

Don’t take what doesn’t belong to you. For business owners and employers, pay

your employees a proper wage. For workers, don't cheat your employer of his just due—do the work you're hired to do. This commandment also covers fraud, embezzlement, and vandalism. Don't destroy other people's property!

### **Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor**

Don't lie. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to be brutally honest all the time. If your girlfriend asks if a dress makes her look fat, any intelligent man will not say "yes", even if he thinks it does. During World War II, people that hid Jews didn't tell the Gestapo that, yes, they were hiding Jews in their attic; come and get them!

The Church says that a person isn't always entitled to know the whole truth: "The right to the communication of the truth is not unconditional. Everyone must conform his life to the Gospel precept of fraternal love. This requires us in concrete situations to judge whether or not it is appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it.

"Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response to every request for information or communication. The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known or for making use of a discreet language. The duty to avoid scandal often commands strict discretion. No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it<sup>19</sup>."

I always wanted to tell parents to encourage truth telling in their children. That doesn't mean that, if a kid tells the truth, he won't be punished for breaking the lamp or hitting his sister. But it should mean that the parent will acknowledge that she is proud of the child for being truthful, even if there are still consequences. Lying to avoid punishment just compounds the problem.

### **Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife**

This commandment “forbids the *intentional* desire and longing for immoral sexual behavior.” <sup>20</sup> (emphasis mine) *Intentional* is the key word here. A fleeting, unwilled thought is not a sin. A willed daydream is.

### **Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Goods**

Don't be jealous of your best friend's Aston Martin. Don't be jealous of the vacation to Hawaii your brother just took. And for heaven's sake, don't *take* the Aston Martin or the jewelry or whatever it is you covet! Then you're breaking two commandments!



## Jesus' Life and Ministry

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem. His parents, Joseph and Mary, had traveled there to be registered for the Roman census, and thus, the town was very crowded, and there was no room for them at any of Bethlehem's inns. So he was born in a stable. His first visitors were shepherds, who had been tending flocks in the fields, but who came to see him after angels descended and told them of the miraculous birth<sup>21</sup>. The three kings (or magi) came later, bringing Jesus the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh<sup>22</sup>.

Jesus was circumcised at eight days old, in accordance with Jewish custom, and forty days after his birth, he was taken to the temple in Jerusalem, where he was dedicated to God. At the same time, Mary underwent ritual purification according to Jewish custom. This is where the Holy Family met Anna and Simeon, who prophesied about Jesus and his mission<sup>23</sup>. The Church celebrates this event on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation. (Also known as Candlemas, because the candles to be used in the church that year are blessed during the Mass.)

We know the Holy Family fled into Egypt to escape King Herod's massacre of all male children under the age of two, but we don't know the timeline, specifically. Luke, who gives us most of the infancy narrative (i.e., the Christmas story) doesn't mention King Herod at all. Only Matthew mentions the flight into the Egypt<sup>24</sup>. So we just have to accept a sort of wonky timeline according to the Biblical accounts.

The Gospels are silent on Jesus' life after his parents find him in the Temple with the scribes at the age of twelve<sup>25</sup> until he begins his public ministry at 30. We know that Jesus grew up in Nazareth<sup>26</sup>; that his foster father, Joseph, was a carpenter, and that Jesus was taught the family business<sup>27</sup>. Tradition tells us that Joseph died before Jesus began his public ministry. After Joseph's death, it would have been Jesus' responsibility to earn

enough money to support himself and his mother.

The first miracle Jesus performed was at a wedding in Cana, which Jesus and Mary were attending. His mother, noticing the wine had run out, told Jesus that there wasn't any wine left, and Jesus turned water into wine<sup>28</sup>.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) relate Jesus' baptism by his cousin John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and in those Gospels, that's the beginning of Jesus' ministry. But wherever you start it, Jesus' public ministry began when he was 30, and continued until his death three years later.

His miracles were wide-ranging: he healed the sick, raised the dead, multiplied food, and walked on water. His preaching took him all over the area of Judea, and what he said applied to all. While many people loved him, followed him, and listened intently to him, he wasn't universally loved, and certainly not understood<sup>29</sup>. Many societal leaders wanted him dead<sup>30</sup>.

Probably the clearest compendium of Jesus' teachings can be found in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew<sup>31</sup>. It's a sort of Cliff Notes of his entire mission, if you will.

There are a few critical points about Jesus that are important to understand:

1) **Jesus is part of the Trinity.** He is not a separate "god" from God the Father. The Trinity is all one; Christians don't worship three separate gods. We're a monotheistic religion, not polytheistic. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three persons in *one God*.

2) **Jesus is both fully human and fully divine.** He's not 50% human and 50% God. He's fully *both*. Is this hard to understand? Yes. It's a mystery. That's OK. We don't *have* to understand everything. I had a professor who said that "sometimes we must fold back the wings of our intellect, and bow before the mystery." (He taught a sacraments class, so there was a lot of mystery involved.) Catholics are *OK* with mystery.

Or we should be.

Jesus always knew where his ministry would lead—to the cross on Calvary. He told his apostles this many times, even if they never quite understood what he was getting at when he spoke this way. Speaking of the apostles, let's talk about them next.

## The Twelve (Screwball) Apostles

Mother Angelica of EWTN fame called the Twelve Apostles “screwball apostles” a lot. It always made me laugh.

This was one of my favorite things to teach the kids, because the apostles were a motley bunch: fishermen, tax collectors, married and single men, who dropped everything to follow Jesus.

The apostles always give me hope, because in the Gospels they’re continually doing stupid things. They don’t understand Jesus a lot of the time. I can imagine Jesus taking a deep breath before talking to them.

Historical fact about all of them can be hard to come by, so sometimes we just have historical *guesses*. Sources and tradition vary and sometimes contradict each other. So I’ve gone with what is the most common or accepted version of their histories here.

**Peter** : Simon Peter, the “rock<sup>32</sup>”, the leader of the apostles. He and his brother, Andrew, were fishermen who worked together. Jesus healed his mother-in-law, but the Gospels never make any mention of Peter’s wife—we just assume that, since he had a mother-in-law, he had a wife.

Peter betrayed Jesus three times the night of Holy Thursday<sup>33</sup>, and tradition says he wept for that betrayal every day of his life. He went to preach the gospel in Rome, where he was crucified upside down, since he didn’t consider himself worthy to be crucified the same way as Christ. He was the first pope, and tradition says he is also the longest reigning pope<sup>34</sup>.

His feast day is June 29. His list of patronages is long and includes bakers, the Papacy, fisherman, bridge builders, stationers, locksmiths, and the city of Rome.

**Andrew:** Simon Peter's brother; a disciple of John the Baptist<sup>35</sup>. He is the patron saint of Scotland and was crucified in an X-shape--hence the flag of Scotland, the Saltire, bearing the X-shaped cross. His feast day is November 30. He's also the patron saint of singers, miners, pregnant women, Ukraine, Russia, and Sicily.

**James the Greater:** Called "greater" because he was taller than the other James. (Yes. For all time, we will know that one was taller than the other.) He was the brother of St. John (probably the elder brother), and one of the "sons of thunder".

Son of Zebedee and Salome, he was a fisherman along with John and his father. James preached the gospel in Spain, and is buried at Santiago de Compostela, which is still the site of many pilgrimages today. His feast day is July 25, and he is the patron saint of Spain, veterinarians, and pharmacists.

**John:** The "disciple Jesus loved<sup>36</sup>", John was the brother of James the Greater, and was also a fisherman. He wrote the Gospel of John, the Johannine Letters (John 1, 2, and 3), and the book of Revelation. He was the only apostle present at Christ's crucifixion, and took care of the Virgin Mary after Jesus' death and subsequent ascension. He died of natural causes on the island of Patmos, where he was exiled during the persecutions of the Roman emperor Domitian, thus making him the only apostle who wasn't martyred.

His feast day is December 27 and he is the patron saint of friendship, loyalty, authors, booksellers, burn victims, editors, papermakers, publishers, and theologians.

**Philip:** Like Peter and Andrew, Philip was from Bethsaida, and was also a disciple of John the Baptist. The Gospels don't tell us what his profession was. He preached in Greece and was crucified upside down, like Peter. His feast day is May 3 and he is the patron saint of pastry chefs, hatters, Uruguay, and Cape Verde.

**Bartholomew:** Also identified with Nathaniel in the Gospels, he was from Cana. He was a missionary to India, where he left a copy of the Gospel of Matthew, and also traveled to Armenia, where he was flayed alive and crucified. In Michelangelo's famous fresco *The Last Judgment*, Michelangelo paints the apostle holding his flayed skin<sup>37</sup>. His feast day is August 24. Some of his patronages include leather workers, neurological diseases, trappers, the country of Armenia, and (I love this one) Florentine cheese and salt merchants.

**Thomas:** The famous "doubting Thomas"<sup>38</sup> who refused to believe Christ has risen until Jesus appeared to him and allowed Thomas to put his hands in the nail marks. He traveled to India to preach the gospel, and was martyred there. His feast day is July 3, and he's the patron saint of India and Sri Lanka.

**Matthew:** A tax collector<sup>39</sup>, Matthew also wrote the Gospel of Matthew. Born in Galilee, he invited Jesus to his house for a feast, and became one of the twelve. Tradition says Matthew preached the gospel to the Jewish community in Judea before going to other countries. We aren't sure how--or when--he died. His feast day is September 21. He's the patron saint of accountants, bankers, tax collectors, civil servants, and perfumers.

**James (the Less):** Son of Alphaeus. He wrote the Letter of James and was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. He was thrown from the roof of the temple in Jerusalem, and his body clubbed after he died. His feast day is May 3. Some of his patronages include the dying, milliners, and druggists.

**Jude/Jude Thaddeus:** He was a cousin of Jesus—his mother Mary was the Virgin Mary’s cousin. Author of the Epistle of Jude, he preached the gospel in Judea, Samaria, Idumaea, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Libya. He is the patron saint of lost/hopeless causes, hospitals, the Chicago Police Department, and the Philippines. He was martyred in Beirut around 65 AD, and his feast day is October 28.

**Simon:** Sometimes called “Simon Zebedee” to distinguish him from Simon Peter. Legend says he was martyred by being sawed into pieces. His feast day is also October 28, and he’s the patron of carriers and tanners.

**Judas:** “The Iscariot<sup>40</sup>”. He betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin for 30 pieces of silver<sup>41</sup>, and committed suicide early on the morning of Good Friday<sup>42</sup>. He was replaced in the group of twelve by Matthias<sup>43</sup>. (Feast Day May 14)

## Jesus' Death

Jesus always knew how and when he would die. He tried to relay this to the apostles, but quite often they didn't quite get it.

The Jewish leaders of the time weren't happy with Jesus. He was teaching things that went against what they believed; he seemed like a bit of a loose canon. They didn't really know what to do with him, and some of the leaders perceived him not only as a threat to their authority, but also to the cautious peace they had with the Roman occupiers. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to cries of "Hosanna" and being hailed as "King of the Jews", this alarmed them. Thus, in their opinion, he had to die<sup>44</sup>.

On Wednesday following Palm Sunday (Wednesday of Holy Week, or "Spy Wednesday"), Judas went to the temple leaders and said he would betray Jesus to them—for a price. Thirty pieces of silver was Judas' price. We don't know exactly why Judas betrayed Jesus. Was he disappointed in Jesus? Did he want a different kind of leader, possibly a political one? We don't know. The Gospels don't say. We do know, however, that Jesus knew he would be betrayed by one of the apostles. And Judas did have a reputation for being greedy; John notes that Judas had control of the communal money, and had stolen from it<sup>45</sup>. So maybe Judas knew there would be a reward for bringing Jesus to the Jewish leaders.

On Holy Thursday, the day before the Passover celebration began<sup>46</sup>, Jesus held the Last Supper with the apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem. He knew what was happening—but the apostles, as usual, really didn't. On this night, Jesus gave us the gift of the Eucharist, which we'll talk more about later in Part III.

After the Last Supper, Jesus went out with the apostles to the garden of Gethsemane, where he spent time in agonized prayer. Even though Jesus knew what was



going to happen to him, remember he was 100% human. He was scared, as anyone would be. He felt the desolation, pain, and sorrow that all humans feel.

After he had prayed, Jewish leaders, soldiers, and Judas came to the garden, with Judas giving Jesus a kiss so the soldiers would know whom to arrest. He was then taken to an illegal nighttime trial before the Sanhedrin and put in a prison cell. In the morning, Jesus was taken to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Under Jewish law, to call oneself the Son of God was blasphemy, and the punishment for blasphemy was death—but the Jews, as a conquered people, couldn't put anyone to death. Thus, they had to convince Pilate to do it. They did this by saying Jesus has taught subversive doctrine that threatened Roman rule.

The Gospels all depict Pilate as a weak man who gave into the pressure of the crowd and the Jewish leaders. He didn't really want to crucify Jesus. His wife even warned him against it, citing a dream she'd had<sup>47</sup>. Pilate had Jesus sent to Herod, since Jesus was a Galilean—perhaps Herod would let him go. No luck. To buy himself more time, and hoping to appease the crowd, Pilate had Jesus scourged. The soldiers further tortured Jesus by weaving a rough crown of thorns and shoving it onto Jesus' head, dressing him in a purple robe, and mocking him.

While all this was going on, Peter denied Jesus three times<sup>48</sup>, and Judas had committed suicide<sup>49</sup>. The rest of the apostles, except for John, hid themselves, afraid of getting caught up in the bloodthirsty crowd that was calling for Jesus' death.

Realizing that only a death sentence would appease the crowd, Pilate condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion. Jesus carried his cross to Golgotha, the “place of the skull”, outside Jerusalem. He was assisted in carrying the cross by Simon of Cyrene<sup>50</sup>, whom the soldiers pressed into service when they saw that Jesus might die before he reached the crucifixion site.

Atop Golgotha, Jesus was stripped, then nailed to the cross through his hands and

feet. Two criminals were also executed with him, one on either side. Of all of Jesus' friends and followers, the only ones at the foot of the cross were his mother, Mary; the apostle John; Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the wife of Clopas<sup>51</sup>.

After about three hours, Jesus died. To ensure that he was dead, a Roman soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side, from which blood and water poured out<sup>52</sup>. His body was taken down from the cross and given to his family, to be buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, who was a member of the Sanhedrin, but also a follower of Jesus<sup>53</sup>. Since it was the Sabbath, and a solemn one because it was Passover, the body was wrapped and placed in the tomb, with the women planning to come back after the Sabbath to anoint the body, according to Jewish custom.

## The Resurrection and Ascension

On Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene came to Jesus' tomb, and found it empty<sup>54</sup>. She began to weep, and then Jesus appeared to her—resurrected, but with his glorious body still bearing the marks of the nails and the spear as proof of his crucifixion. Mary Magdalene was told to go to the apostles, who were still in hiding, and tell them what had happened<sup>55</sup>. John and Peter ran to investigate the tomb, and, like Mary, found it empty.

Jesus appeared to the apostles in their hiding place on the evening of Easter Sunday<sup>56</sup>. He came again, to appear to Thomas, and spent the next 40 days on Earth with them, preparing them to lead the Church when he was gone.

Jesus went back up to Heaven from the top of the Mount of Olives, and left the apostles to continue the work he had given them<sup>57</sup>. Ten days later, the Holy Spirit came upon them, on what we commemorate as the feast of Pentecost, and gave them the gifts they needed to preach the Gospel fearlessly<sup>58</sup>. These men, who had been so afraid of being arrested on Holy Thursday night, now went out into the world, where they were crucified, thrown off roofs, flayed alive, and imprisoned, all for the sake of Jesus.

Christianity began to spread throughout the entire world as the apostles went out from Jerusalem to India, Rome, Greece, and other places. Even today, the Gospel continues to spread and the Church is continually growing.

## Hail, Mary.

No, not the football play. The woman.

Some people think Catholics pay too much attention to Mary. But when you understand Mary from a Catholic perspective, you'll see that she deserves our attention!

At the most basic level, Mary is the mother of Jesus. When she said "yes" to being God's mother<sup>59</sup>, she became the most special woman in the world! How many other mothers does God have?

She also reversed Eve's disobedience by being entirely obedient to the plan God had for her. Could Mary have said no? Yes. She had free will, like we all do. But she didn't. She said yes.

Remember that Jesus is both **fully God and fully man**. Jesus gets his humanity from Mary.

Catholic doctrine holds that Mary was forever a virgin, so Jesus was her only child. We don't know much about her day to day life (the Bible mentions nothing about it). We can guess that she spent her life like most other women in Nazareth--taking care of Jesus, taking care of the home, cooking, fetching water at the village well. It was a typical life of the people of her era. Of course, Jewish prayer and cultural traditions were vitally important. The Bible tells us that she and Joseph made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover at least once, when Jesus was twelve<sup>60</sup>.

Mary was a widow by the time Jesus began his public work. But she was present at his death, where Jesus commended her into the care of St. John<sup>61</sup>.

(Incidentally, this is another piece of evidence that Mary didn't have other children; if she had, then it would've been *their* job to take care of Mary, not John's. There's no way that Jesus would've given his mother into the care of a non-relative if there were other children around.)

Mary was also present at Pentecost<sup>62</sup>. Tradition tells us that she died in Ephesus, in modern day Turkey, and that “Mary’s House” can still be found there.

These are the basics of Mary’s life, as the Bible and Sacred Tradition tell us. And based on all of that, God’s mother is a pretty important person, right?

But as Catholics, we believe two additional things about Mary:

**1) That she was born without original sin--The Immaculate Conception**  
(celebrated December 8)

**2) That was assumed, body and soul, into Heaven--The Assumption**  
(celebrated August 15)

Let’s look at these individually.

**The Immaculate Conception:** In 1854, Pope Pius IX wrote *Ineffable Deus*, an apostolic constitution, about the Immaculate Conception. It says that:

“... the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful<sup>63</sup>.”

In short, and in English, the pope’s pronouncement means that Mary was, from the moment of her conception, free of original sin. Jesus, being God, didn’t have original sin when he was born, but Mary, being human, would have, in the ordinary course of events. But God preserved her from it, and she never sinned in her entire life. Did she have free will? Yes. Is she a goddess? No. She was a human being, but a very special one.

(This is an instance of a pope declaring **dogma**: *a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true*. In this case, the authority is the pope. Contrary to popular belief, the pope doesn’t declare dogma all that much—it’s only been

done twice, and both times in instances about Mary. Since it *is* dogma, Catholics *must* believe in the Immaculate Conception.)

**The Assumption :** This is the second instance of papal infallibility, declared in 1950 by Pope Pius XII. It refers to the fact that Mary, being sinless at her conception and sinless her entire life, was assumed body and soul into heaven after her death<sup>64</sup>. The idea of the Assumption has been around since the fourth century — the fact that no one has found, or ever noted, where Mary was buried, is another point in the doctrine’s favor. If people knew that, there would definitely be a church there, and relics galore. But there’s never been any evidence of the grave site, which gave credence to the ancient idea that Mary was assumed into Heaven.

It’s important to restate that Mary is not a goddess. Mary is a very, very special human being. We do not worship Mary. To Catholics, worship is the Mass. The only person that Mass is offered to is God. We don’t say, “Oh, Mary, accept our offering of bread and wine and change them into the body of your son.”

Catholics have worship, but we also have reverence and devotion. We are devoted to Mary because she is the Mother of God. She was human, like us, and she lived through many difficult things: the death of her husband, the death of her son, fleeing her country because a crazy king wanted to kill her son, not to mention having to explain a miraculous conception to her fiancé. She understands human problems. Mary is our mother, and we come to her like we would come to our moms here on Earth.

Yes, our churches, more often than not, have statues of Mary, and pictures of her. She’s one of the most common subjects in the history of art. Yes, we light candles before statues of her and statues of saints. But this *isn’t* worship, to a Catholic. This is piety. This is prayer. We have pictures of her, and Jesus, and Joseph, and the saints, the same way people keep pictures of loved ones in their homes. We love them, and they’re our

examples and our helpers. When we ask for their prayers, we ask it the same way I ask a friend to pray for me. Just because someone is dead doesn't mean he doesn't still exist.

Mary is God's most brilliant creation. But she's also the humble, believing girl from Nazareth. And she loves us all, because we are brothers and sisters of her son. So Catholics ask her to pray for her, and we honor her with hymns and paintings and feast days. But we don't worship her. She wouldn't want us to! Mary always, always points us to her Son. If we've forgotten about her son, we're doing it wrong. But Jesus *also* wants us to remember his mother. It's a two-way thing. She wasn't just the body that bore him and took care of his physical needs. She was his blessed mother.

The Fourth Commandment is "honor thy father and mother." You can be sure that Jesus fulfilled this perfectly in his life. If we are to follow his example, then we are to honor his Father and mother, as well. Being devoted to Mary doesn't mean being less devoted to Jesus. She always brings us always closer to him.

## The Trinity

This was one of my favorite chapters to teach my students. Really, the Trinity is just so cool—and really important. It’s also one of those things that is really simple, or really complicated, depending on how you look at it.

The Trinity is the belief that God consists of *God the Father, God the Son, and God The Holy Spirit*. These **three beings** are **one God in three divine persons**. St. Patrick famously explained this doctrine to the people of Ireland using the three-leaf clover: three leaves, but all one plant.

The members of the Trinity are *co-equal*, meaning that one part isn’t greater than the other. Each has a specific “job” in a sense: God the Father *creates*, God the Son *redeems*, and God the Holy Spirit *sanctifies* (makes holy). Sometimes you’ll hear people say “God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier” if they’re trying to be “gender-neutral”, but that’s not accurate. Don’t do it.

In this vein, it’s also important to realize that God the *Father* means something specific. “Father” and “mother”, in Catholicism, aren’t interchangeable terms, any more than “man” or “woman” are. They mean concrete, and different, things.

Biblical evidence for the Trinity can be found in the Bible as early as the Book of Genesis, when God says, “let *us* make man in *our* image, according to *our* likeness.”<sup>65</sup> (Emphasis mine.) Who else is God talking to? Certainly not the animals he just created. They can’t help him here. So God must be talking to someone we haven’t been introduced to yet, in a sense. It makes sense to infer that God is talking to the other members of the Trinity. It’s also found in the Book of Deuteronomy: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”<sup>66</sup>

Really understanding the Trinity is, most likely, impossible. Maybe some of our greatest saints, like St. Thomas Aquinas, had some idea. But what’s important for the



average Catholic to understand is that God is *one God in three persons*. That's it.

## The Four Last Things

A cheerful chapter! But a necessary one. Death, in popular culture, is desperately avoided. Aging is taboo. We work as hard as we can to stave off death for as long as we can. I recently saw a book at a bookstore entitled *How Not To Die*, which made me wonder if the author knew something all the rest of us didn't, or was just delusional. But, in the end, everyone dies, even authors. You will. I will. It happens.

So we should think about that on a pretty regular basis, and then ponder--what happens after?

If you've seen the movie *Pollyanna* with Haley Mills, you might remember the sermon near the beginning of the movie, where Pastor Ford thunders, "Death comes unexpectedly!" He may have been a bit over the top, but he was right—it *does* come unexpectedly, so it's a good idea to think about it. Because as great as this world is, it's not our home. Heaven is our home, our final goal. And to get there, we have to die.

So, we die. That's the first thing.

Second thing: judgment. The church believes there is a *particular* judgment<sup>67</sup>, and then the Big, *Final* Judgment at the end of time.

*Particular judgment* is when your soul is judged after you die. Based on what you did/believed on earth, that determines where you go: Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory.

Yes, Catholics believe in Hell. We do not know who is in Hell, because that's "above our pay grade." But it **does** exist. People **can** go there. Committing mortal sin, and then not confessing it, sends you right to Hell. Do Not Pass Go, Do Not Collect \$200. *However*, it's important to note that God does not send anyone to Hell. That's right. People choose to send themselves to Hell. If a person denied God's existence on Earth, and chose not to believe in God, then he will spend eternity without God.

Here's what the Catechism says about Hell (I've quoted the sections at length

because they're worth reading):

“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.’ 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. 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.’

“Jesus often speaks of ‘Gehenna’ of ‘the unquenchable fire’ reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. Jesus solemnly proclaims that he ‘will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,’ and that he will pronounce the condemnation: ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!’

“The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its’ (sic) eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

“The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: ‘Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.’

“Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the

Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where ‘men will weep and gnash their teeth.’

“God predestines no one to go to hell; 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<sup>68</sup>.’”

Jesus talks about Hell, guys. It’s in the Gospel. He came to save us all, but not everyone will accept that invitation.

So, after your particular judgment, you go to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory.

Purgatory is what it sounds like--purgation for our sins<sup>69</sup>. Jesus says that nothing imperfect will be in Heaven. So if we die with even a smidgen of sin on our souls, we go to Purgatory. Souls in Purgatory eventually get to Heaven. So they are assured they will see God and be happy with Him forever. But first--the bath.

CS Lewis has a great passage on Purgatory:

“Our souls demand Purgatory, don’t they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, ‘It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy’? Should we not reply, ‘With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I’d rather be cleaned first.’ ‘It may hurt, you know’ — ‘Even so, sir.’

“I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering. Partly from tradition; partly because most real good that has been done me in this life has involved it. . . .My favourite image on this matter comes from the dentist’s chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am ‘coming round,’ a voice will say, ‘Rinse

your mouth out with this.’ This will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of this may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure<sup>70</sup>.”

So no, purgatory isn’t *fun*, but it’s certainly better than Hell!

The Church believes there are three parts of the Church: The Church Militant (us on Earth), the Church Triumphant (the people in Heaven) and the Church Suffering, which are the souls in Purgatory. So we need to pray for them!

At the end of each rosary, I like to say the St. Gertrude Prayer: “Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen.”

All Saints’ Day--November 1—is a Holy Day of Obligation in the Church. (That means we treat it like a Sunday, and we must go to Mass.) This celebrates all the deceased who are in Heaven. All Souls’ Day is November 2, when we pray for all those who have died. Many Catholic churches offer special Masses and novenas<sup>71</sup> for the deceased, so people can write the names of their beloved dead on cards or envelopes, and they will be prayed for throughout the entire month of November.

The Last Judgment isn’t something I taught to my students, but what it refers to is the Second Coming of Christ, at the end of time. Since I can’t really put it better than the Catechism, here are the relevant bits:

“The resurrection of all the dead, ‘of both the just and the unjust,’ 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.’ 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.’

“In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man’s relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life...

“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 marvelous 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<sup>72</sup>.”

## Angels

The first thing you need to know about angels is that they aren't people. People and angels are two completely different things. When people die, they are *saints* if they're in Heaven. **They do not become angels.** Angels were never human beings, and human beings are never angels. To say that people become angels when they die is like saying people become dolphins when they die.

Got that?

So, what are angels? An **angel** is *a pure spirit created by God*<sup>73</sup>. The English word “angel” comes from the Greek *angelos*, which means “messenger”, and that makes sense, since angels are quite often messengers in the Bible: Gabriel telling Mary she would be the Mother of God; announcing Christ's birth to the shepherds outside Bethlehem; appearing to Abraham in the book of Genesis, and so forth. And usually, when angels appear, they have to tell people to not be afraid—so we can imagine that angels aren't nice and soft and pretty.

There are nine choirs of angels, but that's a bit beyond the scope of our discussion. Suffice to say the choirs of angels all have different jobs and serve God in various ways.

**Archangels** are literally “angels of high rank<sup>74</sup>.” Three of them are named in the Bible: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Their feast day is September 29th. (In England, the feast is called Michaelmas Day. So, Jane Austen readers, now you know what Mrs. Jennings meant when she said she'd have the Dashwood girls engaged by Michaelmas.) St. Michael (Michael means “Who is like God?”) is the leader of the armies of God and of all the angels. St. Gabriel (which means “God is my strength”) serves as a messenger of God to certain people, namely Mary at the Annunciation. And St. Raphael (“God heals”) is the “angel of happy meeting”, who appears only in the Old Testament's Book of Tobit.

Everyone has a **guardian angel**—an angel specifically assigned to take care of you<sup>75</sup>. Some of us give our angel more work to do than others. The feast of all the guardian angels is October 2.

Don't ignore your guardian angel! Pray to him, ask for his help, and *use* him. I remember when I made my First Communion, our teachers had us sit spaced in the pew so that there was room for “our guardian angel” between each child. (Now, whether or not they were being pious, or just trying to keep us from causing trouble during the Mass, I'll leave up to the reader to decide.) I've included a basic prayer to your guardian angel in Part IV of this book.



Part II:  
The Liturgical Year

## The Liturgical Year: Overview

If you've ever been confused when, on the first Sunday of Advent, you heard "Happy New Year!" from the priest—be confused no more. The priest wasn't more than a month early, or tipsy with leftover Thanksgiving wine. He's following the liturgical calendar.

Catholics have both the regular Gregorian<sup>76</sup> calendar—January through December— but also the liturgical calendar. Like the Gregorian calendar, it's divided into seasons, but there's a few more than spring, summer, fall, and winter.

The new liturgical year starts on the First Sunday of Advent. We ring in the new year with a new cycle of Sunday readings. There are three cycles, which ensure that, over the course of three years, we hear quite a bit of the Bible, both Old and New Testament. The years are designed A, B, and C. Year A gives us the Gospel according to St. Matthew; Year B, the Gospel according to St. Mark; and Year C, the Gospel according to St. Luke. The Gospel of John is scattered throughout the year—for example, we always hear St. John's account of the Passion on Good Friday.

(In the daily Mass cycle, it's a little simpler—there's year one, and year two.)

The seasons of the Liturgical Year are:

- **Advent**— the four weeks leading up to Christmas
- **Christmastime**— from Christmas to the Baptism of the Lord in January (or, traditionally, until Candlemas Day, which is February second, and celebrates Jesus' presentation in the temple and Mary's purification.)
- **Ordinary Time**— from the end of Christmas to Mardi Gras (the day before Ash Wednesday)
- **Lent**— Ash Wednesday to the afternoon of Holy Thursday.
- **The Triduum**-- Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, until

the Vigil Mass.

- **Eastertide**—Fifty days, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost.
- **Ordinary Time**—from the Monday after Pentecost to the First Sunday of Advent.

Each season has its particular colors and emphases. Advent and Lent share purple and rose colored vestments. Christmas is gold, as is Easter. The Triduum breaks out red and gold vestments. Ordinary time is green. The trappings of the church change as well: the Advent wreath comes out for Advent, a nativity for Christmas, but in Lent, things are removed—statues can be covered, flowers aren't on the altar, the liturgy is more stark.

In the following sections, we'll talk about each season individually.

## Advent

Advent is the first season of the Church year, and it's the season that prepares us for both the coming of Jesus in his Incarnation at Christmas, and also for his second coming at the end of the world (called the *parousia*). It has a penitential flavor, but it's not as severe as Lent—it's more a sense of joyfully preparation for Christ's coming in the Incarnation. What can we do to make ourselves ready for his appearance? Lent has more of the penance we think of as penance--being sorry for our sins, giving things up, no meat on Fridays. Advent's penance is slightly different, even though both seasons are purple in liturgical color, and purple stands for penance in church parlance.

At Mass, there's no *Gloria*, except on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. There aren't flowers on the altar. These things remind us of both the penitential tone of the season, but also that we're *waiting*. We don't sing the *Gloria* because the angels haven't sung it yet—Jesus hasn't been born!

The four weeks of Advent are broken into three purple and one rose week--the rose vestments and candles on the Advent wreath are to remind us to “rejoice” as St. Paul tells us in the second reading of the Third Sunday of Advent. It's called *Gaudete* (rejoice!) Sunday. (“Rejoice in the Lord always! I say it again: rejoice<sup>77</sup>!”)

How can we live Advent well? There are tons of books written about that, but a key thing is to remember that it is a time of preparation--it's *not* Christmas. The tree shouldn't go up on December 1 and come down on December 26. The Christmas season, in the Church, lasts from Christmas Day until *at least* the Baptism of the Lord in January—and in some churches, like mine, the old traditions are upheld, where there are 40 days of Christmas, ending on Candlemas, which is when our parish creche is put away. I love this tradition and I've adopted it in my own house. But however long you celebrate Christmas, remember that Advent and Christmas are two distinct seasons.

There are a lot of wonderful feasts, memorials, and solemnities in Advent and the Christmas season, though, so the church gives us lots of chances to celebrate. Here are a few of them:

**November 30: St. Andrew:** The feast day of one of the first apostles kicks off the Christmas novena--say the prayer 15 times every day from now until Christmas Day (see the resources section). I love this novena. It's a wonderful way to prepare for Christmas!

**December 8: The Immaculate Conception** (the patronal feast day of the United States, and a Holy Day of Obligation for all U.S. Catholics). No, this does not refer to Jesus, which you know, because you read the Mary chapter in Part I! If you are still fuzzy on this, go back and re-read it.

**December 9: St. Juan Diego,** who had apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin (1474-1548) is the first indigenous saint from the Americas. He and his wife, Maria, were among the first people to be baptized by the Franciscans after the order arrived in Mexico in 1524. Juan Diego was on his way to Mass to celebrate the Immaculate Conception when Our Lady appeared to him for the first time. He was canonized in 2002 and is the patron saint of indigenous peoples.

**December 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe:** Mary appeared to Juan Diego four times, beginning December 9, 1531, at Tepeyac. She spoke in Juan Diego's native language and asked that a church be built on the site of her apparition in her honor. When he went to the local bishop, the bishop (like most bishops and priests in these accounts) asked for a sign. On December 12, Juan Diego saw Castillian roses at the foot of Tepeyac, which weren't indigenous to the region. He filled his cloak (*tilma*) with the roses, and presented them to the bishop. However, the roses weren't the only miraculous thing the bishop saw—the interior of the *tilma* was imprinted with a picture of the Lady as she appeared to Juan Diego.

The *tilma* has been preserved at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, which is the most visited Christian pilgrimage site in the world, and the world's

third-most visited sacred site<sup>78</sup>.

She is much loved by the Mexican people, especially indigenous Mexicans and in the Southwestern part of the United States. She is the patroness of Mexico, the Americas, the Philippines, and also, in some places, invoked as the protectress of the unborn.

**December 13: St. Lucy/Lucia:** An Italian saint dearly loved by Scandinavians. It's customary to make St. Lucia buns on this day. St. Lucy was a Roman martyr who brought food to the Christians imprisoned in the catacombs, wearing a crown interspersed with candles to light her way down the dark passageways.

**December 14: St. John of the Cross, Carmelite.** St. John of the Cross is a Doctor of the Church and was, for a time, the spiritual director of St. Teresa of Ávila. She convinced him to join her order, instead of the Carthusians, and to help her reform the Carmelite order. Together, they created the discalced ("shoeless") Carmelites.

He was also a mystic who had visions of Christ, but that didn't save him from being captured and tortured by other Carmelites who didn't like his reforms. He was imprisoned in a monastery in Toledo, Spain, for nine months before he managed to escape, and was subjected to at least weekly lashings before the community members. He was fed only bread, scraps of salt fish, and water. St. Teresa and her sisters nursed him back to health, and then he promptly continued his work of reforming Carmelites.

He is considered one of the most prominent poets in the Spanish language. *The Dark Night of the Soul* and the *Spiritual Canticles* (written while he was imprisoned) are called masterpieces of Spanish poetry, full of rich symbolism and imagery. He also wrote *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. His writings are widely available in English translations. He is a patron of contemplative life, contemplatives, mystical theology, mystics, and Spanish poets.

**December 17:** The O Antiphons start. You probably know these as the verses to "O Come, O Come Emmanuel". These are seven attributes of Christ from scripture:

**December 17:** *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom)

**December 18:** *O Adonai* (O Lord)

**December 19:** *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse)

**December 20:** *O Clavis David* (O Key of David)

**December 21:** *O Oriens* (O Dayspring)

**December 22:** *O Rex Gentium* (O King of the Nations)

**December 23:** *O Emmanuel* (O God With Us)

These are read during Mass—they're the verse during the alleluia—and also during Vespers, the official evening prayer of the church. They're also an acrostic. When read backwards in the original Latin, they spell out ERO CRAS—"tomorrow, I come."

## Christmastide: The Feasts, Solemnities, and Celebrations

We celebrate Christmas for eight days; it's called the *octave* of Christmas. The other octave of the church year is Easter. Essentially, it means that the joy of the day is not enough for one day. It has to spill over into eight days. So don't be throwing your Christmas tree away on December 26, because Christmas has only just begun! We spend the next eight days looking at Christmas through different lenses, as it were, in the Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours (the official prayer of the Church).

**December 26:** Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr. His death by stoning is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Another important figure was at his stoning—the future St. Paul, then called Saul, who held the coats of the people who stoned Stephen<sup>79</sup>.

**December 27:** Feast of St. John the Apostle.

**December 28:** Feast of the Holy Innocents--the babies King Herod killed as he tried to find the “infant king of the Jews” that the Magi referenced when they came to him<sup>80</sup>. The “Coventry Carol” is about this event.

**December 29:** Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr. Born in London in 1118, he became chancellor to King Henry II of England, but was exiled in response to his defense of the rights of the Church against the state. After returning to England, Thomas was murdered in 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral. (which is site of the pilgrims' destination in *The Canterbury Tales*, by the way.)

**Sunday After Christmas:** The Feast of the Holy Family--Mary, Jesus, and Joseph. If Christmas is on a Sunday, New Year's is the Sunday after Christmas, and thus the Feast of the Holy Family is moved to December 30.

**January 1:** Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and a Holy Day of Obligation in the United States, since Mary is our nation's patroness.

**January 4:** St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first U.S. citizen to be canonized. A



convert from Anglicanism after the death of her husband, William, her conversion wasn't easy. At the time, Catholics were discriminated against in the United States, and Elizabeth's family withdrew all financial support from the young widow once they heard of her conversion. In order to provide for her five children, she started an academy for young ladies, which led to her founding the Sisters of Charity with the help of Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, the first American bishop. With the sisters and her children, she moved from New York to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where she opened her first Catholic school and the first convent of the order. The school was dedicated to educating the children of the poor, and was the first free Catholic school in America. She can therefore be called the founder of the American parochial school system. She died on January 4, 1821.

**January 6 OR the Sunday between January 2 and January 8:** The Solemnity of the Epiphany, commemorating the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus.

**Sunday after January 8:** The Baptism of the Lord, commemorating Jesus' baptism by his cousin, John the Baptist, in the River Jordan. This marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry when he was 30 years old<sup>81</sup>.

## Ordinary Time

Granted, Ordinary Time doesn't sound like the most exciting thing in the world. But just because it's "ordinary" doesn't mean that big things aren't celebrated within it—The Assumption, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Corpus Christi, Trinity Sunday, and many saints' days, for example, are all within Ordinary Time.

Ordinary Time is a good reminder that we can't live our spiritual life only on the highs of Easter or Christmas, or the penitential desert of Lent. We live most of our lives in this ordinary period—we do our work, raise families, and practice our faith in the ins and outs of every day. Much like Peter wanted to build booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on Mount Tabor after the Transfiguration<sup>82</sup>, we can often want to stay on the mountain in the highs of the spiritual life. But we can't. We have to come down and live in the ordinary again.

Ordinary Time lasts for 34 weeks—the longest period of the Church year. The priest wears green vestments (except on specific feast days), which symbolizes hope and life<sup>83</sup>—very appropriate for the time of the year when we focus on Jesus' three years of ministry among the people of Israel.

## Lent: Overview and the Three Pillars

Lent is probably not going to win the “favorite liturgical season” contest, but the older I get, the more I like, appreciate, and *need* Lent. It’s spring cleaning for the soul.

The English word “Lent” is from the Old English word *lenten* meaning “spring season”, so it’s appropriate to think of it this way. It’s the annual time to get the dust, cobwebs, and trash out of our soul, and focus anew on making it a cleaner, tidier, and more welcoming place for God to dwell.

As a liturgical season, Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to the afternoon of Holy Thursday. Since the date of Easter is movable<sup>84</sup>, unlike Christmas, Lent can either begin quite early (the beginning of February) or rather late (March). It is 40 days, representative of the time Christ spent in the desert before he began his public ministry. As we’ve seen, 40 is an important number in Catholicism.

But Lent is, first and foremost, a penitential season, which is probably why it gets a bad rap. No one really *likes* penance—at least no one who is psychologically normal. But the Bible, and Jesus, are pretty clear on the need for penance. Penance can mean many things, but in Lent the Church gives us the three pillars—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—to help guide us in our practice of penance fitting for the season.

**Prayer** Lent is an excellent time to improve your prayer life. Maybe that means beginning to pray regularly—in the morning before breakfast, before you go to bed, a rosary after dinner. Maybe it means attending Mass during your lunch hour. You could consider adding a holy hour once a week, or once a month. There are so many ways to deepen your prayer life that you really can’t choose wrong. The only wrong choice would be to do nothing.

**Almsgiving** means giving money or goods to the poor, either directly (bringing canned goods to a food pantry, donating clothes to a shelter) or indirectly through a

charity or church. (putting money in the church poor box, sponsoring a child overseas, donating money or items to help refugees.) This is part of Catholic life anyway, but it takes on a special significance during Lent. We should try to give more, so that it's really a sacrifice, that we're really giving something up to help other people.

**Fasting** means eating less food on a given day. For American Catholics, that means one full meal and two meals that, together, do not equal the one full meal. (We'll talk more in detail about almsgiving and fasting in the next section, as well as abstinence, the sibling of fasting.)

The forty days of Lent can be a powerful time in your spiritual life—but only if you take the time to prepare for it and think about what you want to do with it. Instead of dreading it, see it as an opportunity to progress in your prayer life, and to get to know Jesus better.

## Lenten Practices

Lent brings up many spiritual and penitential practices that sometimes don't get much attention during the rest of the year. So let's talk about them.

### **Fasting and Abstinence**

Fasting is an important Lenten practice—it's one of the three pillars of Lent, which we just discussed. But how many of us really understand it? (And I'm not claiming I understand/am aware of every nuance, either.)

Let's start at the top. What does it mean to fast?

*Fast (v): to abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance.*

As Catholics, we fast from food, in general, on two days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Here are the directives the Church gives us (emphasis mine):

“The law of fasting requires a Catholic from the 18th [b]irthday ... to the 59th [b]irthday [i.e. The beginning of the 60th year, a year which will be completed on the 60th birthday] to reduce the amount of food eaten from normal. **The Church defines this as one meal a day, and two smaller meals which if added together would not exceed the main meal in quantity.** Such fasting is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The fast is broken by eating between meals and by drinks which could be considered food (milk shakes, but not milk). Alcoholic beverages do not break the fast; however, they seem contrary to the spirit of doing penance.

“**Those who are excused from fast or abstinence** Besides those outside the age limits, those of unsound mind, the sick, the frail, pregnant or nursing women according to need for meat or nourishment, manual laborers according to need, guests at a meal who cannot excuse themselves without giving great offense or causing enmity and other

situations of moral or physical impossibility to observe the penitential discipline<sup>85</sup>.”

So—one regular meal, and two smaller meals that aren’t bigger than the main meal, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Generally, the idea is that you’re not going to feel full after the two smaller meals. And no snacks, of course.

We fast for a few reasons:

1) It’s in Scripture

Matthew 4:1-2: *Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.*

Matthew 17:17-20: *And Jesus rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said: Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.*

2) It’s to train us to realize that our bodies are not all. We might *want* the Coke, or the hamburger, or the Twix bar, but we won’t *die* without it. What our body *wants* is not necessarily what it *needs*. We have to discipline ourselves.

3) It brings to mind those of us who do not have a enough to eat. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that nearly 795 million people—one in nine—were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2014-2016. Almost all them, 780 million people, live in developing countries, representing 15 percent of the population of those countries<sup>86</sup>. Every fifteen seconds, a child dies of hunger or hunger related causes. That’s four kids every minute<sup>87</sup>.

Updated statistics for the countries with the highest hunger percentage are hard to find, but here is a list from 2012:

1. Burundi – 67.3%
2. Eritrea – 61.3%
3. Haiti – 49.8%
4. Zambia – 43.1%
5. Ethiopia – 37.1%
6. Swaziland – 35.8%
7. Democratic Republic of the Congo – 33%
8. Tanzania – 33%
9. Zimbabwe – 30.5%
10. Guatemala – 30.5%

Fasting helps us be grateful for what we have—food *abundance*—and can help motivate us to relieve the hunger of others.

4) It reminds us to fast from other things—namely, sin. This is also important to remember if you can't physically fast for a lot of reasons. You can fast from gossip, from TV, from Facebook, from getting manicures—whatever is a treat to you. You can also do this in addition to corporal fasting.

**Abstinence** means no meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all Lenten Fridays. (Some dioceses have moved to reinstate abstinence from meat on all Fridays of the year. If you're not sure if your diocese is one of them, check your diocese's website.)

We do this as a sacrifice, although parish fish fries are fun and not often a sacrifice! And yes, lobster is fish—but that's sort of going against the idea of simplicity and penance.

Be sure to plan some meatless Friday ideas for yourself and your family. Do you want to attend your parish fish fry, which also takes care of cooking on Fridays? It's

easier than ever to find meatless recipes thanks to the proliferation of recipe sites and food magazines, but it does take some time to make a list and stock the pantry, so this is an area where advance planning is necessary.

(Here, though, is a SUPER IMPORTANT NOTE: Don't forget about the Eucharistic Fast! We are not supposed to eat an hour before Mass, to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion. There's some "fudging" on what constitutes "an hour", but I'm gonna go with an hour before Mass starts: so if it's noon Mass, no eating after 11 AM. Medicines are permitted, of course, and food with those meds, if it's required. So, if you aren't doing this, or never were taught this—now you know! Fast before Mass!)

## **Almsgiving**

When you hear "Almsgiving", do you think of Robin Hood running around with a cloak and sunglasses, yelling, "Alms for the poor?" Yeah, me too. But that's not really the idea.

Alms is defined as: *charity, or something (as money or food) given freely to relieve the poor*. Some churches have poor boxes in the back for this purpose (mine does). Others have special collections for the poor throughout the year.

But during Lent, we should definitely be thinking more about the poor and how to relieve their poverty. So some increase in charitable giving is to be considered. There are lots of ways to do this: donate to a food pantry, work in a soup kitchen, pick something to give from a charity's gift catalog, sponsor a child who lives in a poor nation, or donate to your diocese's ministries for the poor.

There is something to be said, though, for focusing on other countries when it come to almsgiving. That list of countries up above? That's desperate poverty. People are living in hovels made of cardboard boxes, and if they have those, they're lucky. They have limited—or no— food or clean water. Children are dying from the lack of food and basic health care. When we say dire poverty, this is what we mean. And yes, you can find



this in pockets of America, as well. But I think during Lent it's important to consider those who live in countries where the government cannot help them—there is no safety net.

It's shocking to think that in Burundi, almost *sixty-eight percent* of the population is hungry. Think about that for a minute. Where I am right now, I have a refrigerator with vegetables, meat, fruits, milk, and safe drinking water that will come out of the faucet on demand. I have a pantry full of canned goods and other food stuffs. There are five grocery stores within two miles of my house. If I don't want to cook, there are four restaurants within walking distance of my front door.

According to World Vision, “nearly 1,000 children under age 5 die every day from diarrhea caused by contaminated water, poor sanitation, and improper hygiene<sup>88</sup>.” When was the last time you thought about if your tap water was clean? Or about where you were going to *get* water?

We might not think that we can make a difference with the little we might be able to give. But we can! Twenty dollars feeds a child for a year through [Mary's Meals](#), which provides meals for children at schools, so they get both food *and* education. Twenty bucks is a ticket to the movies and a popcorn. But in the places where Mary's Meals works—places like India, Haiti, Malawi, and South Sudan—**that's a daily meal for a child for an entire school year!** An outing to the movies for you means the difference between a child getting at least one nutritious meal every day, and a child who might not eat at all.

That's incredible.

There are so many worthy places out there to give your money. Think about the incredibly poverty that exists in our world, and do what you can to help alleviate it. Whether you put five dollars in the poor box at the back of the church, bring some canned goods to a local food pantry, or decide to raise thousands of dollars to drill water wells in

a developing country<sup>89</sup>, it *all* adds up.

We can't do everything, but as Mother Teresa said: "If you do something, and I do something, then together, we will do something beautiful for God."

### **The Stations of the Cross**

Perhaps as part of your Lenten life program, you could pray the Stations of the Cross. Representations of them are in every Catholic church, but you can say them at home, too.

The stations recount Jesus' journey to his crucifixion, from his condemnation by Pilate (the first station) to the burial in the tomb (the fourteenth, and last, station). While the number of stations varied over the years, St. Francis is credited with popularizing the fourteen stations we see today. The object of the stations is to travel, spiritually, to Jerusalem, and thus walk with Jesus on Good Friday, in a spirit of penance and reparation for our sins.

The stations are:

1. Jesus is Condemned to Death
2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross
3. Jesus Falls the First Time
4. Jesus Meets His Mother
5. Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry His Cross
6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
7. Jesus Falls the Second Time
8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus Falls the Third Time
10. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments
11. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

12. Jesus Dies on the Cross
13. Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross
14. Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Often in communal services, the hymn *Stabat Mater* (“At the Cross Her Station Keeping”) is sung. On Good Friday, the pope recites the stations of the cross at the Roman Colosseum, complete with prayers and meditations. An excellent set for meditation are [these](#), written by (then) Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (the future Benedict XVI). Before Pope St. John Paul II died in 2005, he was too ill to complete his normal Good Friday practices, so the cardinal took his place, writing his own series of prayers and reflections.

The stations are a superb Lenten practice, since the graces we receive from doing them in a spirit of prayerful recollection and penance are so immense. It is good for us to ponder these things, to realize why Jesus died, to see the supreme mercy of God—the extreme *depth* of God’s love for us. By meditating on the Stations of the Cross, we can truly see that love—love that was so deep it sustained Jesus through His horrible torture and death.

(The 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* shows all the stations in some depth. For older children/teenagers and adults, I often recommend watching this film, because I haven’t found a better example in media of Jesus’ passion and death, and what it truly was. It’s easy to whitewash what happened to Jesus; even the Gospels don’t give us explicit accounts, probably because their audiences knew all too well the horror of crucifixion. But we need to see it, I think, to really get it, and to see how deep and how great that love was.)

Check and see if your church has a communal stations service during Lent, or just go to your church sometime and walk the stations. If you can’t get to a church, you can also meditate on them at home by using a prayer book or an online guide, like the one I

posted above. The important thing is that, at some point during Lent, you really focus on what the season is about, and what happened on Good Friday.

## Laetare Sunday, Passiontide and Holy Week

Just like Advent, Lent has its halfway point--Laetare Sunday. This is when the rose vestments come out, we can have instrumental music at Mass, and flowers on the altar. "Laetare" comes from the Latin in the introit<sup>90</sup>, "*Laetare, Jerusalem!*"—Rejoice, Jerusalem!

The Sunday following, we enter what's more formally called "Passiontide"—the two weeks before Easter. In some places, statues will be covered with purple cloth (like at my parish), so we are fasting from images, in a sense. The closer we get to Easter, the more our liturgy is stripped of its adornment—first, no Alleluia; then, no *Gloria*; the music should become less ornate, less prominent, and more stark in melody; there are no flowers in the sanctuary, and now the statues are veiled. On Good Friday, the church will be stripped of any decoration at all, even the simplest altar cloth.

**Holy Week** is my favorite week of the year. This may be because I was born on Good Friday and so it always feels like birthday week to me, whether or not it actually is, but there's something about the solemnity and pageantry of Holy Week that speaks to me on a deep level.

Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday, plunges us into Holy Week. The Church commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, with the crowds waving palm branches and singing Hosanna<sup>91</sup>. One of the passion narratives from the synoptic Gospels is read at Mass. Of course, palm branches are distributed to the congregation. Any leftover palms are burned to make the ashes for next Ash Wednesday. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week might have special observances at your parish.

Lent ends at sundown on Holy Thursday, and the Triduum begins. In these three days, we reckon time the way the Jewish people do--by sundowns, not sunrises. So the

Holy Thursday liturgy begins in the evening, usually around 7:00.

## The Triduum: The Three Holiest Days of the Year

*“These three days could be considered one single day. They reveal the heart and are the key to both the liturgical year and the life of the Church.” —Pope Benedict XVI*

The three holiest days of the Church year are loaded with symbolism and special rituals.

The first liturgy of the Triduum is the Mass of the Lord’s Supper: **Holy Thursday**. The first reading on Holy Thursday is from the book of Exodus, where God tells Moses how to prepare for the Passover of the Lord—specifically, how to select and prepare the lamb, to eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and to use the lamb’s blood to mark the doorways of their homes, so the Angel of Death will pass over them<sup>92</sup>. The second reading is 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26, which recalls what Jesus did during the Last Supper, and the Gospel is the *mandatum* from the Gospel of John, where Jesus washes the disciples’ feet<sup>93</sup>.

After the homily, the optional ritual of foot washing can occur. If it’s done, the pastor washes the feet of 12 people<sup>94</sup>. At my parish, which is staffed with Dominican friars and brothers, it’s done with altar boys, the Dominican community members, and a few other men to reach twelve. The rite is done to remember what Jesus did to the apostles at the Last Supper, which was just proclaimed in the Gospel.

The priest removes his chasuble (his outermost garment) and washes the feet of the 12 people in front of him with water, drying each foot with a towel. The Mass continues in its regular way after this, until after Communion.

The Eucharist isn’t put back in the tabernacle, as usual; instead, a Eucharistic procession begins, with the sung *Pange, Lingua*. (written by St. Thomas Aquinas)The *Pange, Lingua* is a glorious hymn about the Last Supper and the beauty of the Eucharist.

The Mass celebrant carries the Eucharist to an altar of repose, which has been set up either somewhere in the church proper or in a parish hall, and there is adoration there for a few hours--but not past midnight.

There is no dismissal, after either Holy Thursday or Good Friday services. It's all one long service, until the end of the Easter Vigil. People are to come and go quietly; there should be a very solemn, prayerful atmosphere.

**Good Friday** doesn't actually have a Mass, proper. The old name for the service of Good Friday is the "Mass of the Presanctified" because the priest, on Holy Thursday, consecrated enough hosts to use for this service. Good Friday and Holy Saturday are the only days of the year where there is no Eucharistic sacrifice, and on Holy Saturday, Holy Communion is only given as viaticum (to those in danger of death).

The church is stripped of all decorative objects before the service of Good Friday. There are no candles, no altar cloths, no flowers, no statues. The sanctuary lamp, which is a candle that is always lit to indicate the present of Christ in the tabernacle, is snuffed out today, and in some places, removed from the sanctuary. This is the one day Catholics don't genuflect before going into the pews—Jesus isn't in the church today to reverence.

There are no Introductory Rites, since the service is a continuation of the one the night before. We have my favorite passage from Isaiah for the first reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12—the Suffering Servant who will redeem the world. The second reading is Hebrews 4:14-16 and 5:7-9, about Jesus' suffering and death. The Passion According to St. John is read as the Gospel<sup>95</sup>.

After the homily, the Veneration of the Cross takes place. A large cross or crucifix is brought before the congregation, and the members of the congregation venerate it in various ways--kneeling before it, kissing it, bowing.<sup>96</sup>

After the veneration, communion is distributed and a prayer is said. Again, no dismissal. Some churches have the service of *tenebrae* on Good Friday. It's a beautiful



service, and if you have the chance to attend, I recommend it. It symbolizes the darkness of Good Friday but also the hope of Easter Sunday.

Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence, like Ash Wednesday. Meals should be small and simple, with no meat involved, and only one larger meal.

Holy Saturday is a day of deep quiet and recollection. No Mass is celebrated.

## The Season of Great Joy: Eastertide

Most everyone knows that Easter is the day Christians believe Christ rose from the dead<sup>97</sup>. In the Catholic Church, Easter is a season that lasts for 50 days—until Pentecost—and is the greatest feast of the Church year.

Easter has an octave, just like Christmas—so for eight days in the Church, we celebrate like it's still Easter Sunday.

The Easter Vigil is the granddaddy of Catholic Masses. Nine readings, candles for the congregation, baptisms and confirmations, and a lot of music. It can take hours. But it's a gorgeous, solemn celebration. At the Easter Vigil, those who are entering the Catholic Church are received—people are baptized, they receive their first communion, and they are confirmed<sup>98</sup>. It's a lot of sacraments all at one time for the new Catholics, and it's always exciting to see new people enter the Church family!

The nine readings take us through the whole of salvation history, beginning with Genesis 1:1 and the story of creation. The rest of the readings taking us through the Old Testament patriarchs, the Ten Commandments, and eventually bring us into the New Testament with a reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans<sup>99</sup>. It's sort of like getting the entire history of the world in eight readings. The Paschal Candle (Easter Candle) is carved and lit—the fire that lights it is blessed. Water is blessed as well, before the catechumens are baptized. The congregation also renews their baptismal promises and are sprinkled with holy water.

If you can't attend the Vigil, don't worry. Easter Sunday is equally as glorious. Most churches do it up to the hilt with elaborate music, flowers, and incense. Like at the Vigil, the congregation renews their baptismal promises and are blessed with holy water.

Within Eastertide is the Solemnity of the Ascension—the day that Jesus left His apostles and bodily ascended into Heaven.<sup>100</sup> This occurs 40 days after Easter, with

Pentecost 10 days later. (Some dioceses have moved Ascension Thursday to a Sunday, and some haven't. Check with your diocese/parish.)

Pentecost, 50 days after Easter, is the Church's birthday. We celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem<sup>101</sup>.

At Pentecost Mass, the Pentecost sequence is sung or recited:

*Come, O Holy Spirit, come!  
From Your bright and blissful Home  
Rays of healing light impart.  
Come, Father of the poor,  
Source of gifts that will endure  
Light of ev'ry human heart.  
You of all consolers best,  
Of the soul most kindly Guest,  
Quick'ning courage do bestow.  
In hard labor You are rest,  
In the heat You refresh best,  
And solace give in our woe.  
O most blessed Light divine,  
Let Your radiance in us shine,  
And our inmost being fill.  
Nothing good by man is thought,  
Nothing right by him is wrought,  
When he spurns Your gracious Will.  
Cleanse our souls from sinful stain,  
Lave our dryness with Your rain,*

*Heal our wounds and mend our way.  
Bend the stubborn heart and will,  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,  
Guide the steps that go astray.  
On the faithful who in You,  
Trust with childlike piety,  
Deign Your sevenfold gift to send.  
Give them virtue's rich increase,  
Saving grace to die in peace,  
Give them joys that never end.  
Amen. Alleluia.*

After Pentecost is over, the Church is back in Ordinary Time.

Part III:  
Beliefs and Practices

## Prayer

At the heart, prayer is talking to God. That's it.

Are you surprised it's not more complicated?

Prayer is something that I think we make more complicated than it really is. It's just a conversation with God, the person who created you, and knows and loves you better than anyone else ever could.

In class, I used to compare prayer to having a best friend. If you have a best friend, you want to talk to her, spend time with her, be with her. If you never talked to your best friend, except for an hour a week, and you never spent any time together, except for that hour a week, what would that relationship be like? It wouldn't be a strong one, that's for sure. It would be anemic, at best.

While God is a better friend than any of us will ever have on Earth, we do need to do our part in the relationship, and talk to him.

If you're just starting a prayer routine, the tried-and-true ways are a great way to begin. Vocal prayers—the Our Father, the Hail Mary—are always good. Praying the rosary is excellent. (We'll talk more about that in a bit.) Attending Mass is prayer! Reading the Bible, saying the Liturgy of the Hours, or simple conversation with God are all prayer. You can talk to God just like you can anyone else. It doesn't have to be formal and pre-written.<sup>102</sup>

I can't really put it better than how St. Thérèse already has:

“Prayer is, for me, an outburst from the heart; it is a simple glance darted upwards to Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and of love in the midst of trial as in the midst of joy! In a word, it is something exalted, supernatural, which dilates the soul and unites it to God. Sometimes when I find myself, spiritually, in dryness so great that I cannot produce a

single good thought, I recite very slowly the Our Father and a Hail Mary; these prayers alone console me, they suffice, and they nourish my soul...Great is the power of prayer - a queen, as one might say, having free access always to the King, and able to obtain whatever she asks. In order to be heard, it is not necessary to read from a book a beautiful form of prayer adapted to the circumstances; if it were so, how greatly to be pitied should I be!

“Archimedes said: ‘Give me a lever and a fulcrum, and I will raise the world.’ What he was unable to obtain because his request had but a material end and was not addressed to God, the Saints have obtained in full measure. For fulcrum, the Almighty has given them Himself, Himself alone! And for lever, prayer, which enkindles the fire of love; and thus it is that they have uplifted the world, thus it is that saints still militant uplift it, and will uplift it till the end of time.”

## More Thoughts on Prayer

Or: Why God Isn't a Vending Machine

The kids in my classes knew that it was important to pray to God for things they wanted, but I warned them not to treat God like a vending machine—as in, prayer goes in, what you want comes out.

Now, does Jesus tell us to ask for things we want/need? Absolutely. BUT, we also need to consider if what we *want* is what is *best* for us. Remember that God sees the whole picture. We see this tiny, tiny little bit of the canvas. We're like ants in a yard—we see the blades of grass around us, and that's it. God always knows what's better for us than we do.

So while we talked about Jesus' miracles, and acknowledged the miracles that happen today (I'm sure I've been the recipient of at least one), it is important to remember that prayer is not asking for things--and then getting mad if they don't happen.

I'm sure most of you have prayed for someone to be healed who eventually died. I know I have. But that didn't mean God was spiting us; he was doing what was best for that said person, even though immeasurable sadness was left behind.

So, yes, seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened<sup>103</sup>. But don't just pray to ask for "stuff". Pray to know God's will, pray that you will have the strength to do what he asks you to do, and things like that. Pray, most of all, that God's will be done, because he knows what's best for us and all the people we love. That's not easy. But it's part of maturing as a Christian.

You never know what wonderful things God can be working in what you see as a problem. Some of our Protestant friends talk about a person having a "life verse": a Bible verse that encompasses their lives, or work, or a goal. Mine is John 9:1-3: "As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him,



‘Rabbi, who sinner, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answers, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be manifest in him.’”

I was born with cystic fibrosis (CF), which wasn’t diagnosed until I was 11 years old. Before that, I had epilepsy, which I thankfully outgrew. I had a double lung transplant when I was twenty-three years old, which saved my life. I know many people prayed that I’d be healed. But what God was doing in my life through my illness was more powerful, and more to his purpose, than what could’ve been accomplished with my physical healing. I met people I never would’ve met otherwise, and many of them have had a profound impact on me. I can hope that I’ve had a good impact on them, but I’ll never know that in this life.

I had many people tell me that if I had enough faith, I could be healed. But I always knew that wasn’t how it was going to work. God made me the way He made me for a specific reason, so that, like the blind man, His works might be made manifest in me. Believe that a miracle is possible. Ask in faith and trust. But remember that God sees more than you can.

*“It sends me up a wall when people say, ‘If you had more faith you could be healed.’ What is this faith business in their minds? Some kind of magic formula? ...God is not your personal slot machine! Faith breeds a humility that is willing to accept the truth that the Father has revealed to us through His Son Jesus, knowledge that Christ is the Lord, and a deep realization that within the soul dwells the spirit.”*

*--Mother Angelica, PCPA<sup>104</sup>*

## The Rosary

The rosary is one of those stereotypical Catholic things. If someone is a Catholic on TV, chances are that at some point, either a rosary or a medal will be pulled out to indicate the person's Catholicism. Sometimes you see them dangling from rearview mirrors. There's really no doubt that the rosary is a Big Thing in Catholicism.

But what the heck is it?

The rosary is a series of prayers. The rosary itself—the physical object—is what's called a chaplet, because there's not a bead for every decade (known as a 15 or 20 decade rosary). The usual rosary you see is a five decade chaplet. Many religious orders wear the complete rosary as part of their habit.

The rosary is made up of four main prayers: The Our Father, The Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, and the Glory Be. The bulk of the rosary is Hail Marys. There are 20 decades--sets of 10 beads--divided into four categories, arranged around the life of Jesus. These are the mysteries of the rosary.

The mysteries are: (with Biblical citations in parentheses; I haven't listed all the appropriate scriptures, in some cases.)

### The Joyful Mysteries

1. **The Annunciation:** The Angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that God has chosen her to be the mother of the Savior. (Lk. 1: 26-28)
2. **The Visitation:** Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with St. John the Baptist. (Lk. 1: 39-56)
3. **The Nativity:** Jesus is born in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1-20)
4. **The Presentation in the Temple:** Mary and Jesus dedicate Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem forty days after his birth. (Lk. 2:22-38)
5. **Finding the Child Jesus:** After being lost for three days, Mary and Joseph find Jesus

in the Temple in Jerusalem, teaching the elders and scribes. (Lk. 2: 41-51)

### The Luminous Mysteries (introduced by Pope St. John Paul II in 2002)

1. **The Baptism in the Jordan:** John the Baptist baptizes Jesus. (Mk. 1:9-11)
2. **The Wedding Feast at Cana:** Jesus turns water into wine--his first miracle. (Jn. 2: 1-11)
3. **The Preaching of the Kingdom:** This mystery contains all of Jesus' public works: preaching, miracles, and so forth. (The Gospels)
4. **The Transfiguration:** Jesus' divinity is revealed before three of his Apostles, along with the appearance of Elijah and Moses. (Mt. 17:1-9)
5. **The Institution of the Holy Eucharist:** Jesus gives the apostles his Body and Blood at the Last Supper, under the appearance of bread and wine. (Lk. 22:14-20, Mt. 26: 26-29, Mk. 14: 22-25)

### The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. **The Agony in the Garden:** Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest. (Mk. 32-42)
2. **The Scourging at the Pillar:** Jesus is flogged by the Roman soldiers. (Jn. 19:1)
3. **The Crowning of Thorns:** Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers; a crown of thorns is made and forced onto his head. (Jn 19:2)
4. **The Carrying of the Cross:** Jesus carries his cross through the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha. (Mt. 27:32-34; Mk 15:20-33; Lk 23:26-31; Jn 19: 16-18)
5. **The Crucifixion:** Jesus is crucified and dies. (Mk. 15:33-40; Lk. 23:32-56, Jn. 19: 19-42)

### The Glorious Mysteries

1. **The Resurrection:** Jesus rises from the dead. (Mt. 28: 1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24: 1-12; Jn. 20:1-23)
2. **The Ascension:** Jesus returns to His Father in Heaven. (Mt. 28:16-20; Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11)
3. **The Descent of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles on Pentecost. (Acts 2: 1-43)
4. **The Assumption:** Mary is assumed, body and soul, into Heaven.
5. **Mary is Crowned Queen of Heaven:** Mary enters into Heaven and receives the reward of the just.

Did you notice a few things about these lists? Even though the “Hail Mary” is what’s said on the 10 beads of each decade, most of these mysteries are Christocentric, meaning Christ is at the center of them. Yes, we’re using the Hail Mary, but we’re meditating on the mysteries in the life of Christ. Every mystery that appear “Mary-centric” always involves Jesus! And almost all of the mysteries are Biblically based, taken directly from the Gospels, as are the prayers; the “Our Father” is the prayer that Jesus taught us, and the “Hail Mary” is from the Gospel of Luke.

So how do you pray it?

First, you select a set of mysteries to pray (this assumes you’re not going to go through all 20 in one go—you can do that, though!). If it’s a Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday, it’s traditionally the Joyful Mysteries. Tuesdays and Fridays, Sorrowful. Wednesday and Sunday, Glorious. Thursday, Luminous. But you can pick whatever you want. Then, meditating on one mystery per decade, you just say the prayers.

It can sound repetitive and boring. And maybe it is, at first, especially if you’re not used to this type of prayer. If you have a hard time praying an entire set of mysteries at a time, try just one decade. Try sprinkling the decades throughout the day; I used to pray my rosary during my morning or evening commute. (Obviously you won’t be able to

mediate as well, because you should be focused on driving, but if you're really busy, it's great to use your commute time for prayer! My dad used to pray the rosary with us kids when he drove us to school in the morning.) Keep in mind that lots of things we do are boring at first: no one's ever made it to the Olympics without lots of boring workouts and practices. A ballerina doesn't just appear on the Lincoln Center stage—there's been lots of pliés and *rélèves* and “boring” barre work leading up to that moment. Every musician has had to practice, and that's not always thrilling! Prayer is the same way.

Each mystery brings you deeper into the lives of Mary and Jesus. This is Christian meditation at its best. The Hail Mary provides a sort of background music to your meditation. Many times I've gotten to the end of a decade and been surprised! (The “Our Father” beads are usually bigger than the rest of the beads, so you have a tactile reminder that the decade's over.) And sometimes I don't go that deeply into meditation. I'm tired, I'm sick, whatever. I just pray, and think about the mysteries, or the person I'm praying for. (When I say I'm praying for you, it usually means you're getting a decade of my daily rosary.)

The rosary is a powerful, powerful prayer. It's stopped wars (the victory of the Christians at the Battle of Lepanto is attributed to Pope St. Pius V asking Christians all over the world to pray the rosary for a victory.) It's, by far, my favorite way to pray. It's also completely portable--you don't even need beads, you can use your fingers. It's extremely calming.

The rosary is actually one of the things that led me to know my Dominican vocation. The Dominicans invented the rosary. Well, OK, not *invented*. Mary gave it to St. Dominic. Thus, Dominicans have a strong dedication to the rosary. That's why it's part of the Dominican habit. It's worn where a sword used to be worn on the left side of the body—indicating its power.

There are lots of good books about the rosary, and with great meditations; I've listed some of my favorites in the resources section.

There are few prayers better than the rosary. Give it a try!

## The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Church, even before Pope Francis made it a buzzword with the Year of Mercy, has *always* placed an emphasis on mercy—namely, teaching us the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The corporal works of mercy are the ones I'd bet most people are familiar with, because it's things like feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and visiting the sick. These are the sort of things that, when people think about "charity", this is what they think about. Whether it's donating money to drill a deep well in South Sudan, running a food drive at work, or donating clothes to the local homeless shelter, the corporal works of mercy are generally well know. Their Biblical basis comes from Matthew 25.

"Corporal" means the works of mercy that pertain to the body--meeting our physical needs. They are:

- Feed the Hungry
- Give Drink to the Thirsty
- Clothe the Naked
- Shelter the Homeless
- Visit the Sick
- Visit the Imprisoned
- Bury the Dead

Most of these are pretty straightforward, right? The last one might give you some pause. In most places, we don't *actually* have to bury the dead. That's what funeral homes and cemetery staff do. But we can be there for people was are experiencing a loss. We can go to the visiting hours, the funeral, bring food by the house for the grieving family, and so on. And at the very least, we can always send a card or an email to say that we are praying for the deceased's soul and the family that's been left behind.

But the Church has also taught that it's not enough to just take care of the body. We

have to take care of the soul, too. Because remember— Jesus told us not to fear someone who can destroy just the body, but the one who can send both body and soul into Hell<sup>105</sup>.

Thus, the seven spiritual works of mercy:

- Counseling the Doubtful
- Instructing the Ignorant<sup>106</sup>
- Admonishing the Sinner
- Comforting the Sorrowful
- Forgive Injuries
- Bear Wrongs Patiently
- Pray for the Living and the Dead

These are a little more....opaque, shall we say? It's a bit harder to see how we can put these into direct action, unlike the corporal works for mercy. So let's break these down a bit.

Some of them are pretty simple, like praying for the living and the dead. Pray for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory; pray for the church on earth. The pope, our leaders, our world...all of this is fodder for prayer.

Bearing wrongs patiently and forgiving injuries are ways to more closely imitate Jesus. Jesus bore lots of wrongs patiently, especially during his Passion. Even a quick reading of the Bible accounts of Jesus' death will give you plenty of examples. Forgiving injuries is similar. When someone snaps at you, or accuses you of doing something that you didn't do, shut up about it. Let it go.

(Now, obviously, that probably doesn't mean to go to jail for something you didn't do. That's pretty extreme. But if your officemate says you ate her banana, and you didn't, and you've said that, but she still believes you did it--there's nothing you can really do at that point. Let it go.)

Comforting the sorrowful we discussed above; sometimes you see this written as



“comforting those who mourn.” But it can also mean people who are depressed or anxious. Be a listening ear for people who are experiencing trouble.

Now we get into the Unpopular Ones.

No one wants to be told she’s ignorant. But we shouldn’t *want* people to be ignorant of Christ, or the legitimate teachings of his Church. We can instruct the ignorant by teaching CCD or being an RCIA<sup>107</sup> sponsor, but we can also just explain what the Church believes when the chance comes to defend the church in public.

Counseling the doubtful means being able to help people who may be having doubts about the faith, or the existence of God, that what the Church teaches is really true.

And finally, admonishing the sinner.

Yikes.

No one really likes to do this. And it doesn’t mean that you should go around like the septa at the end of season five of *Game of Thrones*, yelling “shame!” and ringing a cowbell. That’s probably not the best way to get your point across.

We are always to do these things in a spirit of love and mercy.

If a parent sees a child doing something wrong, then he’s going to stop that child from doing something wrong. In the case of religion, we want people to go to Heaven! And if they are deep in sin, they aren’t going to get there.

Now, we know that we are to remove the plank in our own eye first. That’s important. But if you see someone who is in grave sin--adultery, procuring an abortion, being promiscuous—then you need to, in love and mercy, talk to said person. Suggest that maybe what he’s doing isn’t the right way to go, and you love them too much to let them keep doing it. That doesn’t mean nagging the person. (“Are you going to stop smoking? You need to stop smoking. We talked about this yesterday! STOP SMOKING!” )

The question of relationships is also important—how close are you to the person

you're admonishing? If it's the random lady you see at Mass each week, then it might be better to say nothing and just pray for her. If it's your sibling or your child or your best friend, then you can, in charity, talk to that person, in addition to praying for them.

Jesus loves us too much to leave us alone. As C.S. Lewis said, "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird; it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad." <sup>108</sup>

Jesus didn't die for us so we could be ordinary, decent eggs. He wants us to be birds soaring up to him. The works of mercy are part of how we help ourselves, and others, hatch.

## The Sacraments: An Introduction

Who hasn't seen a baby being baptized, clothed in white, or little boys and girls lining up to receiving their First Communions? Or seen the splendor of a Catholic wedding, or a priest's ordination? And of course, the confessional gets a lot of airplay in movies (even being the centerpiece of some, such as *I Confess*), as does the sacrament of anointing of the sick.

Sacraments in the Catholic Church are also somewhat confusing to our Protestant friends. So I'm going to explain them in the next seven chapters.

So, what's a sacrament?

A **sacrament** is a *visible sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace.*

Well, that's nice, Emily. What's that *mean*?

OK. Fair point.

A **visible sign**--meaning, an action performed by a minister, usually a priest. When a baby is baptized and the priest pours of the water over her head, saying "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," that's a visible sign. When a little boy receives the Host, that's a visible sign. And so forth.

**Instituted by Christ**--contrary to popular belief, the Church didn't make these up. All of the sacraments were instituted by Christ, and they all have Biblical support for their existence.

**to give grace**--what is grace? **Grace** is *God's life in our soul.* To expand on that--Grace is God's free gift of himself.

So, that's what a sacrament is. There are seven of them:

1. Baptism
2. Communion/Holy Eucharist
3. Confirmation
4. Reconciliation/Confession

5. Marriage
6. Holy Orders
7. Anointing of the Sick

These can be divided into three categories:

**The sacraments of initiation:** Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation

**The sacraments of vocation:** Holy Orders and Marriage

**The sacraments of healing:** Confession and Anointing of the Sick

In the next seven sections, we'll cover each of these in some detail.

## Baptism

Baptism is the foundational sacrament—all the others build on it<sup>109</sup>.

In the Catholic Church, we tend to baptize babies as a matter of course. Of course some people are baptized as older children or even as adults, but baptism *usually* occurs when a baby is under a year old. It used to happen the day after birth, way back in the day--now it's usually a few months later.

We baptize babies for a few reasons; Jesus said “Let the little children come to me<sup>110</sup>” and to remove the stain of original sin.

Everyone is born with original sin. Baptism removes the sin, grants grace, and makes the person an official member of the Church. Once you're baptized, you can't be unbaptized. It's a permanent character that's embedded in your soul. Even if you never go into a church again, even if you decide you don't believe in God--once you're baptized, you're baptized forever. This is called **sacramental character**. Sacramental character is a spiritual power for the worship of God in the Church.

Each sacrament has what's called **matter** and **form**. The matter is the stuff involved. Here, it's water. You must have water. The form is what's said. “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

If you don't have both matter and form, then it's not a valid sacrament.

In an emergency, anyone can baptize, but usually, a deacon or a priest does it. An by emergency, it means *emergency*: as in, premature baby and in the NICU, or a battlefield. Where death is (or could be) imminent, emergency baptism is OK.

Baptism begins a person's Christian life; thus, it's the first sacrament.

## The Holy Eucharist and First Communion

OK, everyone. Buckle up.

I love the Eucharist. I could write a whole tome on it. I realize the Eucharist is one of the more misunderstood Catholic doctrines. So we're talking about First Communion, but we're also going to talk about the Eucharist more generally. OK?

So first off, what is the Eucharist?

Catholics believe that the **Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ**. It's not a symbol. After the bread and wine have been consecrated by the priest, it **is** Jesus Christ, here, present, fully, in the host.

As Flannery O'Connor said: *"If it's just a symbol, to Hell with it."*

We take Jesus at his word when he said "this is my body." We take John 6 seriously.

To us, it's not a symbol. It is JESUS CHRIST. That's why we have Eucharistic adoration, why we reserve the sacrament in the tabernacle, and why we treat it (or should treat it!) with reverence. It's why we genuflect when we go into the pews, because Jesus Christ is actually present in our churches in the Eucharist. (We shouldn't be genuflecting to the altar—we're genuflecting to Christ present in the tabernacle. At some parish this requires looking around to find said tabernacle and then genuflecting to it.) That's why First Communion is such an important sacrament to Catholics--it's the day when you can receive Jesus in Communion for the first time.

Since we believe that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Christ, the Church also teaches that you have to be properly prepared (or "disposed") to receive it.

In the Roman Catholic Church, you have to be of the age of reason to receive First Communion. Typically, this is seven years old. You have to be able to understand who you are receiving. That doesn't mean that you have to understand the Ins and Outs of Transubstantiation (which means that the Body and Blood might *look*, and taste, like

bread and wine, but it's really Jesus—body, blood, soul, and divinity), but you *do* have to know it's not just some flat piece of bread the priest is giving you.

I always told my CCD kids that I never, ever wanted to see them go up to communion sloppily. The number of people I've seen just shuffling up to communion, like they're going to receive a hot dog at a baseball game! It's appalling! **NO!** You should be aware as to what you're doing and who you are about to receive.

Going back to our discussion of matter and form: The **matter** is the unleavened bread and wine. No, you cannot use grape juice, or Pepsi, coffee, or water. It must be wine. And no, you can't use bread from Kroger, or Doritos, or a doughnut, or a bagel. It must be unleavened bread<sup>111</sup>.

You don't have to receive both species. (That's what the bread and wine are technically called--the species.) At my parish, we never offer the chalice to the communicants. It's only ever the Host. But that's OK.

The **form** is the words of consecration, said by the priest, as part of the Eucharistic Prayer:

**Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.**

**Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.**

After the priest says the words of consecration, the bread and the wine have *become* the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since the Church believes that when we receive communion, we are taking Jesus into our very selves, there are a few rules:

- You should have fasted for one hour before receiving. (Water doesn't count, nor does medication. If you have to take medication with food, then you're fine, too.)
- You must not receive if you are in a state of mortal sin. If you are in a state of mortal sin and you receive communion, then you're committing sacrilege, *on top* of already being in a state of mortal sin. You're just making things worse! (This is one reason that my parish offers confession before every Mass.)

Now, many of my Protestant friends have expressed disdain that they cannot receive communion at a Catholic Mass. A few points on that:

- You could receive, if you really wanted to. There's not a Secret Catholic handshake before you receive. Thunder and lightning aren't going to come down upon your head, and the floor will not open into a chasm before you. However: You don't believe what you believe about it, so why would you say you do? That's what the "amen" after "The Body of Christ" means. Why would you do something that's a lie (and thus, a sin)? Bad form! And, quite possibly, sacrilegious. Generally, that's bad. Don't commit sacrilege, folks. If you're not Catholic, and you're at a Mass, it is the most polite and reverent thing to sit in the pew and have some moments of silent prayer while Communion is being distributed.
- Communion isn't like a hand stamp that indicates you participated at Mass. Plenty of people go to Mass and do not receive communion (all the kids under seven, for example). You can participate fully in the Mass without receiving. I know, your head is spinning here, but it's possible! Receiving communion isn't like getting a heavenly check mark. It is **perfectly permissible** to attend Mass and not receive Communion. In fact, if you're not properly disposed to receive, or aren't Catholic, it's the better option!



I love the Eucharist. I get very upset when I see people not treating the sacrament with the reverence it deserves. That means churches where the tabernacle is basically in another room, away from the sanctuary, and parishes where people just go up to receive in a nonchalant manner, make me very sad/angry.

Catholics! You are receiving God! Jesus is *physically present* in every Catholic church. If that doesn't fill you with awe, you need your awe-meter checked.

As JRR Tolkien (author of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*) wrote:

“I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves on earth, and more than that: Death. By the divine paradox, that which ends life, and demands the surrender of all, and yet by the taste -or foretaste- of which alone can what you seek in your earthly relationships (love, faithfulness, joy) be maintained, or take on that complexion of reality, of eternal endurance, which every man's heart desires<sup>112</sup>.”

Catholics, please remember what a supreme gift we have in the Eucharist. Treat it accordingly!

## Confirmation

There's a lot of confusion around the sacrament of Confirmation. It's not a coming of age thing--although many people think it is. Confirmation can be given as early as age seven, or as late as adulthood. In some places, it's given before First Holy Communion; in some places, it's not given until sixteen years of age. Parishes within the same diocese vary greatly in their approach: at my current parish, it's given in sixth grade; at my parochial school, it was eighth grade; at the parish in my parents' town, it's 10th grade.

What is going on?!

Let's try to get down to basics.

Confirmation is one of the three sacraments of initiation. Like Baptism, it can only be received once, and once it is received, it imparts sacramental character. When you receive this in Confirmation, it enables you to be a public witness for the faith. The sacrament is called "confirmation" because the faith given in baptism is confirmed and strengthened.<sup>113</sup>

The **form** is the bishop (or designated priest, if the bishop can't perform the sacrament for some reason) saying, "be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." The **matter** is the holy chrism (which is also used in baptism), placed on the confirmand's forehead in the sign of the cross.

The Scriptural basis for Confirmation is from the Acts of the Apostles:

"Now when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost<sup>114</sup>.”

In Confirmation, the confirmand also receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are seven of them: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude, piety, counsel, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are given to each person in the doses needed to live out his Christian vocation.

The confirmand also chooses a patron saint. The Church asks that a baby be baptized with the name of at least one saint. You can have more than one, like I do; there are several St. Emilys, and Michele, my middle name, is the feminine form of Michael-- St. Michael the Archangel. However....that doesn't always happen. In Confirmation, the confirmand selects a saint that is meaningful to them. I chose St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

Confirmation completes the sacraments of initiation. At this point, you are an adult in the sense that you are fully initiated into the Church, having had all three sacraments of initiation (baptism, communion, and confirmation). Confirmation is required to be a godparent, and some parishes require it if a person wants to perform various church ministries (like being a lector or an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist). It's not an "optional" sacrament. It's vital to living out your specific Christian vocation. Don't skip it!

## Confession

It's time for the BIG SCARY SACRAMENT! **CONFESSSSSSSSSION.**

OK, it's not really that scary, but everyone seems to be afraid of it. So, let's demystify it, shall we?

First: the question I always get from people who aren't Catholic:

Can the priest ever tell anyone what you said?

Answer:

NO.

Huge, big, fat, NO. Never ever ever ever--at least, not if he wants to keep being a priest. Violating the seal of the confessional means BIG TROUBLE. So, no. Don't worry about that. He can't tell. Ever. Not even if you said you killed someone and the police are currently doing a 50 state hunt for you.

So, that's out of the way. Let's talk about what the sacrament is and what it does and all that stuff.

Confession is basically what it sounds like--you confess your sins. The priest is acting *in persona Christi*--in the person of Christ--at that moment. You're not actually confessing to a priest in a sense that you're telling another fallible human what you've done wrong. You're confessing to God and the priest is the human mediator, as it were.

Now, why confess to him when we can talk directly to God? Why do you Catholics make things so complicated?!

Because God knows us.

God knows what there's a big difference between telling him you're sorry for something--and actually hearing someone say, "your sins are forgiven." Confessing to another person requires guts. It really does. You're going in and admitting all the things that *you've* done wrong, all those mistakes *you've* made. You are vocalizing all these things to another person, and you know that person is right there, listening to what you're

saying.

That's humbling.

It's very easy, in the Penitential Rite of the Mass, to sort of skim over the prayer.

“Oh my God, I am sorry for my sins...*did I turn off the coffeemaker?* ...through my fault, through my fault...*what is that baby doing?!...*I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin...*I'm really hungry right now. I think I'll have eggs for lunch.*”

See what I mean? Sure, you're saying that you mess up and you're sinful and blah blah. But it's not really personal.

Confession is *entirely* personal. It's *your* list of sins, *your* mess-ups. It's all the ways that you, personally, have offended God.

And yes, it's also Biblical: Jesus tells the apostles that those whose sins they forgive are forgiven, and those that are retained are retained<sup>115</sup>, and also in James 5:16: “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

So, how do we do this thing?

Before you actually get in the confessional (or “reconciliation room”, or whatever parishes call it these days), you have to do some prep work. You have to do an examination of conscience. (These can be found online, in many hand missals, or in the missalettes/missals in the pews at church.)

The examination allows you to do a deep cleaning, as it were, and see where you've sinned. There are things you might not even have thought were sins, that are. But there are also a lot of things that people think are sins, that aren't.

Feelings, for example, aren't sins. They're not willed actions. If a guy cuts me off in traffic and my immediate, unwilled reaction is anger, that's OK. The problem would be if I made my anger *clear* to said driver. (You know what I mean.) Does that make sense? So you don't need to go in and tell the poor priest every single thought you've ever

had<sup>116</sup>.

Catholics believe in two types of sins: **venial** and **mortal**. **Venial sins** wound your relationship with God; **mortal sin** kills it. If you die with mortal sin on your soul and unrepented, then you're in Big Trouble. (Meaning, you did something bad, and you're not sorry you did it.) Only mortal sins *need* to be confessed. You can't receive Communion in a state of mortal sin. So when you have mortal sins, you need to confess them in kind (as in, what you did) and number (how many times you did it.). "I committed adultery with my neighbor's wife eight times in the last month." "I had an abortion." "I stole \$5,000 from my company."

(Brief detour: There are conditions for mortal sin. If you've seen the movie *Chocolat*, you know what they are, but if you haven't: Grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent. Therefore, if someone forces you to have an abortion, it's not a mortal sin for you. If someone rapes you, that's not a sin for you. If you're forced to steal the money at gunpoint, same deal. Likewise, if you didn't know it was a serious thing--like, missing Mass without good reason--same deal. The Church excuses ignorance *to a point*.)

So you've examined your conscience. If you've committed mortal sins, you've written down the number of times and what it was. You're ready to go in.

My church offers confession every single day. *And* before all the weekend Masses. If your parish is not quite that.....awesome, check the schedule. It's in the bulletin and on the parish website. (Or it should be.) Or you can call the parish office and make an appointment with a priest. Sometimes you have options when you go into the confessional—confessing face to face, or kneeling behind the screen, with the priest on the other side of it. Sometimes you don't—at my parish, you just have the screen option, usually<sup>117</sup>.

So how do you do this? Briefly: you go in, you confess. The priest may ask questions or talk to you a bit, after which he will give you a penance. You always get a

penance. Then you say your act of contrition, the priest absolves you, and you're done. You leave the confessional, you do your penance. Voila!

It is suggested that Catholics confess once a month. It is *required* that Catholics confess at least once a year, during the Easter season<sup>118</sup>. I know that Pope St. John Paul II went to Confession every week. Personally, I try to go once a month.

The form and matter for confession is as follows:

**Form:** The prayer of absolution.

**Matter:** the verbal confession of sins.

And you have to be sorry. That's right. You can't go in and *not* be repentant. That is sort of nuts. And invalidates the whole thing. You have to be sorry, otherwise, why are you there<sup>119</sup>?

C.S. Lewis wasn't Catholic, but I like this passage he wrote, especially the last paragraph<sup>120</sup>.

“It is essential [when confessing our sins] to use the plain, simple, old-fashioned words that you would use about anyone else. I mean words like theft, or fornication, or hatred, instead of ‘I did not mean to be dishonest’ or ‘I was only a boy then’ or ‘I lost my temper. I think that this steady facing of what one does know and bringing it before God, without excuses, and seriously asking for Forgiveness and Grace, and resolving as far as in one lies to do better, is the only way in which we can ever begin to know the fatal thing which is always there, and preventing us from becoming perfectly just to our wife or husband, or being a better employer or employee. If this process is gone through, I do not doubt that most of us will come to understand and to share these old words like ‘contrite,’ ‘miserable’ and intolerable.’

“Does that sound very gloomy? Does Christianity encourage morbid introspection? The alternative is much more morbid. Those who do not think about their own sins make

up for it by thinking incessantly about the sins of others. It is healthier to think of one's own. It is the reverse of morbid. It is not even, in the long run, very gloomy. A serious attempt to repent and to really know one's own sin is in the long run a lightening and relieving process. Of course, there is bound to be a first dismay and often terror and later great pain, yet that is much less in the long run than the anguish of a mass of unrepented and unexamined sins, lurking in the background of our minds. It is the difference between the pain of a tooth about which you should go to the dentist, and the simple straightforward pain which you know is getting less and less every moment when you have had the tooth out."

Confession is good for the soul, if not for the ego. And that's the way it's supposed to be.



## Anointing of the Sick

The second of the Sacraments of Healing (Confession being the other), Anointing of the Sick used to be called “Extreme Unction”, or, more commonly in TV/movie world, “last rites.” But recently its applications have been expanded beyond those who are in immediate danger of death.

The Sacrament can be used in a variety of applications:

- For people who, indeed, are in danger of death.
- Before major surgery. (*major* being the operative word.)
- People who are older/infirm/have chronic illnesses that put them in danger of death.

Anointing, like Confession, is used a lot in the media because it’s a rather dramatic sacrament. Or at least, it tends to happen in dramatic circumstances. For example, the TV series *Outlander* showed it in season two, after Claire miscarried baby Faith.

The benefits of anointing, according to the *Catechism*, are: graces of strengthening, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties that attend serious illness or old age; union with the passion of Christ, and the intercession of the communion of saints for the sick person, who also contributes to the sanctification of the Church through his or her suffering. There is also preparation for death, which is why the Eucharist, when given to people who are close to death, is called *viaticum*—“provision for the journey.” It also calls to mind the anointing received in baptism and confirmation<sup>121</sup>.

It’s sort of a Grand Slam of Sacraments. The sacred oil is the **matter** of the sacrament, and the prayer the priest says is the **form**.

Biblical support for this sacrament can be found in James 5:14: “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him

and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord.”

This is one of the reasons it’s important to put your religious affiliation on any hospital admission forms; that way, if worst comes to worst, medical people know who to call. Every hospital I’ve been in has had a Catholic chaplain around to give the sacraments and provide spiritual counsel.

In my experience it’s a rather peaceful sacrament. Many churches offer anointing services at least once a year for people with chronic illness, older members of the congregation, or anyone else who is seriously ill. Some parishes even have a special phone line for emergency anointing!

Even if you know someone who is a fallen-away Catholic, it’s an excellent idea to suggest anointing to her if she is very sick or close to death. The benefits of the sacrament, and offering someone a chance to reconcile to God, are supremely important<sup>122</sup>.

## Marriage: “What brings us together today”

The sacraments of vocation are matrimony—the vocation to the married life—and holy orders—the vocation to the priesthood. Both are fairly simple to explain. What’s harder is the theology that undergirds them, but we’re not going to get too deep in that, here. We’re sticking with the basics. (Remember, this is only 101! Maybe I’ll offer Sacraments 205 in the future.)

Matrimony is, after baptism, probably the most “secular” sacrament. What do I mean by that?

People will have their babies baptized/dedicated/christened, even if they’re not religious people. When I saw *Bridget Jones’s Baby*, I noticed that all the characters had their babies christened (Bridget remarks that she has tons of godchildren), even if the characters, themselves, were not extremely churchgoing, pious folk. It’s like the thing you do. You have a baby, you christen her. That’s that. (At least in England, and at least in the movies.)

Marriage is very similar to this. I’ve been to weddings where people told me they church-shopped beforehand, looking for a “pretty” place to get married—not because they were extremely devout, or attended church regularly, but, you know, one gets married in a church. (And, needless to say, a *pretty* church.)

On the face of it, marriage is easy to explain. Man, woman. Vows. Rings. Consummation. Marriage!

Um....well, sort of.

In the Catholic Church, marriage is for life. Meaning, you don’t get divorced because of “irreconcilable differences.” That does not mean, however, that if you’re married to an addict, or an abuser, that you need to stay in the marriage. I’m not a canonist, and I don’t play one on TV, so I don’t know all the ins and outs of annulment. However, there are appropriate reasons to get one. And it *isn’t* the same as divorce. An

annulment means that one or both spouses didn't consent to the marriage (which is why Buttercup and Humperdink's marriage in *The Princess Bride* isn't valid), or there was some impediment to either one being able to marry. (Like in *Jane Eyre*—the wife in the attic!) But, again, this is Catholic 101, and I'm not a canonist, so if you're in a situation where you're wondering about annulment, then you need to talk to your priest or an official in the diocesan office who deals with annulments.

So, marriage. Man, woman. Priest. **Marriage prep!**

Since marriage is for life, the Church does its utmost to ensure that the couple is aware of issues that could arise, and that they know how they want to deal with said issues. The infamous “survey” that you have to fill out—it's hundreds of questions—during marriage prep is meant to help facilitate those discussion. The Church doesn't want to marry couples where the parties involved have no idea how the other feels on raising the kids, finances, how to resolve arguments, and so forth. The Church wants to prepare you. This is done in two ways—one, by meeting several times with the priest who will marry the couple, and two, by Pre-Cana (which is a marriage preparation program).

However much fun the wedding prep is (“Beige roses, or ivory roses? Do we want Bach or Purcell for the processional? WHAT COLOR WILL THE NAPKINS BE?!”), it's not the *point*. You don't get married to throw a big party. You get married because you want to spend your life with this person, you love this person, and you want to grow in holiness with this person.

The Anglican rite actually does a good job talking about this. If you've seen the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, you know the bit I'm talking about. If not (and in which case, get thee to iTunes and rent it, for goodness sake!), here's the relevant part:

“...holy matrimony, which is an honourable estate, instituted by God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and His church, and therefore is not by any to be enterprised lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy man's

carnal lusts and appetites, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained.

“First, it was ordained for the procreation of children. Secondly, as a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication. Thirdly, for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity, into which holy estate these persons present come now to be joined.”

A lot of people today aren't entering marriage reverently and soberly.

An interesting bit about the sacrament is that the priest doesn't, technically, marry the people. Remember how we've been talking about matter and form? In matrimony, the **form** is the exchange of vows. The **matter** is the people--the man and the woman--and for a marriage to be valid, it needs to be consummated. Yes, that's right.

SEX, people.

If you're an *Outlander* TV fan, you remember that, in season one's episode “The Wedding”, Dougal said he wanted “this marriage consummated with no doubt whatsoever.” Hence, Claire and Jamie's rather awkward start to their wedding night.

(You will remember, true fans, that Jamie is marrying Claire to save her from being abused at the hands of the Evil Redcoat Captain Jonathan Randall. Let us remember that, for most of human history, marriage wasn't about “twue wuv.” It was about lots of other things, like creating alliances, monetary matters, security, or keeping people from being abused by Evil Redcoat Captains.)

So the marriage is man and woman, and it must be consummated.

People say that the Church doesn't like to talk about sex, but really, the Church has such great respect for it that we do talk about it. Quite a bit. Pope St. John Paul II devoted two years' worth of Wednesday audiences to talking about what was later termed “the Theology of the Body.” That's 100 Wednesdays of talking about humanity, sex, and personhood.

This is the main reason the Church doesn't allow artificial birth control. Stick with me here.

In marriage, the couple participates in God's creative life. They work with God to bring new life into the world. That's pretty cool, right?

One of the points of marriage is the procreation of kids. It always has been. It always will be. Now, that does not mean that if you are infertile, that you can't get married. But it does mean that in *general*, that's one of the points of marriage—to have kids.

No, that doesn't mean that the church sees women as brood mares or rabbits. You can limit the number of children you have. But it should be done prudently and using Natural Family Planning,<sup>123</sup> not contraception, which makes the sexual act null and void, and, in some cases, actually kills any baby that was conceived<sup>124</sup>.

The Church's beliefs on the nature of sex, marriage, and contraception are put forth in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humane Vitae*. If you want to know precisely why the Church thinks what she thinks, and read some pretty prescient comments about the state of sexual affairs between modern men and women, then you want to pick up this encyclical.

(There are 5,000,000,000 resources out there about NFP and the Catholic view of marriage. You can google it. I'm trying to go into a bit of the theology here, but really, it's just so rich that its scope is beyond what I can do in a basics lesson. I've recommended some good books in the resources section if you're interested in learning more about this or Theology of the Body.)

The big takeaway here is that God sees human love as good, and even sacred. That's right. It's holy, people. That's why we take it so seriously, because to treat holy things as if they're not holy is sacrilege. Which is a sin. (Which is also why we object to pre- and extramarital sex. Sex can only morally occur between the married partners: wife

and husband. Not Wife A with Husband B, or girlfriend/boyfriend. Put a ring on it, people! And then stay faithful to the person wearing the ring!)

So, while the party, and the dress, and the cake (we can't forget about the cake), are all nice things, they're not the *point* of marriage.

One of the reasons that Christ instituted marriage as a sacrament is because marriage is hard. The Church recognizes that. That's why the couple needs the sacramental grace that is received! Grace is *helpful*. (Understatement of the year, right there.) Grace isn't a magic wand, but it does make something that's humanly really hard somewhat easier.

Essentially: Be like Lizzie and Darcy and Jane and Bingley. Don't be like Lydia and Wickham. Don't be like Humperdinck! (Especially not like that!) Do that, and you'll be on the road to a good marriage.

## Holy Orders

Men who are called to the priesthood become priests through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Every pope, cardinal, archbishop and bishop is a priest first, and a priest last. While they have other duties as part of their office, the pope still baptizes babies and says Mass. An archbishop marries couples and hears confessions. Cardinals anoint the sick. They never stop being priests, even if they have other titles in addition to “Father”.

Holy Orders can only be given once, and it’s done by a bishop (which includes cardinals and the pope). The **form** is the laying on of hands; the **matter** is the prayer said by the bishop. Like in baptism and confirmation, the man who is ordained receives a special, permanent sacramental character.

The sacrament is open only to unmarried men in the Catholic Church. We stick with this because that’s what Jesus did; the 12 apostles were all men. Priests remain celibate for the rest of their lives.

There are two types of priests: a **diocesan** priest, and priests that belong to **religious orders**. A diocesan priest is what you’re probably most familiar with—he’s a priest who serves within a *diocese*, a specific geographic area. A priest of a religious order, on the other hand, like the Dominicans, can serve anywhere the order sends them. I know Dominican priests who are stationed in Kenya, who are studying in England, who are assigned to universities as campus ministers, or who are chaplains at nuns’ monasteries. Diocesan priests can also be teachers, and perform other ministerial tasks, but they will stay within a certain geographic area.

Technically, diocesan priests do not take vows. Vows are made by members of religious orders. Diocesan priests do not promise poverty, but they do promise respect and obedience to the bishop of the diocese<sup>125</sup>. They buy their own cars, can own property, and they live more like their parishioners do, in terms of having possessions and things



like that.

Priests of religious orders *do* make vows, but these can vary depending on the order. Dominicans, for example, only verbally take the vow of obedience when they make profession. Everything is included in that vow, including poverty and chastity. Benedictines take four vows; Franciscans take a special vow of poverty. Religious orders also have their specific habits (clothes that they wear) and customs.

Without priests, we'd lose a lot of the sacraments. Priests are the only people who can consecrate the Eucharist, hear confessions, and anoint the sick. The course of study is quite long; for a diocesan priest, an undergraduate degree, followed by four years of seminary, is the normal course. For religious, it can be even longer--Jesuit formation, for example, takes ten to eleven years, and Dominican formation is at least seven. Why does it take longer? Because the men aren't just becoming priests, but they're also joining an order with a specific charism, which requires additional formation in the lifestyle they are undertaking<sup>126</sup>.

It's not something a man decides to do lightly. Priesthood is for life. (Unless he's laicized--that's the term, not "defrocked".) As a priest, he is in charge of all the souls in his parish. That's a big responsibility. A priest can be called to serve at any time, day or night. A Mass cannot occur without a priest, because only a priest can perform the consecration that transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

One of the things Catholics should do is pray that God will give us many holy priests, because without them, we're in bad shape.

Priests aren't perfect. They're human. The sacrament doesn't magically transform them into perfect people. Grace has to be cooperated with; it's not a magic wand. So yes, there are priests who aren't great at administrative things, who don't give good homilies, who can't sing, who are gruff in the confessional, and so forth. They're not perfect. But they have a very important job. So pray for them! And parents—be open to your sons

becoming priests! No, you won't have grandchildren from them. But they will be spiritual fathers to innumerable other souls.

## Saints Alive: The Canonization Process

While we're all called to be saints, what exactly *is* a saint? And how do people like Mother Teresa get those cool ceremonies in Rome and get added to the church calendar?

First off, a saint is *anyone* who is in Heaven. If your grandma died, and is in Heaven, she's a saint. (*You are not an angel when you die.* If you have forgotten this, do not read any further. Go back to Part I and re-read the "Angels" chapter. Then come back.)

However, we don't know if your grandma is in Heaven. Canonized saints, on the other hand, because of lots of evidence, are people that the Church is sure *are* in Heaven. They go on the official list of saints, called the "canon." Thus: Canonized saints.

(A little note here: the Church doesn't "make" saints. God makes saints. We just recognize them.)

The canonization process is a long one, and there are several levels to it. The process was updated in 1983 by Pope St. John Paul II. I'm describing that process here.

How to be a saint, in four (not easy) steps:

The process of canonization begins in the deceased's own diocese. So, for example, if someone died in Columbus, Ohio, then the Diocese of Columbus is the place where the process would start.

The bishop gives permission **to open an investigation into the deceased's virtue.** Usually this happens no sooner than five years after the person's death. In the cases of Pope St. John Paul II and St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), this process was expedited. (At Pope St. John Paul II's funeral, there were signs that read *Santo Subito*--sainthood now!) This period was also waved in the instance of Sister Lucia Santos, the last surviving Fatima visionary, who died in 2005, a little less than two months before the death of Pope St. John Paul II.

A guild/organization of people who want the individual canonized is created, and an

exhaustive search for the person's writings, speeches, and so on, is done. A detailed biography of the deceased is also written.

When sufficient documents and evidence of the person's virtuous life are gathered, **the material is presented to the Roman Curia, specifically the Congregation for Causes of Saints.** Here, the deceased is assigned a *postulator*, a person who gathers more information about the person's life. At this point, the person is called a servant of God. Relics are taken at this point. (We'll talk about relics in the next chapter.)

When enough additional information has been gathered, **the Congregation for Causes of Saints will make a recommendation to the pope that he declare the deceased possessed "heroic virtue."** What does that mean? It means that the servant exhibited the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, to a heroic degree.

Once the declaration is made, the person is officially Venerable. He doesn't have a feast day, no churches can be built in his honor, and the Church isn't declaring for sure that this person is in Heaven. However, prayer cards may be printed, and people may ask for this person's intercession.<sup>127</sup>

This is where miracles start to come in. People can pray to venerable/blessed for him to intercede before God for their petition. A miracle granted by this person's intercession is a sign that the person is in Heaven. However, it has to be through that *particular person's intercession*. That's why sometimes you'll hear people ask for the prayers of a particular servant or blessed—they want the miracle, if it happens, to be able to be attributed to this person in order to further his cause for sainthood.

The last step before sainthood is **beatification. This is a statement by the church that proclaims it is "worthy of belief" that the deceased is in Heaven.** The person is either a martyr or a confessor. A *martyr* is a person who died voluntarily for his faith or in an act of heroic charity for others (St. Maximilian Kolbe is an example of the latter.) A

*confessor* is someone who “confessed” his faith by how he lived his life. To be declared blessed, at least one miracle attributed to your intercession has to happen. Usually today these are miraculous cures, which are verified via a lot of medical testing and inquiry. You can’t just say it was a miracle; it has to be proven, as far as possible, via a *lot* of science. Once a person is beatified, he or she is called “blessed”.

A blessed gets a feast day, which is usually only celebrated in the blessed’s home diocese or religious order. (So if Sister Jane of God was a Carmelite, once she becomes *Blessed* Jane of God, she can go on the Carmelite’s calendar of feast days. But the Benedictines won’t add her to theirs.)

Finally, **sainthood is announced when at least two miracles have been attributed to the person’s intercession.** (If the person wasn’t a martyr. If you’re a martyr, just one suffices.) Canonization means the Church is certain that this person is in Heaven and enjoys the Beatific Vision.

The saint’s feast day can be celebrated by the universal Church, churches may be built in the person’s honor, and the faithful may freely celebrate this saint. Holy cards and medals can be made.

The canonization ceremony involves a Mass in Rome. A tapestry is made of the saint and is displayed during the Mass itself in St. Peter’s Square.

As you can see, it’s a long process, and obviously, not everyone in Heaven is a canonized saint. But as Mother Angelica used to say, “Where most men work for letters after their name, we work for ones before our name: St. It’s much more difficult degree to attain. It takes a lifetime, and you don’t get your diploma until you’re dead.”<sup>128</sup>

## Relics

In the chapter on sainthood, we talked about relics. But what the heck are they?

Essentially, relics are the bones, ashes, and/or clothing of a saint. The relics are divided into classes: first, second, and third.

A **first-class** relic is, in terms of a saint, a physical remnant of them (piece of hair, a bone, skull, etc.) A first class relic of *Jesus* would be a piece of the manger, the cross, etc. (Yes, there are pieces of the True Cross out there.)

A **second-class** relic is an item that a saint owned or frequently used, like a rosary, a breviary, crucifix, or, sometimes, an item of the saint's clothing (like a bit of St. Thérèse's habit or Pope St. John Paul II's cassock.).

A **third-class** relic is something that has touched a first or second class relic. Sometimes you'll see people press a rosary or a piece of cloth to a first or second class relic. The item that touched the first- or second- class relic is now a third-class relic.

A relic is kept in a *reliquary*. Sometimes this is a small frame, specially made for the object; sometimes it's a tomb of a saint, like St. Thomas Aquinas' :



*The reliquary of St. Thomas Aquinas, at his burial place in Toulouse, France.<sup>129</sup>*

First-class relics are placed in the altars of Catholic churches. Nowadays there is usually copious documentation attached to relics, so people can affirm the relic's authenticity.

Relics help put us in touch with the divine. Miracles have been attributed to them. But we don't worship them, just like we don't worship saints. They are, however, holy objects and thus are to be treated with respect. The idea of relics is Biblical—you can find it in Acts 19: 11-12: "And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and evil spirits came out of them."

## Who's In Charge Here?: Apostolic Succession, Papal Election, and the Magisterium

There are more than one billion Catholics in the world, who speak every language and live in every country. That's a lot of people! So how does the Church ensure that all these people have parishes, pastors, access to the sacraments, and additionally, that the Masses and sacraments are valid, and the people in country X haven't decided to start worshipping a new Goddess of Tiger Lilies during Mass?

Short answer: The Papacy, Apostolic Succession, and the Magisterium.

What does all that mean?

**Apostolic succession:** the uninterrupted transmission of spiritual authority from the apostles through successive popes and bishops.

Catholics believe that the papacy extends, in an unbroken line, back to Peter, the first pope. There have been, as of this writing, 265 popes, with Pope Francis being the 266th.

But the pope is just the top of the Catholic hierarchy. In order to really understand the papacy and how a pope is elected, you have to understand the basics of church governance.

From the bottom up:

A **pastor** is in charge of a parish, which covers a territorial area. (A suburb, a city, part of a suburb or city, etc.)

A **bishop** is in charge of a diocese—a larger territorial area.

An **archbishop** is in charge of an archdiocese—an even larger area. An archdiocese doesn't have to be bigger in area, but in population<sup>130</sup>. New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles are some of the archdioceses in the United States.



Archdioceses often have a **cardinal** as the bishop. Bishops and cardinals are created<sup>131</sup> by the pope.

You have to be a priest before you can be a pastor or a bishop, and be a bishop before you're a cardinal. The levels build upon each other, and each step up gives the person authority over a larger group of people.

The world's cardinals make up the **College of Cardinals**. Cardinals under the age of 80 elect the pope in conclave<sup>132</sup>. Any cardinal under 80 is eligible to be elected pope. The college also serves as the papal advisory body, and the pope can call them to Rome for special meetings or church councils, such as Vatican II, Vatican I, the Council of Trent, and so forth. As of this writing, there are 227 cardinals around the world, 120 of whom are eligible to participate in conclave<sup>133</sup>.

(Fun Catholic fact: technically, *any* Catholic man can become pope. As in, my dad could be elected pope. But then he'd have to be ordained and all that jazz. But *technically*, it could happen. If a man who isn't a priest is elected, then he is immediately given the priestly offices; if a man who is a priest, but not a bishop, is elected, then he is immediately made a bishop before he can become pope.)

The roots of the papacy are Biblically-based—it's not something we just made up for fun. The most common citation for the papacy, and Jesus' institution of it, can be found in Matthew 16:

“When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and

upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.”<sup>134</sup>

Every pope since then has followed Peter into the “Petrine office” (Petrine--Peter).

Now, there have been some pretty awful popes. There have also been many saintly ones. The office doesn’t automatically make you holy.

The tradition of regnal names began with Pope John II, in 533. His given name was Mercurius, after the Roman god Mercury, and he didn’t think that was an appropriate name for a Christian pope! So every pope since then has had the option of a regnal name. Pope St. John Paul II’s baptismal name was Karol; Benedict XVI’s was Joseph, and Francis’ was Jorge.

The pope’s role has changed over the centuries, but he has always been the spiritual leader of the world’s Catholics.

So we understand apostolic succession. Now: how is a pope chosen?

A pope is chosen by the college of cardinals in *conclave* (Latin, “with a key”). Upon the death (or, *much* more rarely, resignation) of a pope, the world’s cardinals come to Rome, and, after the pope is buried, the eligible cardinals enter the conclave. For our purposes, we’re going to talk about the process when a pope dies, since that is, by far, the most common way a conclave is called.

Conclave has had a pretty exciting history. It wasn’t until 1059 that the College of Cardinals was designated the sole body of papal electors. It could take *years* to elect a pope, so finally Pope Gregory X decreed in 1274 that the cardinals should be locked in seclusion and not permitted to leave Rome until a pope was chosen. That certainly sped up the process.

Conclave is held in the Sistine Chapel of the Apostolic Palace. The process has changed over the years, but the last two conclaves have been held under Pope St. John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution of 1996. The cardinals are lodged in St. Martha's House, a building built specifically for the cardinal electors, which is much nicer than the haphazard accommodations that were once built upon the call of conclave. (This is also where Pope Francis currently resides, since he chose not to live in the Apostolic Palace.)

The cardinals are sealed into the conclave following a Mass and two sermons, and they take an oath swearing to follow the procedure of conclave, to maintain secrecy, and to disregard any secular instructions they may have received. After this, the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations says, "*Extra omnes!*"—Latin for, "everyone else, get out!" Today, to ensure secrecy, the Sistine Chapel is swept for bugs/recording devices, and WiFi signals are blocked. Wireless signal jammers are used in the Sistine Chapel, and cardinals are not allowed newspapers, television, the radio, or any form of electronic communication.

On the first day of the conclave, one ballot may be held, but it's not required. Four ballots are held on each of the successive days—two in the morning, two in the afternoon. If no pope is chosen after three days of balloting, the process is suspended for one day for prayer. The process repeats itself in various ways until a pope is chosen.<sup>135</sup>

The cardinals are given pieces of paper, on which they write the name of the person they think should be pope. They take this ballot to a table before the altar, where two scrutineers are sitting. Each cardinal declares, "I call as witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge, that my vote is given before God to the one I think should be elected." (The oath is in Latin.) Scrutineers take the paper and, when all the cardinals have voted, they tally them. The votes are anonymous—no cardinal signs his name to his ballot.

After the ballots are counted and tallied (to ensure the right number of ballots had been cast), the ballots are burned—the source of the famous white or black smoke.

Originally, when a pope was not elected, damp hay was added to the ballots, to create black smoke. The ballots burned alone when a pope was elected, which created the white smoke. Since 1963, chemicals have been added to the burning process, along with the ringing of bells to indicate the election of a new pope. (When Benedict XVI was elected, then was some confusion as to the color of the smoke, so the ringing of the bells was very helpful in determining that yes, a pope had been chosen.)

A pope is elected when two-thirds of the ballots are in his favor. The newly-elected man is free to say he does not accept the office. A cardinal can also explicitly say this *before* the conclave starts.

If he accepts, the new pope is taken to the “room of tears”, which is a room next to the Sistine Chapel. (It’s called that because of the strong emotions the newly elected pope usually expresses.) He chooses his white cassock and other papal accoutrements from the three sizes provided.

Before the newly elected pope appears on the balcony of St. Peter’s, the senior Cardinal Deacon announces the “*Habemus Papam*”—we have a pope!—from the balcony. The speech is given in Latin, with the pope’s former name given, as well as his regnal name, which he chooses after he accepts the office. The new pope appears on the balcony and gives brief remarks, as well as a blessing. The pope is officially inaugurated with a Mass at a further date.

Finally, the Church has something called the **Magisterium**. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church is the teaching office of the Church, and it consists of the pope and the bishops. The Vatican II document *Lumen gentium*<sup>136</sup> states that the day to day teaching of the Church throughout the world, when the Bishops are in union with each other and with the Pope, and present something as definitive, is infallible<sup>137</sup>.

Note that there’s a lot of levels there. The bishops have to be in union with each

other *and* the Pope. *And* they have to present something as a definitive teaching. It can't just be the U.S. Bishops, or the Japanese bishops, or just the pope and a couple cardinals, or just the pope. Nope. It's got to be *all of them together*.

Another Vatican II document, *Dei Verbum* (The Word of God) speaks more specifically about the Magisterium and its role:

“Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers, so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.

“But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

“It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls<sup>138</sup>.”

In short, the Church doesn't just make stuff up randomly. She doesn't change with societal pressure or with popular movements. The Church is focused on *truth*—that's what really matters. The Church's job is to save souls. That's her goal, her job, and her sole focus.

Part IV:  
Prayers and Resources

### Class Dismissed

*You must laugh your way to heaven, because tears won't get you there.*

—*Mother Mary Angelica, PCPA*

I hope that you've laughed a few times while reading *Catholic 101*. I hope you've learned a few things, too, and been inspired to delve more deeply into the Catholic faith, either via the prayers and resources I'm about to present to you, or through your own library hunting.

While religion is a serious topic, dealing with eternal things, God also created us to have joy. Religion shouldn't be something that is only dour and serious. It also needs a good dose of cheerfulness, joy, and laughter. So, while breaking out into the giggle during Mass is probably not an approved suggestion, knowing that God loves you, and created you to love, know, and serve him in this life, and be happy with him forever in the next, is something that should inspire great joy in you. God is always good, and you are always loved.



## Basic Catholic Prayers and Important Dates

### **The Our Father**

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **The Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

### **The Glory Be**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

### **The Hail, Holy Queen**

Hail, Holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee to we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, that after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary!

### **The Memorare**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence I fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins, my mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

(Mother Teresa had what she called a “flying novena” with the memorare: nine memorares in a row for a petition, with a tenth added in thanksgiving for the petition being granted.)

### **Guardian Angel Prayer**

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here, ever this day/  
night be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

### **Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, cast into Hell Satan and all other evil spirits who prowl through the world, seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

### **The Nicene Creed**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,

born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
I believe in one, holy, catholic<sup>139</sup> and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

## **The Angelus**

*Traditionally said at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. It is replaced during the Easter season with the Regina Coeli (Queen of Heaven). If you live near a Catholic church, you might hear the church bells toll for the Angelus at six, noon, and six.*

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary:

And she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Say the Hail Mary*

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:

Be it done unto me according to your word.

*Hail Mary...*

*(Bow during this line)* And the Word was made Flesh:

And dwelt among us.

*Hail Mary...*

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,

That we may be made worthy of the Promises of Christ.

Let us pray,

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ  
Our Lord.

### **The Regina Coeli**

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia. / For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.

Has risen, as he said, alleluia. / Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia. / For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.  
Let us pray. O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ  
our Lord. Amen.

### **The St. Gertrude Prayer**

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within  
my family. Amen.

### **The St. Andrew Novena**

*begins on November 30 and is said fifteen times a day until Christmas Day.*

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God! to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.

### **Holy Days of Obligation in the United States**

January 1: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

40 Days after Easter: The Solemnity of the Ascension<sup>140</sup>

August 15: The Assumption of Mary

November 1: All Saints' Day

December 8: The Immaculate Conception

December 25: Christmas

There is also the *Easter duty*—the duty of Catholics to receive communion at least once a year during the Easter season (required by Canon 920 of the Code of Canon Law<sup>141</sup>)

### **The Precepts of the Church**

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least once during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence set by the Church. (Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday.)
5. You shall help provide for the needs of the Church.

## Books

### *General Catholicism*

- Hahn, Dr. Scott, editor. The Catholic Bible Dictionary. Image: 2009.
- John Paul II., Pope St. Crossing The Threshold of Hope. Knopf: 1995. Servant: 2009.
- Morrow, Fr. Thomas G. Be Holy: A Catholic's Guide to the Spiritual Life.
- Trigilio, Jr. Rev. John and Rev. Kenneth Brighenti. Catholicism for Dummies. For Dummies: 2017.

### *General Prayer*

- Dubay, Fr. Thomas. Prayer Primer. Ignatius Press: 2002.
- . Deep Conversion/Deep Prayer. Ignatius Press: 2006.

### *Life of Christ*

- Benedict XVI. Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration. Ignatius Press: 2007.
- . Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the Resurrection. Ignatius Press: 2010.
- . Jesus of Nazareth. The Infancy Narratives. Ignatius Press: 2012.
- Sheen, Rev. Fulton. The Life of Christ. Image: 1977.

### *On the Rosary*

- Edmisten, Karen. The Rosary: Keeping Company with Jesus and Mary. Servant Books: 2009.
- Groeschel, Fr. Benedict. The Rosary: Chain of Hope. Ignatius Press: 2003.
- Father Peyton's Rosary Prayer Book. Ignatius Press: 2003.

*NFP/ Marriage/ Theology of the Body*

John Paul II. Love and Responsibility . Ignatius Press: 1993.

— . Man and Woman He Created Them. Translated by Michael Waldstein. Pauline Books and Media: 2006.

Paul VI, Pope. Humane Vitae: On Human Life. Pauline Books and Media: 1968.

Stimpson, Emily. These Beautiful Bones: An Everyday Theology of the Body. Emmaus Road: 2013.

*Sabbath*

Ostermann, Charlotte. Souls at Rest . Second Spring Books: 2014.

*Mary*

Hahn, Dr. Scott. Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God. Image: 2006.

Sheen, Rev. Fulton. The World's First Love: Mary, Mother of God. Ignatius Press: 2010.

*The Mass*

Benedict XVI. God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life. Ignatius Press: 2003.

Hahn, Dr. Scott. The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth. Doubleday: 1999.

*Sacraments*

Hahn, Dr. Scott. Lord Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession. Image: 2003.

— . Swear to God: The Promise and Power of the Sacraments. Image: 2004.

**Films**

*The Passion of the Christ.* Directed by Mel Gibson, performances by Jim Caviezel, Maia



Morgenstern, and Christo Jivkov. Icon productions, 2004.

CCC America's series on saints is excellent, especially *The Day The Sun Danced* (about Fatima), *Bernadette: Princess of Lourdes*, *Francis: Knight of Assisi*, *Patrick: Brave Shepherd of the Emerald Isle*, and *Nicholas: The Boy Who Became Santa*. The films are available at Catholic bookstores, and also at [www.cccofamerica.com](http://www.cccofamerica.com). These aren't just great for kids. The Fatima one, especially, is great for all ages.

### CDs

A great way to mediate during the rosary is to use a CD. The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, have released an excellent one that I've used frequently entitled *The Rosary: Mysteries, Meditations, and Music*. It's available at Amazon, Catholic bookstores, and on their website: <https://www.sistersofmary.org/product/rosary-mysteries-meditations-music/> (They have other CDs, too!)

For music that corresponds to the Church year, the Benedictines of Mary, based in Missouri, have wonderful recordings that are internationally known. You can buy them on Amazon, at Catholic bookstores, and also directly on their website: <https://music.benedictinesofmary.org/> Their *Caroling*, *Easter*, *Adoration*, and *Lent* albums are some of my favorites.

The Dominican student brothers of the St. Joseph province also have excellent CDs, which you can purchase at their website: <https://www.dominicanajournal.org/music/>. Their recording "Christ Was Born To Save" is especially great for Christmastime.



## Bibliography

### *Books*

- Arroyo, Raymond, editor. Mother Angelica's Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality. Doubleday: 2007.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church. Image Doubleday:1995.
- Milton, John. Paradise Lost. Oxford University Press: 2004.
- Pope St. John Paul II. Encyclical Letter. Evangelium Vitae. 25 Mar 1995.
- Paul VI. Encyclical Letter. Humane Vitae. 25 July 1968.
- Pius IX. Apostolic Constitution. Ineffable Deus. 8 Dec 1854.
- Pius XII. Encyclical Letter. Humani Generis. 12 Aug 1950.
- . Apostolic Constitution. Munificentissimus Deus. 1 Nov 1950.
- Lewis, Clive Staples. Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer. Mariner Books: 2002.
- . Mere Christianity. New York: Harper Collins, 1980.
- . God In The Dock. Eerdmans: 1970.
- Zmirak, John. The Bad Catholic's Guide to the Catechism. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2012.

### *Film*

- Pride and Prejudice. Directed by Simon Langton, performances by Jennifer Ehle, Colin Firth, Susannah Harker, Alison Steadman, Benjamin Withrow, and Crispin Bonham-Carter. BBC, 1995.

## Acknowledgements

Deep thanks to:

Mary Parker for her editing and proofreading prowess. This book is much better because of her comments and attention to detail.

Rev. Br. Humbert Kilanowski, O.P., for his help with the Confirmation chapter.

Mary Beth Chamblin, for being a wonderful role model and an excellent co-catechist.

## About the Author



Emily M. DeArdo is life-professed lay Dominican who writes regularly at [emilymdeardo.com](http://emilymdeardo.com). She is a graduate of Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. This is her first book.

---

<sup>1</sup>God's life in our souls.

<sup>2</sup>Put simply, a virtue is a good habit.

<sup>3</sup>CCC 1. <http://www.sborromeo.org/ccc/prologue.htm> Accessed April 27, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>5</sup>CCC 1849

<sup>6</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Church\\_and\\_evolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_and_evolution) Accessed April 18, 2017.

<sup>7</sup>Gen. 22:1-19

<sup>8</sup>The books of Lamentations and Baruch are also counted as works of the major prophets in the Catholic Bible.

Baruch is named after Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch ben Neriah.

<sup>9</sup>I want to note here the differences between the Catholic and most Protestant bibles are found in the Old Testament.

Both Catholics and Protestants agree on the makeup of the New Testament, but not the Old. The Catholic Bible contains what are called the "Deuterocanonical" or "apocryphal" books: Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, part of the book of Esther, and some parts of the book of Daniel. The whys of the differences are complex and not really fitting in our scope here, but I did want to note that these are the differences in the Catholic and Protestant Old Testaments.

<sup>10</sup>The Catholic list is slightly different than the Protestant list in wording and numbering.

<sup>11</sup>Ex. 20:1-17

<sup>12</sup>emphasis in the original

<sup>13</sup>CCC 2072

<sup>14</sup>"Mass", when referring to Catholicism, is capitalized. If you don't capitalize it, it means something completely different. It drives me crazy to see how often Mass is not capitalized when referring to what Catholics do on Sunday!

<sup>15</sup>CCC 2263: The legitimate defense of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition against the murder of the innocent that constitutes intentional killing. "The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life; and the killing of the aggressor. . . . The one is intended, the other is not."

<sup>16</sup>CCC 267, which also quotes St. Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae*. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm) Accessed April 18, 2017.

<sup>17</sup>CCC 2270-2275

<sup>18</sup>CCC 2276-2283

<sup>19</sup>CCC 2276-2283

<sup>20</sup>“Catholicism and the ten commandments.” *Dummies*. Accessed January 5, 2017. <http://www.dummies.com/religion/christianity/catholicism/catholicism-and-the-ten-commandments/>

<sup>21</sup>Lk. 2: 1-20

<sup>22</sup>Mt. 2:1-12

<sup>23</sup>Lk. 2:22-38

<sup>24</sup>Mt. 2:13-21

<sup>25</sup>Lk. 2:41-52

<sup>26</sup>Lk. 2:39

<sup>27</sup>Mk. 6:2-4

<sup>28</sup>Jn. 2:1-12

<sup>29</sup>Jn. 6:60-66

<sup>30</sup>Jn. 11:45-53

<sup>31</sup>Mt. 5-7

<sup>32</sup>Mt. 16:18

<sup>33</sup>Mt. 26: 69-75, Mk. 14: 66-72, Lk. 22:54-62, Jn. 18:25-27

<sup>34</sup>The longest reigning pope “officially”—meaning, we have written records dating his reign—is Pope Pius XII, who reigned for 31 years. However, Peter is noted in the World Atlas as reigned for 35 years, from 30-65 AD—so this dates from him being the head of the apostles while Jesus was still alive. <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/longest-serving-popes-in-the-history-of-the-catholic-church.html> accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>35</sup>Jn. 1:33-42

<sup>36</sup>Jn. 20:2

<sup>37</sup>This is also a self-portrait of Michelangelo.

<sup>38</sup>Jn. 20:24-29

<sup>39</sup>Mt. 9:9

<sup>40</sup>Lk. 6:16

<sup>41</sup>Mt. 26:14-16, Lk. 22: 3-6, John 13:21-30

<sup>42</sup>Mt. 27:3-10

<sup>43</sup>Acts 1:23-26

<sup>44</sup>Mt. 26:3-4

<sup>45</sup>Jn. 12:4-6

<sup>46</sup>There is some controversy over whether the Last Supper was a seder meal or not. If you’re interested in reading more about this, read Pope Benedict XVI’s *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the*

*Resurrection.* (More information in the resources section.)

<sup>47</sup>Mt. 27:19

<sup>48</sup>Mt. 26:69-75

<sup>49</sup>Mt. 27:3-10

<sup>50</sup>Mk. 15:21

<sup>51</sup>Jn. 19:25

<sup>52</sup>Jn. 19:34

<sup>53</sup>Jn. 19:38-40

<sup>54</sup>Jn. 20:1

<sup>55</sup>This gave Mary Magdalene the title of “Apostle to the Apostles”.

<sup>56</sup>Jn. 20:19-23

<sup>57</sup>Acts 1: 6-11

<sup>58</sup>Acts 2

<sup>59</sup>Lk. 1:26-38

<sup>60</sup>Lk. 2:41-52

<sup>61</sup>Jn. 19:25-30

<sup>62</sup>Acts 2

<sup>63</sup>Pius IX. *Ineffable Deus*. Published 8 December 1854. Accessed April 27, 2017. <https://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/marye1.htm>

<sup>64</sup>Pius XII. *Munificentissimus Deus*. (Defining the Dogma of the Assumption) Vatican Website November 1, 1950. Accessed February 9, 2017. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_apc\\_19501101\\_munificentissimus-deus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus.html)

<sup>65</sup>Genesis 1:26

<sup>66</sup>Deut. 6:4

<sup>67</sup>CCC 1021

<sup>68</sup>CCC 1033-1037

<sup>69</sup>CCC 1030

<sup>70</sup>Lewis, Clive Staples. Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer. Mariner Books: 2002.

<sup>71</sup>A novena is nine consecutive days of prayer: a devotion, a rosary, Masses, etc., said for the same intention.

<sup>72</sup>CCC 1038-1040

<sup>73</sup><http://www.catholic.org/saints/angels/> accessed March 2, 2017.

<sup>74</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangel> accessed March 2, 2017.

<sup>75</sup>CCC 336: “From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their (the angels) watchful care and intercession.



Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life. Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united to God.”

<sup>76</sup>Which was named after a pope, by the way: Pope Gregory XIII, in October 1582.

<sup>77</sup>Phil. 4:4

<sup>78</sup>If you’re interested in more information about the makeup of the tilma, or the scientific tests it’s been subjected to over the years, visit [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our\\_Lady\\_of\\_Guadalupe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Guadalupe)

<sup>79</sup>Acts 6:8-7:60

<sup>80</sup>Mt. 2:1-8, 16-18

<sup>81</sup>Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22

<sup>82</sup>Lk. 9:28-36

<sup>83</sup><https://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/LITCOLOR.HTM> accessed March 6, 2017.

<sup>84</sup>Easter is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 20.

<sup>85</sup>“The Holy Season of Lent Fast and Abstinence.” EWTN. Accessed February 9, 2017. <https://www.ewtn.com/faith/lent/fast.htm>

<sup>86</sup>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “State of Food Insecurity in the World in Brief.” Accessed February 9, 2017. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4671e.pdf>

<sup>87</sup>World Vision. Accessed February 9, 2017. <http://donate.worldvision.org/ways-to-give/hunger/hunger-fund>

<sup>88</sup>World Vision. Accessed February 14, 2017. <https://www.worldvision.org/our-work/clean-water#1470869887509-34371ddb-6bc9>

<sup>89</sup><https://donate.worldvision.org/give/deep-well>

<sup>90</sup>The Introit is what used to be sung while the priest approached the altar at the beginning of Mass. Sometimes in missals like *Magnificat* you’ll see this noted as the entrance antiphon. Now, most parishes will sing a hymn instead of the introit, which was usually sung by the cantor or choir.

<sup>91</sup>Mt. 21: 1-11; Mk. 11:1-10; Lk. 19: 28-38; Jn. 12:12-15

<sup>92</sup>Ex. 12:1-8, 11-14

<sup>93</sup>Jn. 13:1-15

<sup>94</sup>Originally, it was twelve men, but the ritual language has been changed lately to reflect *12 people*.

<sup>95</sup>Jn. 18:1-19:42

<sup>96</sup>In some places, there may be two crosses used for the veneration.

<sup>97</sup>Unless you’re a religion writer for the *New York Times*, who, on Easter Sunday 2017, wrote that Easter was the day Jesus ascended into Heaven.

<sup>98</sup>There are two groups of people who enter the Church on Holy Saturday: catechumens, who are people who were never baptized, and candidates, who are people who are converting to Catholicism from another Christian

denomination. Candidates aren't re-baptized—that's only for the catechumens. Both catechumens and candidates receive their First Communion and are confirmed.

<sup>99</sup>Romans 6:3-11

<sup>100</sup>Acts 1: 6-11

<sup>101</sup>Acts 2

<sup>102</sup>That being said, there are forms of prayer or meditation that the Church does *not* approve of, so before you try anything trendy, be sure to check what the Church has to say about it.

<sup>103</sup>Mt. 7:7

<sup>104</sup>Arroyo, Raymond, editor. *Mother Angelica's Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality*. Doubleday: 2007.

<sup>105</sup>Mt. 10:28

<sup>106</sup><http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2016/01/saint-thomas-aquinas-and-the-spiritual-mercy-of-instructing-others/>

accessed April 18, 2017

<sup>107</sup>Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

<sup>108</sup>Lewis, Clive Staples. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Harper Collins, 1980.

<sup>109</sup>CCC 1213

<sup>110</sup>Mt. 19:14

<sup>111</sup>I was absolutely shocked the first time I went to a Protestant service and saw the pastor getting out a loaf of Kroger bread, and a jar of Kroger grape juice in the sacristy before a service. He started to break the bread slices into pieces and pour the grape juice into little Dixie cups. I was flabbergasted.

<sup>112</sup>The Letters of JRR Tolkien, letter to his son, quoted in *The Bad Catholic's Guide to the Catechism*. 185. (Zmirak, John. *The Bad Catholic's Guide to the Catechism*. Crossroads Publishing, 2012.)

<sup>113</sup><http://www.dummies.com/religion/christianity/catholicism/what-is-confirmation-in-the-catholic-church/> accessed

February 24, 2017.

<sup>114</sup>Acts 8:14-17

<sup>115</sup>John 20:21-23

<sup>116</sup>Confession is also not therapy. The priest is not a shrink.

<sup>117</sup>You always have the right to ask for a anonymous confession, meaning, not confessing face-to-face.

<sup>118</sup>This is called the "Easter duty": to confess your sins and receive communion at least once a year, during the Easter season.

<sup>119</sup>Meaning, no one can *force* you to go to confession, as also seen in *Chocolat*.

<sup>120</sup>C.S. Lewis, "Miserable Offenders," *God in the Dock* (Eerdmans, 1970) 120-121.

<sup>121</sup>CCC 1520-1523

<sup>122</sup>For the book nerds among you, this is visible in Evelyn Waugh’s classic novel, *Brideshead Revisited*. Definitely worth reading.

<sup>123</sup>Which is not the “rhythm method”, folks. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/>

<sup>124</sup>DeSanctis, Alexandra. “Yes, Some Contraceptives are Abortifacients”. November 4, 2016. *National Review Online*. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/441811/contraceptives-abortifacients-theyre-often-same-thing> Accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>125</sup>“What’s the difference between a diocesan priest and a religious order priest?” [www.dcpriest.org](http://www.dcpriest.org) <http://www.dcpriest.org/faq/about-the-priesthood/742-what-is-the-difference-between-a-diocesan-priest-and-a-religious-order-priest-742> Accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>126</sup>Not all men who enter the Dominican order become priests; some are called to be cooperator brothers, who are full members of the order and who serve, but not as priests. St. Martin des Porres is the most famous Dominican cooperator brother.

<sup>127</sup>“Canonization.” Wikipedia. Accessed April 27, 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonization>

<sup>128</sup>Arroyo, Raymond, editor. *Mother Angelica’s Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality*. Doubleday: 2007.

<sup>129</sup>Photo by Richelle Zakrzewski, 2017.

<sup>130</sup>An archdiocese can also be created in an area that has historical significance.

<sup>131</sup>Created meaning named/appointed.

<sup>132</sup>The age limit was imposed by Pope Paul VI in 1966.

<sup>133</sup>“College of Cardinals.” *Wikipedia*. Accessed January 4, 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College\\_of\\_Cardinals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_Cardinals)

<sup>134</sup>Mt. 16:13-20

<sup>135</sup>I’m massively simplifying here in order to keep the outline of the process easy to follow, so I’m skipping some of the more minute details, namely the selection of the Cardinal Bishop, Cardinal Priest, and Cardinal Deacon—these three men have various roles throughout the conclave process. I’m also simplifying the process of the ballots and what happens on various days during the process if a pope still hasn’t been chosen.

<sup>136</sup>Vatican II. “Lumen Gentium”, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. Published November 21, 1964. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed October 24, 2017. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>137</sup>Most, Fr. William G. “The Magisterium or Teaching Authority of the Church.” EWTN.com. Accessed October 24, 2017. <https://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/chura4.htm>

<sup>138</sup>Vatican II. “Dei Verbum”, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. Published November 18, 1965. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Accessed October 24, 2017. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)

<sup>139</sup>“catholic” in the creed doesn’t mean “Catholic” as in the Church. It means *universal*—the original meaning of the word “catholic.” I’ve seen some Protestant missals which replace “catholic” with “Christian”, which completely changes the meaning of the sentence.

<sup>140</sup>In some places, this has been removed as a Holy Day of Obligation and instead moved to the Sunday following. Check with your diocese.

<sup>141</sup><http://www.ewtn.com/v/experts/showmessage.asp?number=505869>