

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

PROLOGUE AND PROFESSION (Nos. 1–100)



SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, you should ...

- Recognize the origin, destination, path, and purpose of human life.
- Understand how the “pillars” of the Catechism form a “ladder of faith.”
- See the Catechism as a map for the journey of faith.

Part 1: Getting Your Bearings

“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself” (No . 27) .

The first “pillar” of this four-part Pillars program looks at the first section of the Catechism, “The Profession of Faith” or the Creed. The Creed is the story of our journey in miniature. It is also a doctrinal outline that provides the “grammar” of the larger story. While laying out the basic Christian beliefs about the three divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the Creed also recalls the three phases of the economy, which is the working out of God’s saving plan in history: the age of the Old Covenant can be seen as the Age of the Father, the Gospel period as the Age of the Son, and the period of the Church, beginning in the Acts of the Apostles, as the Age of the Spirit.

Two Orders of Knowledge: Reason and Revelation

The Catechism teaches that there are two orders of knowledge: natural reason and divine revelation. Both help us develop a relationship with God (see No. 36).

Creation sets the table for revelation, the second order of knowledge. For example, hints or “fingerprints” of God are detected within the wonders of creation. Yet an infinite God cannot be fully known by created

things alone. Creation is like God's business card. It makes known what God does in his work, but it does not fully reveal God personally. That takes revelation—God-imparted knowledge (see No. 53).

God discloses himself to humanity over time (see No. 53). The term revelation means, "lifting the veil." As a groom lifts the veil to see his beloved, the Old Testament Scriptures slowly unveil God himself until he appears as "... the first-born of all creation ..." the God-man, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15). Revelation makes known a God who desires a relationship with his creatures. God reveals himself and his plan of loving goodness (see No. 51). Our reason may strive "upwards" toward knowledge of God, but revelation moves in the opposite direction. Theologians describe God's action of coming "down" to meet us as "condescension." God lowers himself to take human form as a parent stoops to help a child.¹⁸

The Creed offers a summary of the story and shows how that story (or economy) is to be read rightly; it is story and doctrine together.

In this session, you will see that the path of the journey from Blessing to Blessing is described in Scripture and Tradition as the working out of God's plan of loving goodness, his plan for our salvation. Together, these two sources of divine Revelation are God's way of communicating his will for us (see No. 80). God has also given the Church a special ability to teach with authority what God has revealed; this is called the Magisterium of the Church (see No. 85). God's revelation is the very content of the Catholic Faith and the thing in which we make our act of faith as Catholics. But, as you will see, the content of revelation is not just words; it is a whole way of living and of giving ourselves wholly to God.

As we study the Catechism, we will come to see and appreciate in a new way the plan of the blessing that God employs to invite us to return to him. It might seem at first that phrases such as "act of faith" and "content of faith" are abstract and removed from your daily experience, but as you read, you will find that these concepts are very much the matter of our daily walk of faith. At every point, the details are grounded in the Scripture story (the economy of salvation, from which they spring) and referred to the experience of the saints, both those who are enjoying their reward in heaven and those who continue on the Christian journey here below.

Myth: Catholics don't "get" the Bible.

Sometimes Catholics are accused of not having a strong relationship with the Bible. Some people have gone so far as to scoff at the Catholic Church, saying it is not a "Bible-believing" Church! Yet the Liturgy of the Word—proclaimed directly from the Old and New Testaments that make up the Bible—makes up half of the Mass, and many of the prayers of the Roman Missal are biblically based.

The teaching of the Catechism is strongly based on the Bible. It could be said that the Catechism represents the Catholic Church's two-thousand-plus years of meditation on Sacred Scripture. Indeed, the Bible is the most frequently quoted primary source within the Catechism; more than ninety percent of the Old Testament books are referenced in some way, and all of the New Testament books are cited.

If Catholics spend time reading and studying the Catechism, their love for Scripture will grow as they reflect upon the abundant biblical texts that are explained or footnoted within it.

Part 2: Questions to Guide Your Reading

“Where the bishop is, there let the people gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”—St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrnaeans

Reading the Catechism

The presentation for Session Two covers Catechism Nos. 1–100. Please read those paragraphs to prepare for the presentation. Of course, the idea of reading a hundred paragraphs might sound daunting—and it is no small assignment. However, many of these “paragraphs” are actually only a few sentences, so give it a try.

If you do not have the time to get through all of the paragraphs, or if you find that the Catechism is a little more difficult to get through than you had thought, don’t become discouraged. You are not alone if, at first, you find the Catechism difficult to read

You will derive the greatest benefit from this course if you read the actual text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church . To assist you, we have selected paragraphs for each lesson that are the most important in the lecture presentation. Try reading these first if your time is limited or if you find it too difficult to get through all the paragraphs.

The essential paragraphs for this first session are: 1, 4, 5, 7, 14-18, 26-28, 30-36, 50, 53, 66, 74, 78, 80, 84, 95, and 98.

If you are reading along in the Compendium, these paragraphs correspond to questions 1–24.

QUESTIONS

The questions in these sections are intended to help you identify the key concepts. It may help you to read them before you begin to read the paragraphs indicated at the top of each set of questions. You can “grade yourself” by looking at the Answer Key at the end of the lesson. Please complete this section in preparation for the upcoming presentation and the discussion that will follow.

From the *Catechism* Nos. 1–25

1. “God, infinitely perfect and _____ in himself, in a _____ of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own _____ life.”
2. “He [God] calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the _____ (choose one).”
 - a. Natural universe
 - b. Synagogue of free men
 - c. Church
 - d. House of Nazareth
3. What are the four major parts in the structure of the *Catechism*? Fill in the blanks.
 - a. “Part One: The Profession of _____.”
 - b. “Part Two: The _____ (s) of faith.”
 - c. “Part Three: The _____ of faith.”
 - d. “Part Four: _____ in the life of faith.”
4. “The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the _____ that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the _____ of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from _____ and have no other objective than to arrive at _____.”
What word is missing in all four places? _____

From the *Catechism* Nos. 26–100

5. “_____ is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man”
How has God revealed himself to you? _____
6. Name two creations that provide “points of departure” that enable us to argue for God’s existence: _____ and _____.

Finding happiness in God is not an effortless endeavor (see Nos. 27 and 30). Do the ways people can come to know God, described in Nos. 31–38, reflect your own experience or that of others you know?

7. “The proofs of God’s existence ... can predispose one to _____ and help one to see that faith is not opposed to _____.”
8. T or F _____ God can be known with certainty without faith.

Fortunately, we are not left entirely to our own devices when it comes to knowing God; he has also made himself known to us. Why did God reveal himself to mankind (see Nos. 51–52)?

9. Name the biblical figures whom the *Catechism* associates with the five stages of revelation described in Nos. 53–65.

1. _____(two people)

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

10. Who were some of the holy women that kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation?

11. “Sacred _____ and Sacred _____, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out of the same divine well-spring [the God who reveals, and] come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal.”

12. Who has been entrusted with the task of authentically interpreting the Word of God?

13. How does the *Catechism* describe the connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas?

14. How does understanding of “the heritage of faith” grow in the life of the Church?

GLOSSARY TERMS

During your reading, if you come across unfamiliar words or phrases the Catechism contains a wonderful glossary of terms at the end. Key terms will be included in a glossary at the beginning of each lesson, and they will be explained throughout the text.

Catechesis

The systematic teaching of the Catholic Faith to people of all ages to aid them in entering into, or growing in, the life of faith (see No. 5). Instructors are usually called “catechists.”

Catechism

A book used in catechesis that contains a summary of what Catholics believe. When the word is used in a general sense, it is sometimes lowercase. When it is capitalized (“the Catechism”), it always refers specifically to the Catechism of the Catholic Church .

Divine Revelation

God’s way of telling us about and showing us himself and his plan for our salvation. We find it in the Church’s oral and written Tradition, especially in the Bible. The fullest expression of divine revelation is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Economy of Salvation (Divine Economy)

The way in which God creates and governs the world, arranging the events of history to accomplish his plan of salvation in Christ and through the life and sacraments of the Church. (From the Greek words oikos and nomos, meaning “house” and “rule” or “law.” Oikonomia, then, means God’s way of governing his house.)

Magisterium

From the Latin magister, meaning “teacher,” this term refers to the Church’s teaching office, held by the bishops in union with the pope. The Magisterium interprets Sacred Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, ensuring the Church’s fidelity to the teachings of the apostles in matters of faith and morals (see No. 85).

Pedagogy

A method or way of teaching. Our English word pedagogue, or teacher, is from a Greek word that literally means “child leader.”

Sacred Scripture

The Bible, made up of the forty-six books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Sacred Tradition

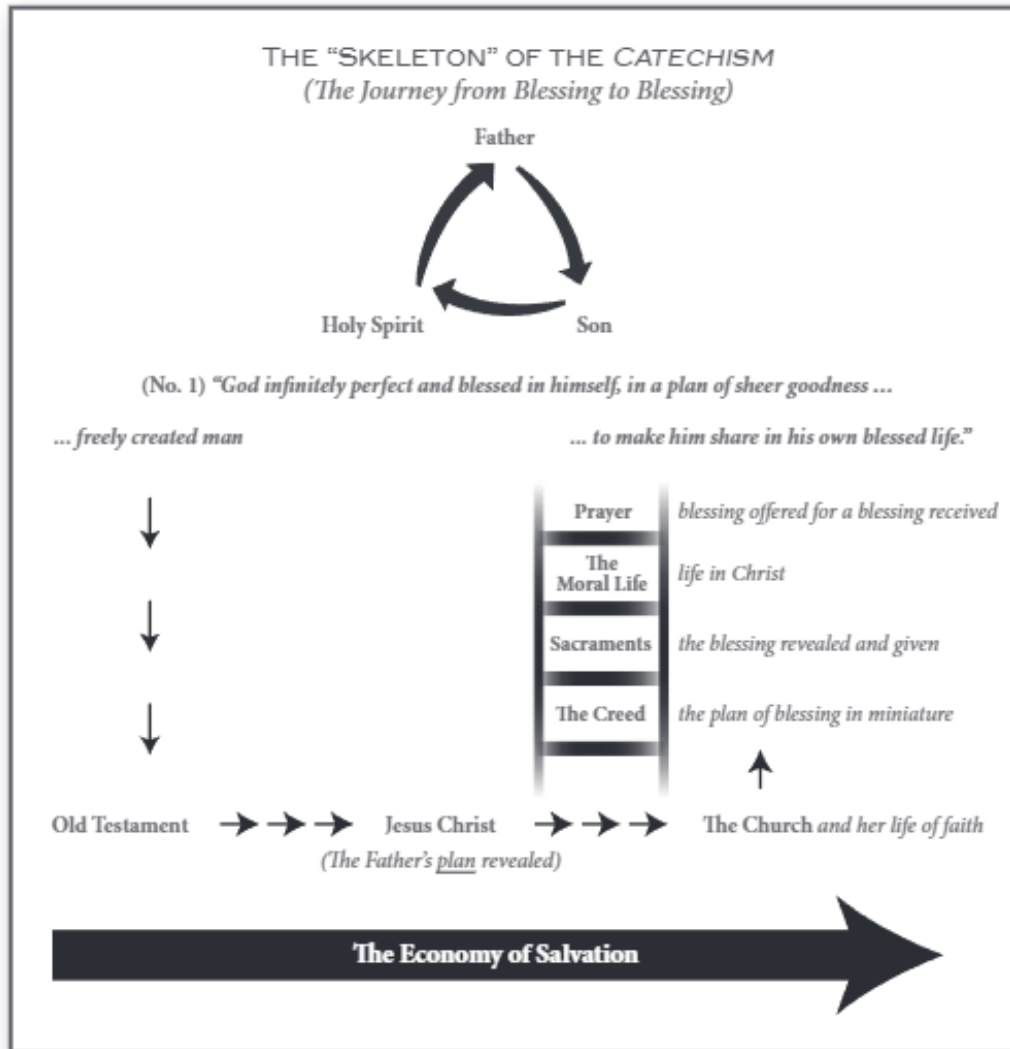
The oral teaching of the Church containing the whole Word of God, received from Christ and his Spirit through the first apostles, which has been passed down through generations in her doctrine, life, and worship, taught by the bishops and popes (see Nos. 75–82).

Presentation Outline

THE JOURNEY BEGINS Prologue and Profession (Nos. 1–100)

I. Catechesis and the Life of Faith

- A. Catechesis aims at initiating and nurturing a person into the Christian life
- B. The Catechism as a journey from Blessing to Blessing



C. The four pillars (divisions) of the Catechism

- D. The essential elements of the journey
 1. Starting point (our origin)–God
 2. Destination–God
 3. Path–God’s plan in the economy of salvation
 4. Purpose (Intention)

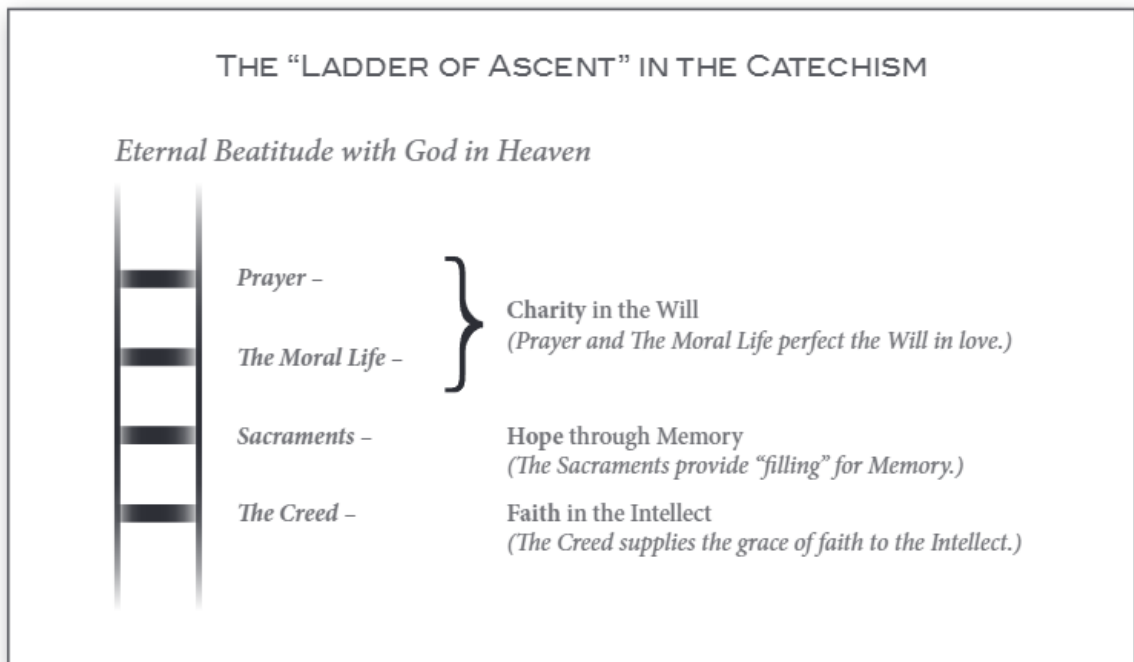
- E. The journey has two possible endings

II. The Journey’s Purpose and Path

A. Happiness

1. Philosophers = “happiness is that for which everything else is sought”
2. “The desire for God is written in the human heart” (No. 27)
3. The search requires “... every effort of intellect, a sound will, ‘an upright heart’ ...” (No. 30)
4. Catechism stresses “heart” and connects it with memory (see Nos. 1162, 2697)
5. God constantly draws us to himself; never ceases to call us to seek him

- B. The four “pillars” of Catechism provide everything we need to achieve happiness (see “The Ladder of Ascent” image)



- C. The threefold gift of grace—faith, hope, and charity—makes the journey possible
- D. Intellect, will, and memory (or “heart”) make us human and form our “capacity” for God (see No. 36)
- E. Happiness as the fullest development of the highest human powers over a lifetime (Aristotle)
- F. Intellect ordered toward truth, the will toward goodness
- G. Trinity of powers images God’s Triune nature (Augustine)

III. How God Makes Himself Known

- A. God is engaged in human history:
 - 1. “God Comes to Meet Man” (No. 50)
 - 2. History has a purpose; it is directed by a divine plan
 - 3. Divine plan disclosed in revelation
 - 4. “Divine pedagogy” of deeds and words (No. 53)
 - 5. God tells his story in stages (No. 54-64)
 - 6. Jesus Christ is the fullness of God’s revelation (see No. 65)
- B. The transmission of divine revelation:
 - 1. “One common source” in “two distinct modes” (No. 80):
 - a. “Sacred Scripture” (see No. 81)
 - b. “[Holy] Tradition”¹ (see No. 81)

c. Transmitted “orally” and “in writing” (see No. 76)

2. Canon of Scripture assembled over time; grew out of apostolic (oral) Tradition (see No. 83)

C. Magisterium, the “teaching office” of the Church (see No. 85)

1. The bishops in union with the pope

2. Interprets revelation in both its written and oral forms (see No. 85)

D. The “three-legged stool” of Tradition, Scripture, and Magisterium (see Nos. 84, 95)

Part 4: Group Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of catechesis listed in No. 6 do you think are most needed today?
2. As we have mentioned, the Church takes these four parts, or “pillars,” of the Catechism (see Nos. 13–17) from Acts 2:42. How do you see the activities described in this passage reflected in your own life? How can the Catechism pillars contribute to these activities in your life?
3. The relationship between the various teachings of the Church is sometimes known as the ‘hierarchy’ of truths”¹ (No. 90). Can you think of an example of one Church dogma “building” on another?
4. In light of Catechism No. 95, how would you respond to a friend who insists that, because the Holy Spirit guides us to all truth, we don’t need anyone to interpret the Scriptures for us?
5. Approaching God with the faculty of reason, and responding to him with faith, allows us to go from knowing about God to actually knowing him. Has there been a time in your life when you went from knowing about God to knowing him more personally?
6. Can you think of any examples of how the teachings of the Church have guided you in your journey of faith?