

# Our Loving God: Father and Creator

---



Before the mountains were born,  
the earth and the world brought forth,  
from eternity to eternity you are God.  
A thousand years in your eyes are merely a  
yesterday.

—Psalm 90:2, 4

## CHAPTER 1 OUTLINE



### **One, True God**

*God reveals himself to us through our natural reason.*



### **Beliefs about God**

*There are no more important questions than those dealing with God's existence.*



### **Divine Revelation**

*God makes himself known through the mystery of his divine plan.*



### **Who Is God?**

*God has revealed himself as a Trinity of Persons.*



### **Creator of Heaven and Earth**

*God created out of his wisdom and love in order to share his glory.*



## One, True God

Once there was a young boy traveling in a train car unattended by an adult. An elderly gentleman noticed that the child was all alone and began to chat with him.

“Are you traveling by yourself?”

The youngster replied, “Yes, sir.”

“How far are you going?”

“To the end of the line.”

“Aren’t you afraid to take such a long trip all alone?”

“Not at all.”

“Why not?”

“Because my daddy is the engineer.”<sup>3</sup>

What the elderly gentleman could not see with his naked eye was that even though the boy seemed to be isolated and alone, he really was not. Humans are never alone, even in the darkest of circumstances. God is always present to us, from the very first moment of our existence until our last breath. Just as the elderly man did not recognize that the boy’s father was really nearby and leading the journey, some people today do not see how God is present and active in our lives.

We need never fear the journey if we realize that God is our Father, a loving Father, and that he is in charge, directing us to our destination. Just as the engineer is invisible to the passengers, we cannot directly see how God is leading us on. But he is. The boy in our story seemed alone. However, he was not lonely because he knew his father was with him. So it is with God and us. We will never be lonely and fearful because we believe that God is everywhere and that he is in charge and leading us, if we but let him. We need to have faith, put our lives in his hands, and enjoy the life journey by frequently recalling God’s presence and guidance and then by noticing and helping the people around us on our journey together.

Not everyone, of course, agrees that there is a Creator of the universe who guides it and is constantly present to it. For example, in the recent decades, several prominent **atheists** have published popular books that ridicule religion and believers. Atheists deny the existence of God.

In contrast to this view, this chapter will show that to believe in God is

### atheist

A person who denies the existence of God.

eminently reasonable. As Psalm 19:2 puts it, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder’s craft.” This chapter will also discuss how God revealed himself not only as the Creator of all that exists, but also as

a loving Father who entered into a relationship with the magnificent creatures he made. Belief in the one true God is central to all other aspects of our Catholic faith. He is the God we profess in the Apostles’ Creed.

## For Reflection

Think of and share an appropriate symbol for your own life journey.

## Beliefs about God

Few questions are more important than the question of God’s existence. Through history, the vast majority of people have worshiped some kind of deity. For example, the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Aztecs, and many other civilizations all had involved systems revolving around belief in gods.

Today, reasonable estimates conclude that over 90 percent of people around the world believe in some type of God.

The number of people who belong to the world’s great religions attests to this. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam together claim over 50 percent of the world’s population. They are all **monotheistic** religions, that is, they believe in one (*mono*) God (*theos*). On the other hand, popular Hinduism is **polytheistic**, that is, holding belief in many gods and goddesses. Buddhism, though not believing in a personal god, does hold that there is a sole Ultimate Reality in the universe.

### monotheistic

Religions that believe that there is only one God. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are the three great monotheistic world religions.

### polytheistic

Religions that believe in multiple gods and goddesses. The ancient Greeks and Romans were polytheistic, as is the Hindu faith.



## God Statements

Here are different statements that reflect various ideas people hold about God and his existence. Analyze each one. Why do you accept or reject any of the statements? Which of the statements must a Catholic believe? Which of the statements are, in your judgment, clearly false?

1. God exists and makes a difference in my life. He is interested in me and concerned about my welfare.
2. Although God exists, I cannot imagine how he could be interested in me. I am like a grain of sand in an infinite universe. How could an infinite, all-powerful Being care about me?
3. How can you say there is a God when there is so much innocent suffering, like victims of terrorist attacks, natural disasters, or ravaging diseases? In the words of the ancient philosopher Epicurus, “*Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?*”
4. Science will one day explain the “mysteries” of the universe. There is no need to invent a God to explain what we don’t know today.
5. “God is not what you imagine or what you think you understand. If you understand, you have failed” (St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*).
6. Since no one can definitely show there is a God, why not simply say, “I don’t know if God exists or not”?
7. “A baby is God’s opinion that the world should go on” (Carl Sandburg, 1878–1967).
8. Jesus is God speaking in a language that humans can understand. He is God, my Lord and Savior!



### Deism

The belief that God did create the universe but that he takes no further interest in it.

### agnostics

People who claim that God's existence cannot be known.

Some who label themselves as believers take a more philosophical approach to religion. An example is **Deism** (illustrated in the second statement in the exercise “God Statements”). Many of the founding fathers of the United States of America (including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson)

were Deists who thought of God as a watchmaker or absentee landlord. In other words, the Deists believed that God created the universe by “winding it up” and then staying outside his creation while it “worked” on its own. Most Deists do not think God destined a special people to know him, nor do they believe that God performs miracles by becoming involved in his creation.

A recent study found that 1.6 percent of Americans claim to be atheists, while 2.4 percent describe themselves as agnostics.<sup>4</sup>

Atheists are people who do not believe in the existence of God, supernatural beings, or in Heaven or Hell. (The third and fourth statements in the exercise on page 17 illustrate some of their reasons.) Many atheists are also *secular humanists*. Secular humanists claim that the world can operate without any recourse to God. Humanism makes the human person and human achievement the center of the universe.

Related to atheists are **agnostics** (from a Greek word that translates to “don’t know”). Agnostics hold that God’s existence cannot be proved or disproved. (The sixth statement in the exercise reflects this view.) Agnostics answer “I

don’t know” when asked if they believe in God and usually act as though God does not exist. Divorced from religion, some atheists and agnostics live a hedonistic life in which the pursuit of pleasure acts as their god.

In contrast to the claims of atheists and agnostics, to believe in God is eminently reasonable. The fact that so many people through the ages have believed in God and have practiced some kind of religion that involves prayer, ritual, sacrifice, and an ethical code is a strong indicator that humans have a religious nature. Humans intuit that there is some Power in the universe much greater and more awesome than themselves.

But what about the great variety of religions? Does the fact that there are so many varying beliefs about God and differences in worship and doctrine disprove God’s existence? Not really. Rather, these differences point out that the human intellect can discover a Supreme Being, but that God’s complete identity remains a mystery, only to be discovered with God’s direct help or revelation. In fact, the Church teaches “by natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works” (*CCC*, 50). St. Paul also understood this to be true:

For what can be known about God is evident . . . because God made it evident. . . . Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. (Rom 1:19–20)

There is no ironclad way of proving God’s existence. But there *are* signs all around us that point to God. Intelligent people can discover these signs, reflect on them, and reasonably conclude that they point to a Supreme Being. Some of

these signs appeal to the intellect, others appeal to the heart or feelings.

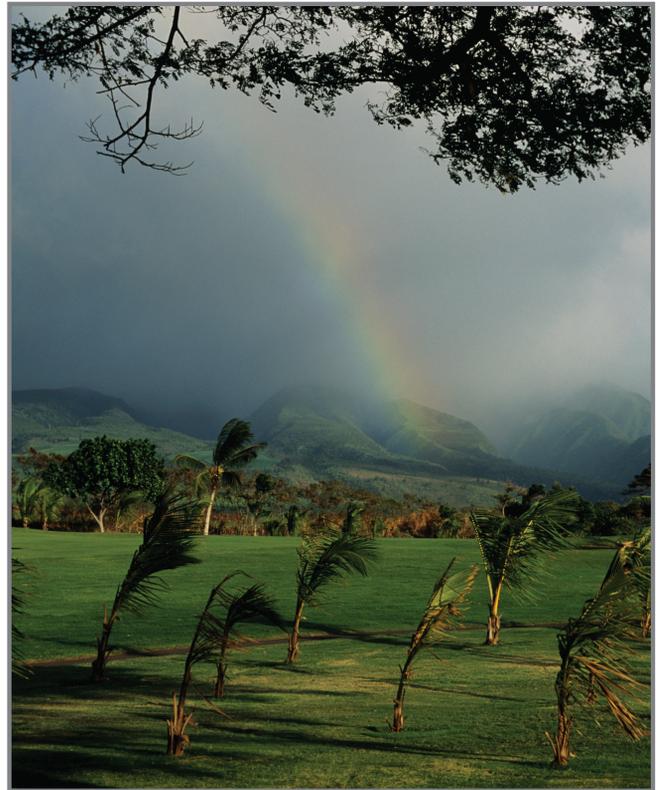
## Intellectual Proofs for God's Existence

Throughout human history many excellent arguments have been advanced that demonstrate God's existence. St. Thomas Aquinas's (1225–1274) ideas (based on the Greek philosopher Aristotle) provide us with five “proofs” for the existence of God:

1. *The Unmoved Mover.* There is motion in the world (for example, neutrons, electrons, protons, atoms, etc.). Whatever is in motion had to be moved by something else. This “something else” also must have been moved by Something or Someone. Continue imagining back to the beginning of time, and we must conclude there was a First Mover, an Unmoved Mover, which is God.
2. *First Cause.* Nothing causes itself. For example, a painting comes about from an artist who was brought into existence by her parents. Who caused these parents? Keep going back to the beginning, and you must conclude there was a First Cause or Uncaused Cause that was eternal. This Being we call God. Today, even those who accept the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe are forced to ask questions about where the primeval matter that started everything came from. The only logical answer is a Divine Being, who made it.
3. *Everything Comes from Something* (i.e., “the cosmological argument”). “Nothing” cannot create “something.” Therefore, we are forced to conclude there must be one necessary, eternal Being (God) who always was and brought other beings into existence.
4. *Supreme Model.* Persons and things in this world have different *degrees* of qualities like goodness, truth, beauty, justice, and so forth. But we can only speak of different degrees of these qualities by comparing them to a Supreme Model or reference point. This perfect model of goodness, truth, and beauty is the perfect Being we call God.
5. *Grand Designer.* There is a beauty, immensity, symmetry, and power in our world that forces us to conclude that a Grand Designer made it all. A simple spider spinning its web, a beaver building its dam, the earth rotating around the sun, the chemical mix that produces life, the awesome process of human

reproduction—all these and countless other realities suggest a God who implanted laws in the universe to make it work right. G. K. Chesterton once said, “Show me a watch without a watchmaker, then I'll take a universe without a Universe-Maker.”

A good application of St. Thomas's five proofs is to ask the simple question, “How did we humans get here?” First, scientists have yet to explain how life could have evolved from matter. Second, statisticians say it is virtually impossible for intelligent, human life to appear by mere chance. Third, when we look at the course of human development, we can detect a hidden but powerfully present Intelligence that is leading and guiding us. The mystery of human life and history *has* to be rooted in the Mystery at the heart of the universe.



## Heartfelt Proofs for God's Existence

“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God” (CCC, 27). We see this deep yearning for God reveal itself in many ways, including:

1. *An unquenchable thirst for joy and happiness.* We all want to be happy. We spend a lot of our time and energy doing and getting things that we think will make us happy. Yet our happiness fades, and we soon find ourselves

**transcendence**

A trait of God that refers to God's total otherness and being infinitely beyond and independent of creation.

**immanence**

A trait of God that refers to God's intimate union with and total presence to his creation.

desiring something else. Are we creatures doomed to be ultimately frustrated? We want happiness, but the more we pursue it, the more it slips away. A possible explanation for this reality is that our Creator God implanted in us a kind of homing device that causes us to be restless until we find him. This restlessness for total happiness points to a God who made us this way. Consider the opposite: if there is no God, then there is no meaning to life. Our deep yearning for everlasting happiness and joy becomes a meaningless joke.

2. *An experience of beauty and truth.* So much of the beauty and truth of Heaven is found on earth: a starlit sky, a breathtaking sunset, or a beautiful piece of music. When we experience profound joy in the presence of some awesome experience, when we

encounter truth and it seems so perfectly right, we are getting a taste of God's beauty and truth. God made us, understands us, loves us, and gives us a taste of Heaven on earth.

3. *A sense of personal conscience, moral goodness, and justice.* In the depths of our souls, we sense God's voice teaching us that we must always do good (for example, treat others fairly) and always avoid evil (for example, "Do not murder"). We sense that there is an absolute moral authority—God—that teaches the standard of human behavior. We also imagine a God of justice. It seems unfair to us that cheaters, liars, and killers often prosper in this life while some good people suffer and are taken advantage of. We have a fundamental feeling that things will be reversed someday, that there is a Power



## Understanding God

The Scriptures stress both God's **transcendence** and **immanence**. These terms can help us to understand more about God.

- Transcendence is the quality of God's total uniqueness and infinite greatness compared to his creatures. Psalm 102 puts it this way: "They shall perish, but you remain though all of them grow old like a garment; . . . but you are the same, and your years have no end" (verses 27–28).
  - God's immanence, on the other hand, refers to God's being in the world, his closeness to and intimacy with us. In preaching to the Athenians, St. Paul emphasized this quality when he said, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). A wonderful example of God's immanence is when he allows us mere creatures to receive his very Son, Jesus Christ, in Holy Communion.
1. What kind of God (immanent or transcendent) do you experience when you are happy? Worried? Guilty? Peaceful?
  2. Interview two adults and two peers. Ask them for two reasons for believing or not believing in God. Share and compare responses.
  3. Choose a piece of *instrumental* music (classical or otherwise) that speaks to you of beauty, truth, or goodness. Listen to the music. Write two or three paragraphs explaining how this music speaks to you of God or other spiritual realities.
  4. Read Psalm 33. In your journal, write a verse or verses that express God's transcendence. Then read Psalm 103. Write a verse or verses that express God's immanence.



## PROFILE OF FAITH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, GREAT THEOLOGIAN

Thomas Aquinas was born in approximately 1225 to a noble family. As a child, his brilliant mind was already asking his Benedictine teachers about God's nature. Against the fierce opposition of his family, at eighteen he joined the relatively new Dominican Order, which had become known for its quality of preachers and teachers.

Thomas studied under the brilliant St. Albert the Great at the University of Cologne. Tradition holds that Thomas merited the nickname "Dumb Ox" for his quiet manner and huge size, but he proved himself to be the most brilliant of all students. Albert reportedly said of him, "This ox will one day fill the world with his bellowing."

After ordination, Thomas received his doctoral degree at the University of Paris. He then embarked on an untiring life of teaching and preaching. But it was his writing that made him a marvel in his own day and the genius theologian of the Catholic Church for all time. A prolific writer of over sixty works, Thomas's masterpiece is the *Summa Theologica* (*Summary Treatise of Theology*, 1265–1273). It marks the summit of *scholastic philosophy*, which reconciled Christian faith with human reason and the works of Aristotle with Scripture.

Thomas's contributions to human thought are immeasurable. Besides his arguments for the existence of God, Thomas explained how human intellect is necessary to understand the knowledge that humans receive through the five senses and to grasp immaterial realities like God and the human soul. Many truths can be known through human reason—like the nature of the material world and the existence of God—but others can only be grasped through Divine Revelation (God revealing it to man)—like God taking human form in the person of Christ. Reason and Revelation work hand in hand and are not opposed to each other. On the one hand, Christian faith can preserve human reason from error. On the other hand, reason can serve the faith, for example, by clearly explaining and defending the truths that God has revealed to us.

Toward the end of his life (December 6, 1273), Thomas had such an ecstatic experience of God that it caused him to stop writing altogether. He said, "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value." Thus, he never finished the *Summa*; he died a few months later (March 7, 1274).

Thomas was declared a saint in 1323 and named a **Doctor of the Church**, that is, a person of great learning and knowledge whose works the Church has highly recommended for studying and living the faith.

that will right all wrongs, if not in this life, then in the next.

4. *Love*. Love is a spiritual reality with origins that the material universe cannot explain. In fact, love comes from love itself, the being we call God. (The same argument holds for intelligence; it must ultimately come from intelligence itself, that is, God.)

Given the many signs of head and heart that point to the existence of God, it's easy to see that the French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) is right on. He said it is a good bet to believe in God. "If you win, you win everything." With faith in God comes a big payoff—eternal life. With atheism, you only have everything to lose.

### Doctor of the Church

A Church writer of great learning and holiness whose works the Church has highly recommended for studying and living the faith.

## For Reflection

- With a digital camera, take a picture of something in nature that speaks to you of God, the Masterful Designer of the universe. Print the picture with a caption of several verses from Psalm 104 that express for you the praise that God the Creator deserves.
- Why do you believe in God?



## For Review

1. Identify: *monotheism, polytheism, atheist, agnostic, secular humanism, and deism.*
2. What might the existence of so many religions tell us about God's existence?
3. In your own words, explain two of the "proofs" for the existence of God given by St. Thomas Aquinas.
4. Give an example of how the human heart can lead us to God.
5. Give an example of God's transcendence. Give an example of God's immanence.
6. Why it is appropriate for St. Thomas Aquinas to be named a Doctor of the Church.

### covenant

The open-ended contract of love between God and human beings. Jesus' Death and Resurrection sealed God's new covenant of love for all time. *Testament* translates *covenant*.

### Bible

The inspired Word of God; the written record of Revelation.

## Divine Revelation

(CCC, 50–73)

Although human reason can discover that God exists, left to itself it cannot get a true picture of who God really is. God is a mystery; his ways are above our ways; his thoughts are not our thoughts (see Is 55:8).

Out of his infinite love and goodness, God freely revealed himself to human beings. *Revelation* means "unveiling." The God of mystery is beyond human comprehension. Yet he freely chose to step into history, speak to us through the Law and prophets, and invite us into a deeper relationship by sending to us his only, divine Son, Jesus Christ. *Divine Revelation* refers to this free gift of God's

self-communication by which he makes known the mystery of his divine plan.

God's Revelation mainly uncovers his saving love. The account of God's saving activity for humankind is known as *Salvation History*. Salvation History begins with the creation of the first humans and the beautiful world we live in (told in Genesis 1–2). But this is only the beginning. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and committed the Original Sin, falling out of friendship with God. God might have abandoned his creatures at this point, but he did not.

Rather, out of his infinite love, God established a series of covenants with humankind. A **covenant** is a solemn agreement, an open-ended contract of love in which God commits himself totally to human beings. In the Old Testament, God promised to be faithful to us forever while humans were to remain faithful to him. He promised Salvation, Redemption, and eternal life. The **Bible** records a number of these covenants, the most of important of which are:

- *The Covenant with Noah.* After the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his descendants and with "every living creature" (Gn 9:10) that was with Noah on the ark. God promised that never again would a flood destroy the earth.



## KNOWING CHRIST THROUGH SCRIPTURE

### The Prophet Moses

One of the towering figures in the Old Testament is the prophet Moses. His name is found 750 times in the Old Testament and approximately 80 times in the New Testament. He is the dominant human figure in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, where he is held in the highest regard: “Since then no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Dt 34:10).

Scripture reports that Moses was born of a Levite couple (Ex 2:1–10) in Egypt. Because of Pharaoh’s decree to kill all newborn Hebrew males, Moses was hidden by his mother and then placed in a watertight basket to drift down the Nile River. Pharaoh’s daughter rescued Moses, an event witnessed by Moses’ sister. She then appointed Moses’ own mother as his nurse and later adopted Moses.

As an adult, Moses learned of his identity as a Hebrew and killed an Egyptian who had beaten a fellow Hebrew. He fled to Midian, married, had some children, and made a living as a shepherd until the age of eighty. God then appeared to him in a burning bush (Ex 3:1–6) and commissioned Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Moses made a number of excuses why he was not up to the task, for example, that he lacked the gift to speak. But God’s will prevailed. God revealed to Moses his name—*Yahweh* (“I am who I am”)—and showed him the signs he would perform to help lead the Israelites to freedom.

The Book of Exodus recounts how Yahweh empowered Moses to lead the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt, defying the armies of the pharaoh. Moses led his people to the Sinai Peninsula where he ascended Mount Sinai to speak with God. After spending forty days and nights with Yahweh, Moses received the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets. These represented the Law that the people were to keep as their part of the covenant

that God made with them. But when he descended from the mountain, Moses learned that the people were worshiping a golden calf. He broke the tablets in anger for their lack of faith in the one true God. Moses then inscribed a new set of tablets at God’s command and placed them in the Ark of the Covenant.

Serving as God’s spokesman and interceding for his people, the prophet Moses led the Israelites through the desert and, with God’s assistance, helped the people survive various hardships including plagues, earthquakes, and wars with the native peoples. Moses died before entering Canaan, the Promised Land, but he was allowed to see it from a mountaintop. He turned leadership of the Israelites over to Joshua, who then led the people into Canaan.

Moses is known as a great prophet, intercessor, miracle worker, lawgiver, and rescuer. The life and ministry of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, was prefigured in many ways in the life of Moses. For example:

- As a prophet, Moses was God’s spokesman. Jesus is the only Son of the Father, who spoke for his Father. “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves” (Jn 14:10–11).
- Moses prayed to God many times on behalf of the people. Jesus intercedes for us continually before the Father. “It is Christ (Jesus) who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us” (Rom 8:34).
- Moses performed miracles at God’s command to help the people. Jesus performed miracles by his own authority to show God’s compassion and mercy and to reveal his identity.

## KNOWING CHRIST THROUGH SCRIPTURE *(continued)*

- Moses gave the Law to the Israelites. Jesus is the New Lawgiver. His Sermon on the Mount and his command to love are requirements for his followers. “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you” (Jn 15:12).
- Moses led his people out of slavery into freedom. Jesus’ Death, Resurrection, and Glorification have led all of humanity out of slavery to sin and brought us the freedom of eternal life with our loving God. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

Read the following important passages about Moses and the Sinai Covenant. Then answer the following questions:

### **Exodus 2–4: Moses’ Early Life and Commission**

- Who gave Moses his name, and what was the basis for the name?

- What was the name of Moses’ son?
- Why did Moses remove his sandals?
- Who was to be Moses’ assistant?

### **Exodus 11–14: The Tenth Plague and Exodus**

- What was the tenth plague?
- Why were the Israelites to perform the Passover ritual?
- How long did the Israelites spend in Egypt?
- List two Passover regulations.
- What did Moses take out of Egypt? Why?
- How did the Lord lead the Israelites?
- How did the Israelites escape?

### **Exodus 19–20: Giving of the Ten Commandments**

- How did the Lord appear to Moses?
- What is the most important command the Lord gave to the people?

- *The Covenant with Abraham.* Recall that a major chapter in Salvation History is God’s covenant with Abraham, the Father of Faith for the Jewish people and our spiritual father because of our shared ancestry with the Jews. Part of this covenant involved circumcision for Jewish males as a way to set apart the people God would form from Abraham’s descendants.
- *The Sinai Covenant.* God formed Israel as his people when he freed them from slavery in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. He gave the Chosen People his law through Moses on Mount Sinai. The Law taught Israel to acknowledge Yahweh as the one, living, and true God. But it did not offer a means of Redemption. Through the prophets who came after Moses, God gave Israel hope for Salvation. They proclaimed a new covenant to be written on human hearts. They gave hope for a future Messiah who would bring Salvation.
- *Jesus Christ, the New Covenant.* The climax of Salvation History was the coming of Jesus Christ, God’s

Son, the fullness of God’s Revelation. Jesus is God’s total Word made flesh, the Son who lived among us. He taught us in word and deed about God and completed the Father’s work of Salvation. Since Jesus Christ is God’s final word, there will be no further Revelation after him. To see Jesus is to see the Father.

## Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition (CCC, 74–141).

God reveals himself through a single “deposit” of faith. Christ entrusted this deposit to the Apostles. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they handed it on through their preaching and their writing to the Church, until Christ will come again. This single deposit is found in Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and in the Sacred Tradition of the Church.

Sacred Scripture is like a library of divinely inspired writings (*Bible* means “books”). God used human authors and their unique talents to put into writing what he wanted written, and nothing more. “The books of Scripture

firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our Salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures” (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, No. 11, quoted in *CCC*, 107). This means that the Bible is inerrant; that is, it contains no errors. (See pages 288–290 of the *Catholic Handbook for Faith* for more information about the Bible.)

**Sacred Tradition** is the living transmission or “handing on” of the Church’s Gospel message. We find this Tradition in the Church’s teaching, life, and worship. The Apostles, inspired by the Spirit, were the first to receive the gift of faith. They in turn gave it to the care of their successors—the Pope and bishops—to “faithfully preserve, expound, and spread . . . by their preaching” (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, No. 9, quoted in *CCC*, 81).

Christ commissioned the Apostles to interpret authentically God’s Word—both Scripture and Tradition.

This Christ-appointed teaching authority, which extended to the Pope and the bishops in communion with him, is known as the *Magisterium* (from the Latin word for “teacher”). With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Magisterium teaches with Christ’s own authority. This is especially so when the Magisterium defines a **dogma**, that is, a central truth of Revelation that Catholics are obliged to believe.

Recall that faith (*CCC*, 26, 91–100; 142–171) is the theological virtue that enables us to believe in God and all that he has revealed to us and all that the Church teaches regarding our faith. Through faith we can commit our whole lives to God and say yes to the gift of Revelation given to us in Christ our Lord. In summary, the free response of faith makes us part of the Church and enables us to accept Jesus as Lord, partake in the life of the Blessed Trinity, and commit ourselves totally to God, both with our intellects and wills.

### Sacred Tradition

The living transmission of the Church’s Gospel message found in the Church’s teaching, life, and worship. It is faithfully preserved, handed on, and interpreted by the Church’s Magisterium.

### dogma

A central truth of Revelation that Catholics are obliged to believe.

## For Review

1. Define: *Divine Revelation*, *Salvation History*, *covenant*, and *faith*.
2. List four covenants that God made with humankind.
3. Where is the single deposit of faith found?
4. Discuss three ways Moses prefigured Jesus Christ.

## For Reflection

- The Old Testament offers a variety of images for God. Read the following passages: Deuteronomy 32:11; Psalm 24:8, 10; Isaiah 49:15; Hosea 11. Note the image of God highlighted in the passages.
- Compose your own prayer of praise using a personally meaningful image for God.



## Who Is God? (CCC, 205–237; 268–271)

A name expresses a person's inner identity. When Moses encountered God in the burning bush, God revealed his name to Moses—**Yahweh**, "I Am" (see Ex 3:4–14). This holiest of all names can also mean "I am he who is," "I am who I am," or "I am who am." The name Yahweh shows that God is not some impersonal force but one who creates everything out of nothing and keeps it in existence. God is *omnipresent*; he is everywhere.

The name Yahweh also acknowledges God's mystery. Moses knew this when he took off his shoes and bowed in reverence. God's omnipotent and eternal nature is beyond human understanding. Yahweh reveals himself to be the Holy One in our midst, a God of truth and love. "God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world" (CCC, 216).

In fact, God's only motive for revealing himself, for choosing the Jews from among all people, is his totally free gift of love. This love is constant. Despite human sinfulness, the Lord is "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin" (Ex 34:6–7).

## Attributes of Almighty God

God has revealed for us several of his attributes. The Apostles' Creed identifies only one of God's attributes: *omnipotence*. This means that God is almighty. God's power is unlimited, but it is loving, merciful, and gracious power.

The almighty God possesses many other qualities that are part of his mysterious nature. These attributes are beyond our comprehension and can only be understood by analogy, that is, by comparing something familiar to something unfamiliar. For example, we examine God's perfection by looking first at a human quality like intelligence. Second, we understand that God's intelligence is not like human intelligence since human intelligence is limited. Third, we state that God transcends, that is, goes infinitely beyond anything humans can understand. God is a perfect being. God is intelligence itself. God is, thus, all-knowing.

St. Thomas Aquinas listed the following nine attributes of God that are evidenced through history and in Scripture:

1. *God is unique*. There is no God like Yahweh (see Is 45:18).

2. *God is infinite and omnipotent.* God is everywhere, unlimited, and all-powerful. God can do everything (see Ps 135:5–6).
3. *God is eternal.* God always was and always will be. God is the one being who cannot not be (see Is 40:28).
4. *God is immense.* God is not limited to space (see 1 Kgs 8:27).
5. *God contains all things* (see Ws 8:1).
6. *God is immutable.* God does not change—ever (see Ps 102:25–28).
7. *God is utterly simple—a pure Spirit.* The opposite of simple is complex, which means divisible into parts. In God there are no parts, no divisions. God is not material. God’s image cannot be made (see Ex 20:4).
8. *God is personal.* God is alive (the source of all life), knows all things, and loves and cares beyond limit. The saving God manifested personal love through the compassionate acts in the history of the Israelites and most supremely by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to all people (see Jer 31:3).
9. *God is holy.* Holiness is a quality of being absolutely other than creation (see Is 55:8). God’s goodness and love are unlimited. We cannot praise the holy God enough.

## God the Father (CCC, 232–242; 261–262).

God the Father is the first Person of the **Blessed Trinity**. God has revealed himself as a Trinity of Persons. Jesus addressed God as Father (for example, John 17:1) and taught others to do so. God the Father named Jesus as his Son (for example, Luke 3:22). God the Son revealed that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name, a Spirit of truth and love (for example, John 14:16–17).

The Blessed Trinity is the central mystery of faith and the source of all other mysteries. This mystery reveals that

Jesus is the visible image of God the Father and that the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of the Son. The activity of the one true God—who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—reveals, reconciles, and unites himself to us. This is the story of Salvation History. (The dogma of the Blessed Trinity is presented in more detail in Chapter 3.)

Jesus taught us to pray to **Abba**, our Father. *Abba* is a child’s word in Aramaic for “father,” something like “daddy.” It is a word of endearment and love. By addressing God as *Abba*, Jesus showed that God is a loving Father, one whose children should approach him with love and confidence and treat each other as brothers and sisters.

Jesus’ relationship to the Father is unique. God the Father is in eternal relationship with his only Son, who in turn is eternally in relationship to his Father. Jesus is the Word of God who is with the Father from all time; the Word of God is God. Jesus also taught:

### Yahweh

The sacred Hebrew name for God that means “I am who am,” “I am,” or “I am who I am.”

### Blessed Trinity

The *central* dogma of the Christian faith that there are three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in one God.

### Abba

An Aramaic term of endearment meaning “daddy.” Jesus used this word to teach that God is a loving Father.



All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him. (Mt 11:27)

It is right and proper to call God “Father.” Today, however, some have difficulties with the address of God as Father, claiming that it creates the impression that God is male. This is not true. God is beyond the biological distinction of male and female. Both men and women are made “in the image and likeness of God.” Therefore, it is also proper to use images of motherhood

to emphasize God’s closeness to us and care for us. For example, the book of Isaiah describes God in this way: “As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you” (Is 66:13). Images of parental love can be helpful in understanding God. However, human parents are weak and imperfect. God goes infinitely beyond any human standard of parenthood. “No one is father as God is Father” (CCC, 239).

Catholics continue to address God as Father because this is the language of Jesus, the language of Revelation, the language of our faith. We call God “Father” because Jesus teaches us to do just that.

## For Review

1. What is the meaning of *Yahweh*?
2. List three qualities of *Yahweh*.
3. What is the central doctrine of Christianity?
4. Why is “Father” an appropriate form of address for God?
5. What is the meaning and significance of *Abba*?

## For Reflection

What three qualities do you associate with a good mother? Describe how these qualities can also be applied to God or to Jesus Christ.



## Creator of Heaven and Earth

(CCC, 279–308; 315–323; 337–349; 353–384)

Both Scripture and Tradition firmly teach that the Triune God created out of his wisdom and love to show forth and communicate his glory. Creation is not the result of blind chance or fate. God created out of his love, wisdom, and great desire to share his beauty, truth,

goodness, and life, especially by making us his adopted children through Jesus Christ by power of the Holy Spirit.

The opening verse in the Bible proclaims that God alone is the Creator of all that exists outside himself; he alone keeps everything that is in existence. Therefore, everything in the world, including human beings, is entirely dependent on God.



## Genesis Creation Accounts

The book of Genesis includes two stories of creation. These stories are interested in the *why* of creation; they do not describe *how* the world began. The Bible is not a scientific textbook. Rather, it is a record of Revelation about God's love for human beings. What the biblical authors were interested in was religious truth. For example, regardless of how the created world came to be, God is the source of all that is.

They also teach the basic reason for human existence and destiny, the meaning and source of evil, God's saving action in human history, and so forth. Thus, when reading these stories, be on the alert for *religious* truth, not scientific fact.

- Read the first creation story (Gn 1:1–2:4a). Name something God created each day. What did God do on the seventh day?
- Read the second creation story (Gn 2:4b–25). Why did God create Eve? What did God forbid?

Divine Revelation teaches other truths about God's creation:

- *God freely created an orderly and good world out of nothing.* No one helped God create. No preexisting matter was present at creation. All that God makes is good. Created through the Word of God, the universe is made for human beings, who are in God's image and likeness.
- *God is totally beyond us. At the same time, God is present to us, upholding and sustaining creation.* God is infinitely greater than his creation, infinitely beyond that which he has made. But because of the love he freely bestows on us, God is present to our inmost being. God is more present to us than we are to ourselves. He does not abandon his creatures but sustains every moment of their existence. If he would forget us for an instant, we would cease to exist. We show great wisdom when we recognize through grateful hearts that we are totally dependent on God for all that we have and all that we are.
- *God guides creation through **divine providence**.* God guides us on our journey to our final goal of eternal life with the Blessed Trinity. Knowing his Father so well, Jesus taught that we should trust in God's providence with childlike faith. He instructed us to seek God's Kingdom first, trusting that our loving Father will take care of our needs (cf. Mt 6:31–33).
- *God created humans in his image and likeness.* Each person possesses profound dignity. Despite our differences of gender, national or ethnic origins, religion, race, and the like, God calls us into one family. Every person is lovable and worthy of respect—from the first moment of conception to natural death. Humans are the crown of God's creation, possessing both body and soul. God creates immediately our spiritual souls in his image and likeness. The soul empowers us with a spiritual nature that enables us to think, to know the difference between right and wrong, and to love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves. There was a time when we did not exist, but now we are immortal; God will always keep us in existence. We have an eternal destiny



## Sharing God's Beauty

God made you a unique and beautiful creation. He expects that you will share your God-given goodness with others. Write a short essay describing the beauty of creation and what you perceive to be your own goodness. Develop in the essay concrete ways for sharing your and God's goodness with others.

**divine providence**

God's loving and watchful guidance over his creatures on their way to their final goal and perfection.

**Original Sin**

The fallen state of human nature into which all generations of people are born. Christ Jesus came to save us from Original Sin.

and an eternal life in store. Our earthly vocation is to be like Christ, that is, to reproduce in our own lives the image of God's Son.

- *God created us male and female out of love and for love.* God made us with the same dignity—male and female, both equally good. Our sexuality encourages us to seek companionship, to depend on each other, and to love each other.
- *God is the creator of all that is seen and unseen.* This includes belief in angels and devils (CCC, 325–336; 350–352; 391–395; 414). Attested to in both Scripture and Tradition, angels are spiritual created beings, “surpassing in perfection all visible creatures” (CCC, 330). Personal and immortal, angels possess intelligence and free will. Like humans, they had an opportunity to love and accept their loving Creator or reject him out of prideful self-interest. Angels are those invisible spiritual beings who lovingly worshiped God from the beginning. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the angels who were created *through* and *for* him, serving as messengers (*angel* means “messenger”) of his saving plan. Examples include the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and angels who

were present at Jesus' birth, temptation in the desert, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and at his Resurrection and Ascension. Traditionally, Catholics believe that each of us has a guardian angel to watch over us.

Created good by God, Satan and the other demons became evil by their own doing. Their fall consisted of a free, radical, and irrevocable rejection of God and God's reign. Devils are part of the mystery of evil the human mind can never fully grasp. Satan and his demons are creatures, so they cannot prevent God's reign from growing. For example, though God permits devils to tempt us, he will not permit them to harm us. We need not fear their influence in our lives if we stay close to Jesus through prayer and the sacraments. Jesus Christ is victorious over sin, evil, the fallen angels, and death itself.

- *Though essentially good because God made us, humans are tainted with sin.* Because of Original Sin, the human spirit is often willing, but the flesh is weak (see pages 30–31).
- *Through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God invites us into a personal relationship with him* (see Chapter 2).

**The Fall and Original Sin**

(CCC, 385–421)

While the book of Genesis tells how God created people in his image and likeness, it also uses symbolic language to tell how Adam and Eve rejected God's love, resulting in humanity's loss of his friendship. Adam and Eve's **Original Sin** was their misuse of their God-given freedom and their disobedience in not relying on his goodness. Their decision had serious consequences: the immediate loss of the grace of **Original Holiness and**



**Justice** received from God. Their Original Sin resulted in disunity between God and all their descendants, caused disharmony between nature and humans, and alienated people from each other.

After the Fall, sin affected all humans. Old Testament stories like Cain's murder of Abel and the many accounts of the Chosen People's failure to keep God's Law attest to this reality. Through Original Sin we have inherited a fallen human nature and are deprived of Original Holiness and Justice. Our human nature is also weakened and is subject to ignorance, suffering, the inclination to sin (known as **concupiscence**), and death (CCC, 404–405).

Though Original Sin is inherited by all, it is not an *actual* sin we personally commit. Rather, we are born into a condition where we are inclined to surrender to the powers of evil in the world. Our own efforts cannot liberate us from this condition. Only Jesus Christ has the power to free us from sin. Baptism gives us Christ's life, erases Original Sin, and restores our relationship with God. However, human nature remains weak, so we need the constant help of the Holy Spirit to fight temptation and choose God's will.

Through Salvation History, God never abandoned his sinful creatures. He created a Chosen People and was passionately faithful to them through their history. The high point of God's loving concern was his promise to send a Messiah who would restore humankind's proper relationship with God:

But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. (Mi 5:1)

In God's own time, he was true to his word and sent his only Son, Jesus

Christ. Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension overcame the effects of Original Sin.

The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken away from us: "where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rom 5:20). (CCC, 420)

There is a tremendous reward for those who believe in the one, true God. The reward is manifested in several ways. Here are three:

1. *We come to knowledge of God's greatness and his love for us.* God loves us unconditionally. He created us out of nothing, gave each of us many gifts and talents, and loves us to the point of sending his Son to redeem us and give us everlasting life.
2. *Our life has meaning.* Belief in God reveals our true identity as brothers and sisters of one another. It reveals our dignity and gives us a mission to care for each other and for the precious world God entrusted to us.
3. *God will always care for us.* Salvation History reveals that God will not abandon us when we sin. He will forgive us if we turn back to him. We should always trust him and his love.

## For Reflection

- Read the biblical account of Cain and Abel as found in Genesis 4:1–8. In your judgment, what was the true motivation for Cain's action? Write of a time this same motivation was at work in one of your own actions or one you witnessed in some other person.
- Tell two ways that you recognize God in creation.

## Original Holiness and Justice

The state of man and woman before sin. "From their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise" (CCC, 384).

## concupiscence

An inclination to commit sin that can be found in human desires and appetites as a result of Original Sin.



## For Review

1. Name five things Catholics believe about God as Creator.
2. Define *Original Sin*.
3. Name two effects of Original Sin.
4. What is the main function of angels in relation to humans?
5. What is the Catholic belief concerning the existence of Satan and demons?
6. What difference can believing in God make for your life?



## Explaining Your Faith

*How can Christians say God is good and loving when there is so much suffering and evil in the world (CCC, 309–314; 324)?*

We should make it very clear first of all that God is supremely good and loving, even in the midst of suffering. God has proven his love in so many ways. For example, he did not have to create the world, but he did—out of love. And he created us humans in his image and likeness and gave us the ability to love and be loved.

Sacred Scripture, the living Word of God, tells the story of God's love through human history, which reaches its climax in the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord's own suffering and Death prove beyond any doubt God's immense love for human beings. Christ has redeemed us from our sins and won for us a share in God's own life for eternity. He has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit and invites each of us into friendship with him. He continues to be present to us in the Catholic Church, the Body of Christ, and comes to us in the sacred liturgy, especially the Seven Sacraments. In the Eucharist, a sacrament of love and union, we can receive the Risen Lord in our own hearts and allow him to live in us.

In short, Salvation History is the story of God's immense love for humanity in general and for each of us as individuals.

Suffering and evil are an unfortunate part of the human story. God, however, does not cause or send suffering. He is all-good and only brings about goodness. Then how do we explain the existence of suffering and evil, a question that has challenged all religions, including Christianity, in all ages? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* summarizes the dilemma this way: "Faith

gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life" (CCC, 324).

By looking at Divine Revelation in Sacred Scripture, we can gain some insight on this last point. For example, the Old Testament book of Job confronts the very question of why bad things happen to good people. Job was a good man who lost all his children and property and contracted a horrible disease. Always trusting God despite his setbacks, Job's sufferings revealed one partial answer to why there is suffering: good can come from it. As the proverb goes, "God writes straight with crooked lines." Job became a more holy man, a better friend, and more trusting of God because of his sufferings. The story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50 also points this out. Joseph was shoved into a ditch and left for dead there by his jealous brothers. Yet from suffering he emerged as the pharaoh's assistant in Egypt, in charge of dispensing food during a worldwide famine. In this position he was able to save his own family from starvation.

A key insight came to Job toward the end of his trials. Job says to God:

I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know. I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you. Therefore I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:3, 5–6)

Job admits that God's ways are mysterious and that ultimately we cannot fully understand them. It takes humility and trust to admit that we can never understand the mystery of innocent suffering and evil in the world. We are not God, and we don't see things from his perspective. We need to know that we are totally dependent on him and not in control of everything. Therefore, we can never adequately explain all the evil that befalls us.

But we can explain some of it. Consider these points:

- *God's created world is on a journey to perfection.* God could have created a "perfect" world where there would be no physical evil. But in God's goodness and wisdom, he decided to create a world that is in a process of becoming. It is not yet perfect. Nature's constructive and destructive forces exist side by side. The more perfect exists alongside the less perfect. "With physical good there also exists physical evil as long as creation has not reached perfection" (CCC, 310).

Just as a renowned concert pianist must toil to perfect his or her skills, so the world undergoes pain to achieve the perfection God has in store. We cannot now appreciate the pain involved in this growth process because innocent people suffer at the hands of nature. But we believe that in God's wisdom this growth is good both for individuals and humanity as a whole as we journey to perfection.

- *The misuse of freedom is the cause of much moral evil.* Out of divine goodness, God created humans and angels as *intelligent* and *free* creatures, not mindless robots or unthinking puppets. The gifts of intellect and free will are what make us beings of tremendous dignity and not mere automatons. But these two gifts require responsibility. We must freely choose to love God and others on our journey toward eternity. When we refuse to love, we sin. And sin brings about incredible evil and suffering.

Revelation tells us that when some angels chose to sin, they (the fallen angels, or devils) unleashed evil in the world in opposition to God. Satan is known as the father of lies, a deceiver of the whole world. He and the other devils try to get humans to revolt against God through disobedience, that is, to sin. Satan

acts in the world out of hatred for God; and "although his action may cause grave injuries—of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature" (CCC, 395)—his power is limited because he and the other devils are only creatures. He cannot do anything to prevent the building up of God's reign.

Unlike Jesus, who resisted the lies of Satan in the desert, humans from the time of Adam and Eve have given in to his deceptions, which have led to sin. And human sin has resulted in terrible moral evils like war, rape, abortion, drug abuse, prejudice, and greed. God does not *cause* this moral evil. Humans, by misusing their freedom, are the cause. God *permits* moral evil, however, because God loves and respects the free creatures he has made. And in a way known only to God (a truth that Job eventually admitted), God knows how to derive good out of all evil. As St. Paul wrote, "We know that all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

- *Christian faith announces the Good News of Jesus Christ, who conquered the forces of evil.* Certainly, the worst moral evil in the world was for humans to put to death the innocent God-man. Like any normal person, Jesus abhorred suffering and even asked his Father to remove it. But Jesus freely embraced the sufferings that unjustly came his way by submitting to his Father: "May your will be done."

God heard Jesus' prayer, not by saving Jesus from death, but by saving him *out* of death. Jesus' suffering, Death, and Resurrection have conquered the worst evil: death and separation from God. If we love as Jesus teaches us to do and join our sufferings to him, we will share forever in the Lord's blissful, superabundant, joy-filled life. This is Good News, actually great news, that can help us cope with the mystery of evil and suffering.

Write of a time in your own life when something good came after a period of trial, suffering, or a setback.

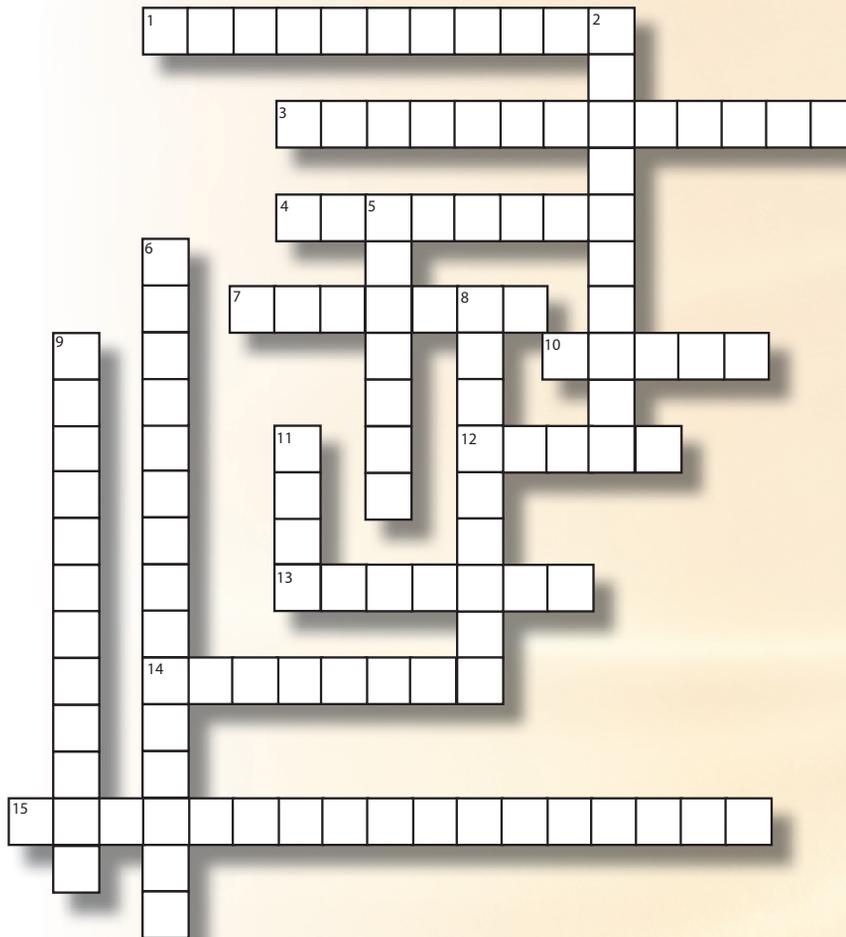


## CHAPTER QUICK VIEW

- The vast majority of people believe in God. St. Thomas Aquinas offered intellectual proofs. The human heart is also able to discover God. Atheists do not believe God exists. Agnostics claim ignorance on the question. Deists picture God as a watchmaker who does not get involved in the world he made. (pages 16–21)
- *Transcendence* is a quality of God's total otherness; *immanence* is a quality of God's closeness to us. (page 20)
- God is an absolute mystery, totally other than humans. (page 22)
- *Divine Revelation* is God's free self-communication of himself by which he makes known the mysteries of his divine plan. (page 22)
- God entered into *covenant* with humankind. A covenant is a solemn, open-ended agreement of love. God promised to care for humans always while humans were to remain faithful to the one true God. God's greatest and final covenant was the sending of his only Son, Jesus Christ, to save humanity from its sins and rescue it from death and the evil one. (pages 22–24)
- *Faith* is the human response to Divine Revelation. (page 25)
- The deposit of Divine Revelation is found in Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Tradition of the Church. (pages 24–25)
- The God of mystery revealed his name to be Yahweh ("I am"). This shows that God is the source of all being, the Holy One in our midst who is pure Spirit, unchangeable, unique, infinite, all-powerful, eternal, immense, merciful, gracious, living, faithful, and true. (pages 26–27)
- The central dogma about the one true God is that he is a Trinity of Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (page 27)
- Jesus tells us that we can address God as *Abba*—"Father." However, Jesus has a unique relationship to the Father as his eternal Son. (page 27)
- God made humans in his image and likeness; thus we have incomparable dignity. (page 29)
- God created an orderly and beautiful world out of nothing. This world includes both visible realities and invisible realities like angels and devils. Humans are the summit of God's creation, are in solidarity with it, and must respect and develop it. (pages 29–30)
- Adam and Eve, created in God's image with the ability to think and to love, rejected God through an act of disobedience. This is known as *Original Sin*. All humans have inherited the effects of Original Sin, including an inclination to sin and a fallen human nature that leads to death. (pages 30–31)
- Belief in the one true God gives life tremendous meaning by showing that our Creator loves us beyond what we can imagine and revealing our true identity as his children and brothers and sisters in Christ with an eternal destination of happiness in union with the Blessed Trinity. (page 31)

## Learning the Language of Faith

Test your knowledge of important terms that you have learned in this chapter and the Introduction. If the answer requires more than one word, separate the words with a blank box.



### Across

1. the official teaching authority of the Church
3. a trait of God that refers to God's total otherness and being infinitely beyond his creation
4. an open-ended contract of love between God and humans
7. the theological virtue that enables us to love
10. the written record of Revelation
12. any central truth of Revelation that obliges us to believe
13. a person who denies that God exists
14. the relationship between God and humans that results in a body of beliefs and a set of practices
15. God's loving and watchful guidance over his creatures

### Down

2. belief in one God
5. firm attitudes, stable dispositions, and habitual perfections of the intellect and will
6. three Divine Persons in one God
8. Sacred \_\_\_\_\_ is the living transmission of the Church's gospel message found in her teaching, life, and worship
9. the fallen state of human nature into which all generations are born
11. Aramaic word for "daddy"

## Ongoing Assignments

As you cover the material in this chapter, choose and complete at least three of these assignments.

1. Write a dialogue between an atheist and a believer who is trying to convince the person that God exists.
2. Read a psalm of praise (for example, Ps 19, 29, 65, or 104). Create a visual presentation to illustrate the object of the praise.
3. Copy into a notebook or journal ten important quotes from the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. This document is online at the official Vatican website.
4. Decide which attribute of God is being named or described in the following Scripture passages:
  - Lamentations 5:17–20
  - Job 37:16
  - Jeremiah 10:10–12
  - Jeremiah 32:17, 27
  - Psalm 139:1–6
  - Psalm 139:7–12
  - Isaiah 55
  - Isaiah 48:3–5
5. Research current debates on the teaching of evolution in the public schools. Prepare a short written or oral report.
6. Write a report on some of the new information you have discovered in this chapter on either the existence of God or the existence of angels.
7. Read and report on Greg Friedman, O.F.M.'s, "Facing Questions of Faith" *Youth Update* (St. Anthony Messenger Press).
8. Search the Old Testament and New Testament for passages that describe God. Transcribe several favorite Scripture passages into your journal.
9. At a parish function, interview at least five people on why they believe God exists. Prepare a report on your findings.
10. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on how angels have been depicted in art through the ages.

## Prayer Reflection

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalms proclaim God's steadfast love and fidelity to Israel as God's special possession. The three major types of Psalms are hymns of praise; petitions, which typically end on a note of confidence; and Psalms of thanksgiving. Today, the Church uses the Psalms in her own prayer life, especially at liturgies, for example, the Responsorial Psalm featured during the Mass. Reading and praying the Psalms put us in touch with spiritual feelings that run the gamut of human emotions and desires. They help us lift our minds and hearts to God and cry, "Alleluia!" (which means "Praise Yahweh!")

### *Psalm 23*

The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

In green pastures you let me graze;  
to safe waters you lead me;  
you restore my strength.

You guide me along the right path  
for the sake of your name.

Even when I walk through a dark valley,  
I fear no harm for you are at my side;  
your rod and staff give me courage.

You set a table before me  
as my enemies watch;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and love will pursue me  
all the days of my life;  
I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
for years to come.

- *Reflection:* How is God guiding and leading you in your life right now? Are you listening to his voice?
- *Resolution:* Resolve to go to Mass one time on your own in the following weeks to thank God in a special way for all the gifts he has given you. Receive the Lord in Holy Communion.