

THE JOURNEY IN THE CATECHISM

Welcome to Pillar I: The Creed and this first session in your exciting journey of faith formation and spiritual growth. As you embark upon this first step of your journey, you will find that the Catechism provides not merely isolated facts about the Faith, but a trustworthy map for every believer, a guide for living a life of faith.

As the very first paragraph of the Catechism's Prologue suggests, this journey is one from Blessing to Blessing. We are made by God and made to return to God. And so, this journey is not one imposed upon us by some religious authority, but one that, in a certain sense, has been written into our very genetic code. As the Catechism puts it, "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God" (No. 27).

This journey has as its destination our heart's deepest longing—union with God. This journey is not a "forced march"; in fact, it more closely resembles a wedding march, as we venture up the aisle to meet the one for whom we were made. God doesn't command that we undertake this journey. Rather, he invites us to seek the happiness for which we were made; it is a graced happiness that the Church calls beatitude. Beatitude is nothing less than a share in the blessed life of God himself.

You will see that the journey to your greatest happiness is a journey of faith. This faith, though, is not simply a verbal profession of belief, but rather a faith that is lived. This life of faith is made up of activities that correspond to your desire for truth, goodness, and worship.

The Four Pillars of the Catechism

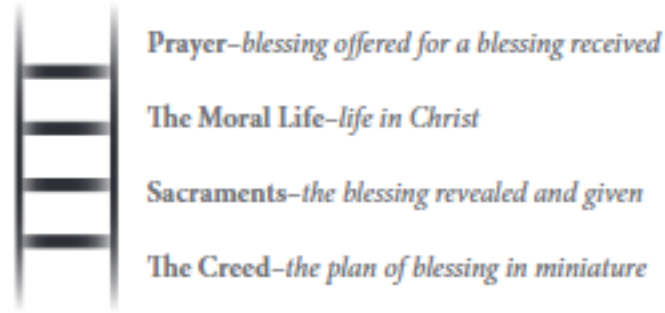
The Catechism of the Catholic Church is comprised of four parts, or "pillars," that address those desires for truth, goodness, and the need to worship. These four pillars are taken from a Scripture passage that describes early Christian life:

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42) .

The four pillars of the Catechism are:

- The Profession of Faith, represented by the Creed
- The Sacraments
- The Moral Life, represented by the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments
- Prayer, represented by the Our Father

As you will see, these four parts of the Catechism are like rungs of a ladder, which we ascend in order to return to the Blessing from which we have come. Each rung of the ladder brings us a step closer to our ultimate happiness. The four pillars of the Catechism invite us to a faith that is professed, celebrated, lived, and prayed.



From Blessing to Blessing: A Journey of Faith

In the upcoming weeks of this study, and in future Pillars studies, not only will you learn the doctrines of the Church (which can be thought of as the “grammar” of the story of salvation), but you will also learn what those doctrines mean and how they relate to one another. The doctrines and the story fit perfectly together, and the Catechism makes sure that we get both by embedding each doctrine into the great story of our journey of faith.

You will see that the very method the Catechism uses to disclose the unchanging doctrinal content of our Faith invites us to enter into what the Church’s official handbook on teaching the Faith calls an “educative j o u r n e y.” That journey is described in this Pillars series as a journey from Blessing to Blessing. This journey begins with our creation by God and ends with our return to him in glory, if we follow the path that he provides for us in the Church’s life of faith, hope, and love.

This session is intended to help you understand the purpose of the Catechism, which in turn reveals the very purpose of our lives. What is the primary theme of this session? That the whole of time and history can be summed up in a simple formula: Everything comes from God, and everything will eventually return to him. God is the blessing; he is the ultimate source of all blessings and the goal of all things.

From its opening words, the Catechism makes God the beginning, center, and end of its teaching of the Catholic Faith. “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life” (No. 1). The Catechism describes the whole of our journey in faith as a participation in this movement from Blessing to Blessing.

Consequently, the primary aim of this program is not just to teach you something (though there will be much to learn), but also to help you attain something: holiness and heaven. No purposeful journey can be undertaken without a goal, a destination; and so it is essential that you know the destination, path, and purpose of this journey right from the start. The themes elaborated in this session will be raised again and again throughout the program. Grasping these key themes thoroughly here—in the beginning—will enable you to go forward confidently on the journey of faith.

Session One: Preparing For The Journey

I. Introduction

- A. Pillars = a four-part study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (12 sessions per part)
- B. Catechism issued in 1992 by Blessed John Paul II, announced in Fidei Depositum
- C. Catechism = not an encyclopedia of facts but a guidebook to the journey of faith
- D. Pillar I: The Creed not just an educational—but a transformational—program

II. What Is Catechesis?

- A. Catechesis aims toward a life of faith (see Nos. 5, 11, 18).
 - 1. Catholic (kata'holou, Greek, "according to the whole"; universal)
 - 2. Catechism seeks to unite the pieces in relation to the whole
 - 3. Bicycle analogy: "Get off the seat and stand on the pedals"
 - 4. Pillars program: a way of accessing directly the material in the Catechism
- B. Catechism oriented toward the fullness of Christian life (see No. 7)
 - 1. Teachings imparted in "an organic and systematic way" (No. 5)
 - 2. The Faith and the Church are organic ("The Body of Christ"—see 1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 3. The verbal dimension of faith is oriented and directed toward action
- C. The four "pillars" of the Catechism (see Nos. 14–17):
 - 1. "The profession of faith" (the Creed)
 - 2. "The sacraments of faith"
 - 3. "The life of faith" ("life in Christ"; the moral life)

4. 4. “Prayer in the life of faith”

D. The fullness of faith is not simply verbalized but lived

1. Confessed, celebrated, lived, and prayed

2. Catholic Faith includes both words and lived expression

III. What Is the Life of Faith?

A. A journey “from Blessing to Blessing” (see No. 1) B. Essential elements of the journey:

1. Starting point (our origin)—God

2. Destination—God

3. Path—God’s plan in the economy of salvation

IV. The Path to Blessing (see No. 27)

A. Three critical elements in the schema of the Catechism

1. The Blessing (see No. 1078)

2. The Plan

3. The Economy



B. The "ladder of ascent"

1. The creed, sacraments, moral life, and prayer

2. All rungs of the ladder are vitally interrelated

3. Catechism points us towards the beatific vision, union with God in heaven (see No. 1028)