

Read the following passages and answer the questions at the end of the packet (pages 23-25). Only the answer sheet (page 26) will be collected in September.

Part I: Called to Know God

Longing for God

How can we know him? What's God like? Does it make a difference what a person believes? What does he expect from us? Does God exist apart from us or within us?

People have asked these kinds of questions for thousands of years. Signs of this search for God span history, from prehistoric cave paintings to medieval cathedrals to today when many people explore different types of spirituality. We can't escape the fact that people long for God. They long to know God and to understand more about him. In many ways, this longing reflects the desire to really know who we are and why we are here. This yearning for God is part of what it means to be human. It comes from God, who has known us since the beginning of time, before we even existed. We are religious by our human nature.

As he awaited his fate with the lions in a Roman coliseum. Saint Ignatius of Antioch spoke of his longing for God. "Him I seek, who died for us: him I desire, who rose again for our sake." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out that the desire for God is written on the human heart (CCC, 27). We were made to be with God. The sincere desire for God is a gift from God himself. It prompts us to not only seek the one true God, but to do what is good and reject evil. We seek him because in him we are complete. In him, we find true happiness.

Human desire to know and love God because he calls each of us to grow close to him. God continually sustains our lives and invites us into relationship with him. Thus we can say that we are religious by vocation. The word *vocation* means one's calling or purpose in life. God calls us beyond ourselves to friendship with him, to become his adopted children and to live a loving life.

God wants to be part of our lives, but how can we really know him? The Holy Spirit moves us to know Jesus and grow close to him. Jesus makes it clear that if we know him, we know the one who sent him. "No one ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (*John 1:18*).

In this reading, we will focus on coming to know God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – through Jesus in Scripture. The bottom line is that we know God because he makes it possible, each person of the Trinity relating to us in different ways so that we can come to the ultimate truths. It is through Jesus, the only Son of God the Father, that God's plan for us is fully revealed. It is this gift of knowledge about God that draws us into relationship with him and fulfills our longing for him.

While many people might think of vocation as something that characterizes adult life, each person is called to believe in and follow Christ at one's Baptism. This baptismal call is one to become Christ-like. No matter our age or state of life, we live out our baptismal call by serving God and working with the gifts and talents God has given us. For, our ultimate vocation, our destiny, the whole purpose of life, is union with God.

In Silence and In Noise

Longing God leads us to what to *understand* God. Silence can be part of both longing and wanting to understand. Life is noisy. Silence can help us "go inside" ourselves in, reflect. Sometimes we reflect on the big questions, such as whom God is or in what direction we're going. We have a tendency to take some things for granted when we get too busy – things like all the good that comes from God, our family and friends, and our natural loving for God. They may get pushed away or buried underneath all our other task, interests, relationships, and expectations.

Saint Catherine of Siena once said, "God is closer to us than water is to a fish." A revealing proverb helps explain this: Even though they were swimming in water, the fish thought they were thirsty. Like those fish, we are "swimming" in God's presence. God is so close we sometimes take him for granted just as we might our friends and family or even

breathing clean air. But God is with us always, even when we don't acknowledge him. The Act of the Apostles explains that in God we live and move and have our being (*see Acts 17:28*).

Before he started his mission of salvation, much of Jesus' life seems to have consisted of silence. Only the account of Jesus in the Temple when he was twelve years old breaks that silence (*see Luke 2:39-52*). In that one story, we get a peek at the mystery of Jesus' mission and his understanding that he is the Son of God (*see CCC, 534*). "Did you not know what I must be in my Father's house?" (*Luke 2:49*).

Click on the television. Log off the computer. Turn down the music. Set your cell phone ringer on off. Enter into that silence. Allow yourself to wonder. Saints throughout the ages say, if you go deep enough. God will find you in that silence, and you will answer.

Come on now, get away from your worldly occupations for a while, escape from your tumultuous thoughts. Lay aside your burdensome cares and puts off your laborious exertions. Give yourself over to God for a little while in Him. Enter into the cell of your mind, shut out everything except God and whatever helps you to seek Him once the door is shut. Speak now, my heart, and say to God, "I seek your face: your face, Lord, I seek."

~Saint Anselm of Canterbury c.1033-1109

Let's be clear. We can and do experience God in the busyness of our lives. That includes the technology that makes us a big part of our daily routines. Whether it's through silence, private prayer, the sacraments, Church teachings nature, or one another, there are many ways to come to known God. All these are ways to gain *wisdom*, that is, a spiritual gift that makes it possible for someone to know about the purpose and plan of God (*see CCC, Glossary*). We can reflect on God in the silence as well as in the "noise" that characterizes our modern lives.

The Mystery of God

We can't go far into a study of our Catholic faith without exploring the mystery of God. The ancient Israelites journey of faith is actually where Christianity, and our search for wisdom, begins. Christianity has its roots in the Jewish faith and was also influenced by Greek culture at the time. Greeks were known for philosophy, which involves a rational investigation of truths and principles. The word *philosophy* literally means, "love of wisdom." Using that wisdom, Greek philosophers believed human beings are capable of arriving at truth using *reason*, our ability to think or decide in a logical way. Since that time, philosophers have tried, but struggled, to understand God.

In fact, during the Middle Ages, the greatest religious scholars applied rational thinking to the question of God's existence. They concluded that the existence of God makes more sense than the opposite.

The scholars found that we human beings can "think our way" to an affirmation that God exists. Like those scholars, we realize God's existence today using what the *Catechism* calls "the natural light of human reason" (*CCC, 47*). However, no matter how hard we try to understand and describe God, "Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God" (*CCC, 42*).

God is Love

Have you ever thought that as our faith grows, so does our desire to understand the mystery of God? Believing is a particularly human thing to do, made possible through the grace of God. Think about it. We believe in people all the time. We might show up early because our algebra teacher promised to be there to answer questions. If our parents promise to pick up after the dance, we trust that they will be parked outside when it's over.

There is a certain amount of love that drives people to make those kinds of commitments to one another. That love builds our relationship, like those we enjoy with our family and friends. The closer we are, the more we care about what's happening in each other's lives.

Throughout history, thinkers and scholars have tried to discuss God in philosophical ways. But this reading will explain what Scripture makes known to us about the mystery of God: God is truth, God is light, and God is love. While we can get a sense of God's love, we can never know it fully. We do know that God's love is beyond any experience we have of love. Out of love, the Father sent his only Son to us, to become man and to sacrifice his life in order that we may have eternal life.

Thus we say love is a gift from God, the greatest mystery of all. But as Pope Benedict XVI said in his first encyclical, or official letter to the Church, the meaning of love has been diluted. The encyclical is titled *Deus Caritas*, or “God Is Love.” Why did the Holy Father choose the theme of love? Here’s an explanation he gave in 2006:

“The cosmic excursion in which Dante, in his “Divine Comedy.” Wishes to involve the reader, ends in front of the perennial Light that is God himself, before that Light which is at the same time “the love that moves the sun and the other stars.” Light and love are ... the primordial creative powers that move the universe.

“if there words in Dante’s *Paradiso*’ betray the thought of Aristotle, who saw in the *eros* (*physical attraction*) the power that moves the world, Dante nevertheless perceives something completely new and inconceivable for the Greek philosopher...this God has a human face and = we may add – a human heart.

One Body

In this reading we are dealing with things like how we can come to know God and why he wants to be in relationship with us. God tells us he is love, and we know that we’ve been created in his image. You could say we were made to “be love,” to know his love, to show love, to share love.

What about sex? What if two people really love each other? Is it morally wrong to have sex before marriage? If it feels right, how can it be wrong? Many of us have had questions like these. We face moral decisions every day. We form our consciences as we learn more about who God is, what he has made known about himself, and what difference that makes for how we live.

Sex in itself is good when used according to God’s designs. When it is not, sexual actions are morally wrong and sinful. Used properly, it definitely means something significant. God intended for the sexual aspects of our bodies to be a way for two people to say: “We love each other to become one,” and “We love each other enough to create and care for the life of another.” When we don’t honor what sex truthfully means, we lie and damage ourselves, others, and our relationship with God

The fact that they become one flesh is a powerful bond established by the Creator. Through it they discover their own humanity, both in its original unity, and in the duality of a mysterious mutual attraction.

~Pope John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 10:2

You’ve heard the phrase from Genesis 2:4, “two become one.” We know that is what physically happens in sexual intercourse, but we’re selling ourselves short if we think that’s all that happens.

The Catholic Theology of the Body sees sexual intercourse as God’s way of letting people signify that they have become one – physically, emotionally and spiritually. This union involves a total gift of self between openness to the gift of life that they are called to share in.

The intense message is communicated with the body, in the body, through the body – it’s a body language. The body was designed by God to be truthful. Look at our bodily reactions, like sweating when we’re nervous. Have you ever tried to suppress laughter when you find something hysterically funny? How do you think lie detectors work? When we lie and when laugh, the body reacts.

What would it take for you to open yourself up to someone and be totally vulnerable – like emotionally naked – with your whole life? In God’s design and vision, through sex, the body communicates that two people become one physically, emotionally, and spiritually, with exactly that level of vulnerability and openness. What does it take to get there? It takes the reliability and trustworthiness of the sacramental commitment of marriage.

But people do have sex outside of marriage. Sometimes they say they “really love each other,” and other times love has nothing to do with it. They give into temptation.

We have to remember that the Holy Spirit will help us avoid temptation. Calling on the Holy Spirit when we are tempted gives us strength. God promises will not be tested beyond what we can handle. “He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

One such temptation is recreational sex, or sex without commitment. Recreational sex involves two people knowingly tossing aside any pretense of commitment. “Friends with Benefits” is really an attempt to isolate the pleasurable side effects from bodily communication. In order for people to use their own bodies (and other people’s) like that, the body has to cut off honest communication. And just like in the rest of life, the longer and deeper this damage goes, the longer it takes for the body to begin to heal this trust.

With relational sex, the man and woman are somewhere on the spectrum of commitment: they are more than friends, but not married. So the body knows it can kind of trust and be vulnerable, but not really. Even if the relationship progresses to marriage, the trust has been damaged. Instead of becoming more open, the body learns to be guarded. Why does this matter? Because in non-martial sex, people disrespect the image of God within, damage their body’s ability to truthfully communicate, and real discipleship.

Committed sex takes places as a blessing in the permanency of marriage. Here, as husband and wife, “two become one” honoring the body’s communication with love. Here, vulnerability and openness are pursued and protected with the reliability of commitment. Real, true, mature love respects and honors the body.

“Today, the word “love” is so spoiled, worn out, and abused that one almost fears to pronounce it. And yet, it is a fundamental word, an expression of the primordial reality. We cannot simply abandon it, but we must take it up again, purify it, and bring it to its original splendor so that it can illumine (shed light on) our life and guide it on the right path.”

Love is the force behind God’s creation of the universe, Pope Benedict explained. Out of love God made the world and all that’s in it. Out of love he made himself known to our first parents and subsequent generations. Out of love God, he faithful as his creation did not. Out of love God protected and challenged his people. He acted on his love. He gave of himself knowing that the return could not live up to the gift. The Pope said the best example of love is Jesus, or God who took on a human face and possessed a human heart.

Jesus’ life demonstrated how every form of love involves giving ourselves to others, first and most fundamentally to God. Today, very often love is reduced to common biological terms, but the “right path” the Pope refers to involves loving with body and soul. How can we love by giving ourselves to others, sacrificing and having compassion as Jesus did? What does that look in the ways we treat our parents and family members, our friends, those we see every day but don’t know personally? We might not able to fully understand “God is Love,” but we don’t have to in order to experience it and respond to it.

Meeting God

Think about what your friendships are like. Usually, the more you make yourself known to someone, and the more the other person lets you known him or her, the closer you are.

Something similar happens with God. The more opportunities you have to come to know him better, the closer you can become. And the more you tell God about what’s on your mind and in your heart, the closer the friendship. The relationship, the sharing, always starts with God, but it’s a two-way street.

We meet God in different ways because he comes to us in different ways. Some are natural. Throughout the Church’s history, many have discussed faith in connection to an awareness of nature. Those would include the author of the Book of Genesis, the psalmists, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. The natural world of creation is the foundation of all God’s works.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end ... You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You. ~Saint Augustine of Hippo, Confessions

By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your works. ~ Psalm 104:12-13

Using our God-given abilities, we can come to know something of God through the created world, especially humans who are made in God’s image. We can see that God is present and active in our world and in our lives. We can see that God does exist. The accompanying chart addresses some of these ways of knowing God.

However, throughout history, God has made himself known to humans through actions and events, through love and goodness, through patience and constant forgiveness. We call this the communication *Divine Revelation*, God making known his mystery and plan of redemption in ways we could never know by ourselves. And this communication is shared with us through two related, but distinct ways – Scripture and Tradition, which are referenced in the accompanying chart and discussed in depth in this reading.

Knowing God	
BY NATURAL WAYS	THROUGH DIVINE REVELATION
These are ways we can come to know God through our own seeking:	These are ways God helps us comprehend truths we couldn't know without his help:
The world around us. We can use our human curiosity and thinking skills to recognize signs of God's presence in creation.	Scared Scripture. The Sacred Scriptures are God's inspired word, the written record of God's Revelation in history. Filtered through the person of Jesus Christ, Scripture tells the story of God's relationship with his People, starting with the Israelites, and through the early stages of the Church.
The human person. We can use our human experience of relationships to get a sense of what it means to know God and to be known and loved by him.	
The experience of our ancestors in faith. We can learn from the various ways people throughout history have come to know God, especially the experience of Israel as recounted in the Old Testament.	Sacred (Apostolic) Tradition. Tradition refers to the living transmission, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the message of the Gospel in the Church. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in her knowledge of God as revealed in the Scriptures, in reflecting on what knowing God requires of us, and in forming doctrine rooted in that relationship.
The understanding of the Church. Throughout history, bishops and popes, priests and religious theologians and teachers have reflected on who God is and how we come to know him.	

As the chart shows, God and his plan for our salvation is disclosed through nature and Divine Revelation, his plan is revealed over time. He spoke to our first parents and promised to send a redeemer after their Fall. God selected Abraham to serve as father of many nations. Gradually, God formed his own People – the People of Israel. In time, God sent his greatest gift – his own Son, Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, we are introduced to the central and most important mystery of our faith: God is *Trinity* – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These key aspect of God's Revelation are part of what we call salvation history. Through Divine Revelation we are able to know God, to respond to him and to love him more than we could through any of our own natural abilities.

Responding to God

Earlier it was noted that the hunger for God urges us to search for him. God's Revelation of who he is and his plan for us calls for us to respond. That response is *faith* – believing God and what he has made known through words and deeds.

Faith – like hope and charity – is a theological virtue. The word *theological* means “concerning God.” They are called the theological virtues because they come from God, are directed toward him, and reflect his presence in our lives. The word *virtue* means, “a good habit or response.” Virtues are good moral and spiritual habits that help us make good moral decisions, avoid sin, strengthen character, and perform good deeds.

Faith involves giving the best of ourselves to God who first reveals himself to us. Faith actually begins with God. It is saying, “yes” to the invitation that God offers us to follow his ways. It connections with our deepest human desire to better understand God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, our continual “yes” to God's invitation strengthens our friendship with him and can lead to life with him forever.

God's invitation isn't abstract or otherworldly. His invitation comes through Scripture and Tradition, and most especially in Jesus Christ. Our response to faith in Jesus Christ leads to *discipleship*, that is, a life rooted in Jesus, supported by the Church, and lived out in community.

PRIMARY SOURCES

“The Canticle of Brother Sun” is attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, who is known to have had a close relationship with nature and with God. The poem, which is sometimes sung during liturgies, praises God for the sun, moon, stars, water, and Earth. Here is one stanza:

Be praised my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

In discussing the theological virtue of faith, the Catechism said this about being a disciple:

The disciple of Christ must only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it ... Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation. ~CCC, 1816

Discipleship means *believing* and *living* a life based upon our beliefs. Discipleship is about responding to Jesus’ call in the many areas of our lives. It’s about our priorities, the place Christ and the Church occupy in our lives, and the choices we make. Discipleship is about our personal connection and commitment to God, an openness to the Holy Spirit acting in our lives, and a desire to worship God through the challenging moments of our lives. It’s about what we say, how we act, and with whom we spend time. Discipleship involves the sacrifices we willingly make to follow Jesus and his example. (see CCC 520)

Jesus told us to do as he did, to love as he loved. We saw how Jesus loved. He loved the Father above all things. In his healing actions and challenging but comforting words, he loved. He gave of himself beyond expectation, really beyond understanding. In doing so, he made the Father’s love, which he himself receives, known. So, as his disciples, when we love, which he has willingly given to us. This is what the virtue of charity, also called love, is about, what the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit makes possible.

Seeing the Connection

Let’s take a look at what it means to respond to God’s invitation, to be open to the Holy Spirit’s movement in our lives. You may already be familiar with the event from the Gospel of Luke about a man struggling to get a glimpse of Jesus. The crowd around Jesus was thick, and the man was short. Through his approach to Zacchaeus, Jesus gives a glimpse into a central theme in his mission: the Kingdom of God. But Jesus preached of a Kingdom that is not a geographical place or earthly, political authority in our lives and in our world. We read in Scripture that “the kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Roman 14:17*).

And from Zacchaeus’s response, we get a sense of discipleship and living for the Kingdom. When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we have to continually examine how we live. This is what it’s like for anyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus. We believe and then act on that belief. Never by ourselves, even if we are physically. The Church helps us. The Holy Spirit strengthens and guides us. Faith-filled people in our everyday lives and our saints model it for us.

Giving Thanks A spiritual practice for the life of discipleship

Giving thanks in this case is not about a turkey dinner in late November. And it’s not just about saying thanks for the blessings God has given you. At its core, the spiritual practice of giving thanks is about observing.

The practice of giving thanks is a discipline that requires you to recognize the good things in life, both small and large, and to acknowledge them as gifts from God.

When you practice giving thanks, you strengthen your spirituality because it develops in you an attitude of gratitude. Gratitude is a virtue, and the more you practice it, the more likely you are to feel thankful and express it.

The practice of giving thanks consists of two steps: See it, Say Something.

The first step might be the hardest. Most of us have no problem saying thank you when we are given something we need. But everyday life is noisy. We get busy. Daily life can be stressful, complicated, or even boring. So it’s kind of easy to miss the blessings God gives us, including those he gives us through others.

Jesus told us to “have eyes to see” (*Mark 8:18*). In order to practice giving thanks, we first have to get better at noticing the many forms of God’s protection, love, and guidance.

Then Say Something.

Thank God for showing you something, giving you everything, and sparing you from most things. Thank God for your life, the place you sleep, the place you learn, the food you eat, the beauty of the seasons, the chance to pursue your interest ... the list is endless.

Thank the person who acted kindly. Say something to the teacher or coach who went the extra mile. Thank the parent who once again helped you out.

Many believe that giving thanks is the most important spiritual practice of all. If you intentionally make it a habit it will affect how you look at your life, the quality of your relationship with others, and the depth of your relationship with God.

The Measure of a Man Tim Russert

For years he hosted a weekly TV show on which he asked politicians and leaders the toughest questions. He didn’t attack, but he sought real answers. He wasn’t mean. He didn’t have a big ego. He just kept asking for the truth. And America loved him for it.

Tim Russert came from a blue-collar Catholic family and Catholic schools in Buffalo, N.Y. a nun and a priest who saw his love for journalism mentored him in grammar school and high school. Once he became famous, he would always invite Sister Mary Lucille Socciarelli and Father John Sturm to be events and introduce them to dignitaries, VIP’s, and other TV broadcasters.

Russert was remembered by colleagues and leaders for his brand of hard-hitting but objective journalism. He wrote a best-selling book about the love he had for his dad, and when his son Luke was being born, Russert made a promise to God never to miss Sunday Mass if his son was born healthy. He kept that promise.

Tim Russert took his family on a trip overseas to celebrate Luke’s graduation from college. Then Tim dies suddenly after returning to work. Colleague Tom Brokaw spoke directly to Luke at a memorial.

However powerful and influential he became, whatever his fame and acclamations, nothing, nothing was as important to him as being your father.”

At a memorial for his father, Luke said he had never met anyone with so much optimism. His father loved the best parts of life. Luke said, but also its challenges.

“The ability of the human spirit to withstand tragedy always interested my father,” Luke said. “And he firmly believed that, with faith, friends, and a little folly, anybody could withstand anything.”

*Following Tim’s death, a friend reminded Luke about a chapter called “Loss” from Tim’s book titled, *Big Russ and Me*. In that chapter, Tim tells about a friend who had lost his 17-year old son to juvenile diabetes. Tim called his friend and asked him to think of it this way.*

“What if God had come to you and said, I’m going to make you an offer. I will give you a beautiful, a wonderful, happy, and lovable son for 17 years, but then it will be time for him to come home? You would make that deal in a second, right? Luke applied that question to his own situation, answering: “Well I only had, I had 22 years, but I, too, would make that deal in a heartbeat.”

During a time of celebrity scandals, the story of Tim Russert is one of a regular Catholic guy from a working class family who rose to the center of the national political scene, thrived there, and because of his faith, became known for his extraordinary decency, compassion, and fairness.

“Russert in his public life was loyal to journalism,” said Archbishop George H. Niederauer. “In his private life, he was faithful to his family, fatherhood, and faith. That’s a wonderful measure of a man.”

Talking about God

For the Catholic faith to grow as it has for thousands of years, spreading across continents and cultures, despite persecution and worse, the Holy Spirit had to guide people in their belief and sustain them in their uncertainty. Believing in God and responding to him requires our whole selves, mind, heart, and head. We can and do accept fundamental teachings of the faith without fully understanding them. But we also seek to figure out as best we can what they mean so we can talk about God and to God with increased understanding. And the Church helps us do just that. She has since the very beginning, throughout history, and continues to do so today.

Early Church leaders spent a lot of time seeking an accurate understanding of the nature of God and putting those understandings into words. They read Scripture studied, debated, prayed, and called on the Holy Spirit for guidance in formulating an accurate presentation of fundamental Christian beliefs.

When discussing faith and Church teachings, two terms often come up: *doctrine* and *dogma*. *Doctrine* is a broader term. It refers to general Church teachings, for instance, the Church’s teaching on certain aspects of social justice. *Doctrine*, referring to the Church’s teachings, is reflected in the content of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. But the *Catechism* contains both dogmas (*defined Church teaching*) and doctrine (*general Church teaching*).

Dogma is a more specific term. It refers to the truths of Revelation that have been defined by the Church as “de fide” and must be held by all Catholics. Over the centuries, not a great number of these have been defined. The divinity and humanity of Christ and the three Persons in the Trinity are dogmas. Dogmas are the fundamental teachings of the Church.

Established more than three hundred years before the birth of Christ, Nicea is located on the eastern shore of Lake Iznik in northwestern Turkey.

- The city now bears the name of the lake, but in 325, the Church’s first ecumenical council took place in the town center.
- The council upheld Jesus’ divinity and condemned Arianism, which said Jesus was “from another substance” than that of the Father (CCC, 465).
- Nicea/Iznik is well known for its colorful pottery and well-preserved monuments that represent the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman ages.
- Turkey is a secular republic with a majority Sunni Muslim population.

All dogmas are Church teachings, but not all Church teachings are dogmas.

Important Church theologians are teachers, who were bishops and some even popes from the first eight centuries of the Church, are known as “Fathers of the Church.” These bishops and popes clarified and passed down to future generations Catholic doctrines and dogmas. We’ve already quoted one of them in this reading: Saint Augustine. Women also contributed to Christian philosophical and theological thought at this time. For instance, one of the Church Fathers refers to Saint Macrina (c.330-380) simply as “the Teacher.” Along with her brother, Saint Basil, Macrina began monasteries for women and men.

The first of the Church Fathers was Saint Athanasius (c.297-373). He served as Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt, one of the world’s main centers of learning at the time. He suffered for his efforts, and altogether, he spent fifteen years in exile when rival bishops who held heretical teachings about Jesus gained control of the city.

Athanasius faced his first banishment in 325 because he refused to receive a man named Arius back into communion with the Church. Arius backed an idea called Arianism – the belief that Jesus was not of the same substance as God. Arianism was later declared a heresy, but not before political decisions forced Athanasius out again in 341, this time to Rome for three years. Athanasius spent much of his life defending Jesus’ divine nature as the Son of God.

In the year 325, Athanasius and about three hundred other bishops took part in the *Council of Nicea*. An ecumenical council, usually called by the pope, to exercise their shared authority over the universal Church. A second meeting was

held in 381 at the Council of Constantinople. The *Nicene Creed* stems from these two ecumenical councils. It is a summary of the main doctrines of the faith, and in it we profess our belief in the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed continues to be proclaimed at Mass every Sunday throughout the world. We owe thanks to Church Fathers such as Saint Athanasius for explaining that Jesus is the true God and true man, the only Son of the Father.

Throughout his life Athanasius spoke about the union of divine and human natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ. Athanasius explained that God created human beings in his image to share life with him. But human beings lost sight of God, but the Father never stopped loving them. He sent his only Son, who took on human flesh to teach us the ways to salvation, save us from the power of sin, and reestablish our friendship with the Father. Then, in the ultimate act of self-giving, the death and Resurrection of Jesus restored human beings to life with God and brought about ultimate victory over sin and death.

Understanding Jesus as the Word of God who became man to save us and restore us to eternal life is the vital part of the Good News. We celebrate this in a special way during the Christmas and Easter seasons. We grow to better appreciate this Good News we read the Bible, participate in Mass and the other sacraments, and focus on Jesus in prayer.

Faith and Reason

The word *theology* literally means “the study of God” or “the word of God.” Theology moves the discussion of truth seeking beyond what human reason alone can achieve. Saint Anselm (A.D. 1033-1109) described theology as “faith seeking understanding.” In a 2002 address to the Pontifical Academy of Theology, Pope John Paul II called theology a journey with Jesus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to help Christians understand the Good News of the Gospel and bring it to the world.

Catholicism has always considered faith and reason to be partners. Many of the greatest theologians and philosophers, such as Saint Thomas Aquinas, understood this relationship. Aquinas argued that what we learn from our own reasoning and from faith comes from God.

Aquinas laid the foundation for applying science and logic to the question of God’s existence. *Logic* is defined as a specific method of forming an argument or conclusion. Anyone who searches for God can find certain ways to know him. We call these ways *proofs of God’s existence*, but not like proofs in biology or chemistry class. These proofs for God form “converging and convincing arguments,” which help people to feel certain truth (CCC, 31-33).

Aquinas and other theologians point out God’s existence cannot be known without using reason, and everything we do we do know about God is limited by human constraints. Still if we start not with God himself, but with the beings he created, we can see that something caused us to exist. The accompanying chart describes what Aquinas called his five ways or arguments to show the existence of God.

Aquinas’ Ways or Arguments for the Existence of God

1. *Immovable Mover* – Everyone agrees that things move in our universe. Bowling balls roll down lanes, cars drive down highways, rivers flow from high to low points revolve around their suns, and galaxies expand. At one point, these objects were at rest. Nothing can move by itself. Someone or something started them in motion. The sequence of motion does not go on forever, so something is the first mover that does not need to move. This immovable mover or unmoved mover is God.
2. *First Cause (Uncaused Cause)* – Nothing can be the cause of itself or bring itself into existence because it would need to exist before itself. This is impossible. When something happens, there is a series of causes that make it happen. For example, every person needs previous people to exist. Something had to be the first cause. If the previous cause didn’t exist, then neither would its result. There exists then a first cause or the uncaused cause. We call this uncaused first cause God.
3. *Argument from Necessary Being* – Everything in the universe exists for a limited time. Here Aquinas starts by arguing that if all things can exist or not exist, then at some point in the past nothing existed. If at some point nothing existed, then nothing would exist now because you can’t get something from nothing. Since people and things exist today, then at least one being exists of its own necessity. Nothing brought this being into existence, and it causes the existence of everything else. We call this necessary being God.

4. *The Moral Argument (Perfect Being)* – This way argues that there are different degrees of perfection, like goodness and truth, among the things of the universe. For example, some people behave better than others. There has to be some perfect being that is the highest degree of goodness and from which all good things flow. Aquinas uses fire to illustrate this argument. The closer items get to a fire the hotter they become. The most perfect being that causes the goodness and perfection of all things is God.
5. *Argument from Design* – Natural things that lack reason operate according to a plan and move toward a goal. They do not do so by chance but because of a purpose. There is an order to how a seed becomes a tree, but the seed knows nothing about how to go about it. Aquinas used the example of an arrow guided by the archer and flying toward a target as its goal. For natural things to reach their goal, they need guidance from an intelligent being or designer. There exists then an intelligent designer who orders all things according to a plan. We call the intelligent designer God.

Lex Orandi – is an ancient theological phrase that means, “the Church believes as she prays.” This means the prayer of the Church holds the beliefs of the Church.

In the Nicene we profess belief in the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. “We call these the four essential, distinguishing marks of the Church.

Pope John Paul II used the word *harmony* to describe this relationship. The teachings of faith can be better understood with the help of reason. And, in searching for the truth about god, reason and faith work together. In his encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* or “Faith and Reason,” the Pope said faith has no need to fear reason. He pointed out that Aquinas helped reconcile the distance between faith and reason, between the secular world of science and the Gospel. In other words, the Church does not negate the world, and science should not ignore faith.

Two Approaches

Modern theologians sometimes distinguish two ways to speak about God. A person can arrive at the truth about God through both subjective and objective approaches.

For example: Good reporters covering a news story do their best to remain *objective*, or not be influenced by personal thoughts. They don’t use their opinions or experience to tell the story.

Bloggers, columnists, or commentators may take the opposite, or *subjective*, approach, often filtering what happened through their own experiences and reflection. What they write or say may be one hundred percent their own opinions.

Some theologians, for example, feel that the classical “proofs” for existence are too objective, meaning too divorced from actual human experience.

Other people dismiss faith entirely, saying it is too subjective and comes only from individual experiences and feelings. Either approach can discover signs of God’s existence, but both have their limits. During his 2008 visit to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI said faith is not limited to personal experience alone. God’s Revelation gives each generation the chance to find the ultimate truth for themselves. God tells us about himself, most fully through Jesus Christ.

Still, as Romans 5:5 explains: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Both objective and subjective approaches allow us to know and proclaim the hope of Christ.

Relating to God

Famous theologians have sometimes said that all of the time speculating about the nature of God could not compare to one moment spent in prayer. Perhaps we can easily grasp what he meant. Wouldn’t we trade hours of talk about love for one moment of actually experiencing love? It’s hard to get excited about a God described as “uncaused cause” and “Unmoved mover.”

God first calls to us by creating us and telling us about himself. Prayer begins with God. We respond by sharing with God our gratitude, questions, needs, problems, and concerns for others – the deepest parts of who we are. Prayer involves our whole being – our minds, hearts, and souls.

We pray in different ways, for different reasons. When we thank God or express our deepest concerns – really, any time we pray – we grow closer to him. We grow stronger as disciples. And when we pray, the Holy Spirit enables us and is with us. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, or “On Christian Hope,” calls prayer the most important lesson in learning to hope.

“When no one listens to me anymore, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God.”
~Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* #32

Personal prayer is an encounter between ourselves and God. When we cannot find the words to say, Pope Benedict suggests the prayers of the Church, the saints, and the liturgy. This “intermingling” of personal and public prayer is how we communicate with God, how we become open to him, and how we prepare to serve others. It is how we strengthen ourselves with hope. Then, Pope benedict says, we will become “ministers of hope for others.”

Early Christian life was characterized by dedicated to God. Early Christians prayed fasted, and gave to the poor, but did this while living with their families. Around the year 270A.D. some people decided that the best way for them to really know Christ was to live a simple life alone, meditating or Scripture and praying. These men became known as hermits or monks and women were nuns.

Saint Anthony of Egypt (250-355) is the first known monk. His life was one of prayer and self-sacrifice. Saint Athanasius, in a biography of Saint Anthony, writes that Anthony lived the words of the Gospel: “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (*Mark 10:21*). Saint Anthony lived in the desert in a mountainside cave in what is Libya today. Many imitated his life and wanted to live a similar lifestyle. Saint Anthony, known as first of the “desert fathers,” established a rule for them to follow. The monks lived a simple life, doing manual labor to earn money for the poor and to support themselves.

In Egypt, *Saint Pachomius* (292-348) started the first monastery in 320A.D. on the banks of the Nile River and is credited with writing the first communal rule for monks. The monks lived a life of silence and wore a habit of coarse white linen with a hood that kept them from seeing one another at meals. Before his death, Saint Pachomius had founded nine monasteries for men and two for women.

In the East, *Saint Basil the Great* (329-379) founded the first monastery in Asia Minor in Pontus on the southern coast of the Black Sea. His monastic rule, which focused on community life, liturgical prayer, and manual labor, has been the most lasting of those in the East. His sister, Saint Marcina, founded communities of nuns in the same area.

Saint Therese of Lisieux called a “surge of the heart.” The Catechism defines it as the “rising of the mind and heart to God.” Sometimes it’s hard to know who is praying enough or in the best way, but wise Old Testament figures and Jesus himself share some insights about how we communicate with God.

All four Gospels identify Jesus as a person of deep prayer. Prayer accompanied the major events in his ministry. The Gospels, for example, record Jesus’ prayer as he considered what would happen when he was handed over.

“Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed. “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet; not my will but yours be done” (*Luke 22:41-42*).

Jesus’ words echo those he taught us in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy will be done.” Prayer puts us in touch with God’s plan for us. Prayer connects us to God’s love.

“The Creator, who is so great, so wise, has doubtless hidden secrets in all created things, and we can benefit from knowing the ... I believe that in each smallest creature, though it be a tiny ant, and more wonders than we can comprehend ... I discover secrets within us which fill me with astonishment: how many more must there be that are unknown to me! O my Lord and my God! How stupendous is your grandeur! ...how great are you mysteries! ...

~Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), in *Sacred Voices*, edited by Mary Ford-Grabowsky

Intimate Union

Catholicism has a rich history of people who have had overwhelming experiences of God's love. They sensed God's presence and met him at many different times and points in their lives. They remind us that, "God calls us all to this intimate union with him" (CCC, 2014).

Mysticism refers to this intense experience of union with God. Mystics often speak of their relationship with God in terms of intimacy and love.

Mystics encounter Jesus in a deeply personal, intimate way. Their lives are characterized by intense, silent prayer that grows through love and adoration of God's goodness. Known as *contemplative prayer*, it is "the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love" (CCC, 2724).

Mystics are not just in convents and monasteries, unknown to most of us. They are all around us, often without us even knowing it.

Paul the Philosopher and Mystic

Paul plays a pivotal role in the earliest days of the Church. Although he is not one of the first followers of Jesus, through the grace of God, he is transformed from being one who persecutes Christians into being their greatest advocate. His transformation is described in the Acts of the Apostles as no less than being blind and having his sight restored.

He takes on the philosophers and argues that the wise recognize the one, true living God: only fools miss this truth. In a letter to Christians in Rome he writes that: "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made" (*Romans 1:20*). In other words, there is no conflict between the truth we discover through observing the world around us (*creation*) and the truth we find in Scripture. Both are, in a sense, the word of the Creator.

In those words to the early Church, Paul urges us all to make ourselves new in Christ. We might think Paul means we should change our behavior, but as Pope Benedict XVI points out, he is talking about something deeper. Paul says what must become new in our way of thinking. "This surprises us," Pope Benedict said in a homily closing the Pauline Year. "Renewal must go to the very core. One way of looking at the world, of understanding reality all our thought must change from its foundations." Normally our thinking is limited to "possession, well-being, influence, success, fame," but Saint Paul is talking about something more profound. What we must do, Paul says, is let go of ourselves and learn what God's wants. God's will then become our will. "We must learn to share in the thinking and the will of Jesus Christ," Pope Benedict said in June 2009. "It is then that we will be new people in whom a new world emerges."

Saint Paul makes his way to the great centers of Greek and Roman thought such as Ephesus and Athens, making the case for belief in Christ as perfectly compatible with the best that philosophy has to offer.

He is a great example for bringing the mind and heart together. He also has a deep, loving relationship with Christ such as the mystics have. He expresses this experience in what amounts to a love poem:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
~*Romans 8:35,37-39*

Famous Mystics

Teresa of Avila is in good company among many mystics who enlighten and encourage us in our prayer. Among them are Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Saint Theresa of Lisieux (1873-1897), and Thomas Merton (1915-1968).

Blessed Hildegard von Bingen composed a wide body of written material from visions received through what she called the voice from heaven. She was a twelfth-century poet, composer, naturalist, healer, theologian, prophet, preacher, and founder of convents.

Known as Saint Hildegard, she was the tenth child born to a noble family in Bermersheim, in what is now Germany. At eight, she was sent to Abbess Jutta von Sponheim, who taught her to read and write. Hildegard's spirituality grew and other parents sent their daughters to the Benedictine convent at Disibodenberg.

Perhaps Hildegard's best-known work is *Scivias*, in which she lists visions such as the following and then interprets them.

I saw a great mountain the color of iron, and enthroned on it One such glory that is blinded my sight. On each side of him there extended a soft shadow, like a wing of wondrous breadth and length. Before him, at the foot of the mountain, stood an image full of eyes on all sides, in which, because of those eyes, I could discern no human form. In front of this image stood another, a child wearing a tunic of subdued color but white shoes, upon whose head such glory descended from the One enthroned upon that mountain that I could not look at its face.

~Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*

Thomas Merton lived life intensely, the good and the bad of it, through his college years. Then he felt drawn to the Catholic Church and the monastic life. He entered the Trappist order of monks at the Abbey of Gethsemane in Kentucky. At first he saw living as a monk as way to get away from the superficialities of life. In time he came to see that the life of prayer, manual labor, and silence helped him appreciate all of life more deeply. He describes an experience he had one day when he went into town.

In the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream.

~Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

Saint Therese of Lisieux, who came to be known as "the little flower," was a French girl of fifteen when she entered the Carmelite religious order. At the request of her superiors, she began writing about her life, and we are blessed with an honest report of what this sensitive young woman was going through until her death by tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four. Her relationship with Jesus was always intense but never easy. At times she felt rejected or cast aside suddenly, I felt that I had been wounded by a dart of fire so ardent that death must be near. I have no words to describe it; it was as though an invisible hand had plunged me into fire. And such fire! Yet at the same time, what sweetness! I was burning up with love and was convinced that to withstand such an onslaught of love for one minute, nay for even one second more, was impossible. Death must surely ensure.

~Prayers and Meditations of Therese of Lisieux, Cindy Cavnar, ed.

Although Therese spent much of her brief life in a monastery, she became one of the most popular saints of all time. In a sense she offered a pathway to everyday mysticism for modern Catholics, which she called "the little way." She advocated doing "random acts of kindness" before that term became popular. Perform our little, seemingly insignificant daily tasks with the spirit of love, and they will be an expression of the love of Jesus in us and through us.

Pilgrim's Journey

We are pilgrims progressing from time to eternity, and our goal is the Father himself. He constantly calls us beyond what is familiar and comfortable to new paths of faith and trust. As we draw nearer, he sometimes seems to draw away, but only because he is a mysterious God whose thoughts are not our thoughts, whose ways are not our ways. Like Abraham, we must go forward, not knowing where we are being led. Like Abraham, and Jesus after him, we must constantly turn towards the Father, who is faithful, and trust him. Moment by moment, if we respond to the Father's love, he will bring us unerringly, through Jesus, to himself.

~John Paul II, *Homily in Canberra, Australia, November 24, 1986, #5*

This is how Pope John Paul II described our journey to God as he spoke during his trip to the South Pacific. So, pilgrim, does it sound a little scary when the Pope says things like "not knowing where we are being led?" but that is the point. We are being led. We are being called by the one who created us. God wants to be close to us to take his places

****answer questions on pages 23 - 25**

Part II: God Comes to Save His People

The Turning Point

Lyrics from an African-American spiritual contain the words: “You may have all this world, give me Jesus.” Many religious have great teachers, prophets, and holy people. We know that Jesus is the most important among these for Christians, but how does our faith the difference?

The Church has always had a story to tell - a true story. It was witnessed firsthand, written in Scripture, and passed on by Tradition. It has been in many different ways, sometimes very simple and sometimes with great elaboration and detail. Sacred art conveys it. Music, song, theater, and dance have been used through the centuries to give it expression. The story of Jesus has been told and retold by people around the globe, in every walk of life. We often call it “The Story.” And we describe it as Good News.

The story of Jesus doesn’t begin with his birth or even his conception. No, the story begins with the eternal God, before Creation. In the words of the prologue of The Gospel according to John:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:1-3a).

The Word of God – in Greek, *logos* – became incarnate (became flesh) and was born through the Virgin Mary. Jesus, the only *Son of God*, is the Word made flesh. He is God himself, but the title Son of God shows his unique relationship with God the Father.

In the beginning of the Bible, the Book of Genesis tells how God created the whole world, in all its goodness, beauty, and order. God created out first parents in a state of *original justice* and original holiness. Original justice is described as the harmony that existed inside each human, among each other, and between our first parents and the rest of the world (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 379). Their friendship with God came from the goodness of paradise.

In the Genesis accounts, when the first humans, Adam and Eve, sinned by disobeying God’s commands, they separated themselves from God. In doing so, they lost the harmony that existed through original justice and holiness. That loss is known as Original Sin. Sin – “a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal Law of God” (CCC, Glossary) – entered the world, and with sin, death. This transition of the first couple and their descendants from a state of friendship with God to a fallen state is called “the Fall.”

Sin is an offense against God. It is disobedience against God that goes against Jesus’ own obedience. Because of sin, the world needed a divine intervention to restore humanity to friendship with God. *Salvation history* is the scriptural account of how God, over many centuries, prepared to heal the separation between God and his People. He entered into separate covenants with Noah and Abraham, and revealed to Moses how to live in the covenant relationship. God reached out to the world again and again. God was actively involved with the Chosen People, through charismatic leaders and kings and the preaching of the prophets. God revealed himself to be faithful and merciful. Through the prophets, he also promised to send the *Messiah*, the Anointed One.

Eventually God did this by sending his Son to save humans from their sins. This is how it goes: Salvation history begins with creation, is clarified in the Old Testament, reaches its fulfillment in Jesus, and continues in and through the Church.

God did all this to prepare the way for the *convocation* of all people in Christ, and through the Church, continues gathering people every day. The word “church” itself means convocation. Today, Jesus is present in our Eucharist, the teachings of the church, and the way we, as members of the Church, try to serve the world.

Something More

All the episodes of salvation history prepared the way for the coming of the *Son of Man*, Jesus *Christ*. The term Son of Man is used in visions of the prophet Daniel, where it refers to a mysterious person who will appear at the end of time, coming in the clouds with great glory (*Mark 13:26*). The community of disciples who followed Jesus gradually came to understand that although he taught and preached and led, he could never be reduced to just one of these roles – or even all of them. He was something far more.

The Gospel according to Matthew shows how Jesus fulfills the promises of God and the hopes of his People. You are likely familiar with the very first chapter of that Gospel that tells how an angel visits Joseph, Mary's husband-to-be, in a dream. The angel announces that Mary will bear a Son, to be named Jesus. The Gospel writer goes on to say that "All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him *Emmanuel*", which means, "God with us" (*Matthew 1:22-23*). The name is a pledge of God's help. It reflects that Jesus is the Messiah.

The writer of the Gospel according to Matthew and his community knew the Old Testament Scriptures well. When Matthew tells the story of Joseph, the husband of Mary, Jewish readers would have been reminded of another – the son of the patriarch Jacob.

Stained Glass

In the Middle Ages, when most Christians could not read or write and there were few books even available, the Catholic Church used stained glass windows to teach the faith and to help Christians understand the Bible stories.

Using colored material as part of window opening can be traced back to 306 B.C. when artisans in the Far East made windows by arranging small gem-like pieces of pot-metal (*metal that has a low melting point and can be easily cast*) in wooden or stone panels. As early as the twelfth century, the monk Theophilus described the process of making stained glass for decoration.

Subjects for the windows included creation, the Trinity, angels, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles, and the life and death of Jesus (*baptism, crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension; the Marriage Feast of Cana; the Transfiguration; raising of Lazarus from the dead*).

The use of stained glass windows in many Catholic churches continues today. For example, the church of Saint Vincent de Paul Parish in Seward, Nebraska, has eight large windows depicting the Beatitudes, while stained glass windows in the chapel at Saint John's Seminary in Plymouth, Michigan, offer designs depicting duty and inspiration for the young men preparing for the priesthood.

- Stained glass windows became very popular during the Renaissance period (*A.D. 1400-1600*) when Gothic architecture provided churches with large window openings.
- A filling strong enough to protect the interior of the church from the weather, yet transparent enough to admit light was needed.
- Lead strips held these pieces of glass together.
- They either pieced together glass of various sizes and colors or painted the glass pieces.
- At that time, glass was only available in small pieces, so artisans created mosaics to fill these openings.

The Church continues to affirm that Jesus is God with us. Recall that the word *Christ* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *messiah* which means "anointed." Jesus willingly and faithfully carried out his ministry to bring us new life, dying for us on the cross. That mission grew out of the Father's love for us and his willingness to send his Son to make amends for our sins. The heart of Jesus' mission was to bring salvation for all those who believe. He reconciled humankind to God by freely offering himself. The cross is the turning point of the Christian story. It stands at the center of God's plan for the world. It is the symbol of the Good News.

The total self-giving of Jesus on the cross proved that God's love for us is without limit. It was truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried. The Resurrection of Jesus shows that God's love has indeed triumphed over evil and is stronger than anything that threatens us.

You know the rest of the story: Jesus ascended to Heaven after his Resurrection. Whenever God sends his Son, he always sends the Holy Spirit, who descended on the disciples at Pentecost. The coming of the Holy Spirit was part of Christ's mission. Our understanding of Jesus would be incomplete without knowing that he sent the Holy Spirit to finish his work on Earth and establish the Church. The Holy Spirit makes a collection of individual disciples into something more: a convocation of people reconciled with God and with one another. In short, he makes us the Church and inspires, builds up, and guides us. The Church then is not an afterthought or an add-on to the plan of salvation. The *Catechism*

calls her the Sacrament that unites the Trinity and mankind because God's grace comes to us through the Church (*see CC, 747*). She is the sign of the Holy Trinity's continuing *communion* with the human race.

Until Christ Comes Again

The Church through the sending of the Holy Spirit, is assured of God's continual, sustaining presence, until Christ comes again in glory at the end of time. The very last words of the Gospel according to Matthew attest to the presence of God with us in Jesus Christ: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (*Matthew 28:20*).

The Church's mission is the same as the mission of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Church draws people into communion with God and one another. This is why the period of salvation history in which we now live is called "the time of the Church" (*CCC, 732*), a time when the Kingdom of God is present but not yet complete. By Kingdom of God we mean the rule of God, which is present in Jesus and remains among us through the Eucharist. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we build God's Church, which is the beginning of the Kingdom of God on Earth. To sum it up, Jesus has always existed and will always be with us. He is truly "the Alpha and the Omega" (*Revelation 1:8*) – the beginning and the end – of the great story of God's love, unfolding through history.

The Bible provides glimpses into the Trinity's eternal presence. Some are found in what is called wisdom literature. For example: Divine Wisdom is personified in several poetic texts of the Old Testament. Wisdom – often used with a feminine pronoun – refers to the third Person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit.

Mystery of the Incarnation

When the Church celebrates Christmas, we recall the coming of Christ for the first time as a baby born of the Virgin Mary. The mystery of the unions of the divine and human natures called the *Incarnation*. The story of Mary and Joseph and their journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus in the stable, the appearance of shepherds, angels, and the Magi – all these narratives are very familiar to us. They are beautiful and comforting. What they are trying to express, however, is a startling fact, when you think about it: God actually became man (*see CCC, 479*).

The Word made flesh is Son of God and Son of Mary. Salvation is wholly from above, the gift of heaven, yet it truly springs from our human soil.
~*Maria Boulding, spiritual writer*

It is not that God became "like" a man or put on a human disguise. In the myths of the ancient Greeks and Romans, for example, gods could appear as any sort of creature, animal or human. Eventually, however, these humans and animals would whip off the disguise and return to their godly status. If Christians had believed something like this, it would not have been remarkable.

Scriptures tell us that John the Baptist baptized his cousin Jesus in the Jordan River.

- **The Jordan lies at the lowest elevation of any river in the world.**
- **Christian pilgrims today often visit the traditional site of Jesus' baptism near where the river flows south from the freshwater Sea of Galilee.**
- **The Jordan River forms the border between Israel and the West Bank.**
- **The 223 – mile river ends at the salty Dead Sea, which is 1,312 feet below sea level.**
- **The river is a major water source for Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, not just for drinking, but also for agriculture.**
- **At its widest points, the Jordan spans about twenty yards and the deepest parts are only about seventeen feet.**

What the Gospel tells us about the Incarnation, however, is something very different. God did not take on a costume of human flesh in order to make a theatrical appearance of Earth. God actually became one of us. Another title sometimes used for Jesus is "the Son of Mary," which emphasizes his very real humanity.

Jesus knew what it meant to live a human life, with all its joys and sufferings. He experienced physical hunger, enthusiasm and disappointment, joy and sorrow, energy and fatigue. He had family and friends. He shared in the Jewish religion and followed its observances. He prayed. When Jesus suffered his Passion, the pain and suffering were real. He truly died on the cross.

Jesus took on human nature, but he did so without losing his divine nature (*CCC, 479*). Why? If Jesus had only been a

man, his life wouldn't have resulted in the Redemptions of the world. No human being, no matter how gifted, could save the human race from sin. But because Jesus was also God, he could do what no other human being could do. Christ shared human nature, so that we could share the divine nature. He made it possible for us to share in God's own life. The *Catechism* states this concisely: "The Word became flesh to *make us partakers of the divine nature.*"

We know we were created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1:26-27*), but the Incarnation takes the understanding of the human dignity to a whole new level. The Incarnation gives us a sure knowledge of God's *solidarity*, or union, with us, and a new vision of how to be human. And it also helps us understand the value, importance, and potential of the human person in a whole new way: "The Word became flesh to *be our model of holiness*" (*CCC, 459*). The more we study and meditate on all the events of Christ's life, the more we see reflected in them the good and holy people we ourselves are called to be.

To share in the divine nature of Christ means to imitate Jesus in the way we respond to the challenges we face:

- To forgive when we would rather seek revenge
- To pray for our enemies when we would rather curse their existence
- To seek the betterment of those in need as well as our own interests
- To stop our peers from belittling one another when we would rather join in or ignore it
- To take a risk for the greater good when we would rather play it safe
- To apologize for mistakes instead of justifying ourselves
- To seek purity of mind and heart in a "Hook-up, get-loaded" culture, and
- To gather with the community of disciples in gratitude at Mass when it is easier to think our absence doesn't matter

Process of Discovery

When we watch any Christmas special on television that depicts the Incarnation, the Holy Family often is pictured with halos, a chorus of angels are singing "Glory to God," and a star shines brightly above the manger, which is all-aglow with God's presence. The magnificence of this scene could prompt a twenty-first century believer to wonder how anyone could doubt that Jesus is the Christ. In reality, this truth – that Jesus is the Messiah – became evident only gradually to those around him.

Primary Source

The Second Vatican Council issued a statement that addresses the relationship of the Church to the struggles, turmoil, and possibilities of the world around us. It is called "The Pastoral Constitution the Church in the Modern World." Its title in Latin is, *Gaudium et Spes*, which means "Joy and Hope."

The beginning of article 22 of *Gaudium et Spes* is below:

22. In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, (20) Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling. It is no wonder, then, that all the truths mentioned so far should find in him their source and their most perfect embodiment.

He who is the "image of the invisible God" (Col.1:15),(21) is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which has been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. (22) For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, (23) and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin. (24)

Jesus Shows Us the Way

All the episodes of Jesus's life are worth meditating on. They contain spiritual wisdom that can help guide us along the path of life.

Consider these two episodes in the life of Jesus from the Gospel according to Matthew.

The Call of Matthew – Matthew was a tax collector before he became an Apostle of Jesus. Tax collectors among the Jewish population were responsible for getting the people to pay money to the Roman authorities. They had a reputation for being greedy, corrupt, and were more or less despised by the common people. So when Jesus called Matthew, the other Apostles couldn't make sense of it. Jesus' explanation reveals something important.

Who is the Greatest? The disciples came to Jesus with a question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" rank was important to them, as it is in most societies. Again Jesus' surprising answer reveals something important for the spiritual journey.

Children and the Poor

The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus was not just for the first disciples. In fact, all of us are called to enter the Kingdom. To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word and believe in him (CCC. 543). Jesus gave this on-going challenge to those first disciples, the same people who wondered who was the greatest.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the earth.
~Matthew 28:19-29

So whom does the Kingdom of God belong to? God's Kingdom belongs to the poor and most vulnerable among us; those who accept the Kingdom with humble hearts. Jesus shows us the way to the Kingdom because he relates to the poor. During his lifetime, Jesus experienced poverty, homelessness, hunger, and thirst (see CCC, 544).

His mission to bring his message to the poor echoes the words of the Messiah from the Book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:). In the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke, Jesus declares the Kingdom of God is for the lowly and the persecuted. They are blessed (see Matthew 5:3-11; Luke 6:20-23).

James McGinnis

James McGinnis was a person who took Jesus seriously. In the spring of 1970, he saw the turmoil in the United States and the world and started on the road of peace and justice.

McGinnis was a graduate assistant who taught ethics at St. Louis University. He saw a flyer advertising a talk on peace studies. The discussion sparked a passion for McGinnis. Within eight weeks, he and other professors created an undergraduate curriculum in Peace Studies, with McGinnis as the director of the program.

To complete his doctorate, he and his wife, Kathy, traveled to India to interview many of Mahatma Gandhi's co-workers and delve more deeply into nonviolence as a way of life. McGinnis said the trip had a profound effect on his own call from God to live and teach peace and social justice through nonviolence. He realized that call had been implanted in the late 1960's when he was a member of the Tennessee National Guard in Memphis. In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed. "I sensed that God was calling me to step up to the plate and do what I could to end the war in Vietnam and promote racial and economic justice."

McGinnis and his wife founded the Institute for Peace and Justice in St. Louis in 1975. The Institute promotes peace and justice through education, social action, and prayer. The couple had written books on how to prevent violence and empower people with prayer and peace.

McGinnis didn't live in a bubble of his own lofty theories. He understood that presentations and curriculums needed to evolve when faced with challenges such as the realities of being financially sound, the pervasive power of materialism, and covert and overt racism. This in addition to fostering a justice and peace movement that continually needs younger voices alongside its aging contingent.

McGinnis found ways to grow and change. He found an outlet in portraying a clown. "I was looking for a way of converting myself, of stretching the limits, of becoming a more compassionate person," McGinnis said in 1988. "I also wanted to become a more courageous person, wanted to become a bolder person in public." The playful side of McGinnis – as an actor, singer and dancer – allowed him to portray peace in another light.

But changes later came in more somber ways. On the night the United States began bombing Iraq in 1991, McGinnis left a gathering of peace activists and walked alone to talk with Jesus. He asked, "What do you want of me in the face of this new violence?"

Within in few moments, McGinnis said he knew the answer: "In the face of escalating violence, escalate love." It is a quotation that continued to inspire him for the rest of his life. He also carried a "pebble of love" symbolizing tiny acts of kindness and love in everyday life to offset the impact of the "boulders of violence" in the world.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, McGinnis said he spent more than a year revising his materials – taking into account the feeling of so many people who no longer felt secure. McGinnis said while there is "no simple answer" to the fear and insecurity people now experience, people can, and should, experience peace in their own daily lives as best they can to make a difference. He applauded students who pray for soldiers and write letters to them, but also asked educators to encourage students to pray for children involved in conflict regions. Perhaps they could write letters to legislators that speak about how important it is to work toward peace. McGinnis died in 2009 at the age of 66. Many people who knew him and many he never met left testimonials about how they were inspired by McGinnis' words and actions.

"Jim's fidelity over his lifetime in being a light, a bridge, a part of a rainbow people has enriched the vision and brightened the flame for many of us. I am counting on his intercession, as he joins the cloud of witnesses, especially when I live through days when my heart is heavy and wants to close up and hide."

~Mary Ann Holtz, St. Petersburg, Fla.

The Kingdom also belongs to the children. "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such your gracious will" (*Matthew 11:25-26*). Anyone who wants to be first in the Kingdom must be last in the world. That person must serve as others.

Children were chosen examples of the Kingdom of God for the same reason that the poor were blessed in the Beatitudes. No one was more vulnerable and in need of loving care than a child at the time of Jesus.

In her book, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*, author Joyce Ann Mercer describes children in ancient Palestine as those with the lowest status. "They were in effect, non-yet-people. The language that "kingdom of God" belongs to children sharpens the agenda of the whole Gospel story that the kingdom of God is present for the people, the peasant villagers, as opposed to the people of standing, wealth, and power."

By using a child and the poor as examples Jesus shows that "belonging to/receiving/entering the kingdom of God comes from solidarity with – and not separation from – those who are the lowliest and the least, the most vulnerable to the hardships" of life.

The consequences of this teaching for the disciples and church is to follow the example of Jesus and the prophets to care for the widow and orphan and to speak against all forces that continue to oppress and hurt children and the poor, even at the cost of risking one's life. Following this teaching of Jesus not only brings a person into new life in this world now, but into the new life brought about by the Resurrection of Jesus.

The Trinity is Revealed

People have always wanted to know who God is and to be able to put the truth about God into words. But God is beyond definition. God is greater than our human powers of comprehension. Words fall short. Yet there have been many attempts to describe God. It is a natural human desire to want to know who God is, what is like, and to name the truth about God.

*You want to know Me? You want to see My face?
I do not age with time; I do not fit into a space
I transcend the capacity of your eye, so who am I?
It is the question of the moment;
It is the question for all time.*

As Catholics, we believe that God, has revealed himself. Specifically, God is Trinity of divine Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the central mystery of our faith.

As the *Catechism* explains: “The Trinity is a mystery in the strict sense” (CCC, 237), because it is about the inner life of God. We could never have known it unless God revealed it to us. We do not know it by means of our human reason; we could never deduce it from things we observe in nature. And although there are clues to this mystery in the Old Testament, it was not revealed until the coming of Christ.

It is because of what Jesus has sheened us that we come to know God as Trinity. Many passages in the Bible affirm that Jesus is truly God, but different than God the Father.

We also see in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is promised by Jesus and sent by him. The way in which Jesus speaks shows the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person of distinct from the Father and the Son. Yet all three Persons of the Trinity work together for our salvation. They act as one because they are one God. This is indeed a mystery.

For Our Salvation

An example of the Trinity at work for our salvation can be found in the account of the Annunciation (*see Luke 1:26-35*). The angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and announced that she had found favor with God. He went on to say, “The Holy Spirit will come down upon you, and the power of the Most High (*Father*) will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God” (*Luke 1:35*). All the Persons of the Trinity are involved, each in a distinct way.

It is clear from Gospel accounts that God alone reveals himself as the Holy Trinity. God the Father comes to us as a voice from Heaven and is described as the Father several times. He is also called the Most High. Jesus is recognized as God’s Son. Out of a bright cloud, which the Holy Spirit, the voice of God says at the Transfiguration: “This is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!” (*Luke 9:35*). Jesus himself talks about the Holy Spirit, who is also described as *the* Paraclete. The Holy Spirit will provide comfort and truth to believers, we are told. Our belief in a Triune makes us different from many other religions.

Each of the Persons of the Trinity is distinct, but they remain inseparably one God. Many ancient faiths were polytheistic, believing in many gods. The Christian faith is monotheistic. As we affirm in the Creed, “We believe in one God.”

The Incarnation deepens our understanding of human dignity and reminds us of the goodness of the human body. Our bodies are amazing physical creations. Spend some time on meditating on the physical capabilities of our whole body as reflecting the image of God.

So often we take the physical functioning of our bodies for granted. That is, until something goes wrong. We tend not to think about breathing until we have a cold. A person with a broken toe may tell us about its importance in the balance required for walking.

Genuine spiritual wholeness can be found in contemplating the gift if God’s life pulsing through our bodies.

Take a moment and intentionally focus attention on breathing. Think about the ways in which our bodies take care of us. Science refers to involuntary reflexes: the lungs breathe, the eyes blink, the heart beats, the blood flows, all without thought or choice. What does that tell us about God and how he created us?

Moreover when our minds work in union with our bodies, our ability to refine our physical skills in awe-inspiring. Athlete, musicians, and artists are keenly aware of the way in which the body can steadily learn to perform with more and more precision through practice. What once may have seemed improbable becomes possible. What does that tell us about God and the need to practice Christian virtues, like patience, temperance, and justice?

Yet we can also push ourselves too hard, too fast, and too irresponsibly. Putting perfect performance above wellness exploits the gifts of the body. Our bodies need proper rest and nourishment or they become compromised and can break. Physical injury occurs when we disregard bodily limits. The creative spirit within can be crushed by abuse and overuse of the body.

Our bodies are not performance machines; rather they are creations that reflect the image of God. They make it possible for us to thank God, serve our neighbor, and eventually be happy with God forever.

Whenever you got the notion that your body is “unpreventable,” it certainly wasn’t from God. It’s not like God didn’t know the answer when he asked Adam and Eve, “Who told you that you were naked?” (*Genesis 3:11*). Rather, we need to emphatically and thoroughly understand that the sense of “shame” is not something of God. It’s a lie. It’s manufactured.

Honoring the body means accepting it more than hating it. Honoring the body includes honoring the way it was built. It means becoming friends with your body instead of seeing it as something you are stuck with.

Triune God is the origin and goal of all human life. This is part of the story that Christians have to tell. Firsthand witness passed it on verbally and then in writing. The accounts are passed down to us by the Tradition of the Church. We see it in sacred art and hear it in music. Our senses are filled with the story.

A Fruitful Mystery

The *Catechism* assures us that believing in and loving God wholeheartedly “has enormous consequences for our whole life” (CCC, 222).

- Belief means acknowledging the greatness and majesty of God. This enables us to stand in awe and wonder before God.
- Belief means living in thanksgiving and being grateful for everything God has given us.
- Belief logically leads to affirming the unity and dignity of all people because all are made in God’s image and likeness.
- Belief logically leads to trusting God, even when experience hardship and suffering.
- And, belief means honoring God by making good use of what God has given us: our lives, our bodies, our talents, and our planet.
- The Triune God calls all people into communion with himself.

****answer questions on pages 23-25.**

Part III -The Church of Mercy: by Pope Francis I

Free to Choose Good (Address to the Students of the Jesuit Schools, 7 June 2013)

I would like first of all to tell you something that has to do with St. Ignatius of Loyola, our founder. In the autumn of 1537, on his way to Rome with a group of his first companions, he wondered, *If people ask us who we are, how should we answer?* The answer came spontaneously: We shall say that we are the “Society of Jesus” (*Fontes narrative Iesu, vol. 1, pp. 320-322*). This demanding name intends to suggest a relationship of very close friendship and total affection for Jesus, in whose footsteps that wanted to follow. Why have I told you about this event? Because St. Ignatius and his companions had realized that Jesus was teaching them how to live well, how to live a life that had profound meaning, that imparted enthusiasm, joy, and hope. They had understood that Jesus is a great teacher of life and a model of life, and that he was not only teaching them but also inviting them to follow him on this path.

Dear young people, if I were to ask you now why you go to school, what would you answer me? There would probably be a whole range of replies, according to the sensibility of each person. Yet I think that they could all be summed up together by saying that school is one of the is one of the educational environments in which we develop through learning how to live, how to become grown-up, mature men and women who can travel, who can follow the road of life. How does school help you grow? It helps you not only be developing your intelligence but also by an integral formation of all the aspects of your personality.

In following what St. Ignatius teaches us, the main element at school is to learn to be magnanimous. Magnanimous: this virtue of the great and the small (*Non coerceri maximo contineri minimo, divinum est*) which always makes us look at the horizon. What does being magnanimous mean? It means having a great heart, having greatness of mind; it means having great ideals, the wish to do great things in response to what God asks of us. [it means also] to do well the routine ... daily actions, tasks, meetings with people – doing the little everyday things with a great heart open to God and to others. It is therefore important to cultivate human formation with a view to magnanimity. School not only broadens your intellectual dimension but also your human one. And I think that Jesuit schools take special care to develop human virtues: loyalty, respect, faithfulness, and dedication.

I would like to reflect on two fundamental values: freedom and service. First of all: be free people! What do I mean? Perhaps it is thought that freedom means doing everything one likes, or seeing how far one can go by trying drunkenness and overcoming boredom. This is not freedom. Freedom means being able to think about what we do, being able to assess what is good and what is bad; these are the types of conduct that lead to development; it means always opting for the good. Let us be free for goodness. And in this do not be afraid to go against the tide, even if it is not easy! Being free always to choose goodness is demanding, but it will make you into people with backbone who can face life, people with courage and patience (*parrhesia* and *ypomone*).

The second word is *service*. In your schools you take part in various activities that accustom you to not retreating into yourself or into your own small world, but rather to being open to others, especially the poorest and neediest. They accustom you to work hard to improve the world in which we live. Be men and women with others and for others, true champions at the service of others.

In order to be magnanimous with inner freedom and a spirit of service, spiritual formation is necessary, dear young people; love Jesus Christ more and more! Our life is a response to his call, and you will be happy and will build your life well if you can answer this call. May you feel the Lord's presence in your life. He is close to each one of you as a companion, as a friend who knows how to help and understand you, who encourages you in difficult times and never abandons you. In prayer, in conversation with him, and in reading the Bible, you will discover that he is truly close. You will also learn to read God's signs in your life. He always speaks to us, also through the events of our time and our daily life; it is up to us to listen to him.

****answer question on page 26**

Part I: Called to Know God

Directions: Match the term or name in the first column with the phrase in the second column that fits it best.

Column 1

1. Saint Basil
2. Saint Augustine
3. Saint Athanasius
4. Saint Therese of Lisieux
5. Blessed Hildegard of Bingen
6. Jesus
7. objective
8. subjective
9. reason
10. mysticism

Column 2

- a. based on opinion
- b. revealed the trinity to us
- c. the bishop who wrote *The Confession*
- d. based on facts
- e. defended Jesus' dual nature
- ab. known as "the little flower"
- ac. a process used to think or decide logically
- ad. founded monasteries
- ae. intense union with God
- bc. a mystic and composer of church music

Directions: Write the letter of the correct answer on the space provided on the answer sheet.

11. One result of the Council of Nicea and Constantinople was
 - a. a profession of faith that outlines major teachings of the Church.
 - b. the founding of many monasteries and convents.
 - c. new proof of the existence of God.
 - d. letters to early Christian communities.

12. Which saint founded communities of nuns in Asia Minor?
 - a. Marcina, Basil's sister
 - b. Thomas Merton
 - c. Hildegard of Bingen
 - d. Teresa of Avila

13. Theology has *not* been described as
 - a. the word of God.
 - b. a product of reason.
 - c. the study of God.
 - d. faith seeking understanding.

14. A method used to arrive at a conclusion is
 - a. logic.
 - b. discipleship.
 - c. faith.
 - d. prayer.

15. What would having wisdom help you do?
 - a. memorize the answers of the test
 - b. know about God's purpose and plan
 - c. puzzle out a science experiment
 - d. develops and test a new theory

16. Discipleship is based on
 - a. studying the lives of the mystics.
 - b. proving God's existence through logic.
 - c. living according to principles of faith.
 - d. Understanding happiness in the next life.

17. What does the story of Zacchaeus demonstrate?
 - a. Even powerful people long for God.
 - b. Jesus preferred being with people like himself.
 - c. Tax collectors had many resources.
 - d. There will always be people who take advantage of others.

18. Which medieval priest and philosopher use science and logic to prove the existence of God?
 - a. Saint Ignatius
 - b. Saint Athanasius
 - c. Saint Thomas Aquinas
 - d. Saint Basil

19. Which phrase does *not* describe Saint Paul?
 - a. At one time, he persecuted Christians.
 - b. His writings still are used by the Church today.
 - c. He was both a philosopher and a mystic.
 - d. He was one of Jesus' first followers.

20. Mystics are *most* noted for their
- a. ability to write sacred music.
 - b. letters to other followers of Christ.
 - c. deep relationship with God.
 - d. need to witness out in the world.

Part II: God Comes to Save his People

Directions: Match the term or name in the first column with the phrase in the second column that fits it best.

Column 1

- 21. Trinity
- 22. logos
- 23. communion
- 24. witnessed the Transfiguration
- 25. learned of Jesus' nature in a dream
- 26. had covenants with God
- 27. solidarity
- 28. a tax collector
- 29. a group of people called together from many places
- 30. Emmanuel

Column 2

- a. Joseph
- b. Means "word"
- c. Noah, Moses, and Abraham
- d. Peter, James, and John
- e. to share interests and responsibilities
- ab. Convocation
- ac. Matthew
- ad. our calling to share in the life of the Trinity
- ae. means "God with us"
- bc. one God in three divine Persons

Directions: Write the letter of the correct answer on the space provided on the answer sheet.

31. The story of Jesus begins
- a. with the prophet
 - b. at the Incarnation
 - c. before creation
 - d. at Jesus' birth
32. Which title is *not* part of Jesus' role as "the anointed one"?
- a. healer
 - b. prophet
 - c. king
 - d. priest
33. Jesus said that people would have to become like _____ to be great in heaven.
- a. tax collectors
 - b. children
 - c. disciples
 - d. God the Father
34. What do the Annunciation, the baptism of Jesus, and the Transfiguration of Jesus have in common?
- a. They were all miracles.
 - b. They helped the disciples believe.
 - c. They were foretold by prophets.
 - d. They revealed the Trinity.
35. The Institute of Peace and Justice promotes peace and justice through
- a. protests and demonstrations
 - b. advertising
 - c. education, social action, and prayer
 - d. establishing schools and scholarships
36. _____ has revealed the Trinity to us.
- a. A prophet
 - b. An angel
 - c. God the Father
 - d. God the Son
37. What is the Greek word that means *Messiah*?
- a. logos
 - b. Christ
 - c. Emmanuel
 - d. savior
38. Which event shows that God's love is stronger than death and anything that threatens us?
- a. the Incarnation
 - b. the Nativity
 - c. the Transfiguration
 - d. the Resurrection

39. God the Father spoke during
- a. Jesus' baptism and the Transfiguration.
 - b. Pentecost and the Incarnation.
 - c. the Nativity and the Annunciation.
 - d. the Resurrection and the Ascension.
40. Which is *not* a consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience?
- a. separation from God
 - b. revelation of the Holy Spirit
 - c. sin in the world
 - d. death for humans

Part III: The Church of Mercy: by Pope Francis I

Free to Choose Good (Address to the Students of the Jesuit Schools, 7 June 2013)

Directions: Answer the question below in 75 words or more. (20 points)

Explain the following:

1. What does Pope Francis I mean by being free people?
2. Why is there a need for service?

Summer Reading Freshmen Answer Sheet

Name _____

Directions: This is the only page you bring to school on your **first** day of Religion class.

Place your answers to Part I and Part II reading passages below. (2 points each)

Part I: Called to Know God

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 15. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 20. _____

Part II: God Comes to Save His People

- 21. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____
- 24. _____
- 25. _____
- 26. _____
- 27. _____
- 28. _____
- 29. _____
- 30. _____
- 31. _____
- 32. _____
- 33. _____
- 34. _____
- 35. _____
- 36. _____
- 37. _____
- 38. _____
- 39. _____
- 40. _____

Part III: The Church of Mercy: by Pope Francis I

Free to Choose Good (Address to the Students of the Jesuit Schools, 7 June 2013)

Directions: Answer the question below in 75 words or more. (20 points)

Explain the following:

- 3. What does Pope Francis I mean by being free people?
- 4. Why is there a need for service?
