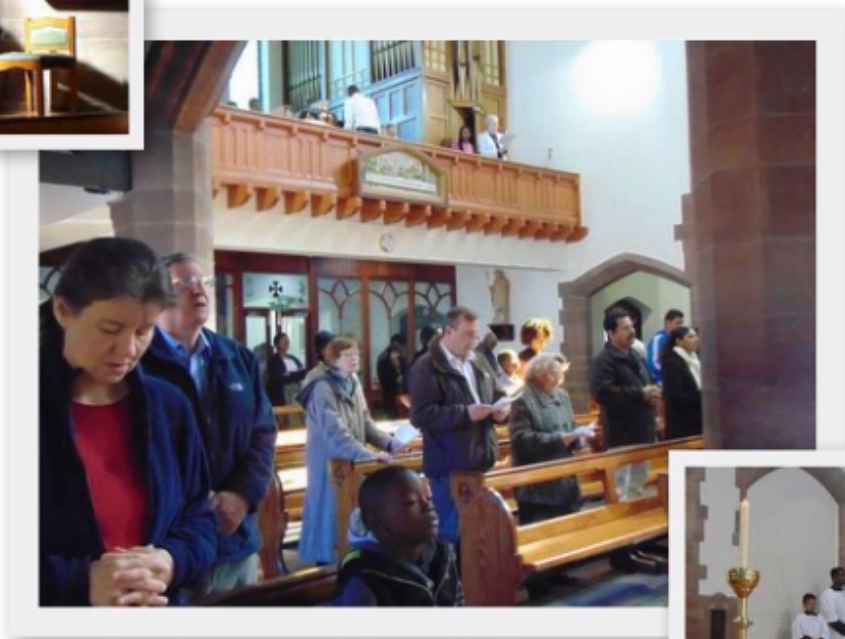


# Year of Faith Sermons



PART ONE

## The Profession of Faith

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# Divine Revelation

## Scripture

Psalm 32; Hebrews 4:14-16

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

27-30	We are made for God – in Him is our happiness
31-35	Creation and Human nature point towards God
36-38	The knowledge of God According to the Church
39-43	How can we speak about God
51-53	God reveals His “Plan of Loving Goodness”
54-64	Stages of Revelation
65-67	Jesus Christ – “The Mediator and Fullness of All Revelation”

## Discussion

### God’s creation

The psalmist speaks of God as creator of all things, of the works of God being trustworthy and of the earth being filled with God’s love - *“the word of the Lord is faithful and all his works to be trusted (...) by His word the heavens were made”*. At the same time the psalm averts to the longing of each person for justice and right, for something beyond suffering and death.

### Means of God’s self revelation

Here is the evidence of God revealing Himself through both material creation and the nature of the human person with its openness to truth and beauty, its sense of freedom, morality and desire for happiness. When the psalmist prays *“Our soul is waiting for the Lord”* we can hear both the natural human desire of those made for God and an allusion to the gradual historical unfolding of revelation which culminates in our Lord.

This revelation, above all as recorded in the history of the people of Israel, God’s chosen people, slowly prepares humanity, deepening hope, building unity, preparing a way which culminates in Christ Jesus.

### The fullness of revelation

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of our Lord as the fullness of the revelation first received by the people of Israel. He speaks of Jesus as the supreme high priest. Jesus’ words to James and John reveal that this fullness of revelation consists of His self giving in service of and for the redemption of creation. Thus the words of the psalm can be seen in their full meaning *“The Lord looks on those who revere him ... to rescue their souls from death”*. Jesus is the fullness of God’s revelation, there are no further revelations, nothing can be added to what Jesus Christ has revealed; So the psalmist is able to say *“we place all our hope in you”*.

## Questions for reflection

Where do I see evidence of God in creation?

How does Jesus fulfil my favourite Old Testament story?

# The Transmission of the revelation

## Scripture

John 16:12-15; Mark 16:15-18; Matthew 28:19 -20

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

75-79	The Apostolic Tradition
80-83	The relation between Tradition and Sacred Scripture
84-95	The Interpretation of the Heritage of Faith
101-104	Sacred Scripture
105-108	Inspiration of Truth of Sacred Scripture
109-119	The Holy Spirit, Interpreter of Scripture
120-130	The Canon of Scripture
131-133	Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

## Discussion

### Proclamation of the Word

It is God's will that this Good News be proclaimed to the whole world. Our Lord, who reveals the fullness of truth and desires that all people should come to know it, commanded his Apostles to teach with authority. This they did by writing and by preaching. By appointing others to continue this work they shared with them the authority they had received from Christ.

The written Word of God is called '**Scripture**'; the words and actions of the Apostles and the Church - '**Tradition**' and the authority of the apostles and their successors '**Magisterium**'.

### Transmission of the revelation

Scripture is the Word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tradition is the passing on, guided by the Holy Spirit, through teaching, life and worship, of what the Church is and believes. Scripture and Tradition are like two rivers springing from the same source, which is Christ, intermingling and feeding each other. Magisterium is the servant

of the Word of God. Listening to it, reflecting upon and expounding it. All members of the Church are called to faithful acceptance of the Gospel proclaimed in Scripture and Tradition and interpreted by the Magisterium. The faith of the Church, filled with the Holy Spirit, living the Gospel and growing in holiness guides and informs the Magisterium.

### The Scripture

The books which, according to Tradition and by the authority of the Magisterium, make up the Bible are the inspired Word of God. God inspired their human authors, acting in them and through them. The Old and New Testaments form a unity. The full meaning of the Old Testament is revealed in the New and the New casts light upon the Old Testament. The heart of the scriptures is the Gospels because their heart is Jesus. His life on earth was recounted by his disciples to others who selecting certain aspects of that tradition produced the written accounts for the good of the Church. The study of the Scripture, its proclamation and its prayerful reading is part of the life of the Church and her members.

## Questions for reflection

Is there a passage of Scripture I really like? – Why do I like it?

Can I think of an example of Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium working together?

# Faith

## Scripture

Luke 1:26-38; 2 Tim 1:12

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

144-149	The Obedience of Faith
150-152	“I Know Whom I Have Believed”
153-165	The Characteristics of Faith
166-167	We Believe
168-169	“Lord, Look Upon the Faith of Your Church”
170-171	The Language of Faith
172-175	Only One Faith
185-197	The Creeds

## Discussion

### What is faith?

Faith is a loving response to God summed up in the words *‘I am the handmaid of the Lord’*. It is seen in Abraham and perfectly in our Lady. Faith is an assent to everything God has revealed and a personal adherence to Him. This faith cannot be separated from faith in Christ who reveals the Father and who makes Him known in the Holy Spirit. It is made possible by the gift of God, and as an act of love, trust and recognition it is a **profoundly human act**.

### The characteristics of faith

Faith trusts in the truth of God but the signs of His work in creation, in the Church and in our lives provide motives for belief. Faith seeks to know more of the one to whom it is given, faith is certain because its object is God. Since God is the source of all things, science the study of God’s creation will complement faith. Faith must be free and demands

perseverance. Faith is challenged in the world by sin and suffering but looks to its fulfilment in the vision of God. Faith in Jesus Christ and the one who sent him is necessary for salvation.

### The Creed

Though faith is a personal act it brings one into communion with the Church. This is clear when we profess our faith during Mass. The creed uses words to enable us to express and communicate those realities which are the object of our faith. In different times and cultures the Church has handed down and proclaimed this one Faith. The first creeds were used to profess the Christian faith at baptisms. The Nicene Creed which we often say at Mass dates from 325. However in this series of sermons we will use the Apostles Creed as a basis to examine *‘what we believe’* referring at times to the Nicene Creed.

## Questions for reflection

What similarities are there between faith in God and the love between a married couple?  
Why might people think science is opposed to religion?

# The Creeds

## The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe 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.  
On the third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right  
hand of God the Father Almighty;

From there he will 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 the life everlasting.  
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 power of 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 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.



# God the Blessed Trinity

## Scripture

John 1:1-18; John 14:5-11; John 16:4-15; John 18:21-26

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

200-231 "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth"

232-267 The Son reveals the Father and the Spirit, 3 Persons and 1 Nature. The Mystery of the Trinity

## Discussion

### God's self revelation

The mysterious name revealed to Moses 'I am who am' indicates that God wishes us to know him, that God is being itself, it confirms the belief of Israel that God is one and that all must worship him. The one God reveals himself to be a God of love, forgiveness and truth.

### God the Son

The Scriptures speak of Jesus as the Word existing from all time, the Word with God and the Word that is God. The Church speaks of the Son as '*consubstantial with the Father*' that is one God with the Father.

### The Son reveals the Father

Jesus speaks of God as Father. Not in a general sense but specifically as the eternal Father in relation to His Son Jesus. The Son and the Father cannot be conceived of separately. To know the one God is to know the source of goodness, truth and love. All things are valued insofar as they lead to God. Desiring our happiness God reveals in love the innermost truth of God.

### The Son reveals the Spirit

God the Son reveals God the Holy Spirit. In his teaching Jesus speaks of the Father sending the Spirit and promises to send the Holy Spirit after his ascension. The Church speaks of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. From all eternity the Father gives the Son everything that is his and it is of the Father that the Holy Spirit, from all eternity, proceeds.

### 'Person' and 'Nature'

The terms person and nature, though inadequate, have been used to enable us to speak of this Divine mystery. *Each Person possesses fully the whole, one, Divine Nature.* The three Persons are distinct. Each is God but each is distinct. That distinction lies in the relationship they have to each other. Inseparable in what they are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable in what they do. But according to their personal property each performs that work. It is in the mission of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that the Trinity is most clearly revealed to us. Above all prayer and adoration lead us more deeply into the great gift of love which is God's revelation of his very being.

## Questions for reflection

How evident is our Trinitarian faith in the prayers and structure of the Mass?  
Which passages in St. John's Gospel speak clearly of the Trinity?

# God the Almighty Creator

## Scripture

Genesis 1; Luke 1:46-55; Acts 17:24-28

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

268-278	The Nature of God's power
279-324	God is the origin of and reason for everything and in His creation God's image is revealed
325-354	Spiritual and material creation

## Discussion

### God is revealed in His creation

God's almighty power which is always just and wise is beyond our understanding but it is revealed in its fullness in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ. Mary's Magnificat is a model of faith in God's power. As Creator of all, God is the answer to questions about our origin, purpose and end. Human reason can know that the Creator exists by studying creation. The inspired texts of Genesis read in the light of Christ reveal the purpose of creation. Scripture and tradition reveal the work of the Holy Trinity in creation; its ultimate purpose, which is to reveal God's glory and its reason, which is God's love and goodness.

### God keeps all things in being

Freely creating out of nothing God wills that creation should manifest his goodness and wisdom. Remaining the transcendent Creator God is present to his creatures as the source of all things, enabling them to exist, to act and to reach their end. Creation

is created in a state of journeying towards perfection yet to be reached.

### Our share in God's creation

God invites his creatures to share in this movement by responsible stewardship. The existence of evil is a question to which the whole of the Faith is a response. In God's creative plan life on earth is finite and fragile and rational creatures have **free will**. That the Almighty has the power to bring good even from moral evil is revealed in Christ.

### Spiritual and material creation

Scripture and Tradition are unanimous in speaking of a spiritual creation. Angels are present in the Old Testament, at all the important events of Our Lord's life and are invoked by the Church during Holy Mass. God has given each of us a **Guardian Angel**. The order, beauty and interdependence of the visible creation is willed by God and man is the summit of God's creation.

## Questions for reflection

What are the signs of Almighty God in creation?

What is the difference between physical and moral evil – how are they related?



# The Creation of Human Beings

## Scripture

Genesis 2, Genesis 3, Luke 10:18

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

355-384 The man: Made in the Image of God man is body and soul, male and female  
385-421 The fall: Original sin, its consequences and the hope of redemption

## Discussion

### Man made in the image of God

Of all creation man is made to share by knowledge and love in God's life. Made in the image of God the human individual is a person, with self knowledge, freedom and the ability to enter into communion with other persons. The spiritual heart of the human person is the soul, that part of a person where the image of God is most clear. Created by God at the moment of our conception the soul united to our bodies forms one indivisible human person.

### Male and female

The differences and complementarity between man and woman are willed by God revealing both the uniqueness of each person and the nature of each person to give themselves in love to another. Scripture and Tradition interpreted by the Church reveals that mankind was created in a state of holiness and justice.

### Sin

In harmony with God, creation and each other mankind did not know death. Only in view of the relationship between man and God is sin seen in all its darkness. In the light of God's loving plan we see sin as primarily the abuse of God's gift of freedom to love. In Christ is finally revealed both the tragedy of sin and the necessary means to overcome it.

## Questions for reflection

Why did God not stop our first parents from sinning?  
If there had been no Original Sin would need a Saviour?

### The Fall

Scripture speaks of angels who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign. Satan, the devil, one of these angels is seen as responsible for tempting our ancestors away from God – Just as Satan tempts Jesus in the desert. Scripture reveals an **Original Sin** by our first ancestors, a choice of self before God, of desire before obedience, of lies over truth.

### The original sin

This choice which destroyed the harmony between God and humanity, between man and woman and between humanity and creation, seriously damages God's creation, especially human nature and death enters the world. The effects of Original Sin, including the damage to human nature and the loss of original justice are transmitted to us all by virtue of the fact that we all share human nature.

### The promise of redemption

From the moment of the fall the redemption is promised. God begins to reveal the coming Saviour, one who will bring blessing far greater than those lost by Original Sin.

*"The Lord God said to the Serpent: I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel."*

**Genesis 3:15**

# God the Son

## Scripture

Matthew 22:41-46; Matthew 17:1-9

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

422-429	Christ, the Son of God made man - the heart of catechesis
430-435	Jesus
436-440	Christ
441-445	The Only Son of God
446-451	Lord
456-483	Humanity and Divinity of Our Blessed Lord

## Discussion

### Jesus Christ

Jesus is God made man, at the heart of our faith is the person of Jesus in whom God's eternal plan is fulfilled. The name Jesus means 'God saves', Christ, meaning anointed or messiah indicates that Jesus' mission is to save God's people. The title Son of God applied to Jesus by Peter, by the Father and by Jesus himself is revealed in its full meaning in the Paschal mystery and the manifestation of our Lord's risen, glorified, humanity.

### The Lord

Lord, a translation of the name used in the Old Testament for God is applied to Jesus indicating that he is deserving of the honour due to God. St. Thomas says 'My Lord and my God'.

### Son of God becomes Man

The Son of God becomes Man to reconcile us to God and to reveal God's love; to show the way to God and to enable us to share in the divine life. Jesus is Divine, he is the Word made flesh, the Word Incarnate. **Jesus is truly God and truly Man.** In safeguarding and speaking of this truth the Church

has used the same useful (albeit inadequate) concepts of person and nature used in speaking of the Trinity.

### Humanity and Divinity of Jesus

There is one Person, Jesus, a Divine Person, who possesses two natures Human and Divine (Person is the answer to the question 'Who is it?' Nature the answer to the question 'What is it?'). In his human nature Jesus can do all that goes with having a human intellect, will and body; however it is Jesus the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity who does these things. Like us Jesus has a human soul created by God and united to his human body at the moment it came to be in Mary's womb. His human knowledge grew and developed as did his body. At the same time the one knowing is Divine and knows the Father and his will fully. Jesus who is God knew and loved each of us during his passion and death. He loves us with a human heart but the one who loves us is Divine. The sacred heart is the chief symbol of that human love, united with divine love, with which Jesus eternally loves us and the Father.

## Questions for reflection

If someone refused to call Mary 'the Mother of God' what would that say about their belief in Jesus? In his human nature Christ died on the cross. The one who died is Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God. Is this correct?

# The Blessed Virgin Mary

## Scripture

Luke 1:26-38; Luke 2:1-20

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

484-511 Conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary

## Discussion

### The coming of the promised Redeemer

With the Annunciation comes the time of fulfilment.

It is by the will of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Son of the Father takes a human nature to himself in Mary's womb. Our Lady can be seen as the end of a long line of women beginning with Eve who received promises and signs from God prompting a response of faith.

### Immaculate Conception

From the moment that the angel proclaimed her 'full of Grace' the Church has grown in the understanding that from the very moment of her own conception Our Lady was preserved from the damaging effects of original sin.

This unique way sharing in the salvation won by Christ was by God's grace deepened into a life free from sin. Mary was thus not only holy and blameless, a suitable Mother for God, but full of

grace, unrestrained by any sin, she was able to give wholehearted consent to God's plan of salvation by placing herself entirely at the service of her son, the son of God and his mission.



### The Virgin

The sign of Mary's virginity is such that the Church has come to understand it as something not diminished but sanctified by Christ's birth, something that indeed is perpetual. To the eyes of faith Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation, the unique relationship of Divine Sonship and Fatherhood, the new creation begun in Christ, the new birth of those who by the will of God alone follow Christ, the unwavering eternal

faith of Mary in God's word and the reality of the Church (of which our lady is the perfect symbol and realization) which brings forth life by embracing God's word.

## Questions for reflection

What is the explanation of the brothers and sisters of Jesus that St. Mark 3:31-35; 6:3 writes about?

Since God can do anything (and cloning and reproductive technology are rapidly advancing) what reasons might someone have for dismissing the possibility of the Virginal Motherhood of our Lady?

# The Life of Christ

## Scripture

Zephaniah 3:14-18; Mark 6:21-43

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

512-570 The Mysteries of Christ's Life

## Discussion

### The life of Christ

The Lord is in our midst repealing our sentence says Zephaniah. Every aspect of Christ's earthly life reveals the Father and is directed to restoring fallen humanity. In his humanity Christ gives himself to us for our justification, his is both the model and possibility of being truly human.

### Hidden life

The season of Advent makes present the expectation of the Messiah. The Baptist is the last of the prophets to prepare for Christ's coming. Jesus' birth, circumcision, the Epiphany, the flight into Egypt, the finding in the temple and his hidden life reveal, foreshadow and are part of the great work of redemption which is the Saviour's mission.

### Public Ministry

At his baptism Jesus is revealed as the Messiah and at the beginning of his ministry allows himself to be identified with sinners. As the new Adam Jesus overcomes the temptations of the Devil and prefigures the final victory of the Cross. Gathering followers around him Jesus establishes the Church

which is the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth. All are called to this Kingdom.

Through teaching, especially parables, Jesus proclaims the poor and lowly to be part of this kingdom, he calls sinners to conversion and accompanies his teaching with miraculous signs.

### The Foundation of the Church

Giving his twelve apostles the authority to share in his mission in a particular way Jesus entrusts a unique mission of unity, strength and authority to Peter. With Peter the apostles are entrusted with the task of governing the Church. At the Transfiguration, a moment when the Trinitarian glory of God is revealed, and our future glory announced, Jesus also reveals the paschal mystery as the way he will accomplish his mission. His final journey to and entry into Jerusalem reveals both the inauguration of the Kingdom of God and the means by which it will be established.

## Questions for reflection

Jesus often makes judgements and makes difficult demands (e.g. Luke 9:51-62; Mark 10:2-16; Matthew 10:37-42; John 6:60-69) where do we find his mercy and love at these times?

In what ways do I imitate Christ?

# The Death of Christ

## Scripture

Micah 5:1-4; Luke 1:39-45; Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Psalm 22

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

574-594 The Law, the Temple, the One God revealed in Christ  
595-623 Jesus Died Crucified  
624-630 Jesus Christ is buried

## Discussion

### Jesus claims to be the Son of God

Jesus' re-interpretation of the Law, the Temple and Israel's faith in God leads to opposition. Jesus reveals himself to be the One in whom the law is fulfilled and the true Temple, the place where God dwells with man. Finally Jesus identifies himself with the Father, claiming and exercising Divine prerogatives especially by forgiving sins and applying to himself the name of God.

### The Trial

A complex historical situation leads to the trial of Jesus. No one group of people can be charged with guilt for Jesus' death, rather Jesus suffers because of and for all sinners. Foreshadowed in the Old Testament it is God's plan of redemption that Christ, assuming our humanity, should *accept as well our sinful condition and bear the sins of all unto death as an act of saving love*. For this he is born, of this both Micah and Elizabeth speak prophetically.



### The Passion

Jesus' eternal mission and his earthly life is revealed and fulfilled in his passion and death in his perfect obedience to the Father and love of us. He gives himself for us, anticipating this self giving at the Last Supper. 'My body given for you'. The horror which death holds for the sinless human nature of Christ is revealed in Gethsemane. This new sacrifice, as the Letter to the Hebrews expresses it, is redemptive because it is the gift of God, it is the free offering of God made man, it is an act of perfect loving obedience, it is a perfect loving act of atonement and satisfaction which repairs the communion between God and man.

### The Death

By uniting a Human nature to himself the Son of God has united all humanity to himself and enabled them to participate in this mystery of redemption. Jesus truly dies. Like us his human body is separated from his human soul. But the soul belongs to Jesus who is the Son of God, the Body remains the body of Jesus the Son of God. His body did not decay or corrupt but lay 'at peace' until the soul and body were re-united in the resurrection.

## Questions for reflection

In what sense is it true to say 'I have crucified my loving Saviour'?

A parent taking on the illness of their child and suffering instead of their child is one analogy that helps us to understand the redemptive death of Christ. Can I suggest any others?

# The Resurrection

## Scripture

John 20; Matthew 28:1-10; Acts 1:6-11

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

632-637	The Descent into Hell
638-658	The Resurrection
659-664	The Ascension
668-677	He will come again in glory...
678-679	... to judge the living and the dead

## Discussion

### The Descent into Hell

Because Jesus died his soul joined all souls in the realm of the dead. These souls welcomed him with joy for his death will open the gates of heaven.

### The Resurrection

The historical event of the Resurrection is the crowning truth of the faith. The empty tomb, though not in itself conclusive is the beginning of the revelation of Jesus' resurrection. The shock caused by the passion and death of Jesus tested the faith of the disciples and even when the risen Jesus appears to them there is hesitation and doubt (some of the Fathers liken the three days looking for Jesus in Jerusalem to this mystery). Gradually the cumulative effect of the appearances, confirmed by Peter, brings the first members of the Church to faith in the resurrection. It is clear that Jesus' risen body is not bound by space and time and that its place is ultimately not on earth but in heaven. The resurrection remains at heart a mystery. No one witnesses the actual moment of resurrection and

Jesus reveals himself to his disciples but not to the world.

### Resurrection – the work of the Trinity

The resurrection is the work of the Trinity. The Father raises the Son through the power of the Spirit thus introducing his risen humanity, body and soul into the heart of the Trinity. This act of God in history is the confirmation of all Jesus did and said, it is the fulfilment of the scriptures and it confirms that Jesus is the Son of God. The death of Christ frees us from our sins his resurrection opens a new life for us as redeemed members of his Church, finally in our union with him rests our hope of resurrection.

### The Ascension

With the ascension comes the irreversible entry of risen humanity into divine glory. We await the final manifestation of the glory of God's Kingdom. The Church herself must follow her Lord in his death and resurrection and then in loving judgement Christ the King will recognise and confirm the choices all have made.

## Questions for reflection

A number of times during Holy Mass we acknowledge explicitly the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. What are those times? Christ is not risen your faith is in vain (c.f. 1 Cor 15:14). Why?

# God the Holy Spirit

## Scripture

John 14:25-26; Acts 2:1-13; Ephesians 3:4-13

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

683-688	"I Believe in the Holy Spirit": Part 1 & Part 2
689-690	The Joint Mission of the Son and the Spirit
691-701	The Name, Titles and Symbols of the Holy Spirit
702-716	The Spirit in the Old Testament
717-730	The Spirit in the fullness of time
731-741	The Spirit and the Church

## Discussion

### The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit communicates to us the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son. **The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity.** The Spirit reveals God to us, making known Christ who is the Father's Word (c.f. Ephesians).

### The Titles and Symbols of the Holy Spirit

We know the action of the Spirit in the Church, in Tradition, Magisterium, the sacraments, prayer, apostolic charism and witness. The Spirit, a distinct Person, is inseparable from Father and Son and in sending his Son the Father sends his Spirit who reveals him. Holy Spirit is the name revealed to us by Jesus, Our Lord speaks also of 'Advocate' and 'Consoler'. Water, oil, cloud and light, the hand, the finger, a mark (or seal) and a dove are scriptural images of God the Holy Spirit.

### The Action of the Holy Spirit

The Church sees the action of the Spirit throughout the old Testament, in creation, the promises, the theophanies, the giving of the law and especially the prophets. The prophets give voice to the expectation

of the Messiah and of a new Spirit. Peter proclaims the fulfilment of the prophets on Pentecost. Filled with the Spirit from Elizabeth's womb the Baptist announces Christ. Mary full of the grace becomes the dwelling place for the Father's Son and the Holy Spirit, by the power of the Spirit Mary makes manifest the Son, bringing him into the World. Through her the world (the Magi) is brought face to face with the Son of God. Christ's whole work is a joint mission with the Holy Spirit.

### The Church is filled with the Holy Spirit

Throughout his life on earth Jesus alludes to the Spirit, on the eve of his passion he promises the Spirit and after his glorification sends the Spirit upon the Church. From Pentecost onwards the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church. The gift of the Spirit contains all; It restores us to the Divine image, makes the gift of Divine love and associated fruits grow within us. In the Church the baptised are united in faith, belief, love and service because the Spirit draws them to Christ. The church becomes the 'sacrament' of the mission of Christ and the Spirit.

## Questions for reflection

Would you add anything to the images of the Holy Spirit contained in the Pentecost sequence?

Has your study of this section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church helped in your understanding of God the Holy Spirit?

# The Mystery of the Church

## Scripture

Isaiah 42:1-4. 6-7; Acts 10:34-38

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

748-750 The Holy Catholic Church

751-780 The Church's Origin, Foundation and Mission

781-810 The People of God. Body of Christ. Temple of the Holy Spirit.

## Discussion

### The People of God

The Church is the people that God gathers throughout history (c.f. Acts); she exists in local communities and is made fully present in the Eucharistic assembly; she has her origin in the eternal plan of the Trinity. The world is created that humanity might share Divine life, a sharing brought about by the union of each person with Christ the Redeemer, a union which is the Church foreshadowed by the gathering of the Chosen People.

### Church's beginnings

Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God gathers those who welcome him into a community with a visible structure. The Twelve, lead by Peter share in Christ's mission, authority and cross. On the cross, in the total redemptive self giving (c.f. Isaiah) anticipated at the institution of the Eucharist, the Church is born. Filled with the Spirit the Church reflects her founder in holiness, in missionary zeal and way of life.

### Church in Heaven and on Earth

On earth the Church is travelling, often amid great difficulties, to its perfection in heaven. The Church is both a visible society founded in a particular way by

Christ and the spiritual community of those united to Christ her head. It exists on earth and in heaven. She is both human and divine. The Church is a sign on earth of God's loving will, it is the means to unity, the way in which Christ continues to offer salvation to all.

Becoming through faith and baptism God's people, all share the **priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ**, offering all to the Father, witnessing to the truth and serving the poor.

The Spirit unites believers with Christ. They become one body, the body of Christ, he is the head of the body with each contributing particular gifts. The nuptial image makes clear both the intimate union and distinction of Christ and his bride the Church.

### The Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Church is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is like the soul of the Body of Christ giving life, strength and grace. The Spirit is the source of those special gifts and graces which members of the Church place at the service of the Church.

## Questions for reflection

Like her head, the risen Christ, the Church must bear the glorious marks of the passion. What are these marks and how can they be differentiated from sin itself?

In what ways do I exercise Christ's priestly, prophetic and Kingly ministry?



# The Marks of the Church

## Scripture

1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 5:25-26

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

811-870 The Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

## Discussion

### Blessed Trinity as the source of the Church

The source of the Church, the Blessed Trinity, communicates unity to the Church, Christ her founder has reconciled all men to God and her soul, the Spirit brings about communion. Rich diversity within the Church finds unity in one faith, the sacraments and the apostolic succession (c.f. 1 Cor).

### Church is One

Human sin brings about divisions within the Church which lead to groups separating themselves from full communion with the Catholic Church. Being of divine origin the unity of the Catholic Church cannot fail but all are called to manifest it clearly, by renewal in faith, conversion of heart, prayer, ecumenical encounter, dialogue and collaboration. Unity is a Divine gift not our work.

### Church is Holy

The Church is holy because of its unity with Christ who is holy. Members of the Church are called to grow in holiness and the Church itself follows the path of penance and renewal acknowledging the sins of each member. The existence of Saints recognises the power of the Spirit to inspire and guide us to Holiness in our lives. In Our Lady we see a vision of the Church as it is and will be.

## Questions for reflection

How can those who reject Christ and His Church be saved?

In what ways do I share in the apostolic work of proclaiming the Gospel?

### Church is Catholic

The fullness of salvation is in the Catholic Church for Christ is its head; the mission of the Church is Catholic for it is sent to the whole world. All are called to the Catholic Church and those who, persevering in charity accept the teaching of the Church, its sacraments, authority and structure are fully incorporated into the Church. All Christians share some communion with the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church through baptism and the profession of Christ. The Jewish people enjoy a special relationship with God who first chose them. Other religions to some degree share in belief in God. However all salvation comes from Christ through his Church. There is no other Saviour or way of salvation. Though God in his love and mercy can call people to faith in ways we know not, the Church has an obligation to proclaim Christ and bring all to the fullness of the Catholic faith.

### Church is Apostolic

The Church is Apostolic because it was founded by Christ upon the Apostles and their successors. It is also called apostolic because each member shares in the apostolic task of proclaiming the gospel to the whole world.

# Life of the Church

## Scripture

Matthew 16:16-20; 1 Timothy 3:1-13;

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

871-945 Christ's Faithful: Hierarchy, Laity and Consecrated Life

## Discussion

### The Pope, bishops and priests

Equality amongst the baptised is served by the diversity of ministry willed by Christ. (c.f. 1 Cor). Authority, mission and grace all come from Christ. Those Christ empowers as bishops and priests to minister his grace and authority in service of his mission do so 'in the person of Christ' and not by their own power. The Bishops exercise their ministry like the Apostles as part of a body united under the successor of St. Peter; priests exercise theirs in communion with their bishop. Each minister is called individually to minister the sacraments, give witness and bear responsibility before Christ. The successor of Peter, the Pope is the source, servant and sign of unity for the bishops and the Church. Bishops in communion with the Holy Father are the source, servant and sign of unity for their own particular Churches. The teaching office of Bishops' shares by God's will in the loving authority of Christ who desires the truth he handed on to his Apostles to remain unchanged. Thus the Holy Father alone, and the Bishops united with him, in matters of faith and morals, are able when necessary for the faith to proclaim the truth infallibly. Bishops and priests by example, prayer and above all the Eucharist sanctify



the Church and by the exercise of the authority they have received from Christ govern the Church or that part of it entrusted to them.

### The Laity

The Lay faithful are called to sanctify the world by engagement with the world in imitation of Christ. To enable them to do this they are given by Christ a share in his priestly, prophetic and kingly office. They are called to offer their works, prayers, joys and sorrows with Christ in the Holy Mass for the salvation of the world, to evangelize, proclaiming Christ by the witness of their lives and to work to improve, guide and participate in the social and political institutions of the world.

### Consecrated Life

Those who profess the counsels of chastity in celibacy, poverty and obedience follow Christ by giving themselves wholly to God as a sign of the world to come. Hermits, consecrated Virgins, Religious, Secular Institutes and Societies of Apostolic life are branches of the Consecrated life. In public or in a hidden way the Consecrated life is at the service of the whole Church.

## Questions for reflection

How do we know that Jesus was celibate, poor and obedient?

In what ways especially do the lay faithful share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ?

# The Communion of Saints

## Scripture

Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Psalm 70; Revelation 7:9, 13-17;

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

946-962	Communion of Saints
963-975	Mother of Christ – Mother of the Church
977-980	One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins
981-987	The Power of the Keys

## Discussion

### Communion

In the Church Christ communicates his riches through the Sacraments and the faithful, united in the Spirit rejoice in the gifts of each member. This communion remains in the Church on earth, in purgatory and in heaven. The heart of this communion is charity (c.f. 1 Cor). United with Christ our suffering our actions can bear fruit for all. The saints in heaven never cease to intercede for us, and just as fraternity with fellow Christians on earth brings us closer to God so does friendship with the saints. The unbreakable communion prompts us to pray for the souls who may be undergoing their final purification before entering heaven.

### Our Lady

Intimately associated with her Son's redemptive mission, from the moment of her immaculate conception, and of his Incarnation, suffering at the foot of the cross with him and united in prayer with Church at Pentecost, Our Lady's union with her Son and Saviour is perfected in the Assumption when, at

the end of her life on earth, taken body and soul into heaven she anticipates the destiny of all the saved. As the exemplary model of faith and charity, a type of the Church, Our Lady's unique and perfect co-operation in the mission of her Son means she is a mother to us in the order of grace. She continues this co-operation in Heaven, the faith, charity and hope revealed in her consent at the annunciation continues to bear fruit for each of us. Our devotion to Our Lady reveals our understanding of Christ and his Church.

### Restoration of communion damaged by sin

When after baptism, through the weakness of our human nature, we lose that communion with each other and with God which is the heart of our Christian life; Christ in his mercy has given the means to restore it. Through the ministry of priests and Bishops, Christ offers forgiveness. The gift of this sacrament, the knowledge that no one who repents is excluded from God's mercy and forgiveness is a cause for great joy and hope (c.f. psalm 70).

## Questions for reflection

What representations of Our Lady in art do I particularly like?  
Is there a particular Saint with whom I enjoy a friendship?

# Eternal Life

## Readings

Mark 10:28-31; John 6:52-58; Revelation 21:5-8

## Catechism

### Paragraphs

988-991	The Resurrection of the Body
992-1004	Christ's resurrection and ours
1005-1014	Dying with Christ
1021-1037	The Particular Judgement, Heaven, Purgatory, Hell
1038-1050	The Last Judgement and Hope of the New Heaven and the New Earth
1061-1065	Amen

## Discussion

### Death

A consequence of original sin is death, the separation of the soul from the body, but death has been made by Christ the passage to eternal life. The soul goes to meet God whilst the body is buried and decays but Christ's bodily resurrection contains the promise that our bodies will be raised like his at the end of time (c.f. 1 Cor). Death is the final act of our earthly discipleship when after a good life and strengthened by the sacraments (c.f. prayer over the offerings) we entrust ourselves to God's loving and merciful will.

### Judgement

At death in the face of God's merciful and just judgement each soul receives the consequences of their faith and actions. Those consequences are either eternal life in heaven, or immediate and eternal damnation.

### Heaven, Purgatory, Hell

Heaven is communion with the Trinity and the whole Church. The human desire for happiness is fulfilled, we know and are known, we love and are loved perfectly. This act of God allowing himself to be thus known and loved, giving the blessed the capacity to know and love him, is called the '**beatific vision**'.

## Questions for reflection

Will all people be saved?

What constitutes a happy death?

Some who die in God's grace and friendship may non-the-less still be in need of preparation for the gift of the beatific vision. The Church speaks of this time as 'purgatory' and in charity prays for those undergoing this purification.

To be united with God we must love. Love is not possible if we hate God, ourselves or our neighbour, if we neglect the serious need of the poor, or reject Christ's teaching. To die in such a state without repenting and accepting God's mercy means to separate ourselves from him forever. To be separated from God is Hell. God wills no one to go to hell. A free, persistent turning away from God is necessary, without repentance. The Church prays daily in the Mass that none will be damned.

### The Last Judgement

The Last Judgement is the final revelation of the saving plan of God and the consequences of each person's response to the love of God. It manifests the loving justice of God and the unity of those who chose to accept his offer of salvation. In the new creation united under Christ, material creation is placed definitively at the service of the Church, itself eternally in communion with God the source happiness and peace.