

CATECHISM OF THE HEART

LESSONS 1 – 12

If we are to take our faith to heart, then there are certain prayers and teachings of our faith that we need to know by heart. And, when we allow these spiritual truths to transform our hearts, we can draw closer to the heart of Jesus Christ himself.

The Catechism of the Heart rests upon the firm foundation of evangelization, and it prepares the way for faith into action. All three dimensions of “catechesis, evangelization, and faith into action” are part of our diocesan and parish spiritual vision.

Each lesson of this Catechism of the Heart builds upon the previous lessons, until all eight lessons are mastered. There are some spiritual prayers and teachings that Catholic Christians cannot “not” know by heart. This is a summary of them.

Finally, regard the Catechism of the Heart as your B.I.B.L.E., that is, Basic Information Before Leaving Earth. With a working vocabulary of key spiritual teachings, we can talk about both the meaning of life and our new life in Christ in heartfelt ways.

LESSON ONE: BASIC CATHOLIC PRAYERS

- **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**
(The Sign of the Cross for regular prayer and for the Gospel reading.)
- **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.**
- **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.**
- **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.**



LESSON TWO: BASIC MASS PRAYERS

Opening Rites:

- **I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore, I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.**

Liturgy of the Word:

- The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**
- The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**
- A reading from the holy Gospel + according to . . . **Glory to you, O Lord.**
- The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Offertory Prayer:

- Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.
- **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his holy Church.**

Preface and the Holy Holy:

- The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**
- Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right and just.**
- **Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Mystery of Faith: (first option)

- **We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**

Great Amen:

- Through him, and with him, and in him . . . for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer: (conclusion)

- **For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.**

Sign of Peace:

- Peace be with you. **And with your spirit.**

Lamb of God:

- **Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.**
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Communion Prayer:

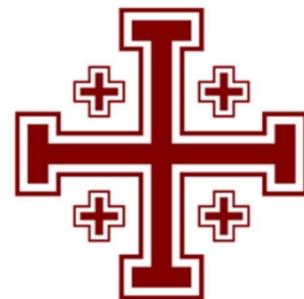
- Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
- **Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

Receiving Communion:

- The Body of Christ. **Amen.**
- The Blood of Christ. **Amen.**

Concluding Prayers:

- The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**
- May almighty God bless you . . . **Amen.**
- Go in peace. **Thanks be to God.**



LESSON THREE: CONFESSION PRAYERS

Begin with the Sign of the Cross, using these or similar words:

**Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was ____ ago.
These are my sins: _____.**

Finish confessing your sins with these or similar words:

**I am sorry for these sins and all the sins of my life,
especially for the sin of _____.**

After receiving your Penance, make an Act of Contrition, using these or similar words:

**O my God, I am sorry and repent with all my heart
for all the wrong I have done and for the good I have failed to do,
because by sinning I have offended you,
who are all good and worthy to be loved above all things.
I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace,
to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid the occasions of sin.
Through the merits of the Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, Lord, have mercy.**

When the Priest says the prayer of Absolution, make the Sign of the Cross as he blesses you. Then, when the priest says "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good," respond with: **For his mercy endures forever.**

The Golden Rule of the Old Testament:
**"You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength;
and your neighbor as yourself."**

The New Commandments of Jesus Christ:
**"Love one another as I have loved you."
"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."
"If you love me, keep my commandments."**

The Jesus Prayer: **"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!"**



LESSON FOUR: THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

Spiritual Definitions:

- **Sacrament:** an outward sign of inward grace, as given to us by Jesus Christ through his Church.
- **Grace:** a sharing in the life and love of God, through the power of prayer and of the sacraments.

Sacraments of Initiation:

- **Baptism:** prayerfully using water in the name of the Holy Trinity to initiate people into the Christian Faith.
- **Confirmation:** being anointed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to lead a truly Christian lifestyle.
- **Eucharist:** bread and wine are prayerfully changed into the Body and Blood of Christ for our salvation.

Sacraments of Healing:

- **Penance:** for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism (also called Confession and Reconciliation).
- **Anointing:** a special anointing to comfort the sick and to dedicate their sufferings to Jesus on the cross.

Sacraments of Community:

- **Ordination:** making new deacons, priests and bishops for the spiritual leadership of the Catholic Church.
- **Marriage:** blessing a man and woman as they prayerfully start their life together as a new Christian family.



LESSON FIVE: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1: I am the Lord your God. You shall not have other gods before me.

For example, power, pleasure, popularity, and possessions are false gods that always disappoint.

2: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

For example, be respectful of all things that are dedicated to God and the service of God.

3: Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

For example, go to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, making them days of prayer and rest.

4: Honor your father and your mother.

For example, cooperate with your parents and those who are in legitimate authority.

5: You shall not kill.

For example, respect the sanctity of human life, be kind to others, and take care of your health.

6: You shall not commit adultery.

For example, be pure and faithful, embracing natural, biblical, and traditional family values.

7: You shall not steal.

For example, don't cheat, take away someone else's property, or destroy their things.

8: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

For example, be honest and truthful in all matters. Be trustworthy and a person of your word.

9-10: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

For example, appreciate what you have and do not compare what you have to what others have.

What other examples can you think of that will help you to always live your life as a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ? Let us not judge by mere human standards, but always by God's judgments, revealed to us in Scripture and Tradition!



LESSON SIX: THE SIX PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

1: Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.

- Sundays: if you are too sick to go to Mass, you are too sick to go out and play.
- Holy Days: Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, Christmas, and New Year.

2: Fast and abstain on the days appointed.

- Lenten Penance: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all the Fridays of Lent.
- Friday Penance: to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

3: Go to Confession at least once a year.

- Examination of Conscience: at the end of each day reflect on your moral life.
- Formation of Conscience: follow the teachings of Christ about right and wrong.

4: Receive the Eucharist during Easter time.

- Fasting before Communion: for at least one hour prior to prepare for Communion.
- Penance before Communion: for serious sin, go to Confession before Communion.

5: Contribute to the support of the church.

- Join your parish: be a registered and active member of your parish community.
- Support your parish: your time, talent, and treasure can make a real difference.

6: Follow the marriage laws of the church.

- Getting married in the Catholic Church: go to the parish where you attend Mass each Sunday.
- Preparing for sacramental marriage: lead a pure life as a single Christian man or woman.

What other examples can you think of that will help you live out your Catholic Christian lifestyle more fully each day? When we practice our faith, we are actually rehearsing for daily life. How is your walk with Jesus going these days?



LESSON SEVEN: THE SEVEN VIRTUES AND THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Cardinal Virtues: explain these virtues in your own words, and how you practice them in your life.

- **Prudence:** judging by God's standards with spiritual wisdom and insight.
- **Justice:** making Christ's teachings your standards of fairness and good will.
- **Temperance:** make wholesome and balanced choices that promote the common good.
- **Fortitude:** have courage to live as a Christian even when society makes it difficult.

The Theological Virtues: explain these virtues in your own words, and how you practice them in your life.

- **Faith:** believe what Jesus teaches us through the Bible and Catechism as your Truth.
- **Hope:** trust that all things will work out for the good for those who put their trust in God.
- **Love:** if you live as Jesus taught, you will love the way Jesus loves as his faithful disciple.

The Apostles' Creed: an ancient summary of our most cherished religious beliefs as Christians.

- **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; 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 life everlasting. Amen.**



Ultimate spiritual questions about confirming our commitment to Jesus Christ:

- Who is Jesus Christ to you, and what makes Jesus Christ special to you in your personal life?
- What has Jesus Christ done for you that makes a difference in how you live your daily life?
- How does living as a Catholic Christian help you to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ well?
- What does Jesus Christ lovingly promise you for living out your life according to his holy teachings?

The difference that Jesus Christ makes in the lives of those who truly believe in him:

- What difference does Jesus Christ make in how I understand what life is all about?
- What difference does Jesus Christ make in how I live out my personal life each day?
- What difference does Jesus Christ make in how I stay connected to his holy Church?

LESSON EIGHT: THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: explain them in your own words and put them into practice in your daily life.

- 1) **Knowledge:** being able to state and correctly explain the teachings of Christ and his Church.
- 2) **Understanding:** appreciating why these holy teachings make a real difference in your daily life.
- 3) **Wisdom:** accepting Christ's teachings as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
- 4) **Counsel:** making right judgments in your daily life and in the advice that you give to others.
- 5) **Piety:** following a personal spiritual Plan of Life to support your Catholic Christian lifestyle.
- 6) **Fear of the Lord:** developing your interior life by "keeping your eyes always fixed on Jesus."
- 7) **Fortitude:** having the courage to stand by your Christian principles, especially when it is difficult.

The Four Spiritual Laws: the "kerygma" or core gospel message of salvation for Catholic Christians.

- 1) **God's Purpose:** God created us to be good, with the purpose of sharing his love and his happiness with us forever.
- 2) **Our Problem:** We rejected God's plan through sin, and thus we lost our way both in this world and in the life to come.
- 3) **God's Provision:** God provided a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 4) **Our Pathway:** We are on the way to heaven when we personally entrust our lives to Jesus Christ in the community of his Church.

Prayer of Commitment to Jesus Christ: a prayer that draws us to the very heart of our faith in Christ!

**LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER.
FILL ME WITH YOUR SPIRIT, SO THAT I MAY LIVE A NEW LIFE.
HELP ME TO KNOW YOU, TO LOVE YOU, AND TO SERVE YOU IN THIS WORLD,
SO THAT I MAY BE HAPPY WITH YOU BOTH NOW AND FOR ALL ETERNITY.
THANK YOU, LORD. AMEN.**



LESSON NINE: THE OLD TESTAMENT AND BIBLE HISTORY

God's plan for mankind's salvation has unfolded throughout the centuries. It has been conveyed through the Tradition of believers and recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To fully understand the meaning of the Scriptures, we need to read the sacred text within the context of the faith Tradition of those who recorded and preserved it. Otherwise, we may be approaching the Scriptures out of context, that is, out of hidden assumptions and presuppositions that distort the Bible's real meaning.

The Old Testament of the Bible was compiled over many years in two separate editions, a Greek Septuagint Edition from Egypt, and a Hebrew Edition from Israel. The Greek edition was compiled about 200 years before Christ. It is called the Septuagint. The Hebrew edition was compiled about 97 A.D. and omitted seven books found in the Septuagint. Since the New Testament (also written in Greek) quotes from the Septuagint, and since the early bishops of the Church quote from it, the Catholic Church accepts the Septuagint as the basis for the Old Testament collection of Scriptures. Thus, there are seven more books in the Catholic edition of the Old Testament than the Protestant edition of the Old Testament, and the Jewish edition of the Hebrew Bible. These seven books in question are called the deuterocanonical books by Catholics. They are truly the Word of God!

The **Scriptures of the Old Testament** are divided according to the following four categories of books:

The Law: the Pentateuch, or the books of Moses, that are the foundation of Old Testament thought, with the establishing of the Covenant with Israel.

History: various historical books describe how the Israelites lived out their faith throughout the centuries, with lessons for us in our own time.

Wisdom: ancient truths of timeless value for living each day to the best of one's ability and with the saving help of God's grace.

Prophets: the challenging messages of those who prepared the way of the Lord through their courageous words and deeds.

The **Salvation History** recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures cover the four following general eras:

First Era Creation, the Fall of Mankind, and the Proto-Gospel
 Noah and the Ark, and the forging of a New Covenant
 The Dispersion of the Nations at the Tower of Babel

Second Era The Great Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 The Sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus: c. 1300 B.C.
 The Conquest of the Promised Holy Land by Israel

Third Era The Kingdom: Saul, David and Solomon: c. 1000 B.C.
 The Decline of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah
 The Babylonian Exile of the Jewish nation: c. 500 B.C.

Fourth Era The Restoration of Israel after the Exile in Babylon
 The Struggles for Jewish Independence: c. 200 B.C.
 The Coming of the Messiah and the New Covenant

These are some of the major talking points for a discussion about the Old Testament and Bible History.

LESSON TEN: THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CHURCH HISTORY

The New Testament. Around the year 400, the Church compiled all the approved readings from the Mass into one volume called the Bible. This is the second part of the Bible, called the New Testament.

GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: the Acts of the Apostles are the second volume of Luke's Gospel

LETTERS OF SAINT PAUL: Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon

CATHOLIC EPISTLES: Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John

APOCALYPSE: Revelation

To understand the Bible fully, it must be read in context with the Catechism of the Church which collected, preserved, and promoted these ancient manuscripts as part of the apostolic heritage of Catholic Christianity.

Church History. Christ promised to be with the Church always, even to the end of time. Christ has kept that promise to us through his gift of the Holy Spirit. The history of the Church community being led by the Holy Spirit is called Sacred Tradition. Tradition means more than just customs. Sacred Tradition is the lived experience of the Church community throughout the centuries, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Several important periods of Church history are:

THE AGE OF THE APOSTLES: 33-100 A.D. Besides the New Testament, other Christian and pagan literature offer valuable information concerning this era.

THE PERSECUTIONS: 100-315 A.D. This is the age of the martyrs who courageously underwent torture and death rather than give up their religious convictions concerning Christ.

THE PEACE OF CONSTANTINE: 315-600 A.D. With the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, the Church became an important part of society, bringing many people to faith in Christ.

THE CONVERSION OF THE BARBARIANS: 600-1200 A.D. In this second great missionary thrust, the gospel was preached to northern Europe and western Asia.

THE MIDDLE AGES: 1200-1600 A.D. This was a time of consolidation in theology and a flourishing of culture and art. The great European cathedrals were built at this time. It was also the era of the crusades and the inquisition, which are greatly misunderstood and unappreciated.

THE REFORMATION: 1600-1965 A.D. Besides the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Reformation was a time of reorganization and reinvigoration of the Church, especially in its missions.

OUR PRESENT DAY: 1965—. The conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 signaled a new age for the Church in the modern world. We are celebrating two millennia of Catholic Christianity with great fervor.

It is the historic position of the Catholic Church that, although other churches are not without the means to salvation, the fullness of what Christ intended the Church to be subsists in the Catholic Church alone. It is therefore our mission to bring the full Gospel to all the world.

These are some of the major talking points for a discussion about the New Testament and Church History.

LESSON ELEVEN: THE CHURCH AS PARISH COMMUNITY

The local Christian community is called a parish. Usually, a parish is a territorial entity, but most parishes accept people who are willing to become regular members of the parish community through attendance and support.

The leader of a parish is a priest, called a pastor, who is appointed by the bishop. There may be some additional priests, called associate pastors, also assigned by the bishop. In many cases there are deacons who are ordained and assigned to the parish by the bishop as well.

The parish staff usually includes a parish secretary and bookkeeper, directors of religious education for youth and for adults, a youth minister, a principal if there is a grade school, and a staff person to coordinate home visits, hospitality, and various parish services, etc.

Parish organizations usually include societies for women and for men, groups for charitable and social events, and various other special groups for social and charitable service purposes, which you are encouraged to join.

Parishes are grouped together into dioceses, under the leadership of a bishop. The bishop's church is called a Cathedral. The bishop's office provides general supervision of parishes and clergy, coordination of services and charities for the diocese, and educational and training programs.

Several dioceses together form a province, with an archbishop as the chairman. The bishops of a country come together as a national conference for the good of the whole church.

The pope is the bishop of Rome and the leader on earth of the entire Catholic Church. Cardinals are bishops who have the right to elect a new pope; they also serve as the pope's closest advisors. The pope's offices are located at the Vatican in the city of Rome. You should visit there someday!

Please find a nearby parish community that you like. Attend Mass there every Sunday and Holy Day. Register as an official member. Support it regularly with your contributions. Become involved in the liturgical, educational, social, and charitable activities and programs of your local parish community.

In addition to the regular Sunday bulletin that is given out at Mass, check out your parish website for more information about your parish community. Make new friends who share your religious beliefs and values. Make a difference in your local community because of your participation and support of your local parish church.

These are some of the major talking points for a discussion about the Church as parish community of faith.

LESSON TWELVE: SPECIAL CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS

This is a list of topics to be discussed. Catholic.com provides detailed explanations for these questions.

The Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The Divinity and the Humanity of Jesus Christ

Salvation History and God's Plan for Humanity

Original Sin and Actual Sin, Mortal and Venial Sin

The Eternal and the Temporal Consequences of Sin

Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory (and Limbo)

The Particular Judgement and the Last Judgment

The Four Marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

Papal Infallibility and the Petrine Ministry

Facts about the Crusades and the Inquisition

Facts about Scandals and Reforms in the Church

The Liturgical Year of the Church and its Feasts

Excommunication, Interdict, and Church Courts

Divorce, Annulments, and Marriage in the Church

What other topics would you like to discuss?

These are some of the major talking points for a discussion about special Catholic Christian doctrines.