



**GOD'S
REVELATION
AND YOUR RESPONSE**



“JESUS LOVES YOU VERY MUCH!”

Two recent popes—St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI—visited Cuba during their papacies, but Pope Francis was the first pope to send a video message to the Cubans before his arrival in September 2015. The four-minute message was to the point:

I want to send you a very simple message but one that I think is important and necessary: Jesus loves you very much! Jesus seriously loves you! He never abandons us when we don't behave as he hopes. He always remains by our side, ready to receive us and comfort us.

At a Mass in Cuba on September 21, the feast of St. Matthew, Pope Francis reminded the crowd how Matthew had once been a lowly and despised tax collector before he turned his life to Jesus. Without showing judgment, Jesus instructed Matthew and invited him to follow him on the way.

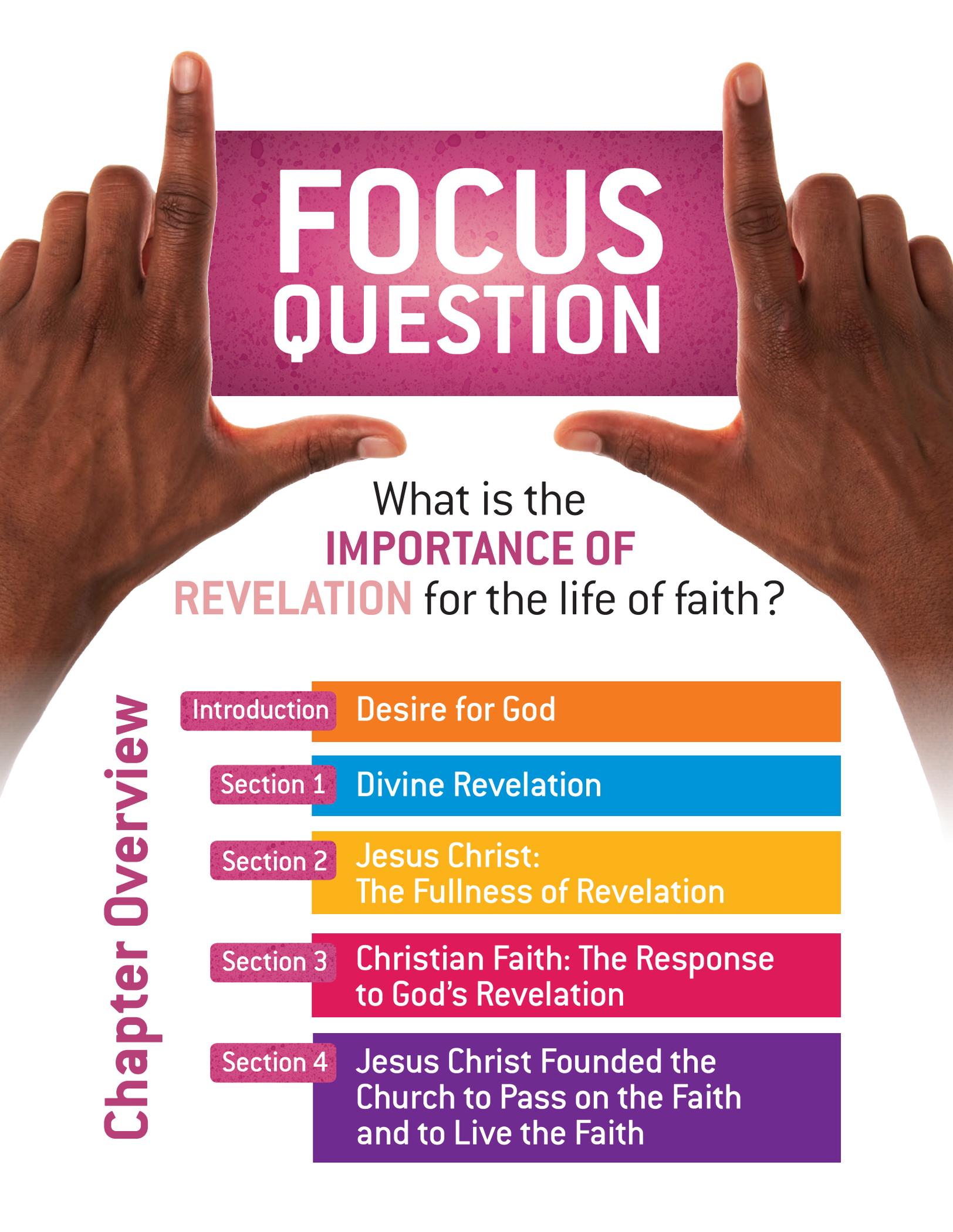
“Do you believe it is possible that a tax collector can be a servant? Do you believe it is possible that a traitor can become a friend?” the pope asked.

Later, in an unscripted talk with teens, Pope Francis encouraged them to dream big about what their lives could be and not be “boxed in” by ideologies or the preconceptions of others.

Pope Francis also preached about embracing a “spirit of poverty,” of letting go of everything to follow Jesus. “This is in the Gospel several times,” he said. “The first ones left the boats, and the nets, and followed him. They left it all to follow Jesus.”

Pope Francis's trip to Cuba and, in the days that followed, to the United States highlighted the reconciliation taking place between the two nations, something that Pope Francis had spent nearly eighteen months working behind the scenes to broker. While Pope Francis has encouraged the political leaders of Cuba and the United States to cooperate on issues like commerce and the environment, he has more personal concerns for the Cuban people. Only about 10 percent of the population regularly attends Mass.

Addressing personally a people who had for many years been hindered by their government from practicing their faith, Pope Francis encouraged them to look anew at the reconciliation, mercy, and love of the Savior, Jesus Christ.



FOCUS QUESTION

What is the
**IMPORTANCE OF
REVELATION** for the life of faith?

Chapter Overview

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INTRODUCTION

Desire for God

MAIN IDEA

Human beings were made to seek God. God can be known with certainty by natural reason on the basis of his works, particularly his action in creating the world.



Have you ever laid in bed at night and asked yourself “the big questions”: *Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? What happens when I die?* Did you ever consider that you were actually created to ask these

questions? Have you pondered the possibility that you were hardwired for something more than just the material world—that is, what you can touch and see in the here-and-now?

You get hints of being made for more when you are left disappointed by the things of this world. Think about the emptiness you feel after a friend abandons you or an event you thought would leave you fulfilled is over, and you are left wanting more. These are experiences common to every human person.

This is not by accident. You were, indeed, made for more, *much more*. You were created for another, indeed, *the Other*. “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God” (CCC, 27). You were created for communion with God. Nothing else in this world will satisfy you completely; it is in him alone that you will have total fulfillment. Sadly, even though humans were made to seek God, men and women often forget or ignore that part of themselves (see “Blocks to Knowing God,” page 5). Regardless, God “never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness” (CCC, 30).

Even if God had not told you anything about himself, you can come to know the existence of God using only your reason. The starting points for such reflections are the created world and the human person.



NOTE TAKING

Identifying Key Points.

Create a two-column chart like the one here to help you organize the content in this section. Fill in the second column with further details.

Key Points	Description
Humans are not satisfied by things of this world.	
You can know God through the world.	
You can know God through the human person.	

You Can Know God through the World

One way to discover God on a natural level is through the beauty and perfection of creation. St. Paul knew this well when he wrote, “Ever since the creation of the world, his [God’s] invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made” (Rom 1:20). And the psalmist extolled that “the heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps 19:2). In other words, the world is such a gift that it must come from a giver. Its majesty and beauty are beyond human capabilities. God embodies all that is good, true, and beautiful, and so all that he creates is beautiful and good. When you recognize him in the beauty of creation, you want to know him and love him as the source of creation and, therefore, the source of all joy.

All around you, you can perceive harmony and beauty. Then you can contemplate the earth itself with its perfect size, its orbital speed and correct distance from the sun, and its precise blend of gases to sustain plant, animal, and human life. Think about the intricacies of the human brain, an organ that can process more than a million messages a second. All that you see and know—including everyday sights like trees, animals, stars, and human beings—actually exists; yet nothing that exists can account for its own existence. No dog, for example, has the ability to bring itself into existence. Nothing in the whole cosmos brings itself into existence. Yet everything does actually exist!

To account for this, there must be a being who exists in and of himself, whose very nature it is to exist or to be, and so has the ability and power to bring other things into existence. Even if it is the small particle that exploded at the dawn of creation (the “big bang”) from which everything else evolved, that small particle had to be created and brought into existence by God.

Nothing comes from nothing, but all can come to be from the God who is.

You Can Know God through the Human Person

If you are truly honest with yourself, you can see that there is a part of you that cannot be totally satisfied by the finite things around you, whether they be enticing experiences or even human friendships. Since your desires are infinite, there must be one who is infinite to meet these desires. What you truly desire is the *source* of all love—someone who loves you completely and whom you can love completely and so fulfill your desire for what is good and loving. This is God, who is goodness and love beyond all imagining.

Not only can you look outwardly to the world to discover God, but you can also look inwardly. As a human being, you have abilities and attributes that do not come from the material world. You can think and reason in ways that animals cannot. You have a free will and a conscience. You are open to truth and beauty. You have a sense of moral goodness and can recognize evil. Though sometimes this is hard, you innately know that some things are morally good—such as being generous and forgiving—and that some things are morally wrong—such as cheating and stealing.

The reason you are able to know the difference between right and wrong is that you have been created in the likeness of God, who is all good. You have been created with a body and a soul. Your soul is immortal, and it will be reunited with your body at the final resurrection. Your single nature—body and soul—make you like God in a way that is very different from everything else that exists. This is why humans, by their very nature, are religious and are meant to live in communion with God. As a religious person, you are aware that there is something beyond what you can see and hear and smell and touch. Because of



Blocks to Knowing God

You learned in this section that even if God had not revealed himself to humans, you have the natural ability to come to know him. However, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “but this ‘intimate and vital bond of man to God’ [GS 19, 1] can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man” [CCC, 29]. The *Catechism* goes on to list reasons why humans could reject this bond to God:

- revolt against evil in the world
- religious ignorance or indifference
- the cares and riches of this world
- the scandal of bad example on the part of believers
- currents of thought hostile to religion
- that attitude of sinfulness which makes a person hide from God out of fear and flee his call

Carefully read over this list again and thoughtfully complete the following items:

1. Explain which of these reasons you think is most prominent in the world in general and why you think this is so.
2. Explain which of these reasons you think is most prominent in your high school and why you think this is so.
3. Explain which of these reasons you think is most prominent within yourself and why you think this is so.

this awareness, you can naturally know God. However, because of ignorance and sinfulness, you can also get this knowledge of God wrong.

Nonetheless, human beings are aware, because of who they are, that there is something much greater than themselves for whom they long and search. This very longing for “something greater” than yourself points to God’s existence. In his goodness, God wrote the desire for him onto the hearts of every human

person, and “by natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works” (CCC, 50). But it does not end there. God desires to enter into a “real intimacy” with you, and thus he “willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith” (CCC, 35). You will examine more of God’s offer of “real intimacy” in the next section.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use your chart to help you complete the following items.

1. Explain one way that someone can know there is a God through the created world.
2. Explain one way that someone can know there is a God through looking at oneself, the human person.



COMPREHENSION

3. “The desire for God is written in the _____.”
4. What are the two main ways you can come to know God with human reason?
5. What does it mean to say that humans are “religious”?



REFLECTION

6. What are some things of this world you have sought to satisfy you but have found left you empty? Explain.

SECTION 1

Divine Revelation

MAIN IDEA

Out of his goodness, God freely chose to reveal himself to humanity. This Revelation is transmitted by Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition; it is preserved by the Magisterium.



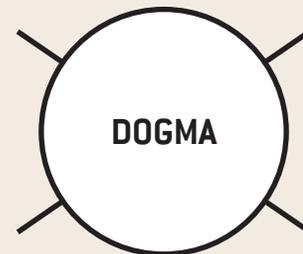
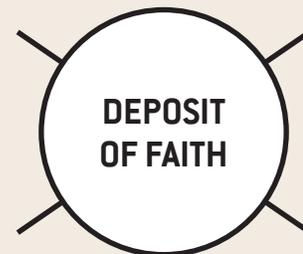
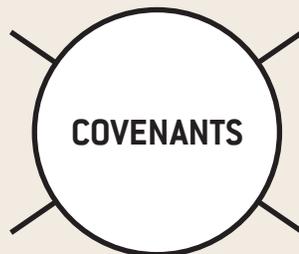
God did not create humans to know him only on the level of natural reason. Rather, he went much further. Out of his infinite love and goodness, God freely chose to reveal himself and give himself to human beings. The God of mystery, the one who is beyond human understanding, freely stepped into human history. God freely chose to reveal himself and give himself to human beings. This gift of God's self-communication by which he makes known the mystery of his divine plan to all people is called **Divine Revelation**. The literal translation of *revelation* is "unveiling." God unveils the mystery of himself before humankind. His Revelation tells you much more than simply information that you do not know. Rather, through his actions and words, God reveals the significance and meaning of those actions and words.

Divine Revelation God's communication of himself, by which he makes known the mystery of his divine plan, a gift of self-communication which is realized by deeds and words over time, and most fully by sending us his own divine Son, Jesus Christ.



NOTE TAKING

Organizing Details. Create word webs around each of the following concepts. You make a word web by drawing lines from the circle to key words and phrases that will help you understand the meaning of the concept.



Stages of Revelation

God's Revelation of himself took place over time. It began with the creation of the world, notably the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of himself. God created human beings to be in perfect communion with him, but through **Original Sin**, the first humans, named Adam and Eve, rejected this communion. Nevertheless, God did not abandon his people. As one of the Eucharistic Prayers at Mass proclaims:

And when through disobedience he had lost your friendship,
you did not abandon him to the domain of death. . . .

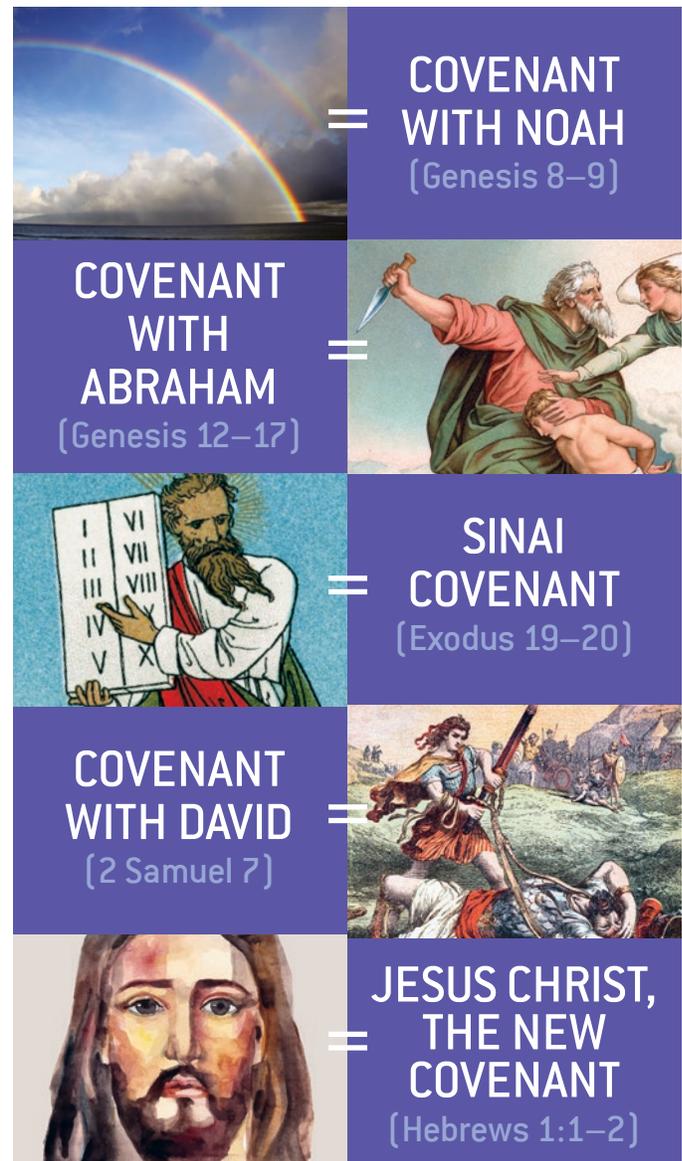
Time and again you offered them covenants
and through the prophets
taught them to look forward to salvation.
(*Eucharistic Prayer IV*)

Original Sin Refers to the personal sin of the first two people, called Adam and Eve, which in an analogous way, describes the fallen state of human nature into which all generations of people are born. Adam and Eve transmitted Original Sin to their human descendants. Christ Jesus came to save the world from Original Sin and all personal sin.

covenant A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being involving mutual commitments or guarantees. The Bible refers to God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses as leader of the Chosen People, Israel. In the Old Testament or Old Covenant, God revealed his law through Moses and prepared his people for salvation through the prophets. In the New Testament or New Covenant, Christ established a new and eternal covenant through his own sacrificial Death and Resurrection. The Christian economy is the new and definitive Covenant which will never pass away, and no new public Revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

salvation history The account of God's saving activity and intervention on behalf of humanity.

Through a series of these **covenants** (see infographic below), God offered human beings, throughout **salvation history**, a chance not only to know him, but to know him better. Within the Sinai Covenant with Moses, for example, God acted so that the Israelites could have a new kind of relationship with him, a relationship that other nations did not possess. In so doing, God revealed that he is a personal God who is the one Lord and Savior. Through these covenants, God also offered the promise of redemption. Redemption in Christ includes forgiveness of Original Sin and all personal sins in the Sacrament of Baptism. However, the other effects of Original Sin, including the



struggle with **concupiscence**, remain and call you to spiritual “battle” (CCC, 409).

As you will examine in the next section, Jesus Christ is the fullness of God’s Revelation. What more can God say than *himself*, Word made flesh? “In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one” (CCC, 65). Therefore, with the death of the last Apostle, St. John, public Revelation ended. Although public Revelation is complete, “it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries” (CCC, 66).

The Trinity of Divine Persons

Ultimately, what God revealed was himself. You can by reason discern that God exists from within the natural order. However, it is only because God revealed himself that you are able to know that the one God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These Three Divine Persons make up the Blessed Trinity.

While there were hints of the Trinity within the Old Testament (God spoke and acted through his Word and Spirit), God’s fullness is revealed only through Jesus Christ. What is revealed is this:

- The Father eternally begets his Son in the love of the Holy Spirit—this is why he is the Father.
- The Son is the only begotten Son of the Father because he eternally shares in the full divinity of the Father who begot him and so loves the Father in the same love of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is that personal love who makes the Father the loving Father of his Son and makes the Son the loving Son of his Father.

The Blessed Trinity, then, is an eternal communion of life and love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Because God created you to be a person in his own image and likeness, you can share in the divine communion of life and love with the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. This communion is accomplished through the Father sending his Son, Jesus, into the world as a man. Through his Death that reconciled the world to the Father, and as the risen Savior and Lord, Christ poured out the Holy Spirit so that through faith and Baptism, you can be made a child of the Father in his likeness. Thus, you can come to live within the very divine life of the Blessed Trinity and to fully share in the divine love that is the fullness of God.

Remember, God does not just reveal himself merely to “show himself” to humans. Divine Revelation is aimed at deepening God’s *relationship* with his people. As the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) taught:

It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature. (*Dei Verbum*, 2, quoted in CCC, 51)

You will study the mystery of the Blessed Trinity more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

Transmission of Divine Revelation

God’s Revelation is contained in the **Deposit of Faith**, which is the wellspring of all that Catholics embrace as divinely revealed. The Deposit of Faith has two modes

concupiscence Human appetites or desires which remain disordered due to the temporal consequences of Original Sin, which remain even after Baptism, and which produce an inclination to sin.

Deposit of Faith The body of saving truths and the core beliefs of Catholicism that are contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition and faithfully preserved and handed on by the Magisterium. The Deposit of Faith contains the fullness of God’s Revelation.

of transmission: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. It is preserved by the teaching authority of the Church, the **Magisterium**. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, ensures that the Church never loses all that the Father revealed through Jesus, his Son. Thus the Church, with regard to what is to be believed (doctrine) and how Christians are to live (morals), always teaches what is true and right and is never in error.

Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture (the Bible) is the written record of Revelation. It is the inspired Word of God. “*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit” (*Dei Verbum*, 9, quoted in CCC, 81). God used human authors and their unique talents to put into writing what he wanted written and nothing more. “The books of the 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” (*Dei Verbum*, 11, quoted in CCC, 107). This last point means the Bible is inerrant; that is, it teaches without error God’s saving truth.

Sacred Tradition

Sacred Tradition is the living transmission, or “handing on,” of the Church’s Gospel message. (The word *tradition* means both “handing on” and “that which is handed on.”) Through Sacred Tradition, the Church’s doctrine, life, and worship pass on what she believes to every generation:

Magisterium The bishops, in communion with the pope, the successor of St. Peter, who are the living and teaching office of the Church. The Magisterium authentically interprets the Word of God, both in the forms of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.



The Apostles followed Jesus’ command to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).

Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes. (*Dei Verbum*, 8)

Christ, who is the completion of Revelation, commanded the Apostles to preach the Gospel. The Apostles, in turn, entrusted to their successors—the pope and bishops—the task to “faithfully preserve, expound, and spread . . . by their preaching” (*Dei Verbum*, 9, quoted in CCC, 81) the Deposit of Faith entrusted to the Church.

The Holy Spirit helps believers to understand, appreciate, and accept the faith that is transmitted through Sacred Tradition. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and attracts the faithful to believe this treasure of faith. He helps people to recognize, accept, and live the Word of God that has been passed on.

Sacred Scripture The inspired Word of God; the written record of God’s Revelation.

Sacred Tradition The living transmission of the Catholic faith through the teaching, life, and worship of the Church.



Pilgrims listen to Pope Francis's homily on Easter Sunday.

Magisterium

The Deposit of Faith, as transmitted by Scripture and Tradition, is preserved by the teaching authority of the Church, the Magisterium. The Magisterium consists of the pope and the bishops in union with him. “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone” (*Dei Verbum*, 10, quoted in CCC, 85).

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Magisterium teaches with Christ's own authority. This is especially true when the Magisterium defines a

dogma The revealed teachings of Christ which are proclaimed by the fullest extent of the exercise of the authority of the Church's Magisterium. The faithful are obliged to believe the truths or dogmas contained in Divine Revelation and defined by the Magisterium.

dogma—that is, a central truth of Revelation that Catholics are obliged to believe. The Holy Father and the bishops are not above the Word of God. They are its servants. Their Christ-given task is to help the people understand God's Word and put it into practice by living holy lives.

Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium are all intimately related. Scripture and Tradition flow from the one font of Divine Revelation, which makes up the Deposit of Faith. The Church is clear that “both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (*Dei Verbum*, 9, quoted in CCC, 82). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Magisterium teaches and properly interprets what Christ wants the Church to know for salvation. Finally, the Holy Spirit helps the faithful to open their hearts and minds to accept and live the truth that they are privileged to hear.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the word web you created to answer the following questions.

1. What is *Divine Revelation*?
2. What is the *Deposit of Faith*?
3. What is a *dogma*?



COMPREHENSION

4. Did Original Sin end God's Revelation? Explain.
5. Name two covenants God made with his people.
6. When did public Revelation end?
7. What is the common source of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition?
8. Which (if either) is more important, Sacred Scripture or Sacred Tradition?
9. Who is part of the Magisterium?

SECTION 2

Jesus Christ: The Fullness of Revelation

MAIN IDEA

Jesus Christ is the fullness of Revelation. Both the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery are pivotal for understanding the reality of Christ.



The coming of Jesus Christ is the climax of God’s Revelation; indeed, Christ is the fullness and completion of Revelation. Think about it this way: What more could the Father reveal than the Revelation of his own Son? The Father accomplished this by sending his Son into the world in human flesh in order to establish his Kingdom. And then, on his return to the Father, the Son sent forth the Holy Spirit so that people can live within the Church, which is the seed and beginning of the Kingdom.

Jesus, as the Son of God, is the supreme invitation for you to come to a fully personal *knowledge* of who God is: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even more remarkably, through Jesus you can come into an

intimate, personal *relationship* with the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The Incarnation

In the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), God the Father sent his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of the **Incarnation**. “Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: ‘By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God’” (1 Jn 4:2, quoted in CCC, 463). Jesus became “truly man while remaining truly God” (CCC, 464). To hear the human voice of Jesus is to hear the human voice of the Son of God. To touch the man Jesus is to touch the Son of God. To be touched by the man Jesus is to



NOTE TAKING

Identifying Main Ideas. As you read this section, fill in a table like the one below.

Reasons for the Incarnation

-
-
-
-

Incarnation The act by which the Father sent his Son into the world and by the power of the Holy Spirit came to exist as man within the womb of Mary. The Son of God assumed human nature and became man in order to accomplish salvation for humanity in that same human nature. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, is both true God and true man, not part God and part man.

be touched by the Son of God. Whatever Jesus says and does is the Son of God speaking and acting through his human nature. For example, the Son of God, by virtue of his human nature, eats, drinks, speaks, and works as a man through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Son of God dies as a man and rises from the dead in glory. All of these actions express his Divine Person.

In his Letter to the Philippians, St. Paul proclaims this great mystery of the Incarnation. These words were likely an early Christian hymn:

Have among yourselves the same attitude that
is also yours in Christ Jesus,
Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God something
to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death, even death on a
cross. (Phil 2:5–8)

This passage from Philippians also emphasizes the great humility of God to have taken on human flesh. And thus, you and others are brought to the question: *Why did God become man?* The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists four important reasons (CCC, 457–60):

1 *in order to save you by reconciling you with God: “The Father sent his Son as savior of the world” (1 Jn 4:14).*

2 *so that thus you might know God’s love: “In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him” (1 Jn 4:9).*

3 *to be your model of holiness: “Love one another as I love you” (Jn 15:12).*

4 *to make you a partaker of the divine nature: “He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4).*

Paschal Mystery

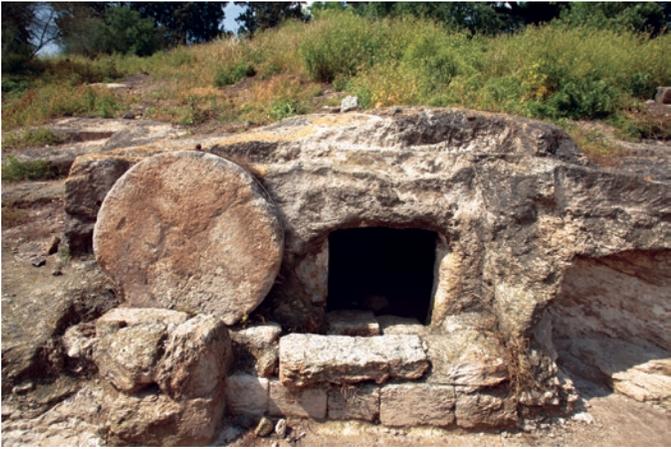
The culmination of the Incarnation is the **Paschal Mystery**. By the Paschal Mystery—Christ’s Passion, Death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension—the world receives the fullness of salvation:

The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God’s grace. (CCC, 654)

Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God. He could have subdued even ten thousand Roman soldiers, but in order to accept his Father’s will, he accepted torture, humiliation, and death. He knew this was not the end of the story. Jesus descended to the dead to free the just who had died before him and were awaiting his redemption. And on the third day after his Death, he rose again. The Resurrection confirmed all of Jesus’ words and work. It also fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies and those made by Jesus himself during his earthly ministry.

The Paschal Mystery repairs the broken relationship between God and humanity. The redemption won by Jesus’ Death on the Cross brings forgiveness of sins

Paschal Mystery The redemptive Passion, Death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension of Jesus Christ through which Jesus not only liberated humans from sin but also gave them new life through his Resurrection.



Jesus was not in the empty tomb. He had been raised “just as he said” (Mt 28:6).

and redeems the world from sin, evil, and death. The Paschal Mystery definitively reveals Jesus’ divinity. In faith with the Roman centurion who witnessed Jesus’ Crucifixion, all people are called to proclaim, “Truly, this was the Son of God!” (Mt 27:54).

An effect of the second aspect of the Paschal Mystery is that by Christ’s Resurrection, he opens to you

the possibility of a new way to live. This new life is the justification that restores a person to God’s grace. Justification brings about both a victory over death and new ways to participate in the life of grace. It encourages you to truly view all other people as brothers and sisters in Christ and to live with them as such. Finally, the Resurrection aspect of the Paschal Mystery is the principal source of your own future resurrection. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

In Christ, Christians “have tasted. . . the powers of the age to come” and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may “live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (CCC, 655, quoting Heb 6:5 and 2 Cor 5:15; cf. Col 3:1–3)

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use your table to help you complete the following items.

1. Explain in your own words two reasons why the Son of God became man.
2. How is the Incarnation a model of humility?



VOCABULARY

3. Name four important reasons for the *Incarnation*.
4. Use the term *Paschal Mystery* in a sentence.



COMPREHENSION

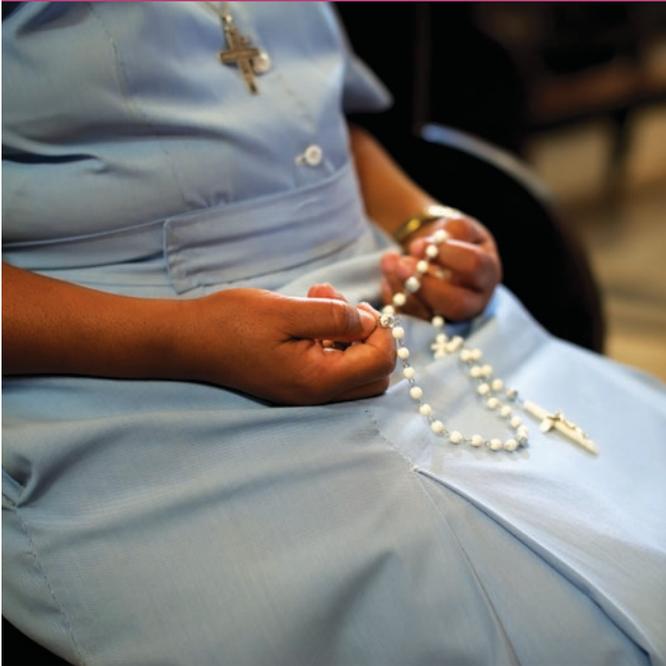
5. What are the two aspects of the Paschal Mystery?
6. What are the results of redemption won by Christ’s Death on the Cross?

SECTION 3

Christian Faith: The Response to God's Revelation

MAIN IDEA

The Christian act of faith in God is the proper response to Divine Revelation, to the way that God generously acts to bring salvation to the world.



You cannot live a life with God without faith. You cannot be open to the beauty and truth of the Father's Revelation of his Son, Jesus, without Christian faith. **Faith** is both a gift of God and a human act in which God invites you to respond to the whole truth that he has revealed. The Holy Spirit offers you the grace not only to believe what the Father has revealed but also to give your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

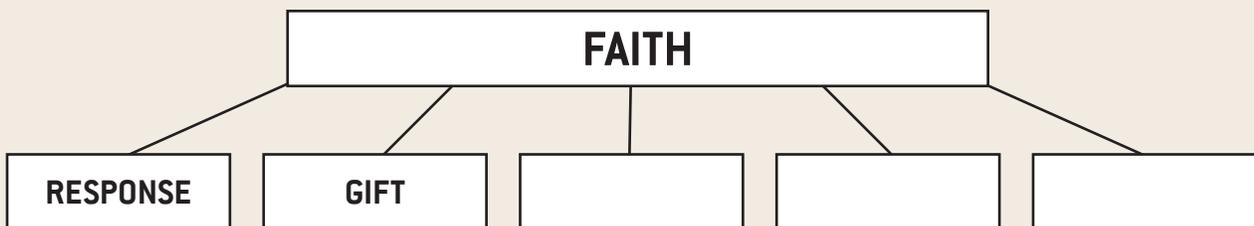
The theological definition of faith is deeper than your ordinary experience with the term. (Note several essential elements of faith in the infographic on pages 17–18.) In a religious sense, faith is your total, accepting response to God's Revelation. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer" (CCC, 143). For the purposes of this course and throughout life itself, try to be open to and accepting of God's invitation.

faith A gift from God that can only exist with God's preceding grace, faith is an act of a person's intellect, an assenting to the divine truth by command of the will that has been moved by that grace. Though only possible by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, faith is truly a human action. "Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason" [CCC, 154].



NOTE TAKING

Recognizing Characteristics. There are several key elements that make up Christian faith. As you read the section, create a flowchart of these elements. Add categories as needed.



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF

FAITH

You've been challenged to be open to the gift of faith. How can you do that? One way is to recognize some of these essential elements of faith.

FAITH IS A GIFT,



BUT YOUR RESPONSE MUST BE FREE.

No one can be forced to embrace faith. Thus, faith is also a free human act in that with the help of the Holy Spirit you freely believe what God has revealed.

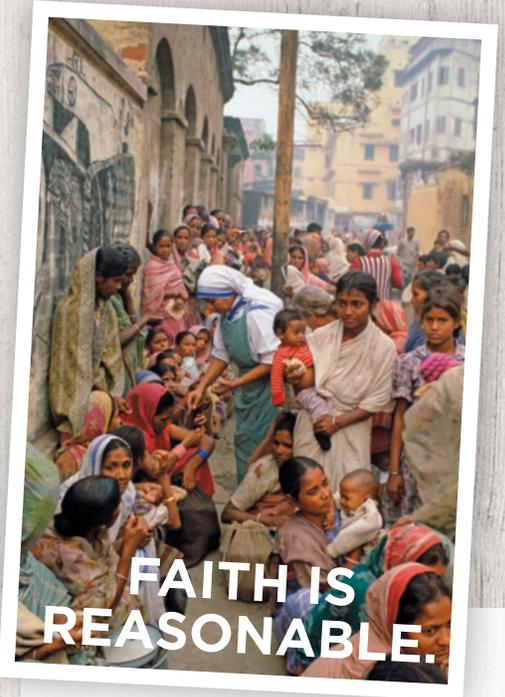
FAITH IS CERTAIN.

The certainty of faith resides in the truthfulness of God the Father who revealed that you believe in him through his Son, Jesus, and who is made manifest to you through the unerring light of the Holy Spirit. This certainty also lies in the fact that what the Catholic Church teaches is true. Jesus Christ has given to his Church the fullness of the Holy Spirit and a share in his own infallibility so that the Church's Magisterium always teaches the truth and never falls into error.



FAITH SEEKS UNDERSTANDING.

Though you will never fully understand or comprehend God's Revelation, you have the duty to grow in your knowledge of God to better understand what he has revealed so that you can more fully love God the Father, Jesus—his Son—and the Holy Spirit.



FAITH IS REASONABLE.

Faith is not a blind act but a reasonable one, because you are able to perceive the beauty of God's actions, especially those saving actions that Jesus performed: his teaching, miracles, Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Other external proofs, or signs—such as the miracles of saints, the life-giving witness of martyrs, prophecies, the growth and holiness of the Church, and the great good that the Church has accomplished since her founding by Jesus Christ almost two thousand years ago—provide more evidence that supports faith.



FAITH GROWS WITH UNDERSTANDING.

Growing in faith is a lifelong task. You can nurture your faith through reading Scripture, praying, participating in the sacraments, reading books about the lives of saints and other Catholic books on spirituality, and learning from faithful and well-informed Catholics. As you grow in your knowledge of God, your faith will deepen and become stronger.



FAITH BRINGS YOU TO RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BLESSED TRINITY.

The act of faith allows you to establish a personal relationship with Jesus, the Son of God,

through the Holy Spirit so that Jesus' Father becomes your Father. Through faith, you come to live within the communion of love of the Blessed Trinity.

FAITH AND SCIENCE DO NOT CONFLICT.

The truth of God's Revelation does not contradict the truth of science. God is both the source of the truth that is found within the universe and the source of Revelation. Thus, the two complement and do not contradict each other.



FAITH MUST BE LIVED.

You live your faith by participating in the life of the Church—that is, through such practices as keeping the commandments, participating in the sacraments, praying daily, loving your family and all whom you meet, caring for the poor, seeking peace and justice, and protecting the inherent dignity of every human life from conception to natural death. If faith is not lived, it runs the danger of being lost completely.



FAITH IS AN ACT OF THE CHURCH.



Faith is an act that is done within the community of faith—that is, the Church. Faith is both personal and communal. Each person must make his or her own personal act of faith, but that act is not of the person's own making. You make a personal act of faith in what the community of the Church believes, and so you become yourself a member of the Church.

Another way to understand faith is as one of the **theological virtues**, along with hope and charity. Theological virtues are gifts because they are infused into your soul at Baptism; thus, faith is a gift. You cannot earn the gift of faith. Once infused into your soul, faith gives you certain capabilities. Faith, when accompanied by hope and love, draws you closer to God and enables you to live in relationship with the Blessed Trinity.

Faith and the Church

In a certain sense, faith is your lifeline to God. It is a gift that enables you to respond to God’s Word. Faith is an essential gift, necessary for salvation: “Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation” (CCC, 161).

How do Catholics receive faith? In the Sacrament of Baptism, the Blessed Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification. One of the results of this gift is that the person is then able to believe in God, hope in him, and love him through the theological virtues. Also, faith is typically first proclaimed in the Christian home, called the **domestic church**. This is the place where children witness

theological virtues Three foundational virtues that are infused by God into the souls of the faithful: faith (belief in, and personal knowledge of, God), hope (trust in God’s salvation and his bestowal of the graces needed to attain it), and charity (love of God and love of neighbor as oneself).

domestic church A name for the Christian family. In the family, parents and children exercise their priesthood of the baptized by worshiping God, receiving the sacraments, and witnessing to Christ and the Church by living as faithful disciples.

religion A set of beliefs and practices followed by those committed to the service and worship of God (CCC, Glossary).



At Eucharist, a person is taken up into communion with God and others.

parents praying, worshiping God, and loving one another. This is the place where children experience lives of holiness along with acts of self-denial. Children, too, participate in these actions and receive the sacraments.

The “obedience of faith” to which St. Paul refers (see Romans 1:5, 16:26) and the other theological virtues of hope and love lead to the moral virtues and the virtue of religion by which you render to God his due in justice. This justice toward God is called the “virtue of **religion**.” The virtue of religion enables you to revere and love the loving God. The word *religion* derives from a Latin word that means “to bind together.” To fail to develop the virtue of religion in your life is to thwart an essential part of your spiritual nature, a nature that seeks out and responds in love to God.

Centered uniquely on the belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, religion gives you a framework to collect your beliefs in God and put them into practice. The virtue of religion requires that you worship God with others as well as individually. All people are called to participate in the fullness of faith present in the Catholic Church. However, the Church recognizes in other religions the presence of God “who is unknown yet near since he gives life and breath and all things and wants all men to be saved” (CCC, 843). For example, Judaism is held in special honor by the

Church because the Jews received the Old Covenant from God. The Jews were the first to hear God's Word, and, unlike other non-Christian religions, the Jewish faith is "already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant" (CCC, 839).

Because the Church teaches positively that "all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body" (CCC, 846), as a Catholic, you are able to give yourself totally to God in Jesus Christ and to accept him and his message as it comes through the Church founded by Christ. Indeed, it is in and through the Catholic Church that you profess publicly that Jesus is the Son of God.

In summary, God reveals himself to you. Faith is your response to God's Revelation. Faith is necessary for your salvation. The faith life of the Church gives life to, supports, and nourishes the life of the individual Christian. A requirement of membership in the Catholic Church is for all members to extend to the entire world God's invitation to believe in, accept, and dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ. This is done by word and example. When you accept and live out the gift of faith, you are on the path to eternal life through Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus' message to the ten lepers he cleansed and made whole: "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you" (Lk 17:19).



Biblical Stories of Faith

The Bible is a rich library of stories about people of faith and great acts of faith. Read the following Scripture passages and answer the corresponding questions.

COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM (GENESIS 17)

1. How old was Abraham when God made the covenant with him?
2. What did God promise Abraham?
3. What was the sign of the covenant?

EXODUS FROM EGYPT (EXODUS 12:40–14:31)

1. How long were the Israelites in Egypt?
2. List two Passover regulations.
3. What did Moses take out of Egypt? Why?
4. How did the Lord lead the Israelites?
5. How did the Israelites escape from Egypt?

GIVING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 19:1–20:26)

1. How did the Lord appear to Moses?
2. What is the most important command the Lord gave to the people?

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the flowchart you created listing some elements of faith to help you complete the following items.

1. Using at least three of the elements you named, write a personal statement of faith.
2. How is faith a response to God's invitation?



VOCABULARY

3. What are the *theological virtues*?
4. How do you acquire these virtues?
5. What are some ways that a Christian receives faith in the *domestic church*?



ANALYSIS

6. Share an example to explain how faith is expressed both personally and communally.



REFLECTION

7. Name three ways that your communal experience of faith—through your family and the Church—affects your personal faith.

SECTION 4

Jesus Christ Founded the Church to Pass on the Faith and to Live the Faith

MAIN IDEA

Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church. Anyone who seeks out Jesus in faith is naturally led to his body on earth, the Church.



Jesus Christ came into the world to accomplish God the Father's plan of salvation. Jesus is the Father's "total self-communication." That means that Jesus shows who the Father is. Jesus' words, actions, and very presence ushered in the **Kingdom of God**.

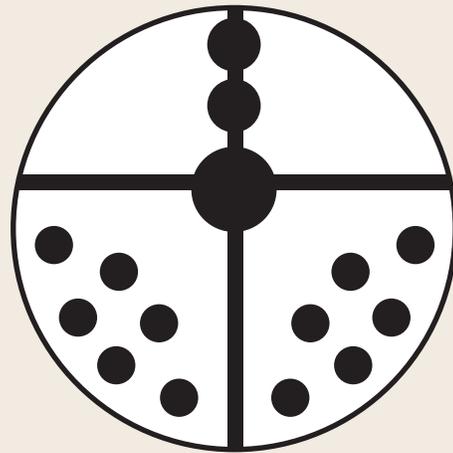
During his time on earth, Jesus established a community to carry on his work in his name after

his Ascension to heaven. He founded this community—"the seed and beginning of the Kingdom . . . a little flock" (CCC, 764)—to help people of every generation to find true happiness and joy as well as to bring them to eternal salvation. This Church was founded by Christ on the Apostles. Jesus' questioning of Peter, a fisherman, about Jesus' true identity (see page 43) set the stage for the founding of the Church. Peter said to



NOTE TAKING

Connecting Main Concepts. Christ and his Church together make up the "whole Christ" (*Christus totus*, see CCC, 795). Create a symbol to represent this teaching. Include other elements in your symbol (e.g., the marks of the Church) to help you remember key points covered in this section.



Kingdom of God Jesus established the Kingdom of God through his Life, Death, and Resurrection. To believe in Jesus and to be united to him through the Church is to live in God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will come to full maturity when Jesus comes again in glory and all evil is destroyed. At that time, those judged worthy by Christ will rise gloriously from the dead so as to live in eternal peace and joy forever with God the Father in the communion of love of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (Mt 16:16). Jesus said to Peter in reply:

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mt 16:17–19)

Simon Peter was able to state clearly the identity of Jesus because God revealed it to him. Jesus gave Simon a new name—Peter—meaning “Rock.” On the Rock of Peter, Jesus established his Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head. Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem. The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ’s mission and his power, but also in his lot. By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church. (CCC, 765)

The Church was established by Christ’s Death on the Cross. At Pentecost, when the Risen Lord poured out his Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the Church “was made manifest to the world” (CCC, 1076). Christ gave to Peter and the Apostles—and their successors—the responsibility to preach the Gospel down through the ages. A prime task of the Magisterium is to hand on the Deposit of Faith and to see to it that Divine Revelation is accurately, authentically, and completely presented to the people of the world. This authority comes from Jesus; therefore, the teaching of the Magisterium comes



GROWING IN FAITH

Through your parish bulletin or a diocesan website, find an upcoming workshop, a prayer service, Eucharistic Adoration, or another parish- or diocesan-sponsored event that you think might help you to grow in your faith. Attend at least one session. Write a one-page summary of your experience. Include in your summary any questions of faith the event addressed. Tell how you might apply its lessons to your life.

directly from Christ himself. “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition . . . has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome” (CCC, 85). When the “Magisterium proposes a doctrine ‘for belief as being divinely revealed,’ and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions ‘must be adhered to with the obedience of faith’” (CCC, 891, quoting *Dei Verbum*, 10 § 2 and *Lumen Gentium*, 25 § 2). The Holy Spirit is the guide and guarantor who ensures that the Magisterium always and everywhere teaches and protects the fullness of the Gospel.

The Body of Christ

The Church is comprised of all the saints in heaven, the souls in Purgatory, and the faithful living on earth. Christ lives in his Church so completely that “Christ and his Church thus together make up the ‘whole Christ’ (*Christus totus*). The Church is one with Christ” (see CCC, 795). The Holy Spirit unites the Church to Jesus so that he and the Church form one living reality, one body, of which the Holy Spirit can be said to be

MARKS OF THE CHURCH

The marks of the Church are the essential aspects of the Church that designate her as the true Church. These marks strengthen Catholics to serve in, and for, the Church and to build up their faith. They also attract non-believers to the Church.

Read the description of each mark of the Church. Respond to each journal prompt.

ONE

This mark describes the unity of the Church, a unity rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The oneness of the Church is founded on the one God and Father of Jesus Christ. Also, Jesus is the one Head of his one body, the Church, which was founded upon him as the revelation of the one, true Gospel. Moreover, the one Holy Spirit is the one living source of the oneness of the Church. Charity—love—“binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14, quoted in CCC, 815).

- What are good techniques for healing divisions and bringing unity (e.g., among friends and family members)? How could these techniques apply to healing divisions within the Church and among all Christians?

HOLY

Jesus, who is all-holy, loves the Church as his Bride. United with Christ, the Church is made holy by him. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to give the Church all the means necessary to grow in holiness and bring glory to God. Love is the soul of holiness to which everyone is called (see CCC, 826).

- Describe the holiest person you have ever known.



CATHOLIC

The Church is catholic, or universal, in two ways: First, the Church is catholic because Christ is present in the Church. Christ is present in the Church in the fullness of his body, with the fullness of the means of salvation, the fullness of the sacraments, and the fullness of ordained ministry in apostolic succession. Second, the Church is catholic because Christ sends her out on a mission to all people in all places until the end of time. No one is excluded from hearing and responding to the Gospel or from the Church. Through faith and Baptism, everyone can become a member of the Catholic Church.

- Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (cf. Mt 28:19). How does this command apply to you?

APOSTOLIC

Christ founded the Church on the Apostles when he poured the Holy Spirit upon them. It is the teaching of the Apostles that the Church faithfully hands on through the successors of the Apostles, the pope and bishops. This is known as apostolic succession.

- Explain why it is so important that the pope can trace his office back to St. Peter.



the soul—the Church’s life-giving principle. The union of Christ and his body is not a mere *metaphor*. It is a living *reality*. There is a real and true living personal union between Christ and the Church. This is why any discussion of Divine Revelation and faith must be centered in the Church.

Faith in Jesus Christ naturally should lead the believer to Christ’s Church, the Catholic Church, which he founded and in which he lives. Catholics profess in the Nicene Creed at Mass each Sunday: “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” (see “Marks of the Church,” pages 24–25). Why? Because Christ, his Good News of salvation, and all the means he left for you to grow in holiness are found in the Church.

The connection between Christ and the Church is richly described in the First Letter to the Corinthians, where St. Paul taught that the Church is the **Body of Christ** in the world. Jesus is the Head of the body; the baptized are her members. Faith in Jesus Christ and the Sacrament of Baptism incorporate a person into the Body of Christ, the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes:

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:12–13)

This passage emphasizes the dignity of each member of Christ’s body. Catholics are members of the Church, each united with Christ and *each other*. Each member



“The Church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ” (CCC, 779).

of Christ’s body is important and has a role to play in bringing Christ into the world. “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). Christ lives in his Church. His love can be found there.

Body of Christ The Church is called the (mystical) Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples; the reality of a Body, whose Head is Christ and whose members are the faithful, reminds the Church of both her unity and diversity.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Refer to the symbol you have created to remind you that Christ and the Church together make up the “whole Christ.” Answer the following questions.

1. Why is the Church the natural place for someone with faith in Jesus to arrive?



COMPREHENSION

2. How does St. Paul describe the connection between Christ and the Church?

3. Where in the Gospels does Jesus designate Peter as the head of the Church? Briefly describe this Gospel account.

4. Name and give a brief explanation of each of the four marks of the Church.



DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

5. The verse “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16) has been called a “mini Gospel.” Do you agree or disagree that the verse sums up the entire Gospel? Explain your answer.