

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

CLASSIFICATION

One-page leaflets containing key facts and points of Catholic doctrine for mass distribution

SUGGESTED METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION:

Display copies of each topic in separate folders in an open top file box, or just display them on a table. You may give them out for free, or ask for donations or payment to sustain the operation.

Foundations of the Faith (Apologetics)

- A Most Intelligent Choice: rational foundations of the truth of Catholic belief
- Ten Reasons the Catholic Church is the One True Church of Jesus
- The Hypocrisy of Catholics is a Very Strong Argument for the Infallibility of the Church

Summaries of the Faith

- Mini-Catechism: the Greatest Wisdom in One Page
- Basic Catholic Doctrines: Formulas of doctrine and key excerpts of the CCC

Encountering Jesus

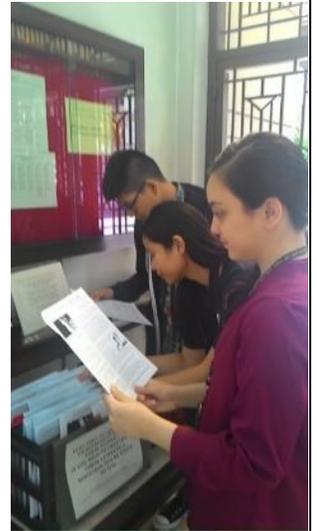
- Paschal Mystery: Center of the Christian Life
- Ten Reasons There is Nothing More Important than Holy Mass
- Confession: Simple Reasons and Simple Steps
- Putting Confession at the Center
- Time Alone with God: Indispensable Path to Man's Only Goal
- The Best Way of Raising your Children is Praying in the Family – St. Josemaria
- The Most Important Aspect of Education: A Guide to Catechesis
- Meditating on the Bible: Towards a New Springtime
- Loving Mary: the Shortcut to Jesus
- Top Ten Instructions of John Paul the Great on the Rosary, “the Most Effective Means of Fostering a Christian Prayer Life”
- The Pope: Christ on Earth
- Loving the Poor

Family and Chastity

- Strategies for a Great Family
- Purity and the Best Remedy for Lust
- Giving Real Love to Your Child
- The Pope's Most Insistent Message
- Key Facts about Homosexuality
- Science Facts on Contraceptives
- Live-in: Research Facts and Analysis on Cohabitation
- The Pope's Most Important Advice to Your Family

Social Responsibility

- Your Mission and Offices
- 10-Point Guide to Conscience in Voting
- Leadership Wisdom of St. Josemaria
- Benefits of All-boys and All-girls Schools
- 10 Reasons Why Same-Sex Marriage is Harmful (by STF Student Action)



A Most Intelligent Choice: Foundations of Catholic Belief

1. God is real.

- Humans, the world and its evolution have such a beautiful intricate, finely-tuned design which can only be caused by an Intelligent Designer, and not by mindless matter nor by chance.
- Nothing can cause its own existence. In the chain of causes and effects we see, if there is no First Uncaused Cause, then the second causes and their effects could not exist. The big bang implies a Big Banger.
- We know of objective moral facts of right and wrong (e.g. do not steal my things) which obliges humans in all cultures. Its power to oblige can't come from men obliged by the moral law. It comes from a Lawgiver.
- Our minds are in contact with eternal, objective and absolute truth superior to our minds (e.g. $2 + 2 = 4$) and the eternal is divine, not human.
- If miracles exist, a supernatural miracle-worker exists.
- If there is no God, life is ultimately meaningless. Only God satisfies the deepest longings of the human heart for eternity. The deep joy of the saints can only come from the divine.
- To bet on God is your only chance of winning eternal happiness, and to bet against him is your only chance of losing. (Note: Most points build on Peter Kreeft's *Extremely Brief Arguments for the Existence of God.*)



2. Jesus is the real God made man.

- Many reliable eyewitness accounts, eminent contemporary Roman historians and archaeological findings attest that the man Jesus really existed in history and was worshipped as God.
- Jesus did things only God can do, and no other human has done. He stopped a storm in one instant, raised 3 dead persons back to life, multiplied 5 loaves of bread to feed 5000 and turned 500 liters of water into top quality wine.
- Jesus fulfilled more than 300 prophecies, the first of which was written around 1400 years before his birth. The odds that one person fulfills only 8 of the prophecies is 1 out of 10^{17} (1 followed by 17 zeros): a virtually mathematically impossible event.
- Jesus claimed he was God. He said, I and the Father are one. He forgave sins and claimed eternity, omnipresence, and all authority in heaven and on earth. Since he was not a *lunatic* or a *liar*, he should be telling the truth: *Lord*.
- Jesus was confirmed dead by the best killers of ancient history, the Roman soldiers, and was seen to have resurrected by more than 500 persons.
- People around Jesus experienced him as divine and called him God. When St. Thomas saw him risen, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God". St. John said that Jesus is the Word and "the Word was God." Later, St. Paul taught about "Christ who is God over all." St. Ignatius, a student of St. John, referred to "Jesus Christ our God," and as "God incarnate".
- Thousands of people in the early years of Christianity, including former skeptics and enemies, gave their lives to testify to the truth that Jesus resurrected and is God. Hundreds of thousands continue to do so throughout history. One estimate says that in the 20th century alone, there were 45.5 million martyrs! (Barrett, Johnson)



3. Jesus built one Church, the Catholic Church.

- The Bible and the early Christians testify that Jesus built his Church on Simon, whom he renamed Rock (*Petros*), and gave him the keys of the kingdom (Mt 16:18-19). Jesus told him alone to "feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). The Church has documentary proof that the Popes succeeded Peter and its bishops are the successors of the other apostles.
- Jesus and the Church are one. It is not true the Catholic Church left the true Faith, since the Church is the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), and he is inseparable from his body. He promised that "I am with you *always*" (Mt 28:20), evil "shall *not* prevail" against his Church (Mt 16:18), and his Spirit "will guide you into *all the truth*" (Jn 16:13).
- The Bible is a Catholic book. It was the Catholic Synods of the 4th century, one led by Pope Damasus' Council of Rome in 382 AD, which drew up the official list of the books of the Bible. All Christians trust the Catholic Church when they read the Bible.
- The Bible refutes the "Bible alone" principle. St. Paul says hold to *traditions* taught by us *by word of mouth* (2 Thes 2:15). The Bible also tells of a *Council's authority* where St. Peter declared what we believe (Acts 15) and that *the Church*—not the Bible—is the pillar and the bulwark of the truth (1 Tim 3:15).
- The true Church is universal, evangelizing in all parts of the world with more than 1.2 billion members today. Compare this with the 2nd biggest Christian group, the Orthodox Churches with only 230M (1/5 of its size).
- The Church continues to perform divine miracles: Eucharistic bread turning into blood; appearances of Mary; heroic saints; cures and sacred images that are scientifically unexplained; saints with stigmata, powers of healing, bilocation and prophecy, etc.
- Since God is Truth, Reason and Love, his Church is the greatest educational and charitable institution in the world. Modern secular research shows that the Church in Catholic Europe gave birth to modern science, university education, economics, the hospital system, support for human rights, and Western Art.



The three statements – *God is real; Jesus is the real God made man; Jesus built one church, the Catholic Church* – are either *true* (they agree with reality) or *false* (they don't). They can't be both true and false at the same time and in the same point. To say "this is your truth while my truth is opposite" is to fall into relativism, the greatest problem of our time. Relativism (no objective truth; only subjective "truths") is (1) *self-contradictory*, like a square-circle, because if relativism is true then there is objective truth, and so it is false; (2) *self-amputation of our mind*, limiting our capacity to know reality. This goes against the universally acknowledged capability of the scientific mind to know the truth of nature; (3) *self-deification*: we who were not alive 100 years ago and will not be 100 years hence make ourselves God, the ultimate arbiters of truth; (4) *contradictory to the obvious*: there are truths that are always true everywhere, like "mass murder of innocents is evil".

Given the good evidence in favor of the *objective truth* of Catholic belief, wouldn't it take more faith to be a non-believer? Isn't it logical to try to learn more about this reality, and if convinced, to choose to live by this truth? And also to learn more about Jesus' loving invitation to enjoy God's life of supreme joy—now and in heaven?

Since Jesus told his Church "He who hears you hears me," he invites you to read the [Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), found [online](#), for a modern synthesis of Jesus' wisdom for us today.

In support of the Popes' call for a New Evangelization, please make copies and distribute **generously**. Online at: <https://paref.edu.ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/a-most-intelligent-choice-foundations-of-catholic-belief/>

Ten Reasons the Catholic Church is the One True Church of Jesus

while other Christian groups derive their elements of truth from her fullness

A one-page leaflet to support Pope Francis' call for a New Evangelization that "all may come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4) and to support Jesus' prayer that "all may be one" (Jn 17:21)

1. The Bible is a Catholic book. It was the Catholic Synods of the 4th century, one led by Pope Damasus' Council of Rome in 382 AD, which drew up the official list of the books of the Bible. All Christians today trust the authority of the Catholic Church that what they read is the true Word of God and not a false text.



2. The Bible refutes the "Bible alone" principle. The Bible says that the "Word of the Lord" is "spoken" (Jer 25:3), not just written. St. Paul urged us to "hold to traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thes 2:15). The Bible also tells of a Council's authority, where Peter settled a doctrinal dispute and declared what "we believe" (Acts 15).

The Bible teaches that not the Bible or the Protestant interpreters of the 16th century and of the present, but "the Church is the pillar and the bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). It also warns against "twisted" interpretations of Scriptures (2 Pt 3:16). While the Church has one teaching, there are now 43,000 evangelical groups with 2.3 added daily. Their views on the Trinity, on gays, etc. contradict each other. Since truth (e.g. Jesus is God) cannot be falsehood at the same time, real falsehoods are sadly being taught among these groups.

3. Jesus built his Church on a man he named Rock. Jesus said "On this rock, I will build my Church and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Mt 16:18-19). Jesus changed the name of Simon to *Petros*, Greek for Rock. He gave *Petros* or Peter, "the keys of the kingdom", which the Jews knew to be the power of a prime minister of the King and chief teacher (Is 22:22). Jesus told him alone to "feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). The Bible shows him leading the Church.

The early Christians referred to Peter's Roman Church as "presiding" (Ignatius, 1st-2nd c.), "of superior origin" and standard of "true Faith" (Irenaeus, 2nd c.), "Chair of Peter", "the principal" (Cyprian, 2nd-3rd c.), and "the primacy" (Augustine, 4th-5th c.). While the Catholic Church can give evidence of its unbroken link to Jesus and Peter, other Christian groups began their existence with their founders like Luther (1517), J. Smith (1830), and F. Manalo (1914).

4. Jesus and the Church are one. It is not true the Catholic Church left the true Faith, since the Church is the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), and he is inseparable from his body. He promised that "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20), evil "shall not prevail" against his Church (Mt 16:18), and his Spirit "will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). He told his Church: "He who hears you hears me" (Lk 10:16).

5. The Bible says we are saved "not by faith alone". The Bible used Luther's phrase "by faith alone" only once: "a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24). The Bible also says that "what counts is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). While Catholics and Protestants agree that Jesus alone saves us, Luther in the 16th century inserted without basis the word "alone" in his German translation of Rom 3:28 ("a man is justified by faith") in order to support his personal interpretation that a Christian is incapable of cooperating with God in his salvation.

6. The Bible and the early Christians believe in purgatory. As shown in their tombstones, the early Christians followed the Bible: "Pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Mc 12:46), for "nothing unclean can enter heaven" (Rev 21:27). It does not make sense to pray for the dead if they only go, as evangelicals say, either to heaven (with faith in Christ) or to hell (without faith). Jesus spoke about forgiveness in the age to come (Mt 12:32) and St. Paul stated that those judged by God are "saved but as through fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15).

7. The Bible and the early Christians believe in the Catholic sacraments. Jesus gave the Apostles the power to "forgive sins" (Jn 20:23). Peter taught that "Baptism now saves you" (1 Pt 3:21) and thus is not a mere inciter of faith. The Bible speaks about "anointing the sick with oil" (Jas 5:14-15), two kinds of laying of hands (Acts 8:17; 2 Tim 1:6), and marriage in the Lord (1 Cor 7:39). Jesus repeatedly said that "he who eats my flesh has eternal life". This is no figure of speech, for he did not give in when "many of his disciples" left due to this "hard saying" (Jn 6:48-68), and St. Paul taught that he who eats the bread unworthily is "guilty of profaning the Lord's body" (1 Cor 11:28). Ignatius of Antioch said "the Eucharist is the flesh of the Redeemer," Irenaeus "we receive the bread as Jesus", and Cyprian "Christ is our bread".

8. The Catholic Church is salt and light. Modern secular historians of science, economics, university education, human rights, international law, hospitals and Western art are showing that Catholic priests, scientists and thinkers were behind the foundation and great achievements in these areas, acting as salt and light as Christ foretold (Mt 5:13-14; Woods 2005). In his Church, he still works his miracles: Eucharistic bread turning into blood; appearances of Mary; heroic saints; cures and sacred images that are scientifically unexplained; saints with stigmata, powers of healing, bilocation and prophecy, and incorruptible dead bodies.

9. The Catholic Church is catholic. Jesus "desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4), thus his real Church is universal, evangelizing in all parts of the world with more than 1.2 billion members today. Compare this with the 2nd biggest Christian group, the Eastern Orthodox Churches with only 230M (1/5 of its size) mainly found in Eastern Europe; the Anglicans 85M (1/16); Southern Baptists 16.3M (1/73), Mormons 14.7M (1/81) and Iglesia ni Cristo 6M (1/200).

10. Jesus and the Bible glorify his mother. Catholics do not worship Mary, but follow Jesus' ways. He obeyed the fourth commandment: Honor your father and mother. Honor in Hebrew is *kaboda*, which means to glorify. The Bible calls Mary "Mother of my Lord" (Lord = God) and says all generations will call her blessed (Lk 1:43.48). It shows that she is the New Ark of the Covenant, the woman clothed with the sun, crowned in heaven with twelve stars (Rev 11:19-12:1). To honor his mother, Jesus' last message to us on the cross is: Behold, your mother (Jn 19:27).

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The hypocrisy of Catholics is a very strong argument for the infallibility of the Church - Peter Kreeft

This is the conclusion of a Calvinist thinker who turned Catholic after a wide search for one mistake that would prove the Catholic Church false. [Peter Kreeft](#) knew about G.K. Chesterton's witty reply when asked about the strongest argument against Christianity: Christians.

A Jew who visited the corrupt Vatican

So when his Calvinist friends found out that he was reading about Catholics, they recommended that he read the books of anti-clericals. The book he read contained a story that led him to the faith. There was a Jewish businessman who was thinking of becoming Catholic but had to go to Rome to do business with the Vatican during the time of some of the most corrupt Popes in history, the Borgias. The Jew's Catholic friend tried to dissuade him to go for fear he will change his mind. But the businessman, a practical Jew, said that for him business was first, and the pleasure of converting was second.

Six months later, the Jew returns asking for baptism into the Church, even after seeing the hypocrisy of the Pope and the cardinals. "I am a practical Jewish businessman. One thing I know for sure: no earthly business that stupid and corrupt could possibly survive 14 weeks. Yours has lasted 14 centuries. It is a miracle."

Kreeft explains: The hypocrisy of Catholics is a very strong argument for the infallibility of the Church. When Popes were assassinating each other, they never added a doctrine that said now you can assassinate the Pope. When they had 13 mistresses they never said that it is okay for Popes to have mistresses. *The doctrine remained absolutely pure even though the practice was never very good and sometimes was horrible.* That was very impressive.

Cardinal Ratzinger told the same story and he quotes the Jewish businessman as saying: "It is because of all that that I have become a Catholic. For if the Church continues to exist in spite of it all, then truly there must be someone upholding her."

Napoleon wanted to destroy the Church

Ratzinger continues: "And there is another story, to the effect that Napoleon once declared that he would destroy the Church. Immediately, one of the cardinals replied, 'Not even we have managed that!'"

I believe that we see something important in these paradoxical tales. There have in fact always been plenty of human monstrosities in the Catholic Church. *That she still holds together, even if she groans and creaks, that she is still in existence, that she produces great martyrs and*



great believers, people who put their whole lives at her service, as missionaries, as nurses, as teachers, that really does show that there is someone there upholding her."

Napoleon died in prison, while the Pope he persecuted and imprisoned, returned to Rome and took care of his family. While Napoleon was in prison, this same Pope requested the British jailers of the exiled emperor to be kind to him.

Despite many attempts of powerful rulers and influential theological rebels to destroy it, the Catholic Church is presently acknowledged even by secular science as the largest non-governmental provider of education and medical care in the world.

Serious secular historians have discovered that Catholic priests and laity have been at the foundation of enormously beneficial things such as [modern science, university education, economics, hospitals, international law, human rights and Western art](#). These works reflect, in the eyes of theologians, the identity of the one, true God: Logos (Reason), Truth, Love, Justice, and Beauty.

Misplacing the blame

When people say they don't believe the Church because of the hypocrisy of pedophile priests and bad Popes, they are "misplacing the blame," says [Catholic Answers](#). "If a preacher, religious, or layman fails to live up to the standards he is preaching, the blame lies with him and not with the message he preaches. His actions say much about himself but not about the teachings of Christ. ... By way of analogy, if it were proven tomorrow that Albert Einstein was a child molester, that would not disprove the theory of relativity." In fact, the Catholic Church does not have more child abuse cases than other institution, such as the family, public schools, Boy Scouts, Protestant groups, and the Church has done more than any other institution to address this problem of today's society.

Despite the sins of its children, the Church is called holy because [Jesus has decided to forever unite himself to it as his body, giving his powers of sanctifying](#). Jesus gave his Church the power to forgive sins in Confession (Jn 20:23) and to celebrate his saving sacrifice (Mk 14; 1 Cor 5). It is individual Christians who back away from his sanctifying power and cause scandal that make it difficult for people to see Christ in the Church. But Christ is there, because when he was on earth he loved to be with sinners, and he continues to be with us precisely because we need him.

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MINI CATECHISM: THE GREATEST WISDOM IN ONE PAGE

In brief: What is the Good News that Jesus revealed?

God loves us. He created us from nothing to live God's life of love and supreme joy. God the Son became man, Jesus, died to save us from sin and rose again to make us share in his divine life as God's children, in union with Jesus.

Basis: Why do Catholics believe this to be true—really real?

God helps us to believe. God is Truth and Good who cannot deceive us. Our faith is reasonable: it is a historic fact that Jesus lived, worked awe-inspiring miracles, honestly claimed to be the one God. After he was killed, he was seen alive by more than 500. Many of them gave up their lives to witness to Jesus and his truths. Jesus built his Church on the head of his 12 Apostles, Peter. He gave him the powers of a King's chief minister and teacher. Jesus committed his divine presence to his Church, so it can transmit his doctrine in its oral and scriptural Tradition. Jesus told the Apostles who were succeeded by bishops headed by the Pope, "He who hears you hears me." (Lk 10:16).

CREED: We believe in God's love

There is one God, a loving almighty Father. Through his Son, he created everything from nothing and sustains it in existence. He created angels, pure spirits and the material universe. He created humans who are spirit and matter: incarnate spirits. In an excess of love, God gave us "sanctifying grace", a share in his divine life! The grace in one man is greater than the whole natural universe! Made in the image of God who is total self-giving love, we are persons endowed with intellect and free will who are called to live God's love.

A sinful angel, the devil, tempted the first humans, Adam and Eve, and they disobeyed God. From then on, the intelligence and free will of all their descendants fell into disorder and weakened. Worst of all, we lost grace, a state called original sin. Since we are unable to create grace and save ourselves, our God who is faithful and merciful, draws good from evil to bring us back to holiness. In the end, God himself became man to reveal his love, facilitating a relationship of love with us.

Jesus is God the Son, our Savior. His name means "God saves." He was born of the Virgin Mary, grew up in his family, worked and "did all things well", obeying God and authorities. After rejecting the devil's lure to greed, self-glory and egoism, he began to preach: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" As Christ, the Anointed One, he saves us as our *Shepherd* (Way) who guides our wills with his laws; as *Prophet* (Truth), who forms our intelligence to know God and his plan; and as *Priest* (Life) who prays and gives us his grace. Jesus was opposed and crucified. Acting as the New Adam, the new head of all men who is always obedient to the Father, he offered his death out of total self-giving love for the Father and each one of us, thus saving us from our sins: "Greater love than this no one has, than he who lays down his life for his friend." (Mt 15:13). Jesus rose to life on a Sunday, gaining for us the grace of becoming God's children.

After he ascended to be our glorious King in heaven, Jesus sent us his Gift, **God the Holy Spirit**, the third person in the Triune God, to give life to his one Church, his Body, granting it all the truth and means to sanctify men. All Church members share these holy things in common as one family. Each man will die, and Jesus will judge his love. He who dies in God's grace and friendship will be with him in heaven; those who need to be purified will pass through purgatory. He who chooses to offend God in mortal sin will suffer in hell. At the end of time, Jesus will return, raise all the dead to life and, revealing the consequences of our actions, will judge all. The saints will reign with Jesus in his eternal Kingdom where God who is Love will be all in all.

SACRAMENTS: We celebrate and receive Jesus' life of love

Jesus' main work to save us, his Passion, Death and Resurrection, is the center of the life of a Christian. This ultimate love of God is called the Paschal Mystery. Jesus makes this present in the Church's liturgy or worship, revolving around the seven sacraments. These are effective signs of grace, ways by which Christ gives us his life. In *Baptism*, the first sacrament, Jesus acts through his priest, who pours water, to bring about the removal of original sin by giving us Jesus' life. Thus, we are made another Christ, Christ himself: "Christ lives in me"! (Gal: 2:20)

The life of Jesus, the Son of God, grows in us through his other sacraments: *Confirmation* (to strengthen us), *Matrimony* (to make family life holy), *Holy Orders* (to ordain priests through whom Jesus gives us the sacraments), and *Anointing of the Sick* (to sanctify the dying). Due to our need of God, without whom we are nothing, it is important to humbly and often receive: God's mercy in *Penance*, to restore grace lost by mortal sin, and heal the soul; and Jesus himself in the *Eucharist*, the summit of God's saving action and of worship.

MORALITY: We live Jesus' life of total love

A Christian lives with the dignity and joy of a child of God: we who came from nothing receive infinite generosity from our Father and so we are generous with God and others. *True love means willing the good of the other, total self-giving, and unity with God's will.* With our freedom, we have the power to act or not to act, and are responsible for our actions. By repeatedly choosing to do good shown by God in our conscience, allowing Jesus to love us through his law and grace, we grow in virtue and freedom. If we choose evil in sin and offend our Father, we truly say sorry: he celebrates our return and fills us with joy.

We live by Jesus' values, the Beatitudes, and his two greatest commandments: love God with *all* our heart, *all* our mind, *all* our strength and *all* our soul, and love others as ourselves for God. We adore, trust and hope in him; strive to know him fully (1st commandment); cherish and repeat his name (2nd); rest in God and offer Mass on Sundays (3rd). We love our family (4th), respect everyone's dignity (5th), reverence sexuality in chastity (6th & 9th), practice justice (7th & 10th), and live in the truth (8th). We are responsible for the brotherhood of all men, working for the common good and for social justice. We are merciful to the poor, those in need, in whom we meet Jesus.



MISSION: We live Jesus' life of total love in saving all men

Jesus commanded us to "make disciples, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you." We are one with Jesus' sole mission of saving all men by obeying God and his Church in our daily lives. As Christ shepherd, we serve, taking initiative to manage the world based on Jesus' values and commands. As prophets, we evangelize and spread Jesus' truths. As priests, we pray to sanctify others, offering the sacrifice of doing all our duties virtuously in union with Jesus' Mass.

PRAYER: We live Jesus' life of total love in dialogue with God

God yearns for our love and gives us his Spirit so we can relate with him. A Christian follows Jesus' example and command "pray always". We humbly live in God's presence, converse with Jesus as a friend and offer our activity for God's glory. We allot time daily to be alone with God who loves us: to meditate on his Word and his Church's teachings, and gaze at Jesus' love, the meaning and summary of all things. We say "I love you, thank you, I'm sorry and help us more." As children of God, we pray the "Our Father" and go to Mary who gives us Jesus.

BASIC CATHOLIC DOCTRINES

Formulas of Catholic doctrine and key excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium

The plan of God for man: to know and love God

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of pure goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. God the Father sent his Son as the Redeemer and Savior of all human beings, fallen into sin, thus calling all into his Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of his eternal happiness.



God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”, that is, of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, Christ must be proclaimed to all according to his own command, “Go forth and teach all nations”.

I. PROFESSION OF FAITH. Faith is man’s response to God who reveals himself and gives himself to man. It means the full surrender of ourselves to God and the acceptance of his truth.

The Apostles’ Creed: summary of the faith of the Apostles. I believe in *God the Father* almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in *Jesus Christ, His only Son*, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the *Holy Spirit*, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

Three offices of Christ, in which all Christians participate: Priest, Prophet and King

Four properties of Christ’s Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Four last things: Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven

II. THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY.

Christ makes present his work of salvation through the liturgy. The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. Through them divine life is given to us as a gift.

Seven sacraments: Sacraments of Christian Initiation: (1) Baptism, (2) Confirmation, (3) Holy Eucharist. **Sacraments of Healing:** (4) Penance, (5) Anointing of the Sick. **Sacraments at the Service of Communion:** (6) Holy Orders, and (7) Matrimony.

III. LIFE IN CHRIST. Through the sacraments, Christians receive the grace which give them the capability of living a new life as children of God in Christ whom they have received in faith. “O Christian, recognize your dignity.” (Saint Leo the Great) All the faithful are called to Christian holiness. Jesus said “Come, follow Me”. To follow Jesus involves keeping the commandments.

Two commandments of love: the fullness of the law, which interprets the 10 commandments. (1) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. (2) You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Ten commandments: makes explicit the response of man’s love to God. (1) I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. (2) You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. (3) Remember to keep holy the LORD’S day. (4) Honor your father and your mother. (5) You shall not kill. (6) You shall not commit adultery. (7) You shall not steal. (8) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (9) You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. (10) You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

Three theological virtues: foundation of Christian moral activity. God is their origin, motive and object. Faith, Hope and Charity (Love). Charity, friendship and communion, is the greatest virtue and the goal towards which we run.

Four cardinal virtues: pivotal human virtues which dispose man for communion with divine love. Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance

Eight Beatitudes: depict the countenance of Christ and authentic Christian life. Blessed are: (1) The poor in spirit (2) They who mourn (3) The meek (4) They who hunger and thirst for righteousness, (5) The merciful, (6) The pure of heart, (7) The peacemakers, (8) Those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Golden Rule: Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Works of mercy. Corporal: (1) Feed the hungry. (2) Give drink to the thirsty. (3) Clothe the naked. (4) Shelter the homeless. (5) Visit the sick. (6) Visit the imprisoned. (7) Bury the dead. **Spiritual:** (1) Counsel the doubtful. (2) Instruct the ignorant. (3) Admonish sinners. (4) Comfort the afflicted. (5) Forgive offenses. (6) Bear wrongs patiently. (7) Pray for the living and the dead.

Seven capital sins: engender other sins and vices. (1) Pride. (2) Avarice (3) Lust (4) Envy (5) Gluttony (6) Anger (7) Sloth

Common good: social conditions that allow human fulfillment: (1) respect for the person, (2) social well-being and development, (3) peace.

IV: CHRISTIAN PRAYER. Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God. It is the personal and living relationship of the children of God with their Father, with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit. It ought to animate us at every moment.

Essential forms of Christian prayer: Blessing and adoration, the prayer of petition and intercession, thanksgiving and praise.

Suitable time for prayer. Anytime. To nourish continual prayer, the Church proposes: morning and evening prayer, before and after meals, Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, Rosary and feasts.

Expressions of prayer: Vocal prayer, meditation and contemplation. Common to all is the recollection of the heart.

Our Father: “summary of the Gospel” and “perfect prayer” taught by Jesus. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

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PASCHAL MYSTERY: CENTER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Discover the most essential teaching of the most authoritative teaching Council of our time

WHAT IS THE CENTER OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE?

The Paschal Mystery, which comprises *his passion, death, resurrection, and glorification*, stands at the center of the Christian faith because God's saving plan was accomplished once and for all by the *redemptive death* of his Son Jesus Christ. (Compendium of the CCC 112)

The Paschal Mystery is the center of the Christian life and the Christian year. This is above all the essential idea of the Second Vatican Council itself. (Benedict XVI, Feb 2013)

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16) These words express the heart of the Christian faith. Jesus' death on the cross is love in its radical form. By contemplating his pierced side, we understand that "God is love", and discover the path along which our life and love must move. (Benedict XVI)

"Jesus loves you: he gave his life to save you; and now he is living by your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than this first and principal proclamation. All Christian formation consists of *entering more deeply* into this first proclamation. (Francis)

WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF MAKING CHRIST'S PASCHAL MYSTERY THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE?

It grounds us. The past event in Calvary in 30 A.D. is not just any center, but the "true center" around which all should revolve, especially our minds and hearts. "God loves us" is the bedrock reality of everything that exists. The air, the soil, events and trials are gifts of God the Amazing Lover—to unite us with him. This ultimate event of love "transcends all time while being made present in them all." (CCC 1085)

It makes us fall in love with Jesus, filling us with sweetness. Love of God above all and others for him is the only goal of life, its bottom line. The Paschal Mystery is the only source of this love, giving it to us in the sacraments and in our contemplation of Jesus' boundless love. Centering on Jesus' love and sacrifice gives us a sense of joy and sweetness to which many saints have testified. "The death and passion of Our Lord is the sweetest and most compelling motive that can enliven our hearts." (St. Francis of Sales) "The greatest pains are made sweet when one looks at Jesus on the cross." (St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi)

It makes us a much better person. Centered on the Paschal event, we learn key habits for daily living: self-sacrificing service, humility, self-mastery, forgiveness, detachment from things, obedience, hope, etc.

It is the secret to a deep and constant conversion. It is well-documented that the film *The Passion of the Christ* brought about a multitude of conversions. "The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced." (CCC 1432) "The most holy Passion of Jesus Christ is the most efficacious means to convert hardened sinners." (St. Paul of the Cross)

It is the most powerful cure for lust and all the evils of mankind. The most common evil of our time that leads people to hell "more than any other sin" (Our Lady of Fatima) will be resolved if people are centered on the passion of Christ. "If the heat of lust rises in me, it is extinguished by recalling the wounds of Christ. I have not found a more effective remedy." (Abbot John of Fécamp) "All the

remedies that humanity needs are found in the life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta) "By his wounds, we are healed." (Is 53:5; 1 Pt 2:24)



It is the shortcut. St. Josemaria's habit of entering the wounds of Christ "led him to the highest peaks of spiritual life." (Bl. Alvaro)

It identifies us with Christ. His whole life was centered on this saving event and anticipated its power. (Cf. CCC 1115; Lk 24:26)

HOW DO WE CENTER OUR LIFE ON THE PASCHAL MYSTERY?

See God's love in everything and allow God to embrace you. The key to "the most important subject in life"—love—is not our loving, but "allowing ourselves to be loved by God". (Cf. Pope Francis)

Treat the Paschal event as your greatest and most remembered book. "Know nothing except Jesus and him crucified." (1 Cor 11:2) Learn the Bible lesson of the Paschal event intently. "He who wants to keep on advancing in virtue and in grace should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus," (St. Bonaventure) to console and thank him, and to say sorry to him for the wounds we caused.

Be lovingly centered on images of Christ's saving passion. "As a Christian, you should always carry your Crucifix with you. And place it on your desk. And kiss it before going to bed and when you wake up: and when your poor body rebels against your soul, kiss it again... When you see a cross, think of the Blood of Christ poured out for you, and don't deny him what he is asking you for." (St. Josemaria) Put in your phone images and videos that portray the historic saving event and use them to pray. Give importance to the God-given, factual image of the Crucified God: the Shroud.

Put your sins to death. "Christ rises in us, if we become sharers in his cross and death." (St. Josemaria) "*Pascha* means the crossing-over. The Son of God crossed over from this world to His Father. What's to gain in celebrating unless you cross over from the darkness of evildoing to the light of virtue?" (St. Ambrose)

Act with the highest dignity, confidence and joy. For "believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ"—Son of God, the King of the universe! (CCC 1003)

Love and serve others as "Jesus in disguise" (Mother Teresa). Their needs and sufferings are "the wounds of Christ". (Francis)

Set the Eucharist and Confession as the most important priority of your life. In them the risen Christ makes his Paschal Mystery truly present, and with the greatest power unites us to himself and his saving, glorious work. Christ in the Eucharist as Self-giving Love is the "center and the source of the Christian life." (LG 11)

Be acutely aware that in the Mass the risen Jesus makes present, through sacramental signs, "the bloody sacrifice of the cross" (Trent; CCC 1366) and his victorious resurrection. Active participation, promoted by Vatican II, actually means "greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life." (S Caritatis 52) "In your mind's eye transport yourself to Calvary." (St. Padre Pio) "Offering the immaculate Victim [Jesus wounded on the cross], not only through the hands of the priest, but also *together with him, they should learn to make an offering of themselves.*" (Vat II, SC 48) Imagine and love Jesus as Mary saw him bleeding on the cross. And during Communion with the risen Jesus, rejoice with her and live a cheerful life of love of saving people.

TEN REASONS THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOLY MASS

If we only knew how God regards this Sacrifice, we would risk our lives to be present at a single Mass. – St. Padre Pio

- 1. Take part in Jesus' world-changing sacrifice at Calvary.** In a mysterious way, the eternal God "makes present" a two-thousand year old event which is the turning-point of human history: when the greatest evil ever done (killing of God) was turned around by Jesus into the greatest good action—a sacrificial death followed by his resurrection, which saved all men throughout the centuries and gave unsurpassable glory to God. In the Mass, we "time travel" to the event which is the center of our life: the Paschal Mystery.



- 2. Do the greatest good action.** Put together all our good actions, all the social work of NGOs, all the sacrifices of martyrs and saints, and they are just specks of dust compared with the infinite value of Jesus' sacrifice made present in the Mass. "All good works in the world are the works of men. But the Mass is the work of God." (St. John Mary Vianney)
- 3. Receive the most expensive gift.** "If you were told by your dad that in a specific room in the city you can get a billion dollar gift, won't you drop everything to find the place and pick it up? What if the gift is the Owner himself of the entire universe? Shouldn't you scramble to receive this gift?" (Fr. H. Raynal) In the Mass we receive far more than a billion times of a billion universes filled with treasures. Since God can't find something greater to express his love, he gives us the ultimate gift: his body, blood, soul and Divinity--Himself.
- 4. Enter heaven. Encounter Jesus himself in action.** We experience heaven touching down on earth and share a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy described in the Book of Revelations. We personally meet Jesus: he who is Infinite Beauty. He himself speaks when the holy scriptures are read (Vat II SC). In a madness of love, he "pours upon us all of his mercy and his love, so as to renew our hearts, our lives, and our way of relating with Him and with the brethren." (Francis) Jesus tells us: "This is *my* body which will be given up for *you*."
- 5. Attain the summit of love and prayer.** God our Maker created us for one purpose: to love him with all our heart and strength. This is our greatest dignity: to be able to dialogue with the Supreme Being as his intimate friend. In the Mass, we reach the "summit" of our conversation and worship as we join God's own loving prayer to God. Above all, Jesus unites us to Himself, drawing us into "the very dynamic of his self-giving," the core of his life. (Benedict XVI)
- 6. Enjoy the most delightful family reunion feast.** In any Mass, we experience singing to the Trinity with the biggest and most harmonious chorus: all of Jesus' angels and all the children of God's great family, both living and

dead, chanting Holy, Holy, Holy! And to their envy, we do something no angel can do: partake of the banquet from paradise, the Bread and the Lamb of God, "containing in itself all delight." (Rite of Benediction)

- 7. Tap into omnipotent help.** The Mass is the "summit", but also the "source" of the Christian life. Its power has greater force than many nuclear bombs! Amazingly, Omnipotence bends down to change bread into God's body and, like a slave, feeds us. He puts himself at our service. We ask him to help those in need, the poor, the sick, and the suffering souls in purgatory. He sends us with exceedingly powerful grace to help solve the greatest problems of society and to responsibly tackle our personal mission.
- 8. Be at the best time to talk to Jesus and ask for gifts.** There is no better time to ask God for something and to advance in virtue than the moments when we are at our closest to him. While the appearances of bread are not yet digested (10-15 mins.), Jesus is present in our body as in an altar. So stay on after Mass during that time to thank God, adore him and ask for presents.
- 9. Build and expand the greatest project.** In the Eucharist, Christ continues his work of redeeming all men and the Christian shares in this work. The last words of Jesus at Mass, uttered through his priest, resound like his last command to us: Go! Go and *make disciples* of all nations.
- 10. Follow Jesus.** The secret of Jesus' joyful and fruitful life is his obedience to God. The Bible gave a one-phrase summary of his life as a child and teenager: "he obeyed". He saved all men by being "obedient unto death on the cross." When we go to Mass, we follow his footsteps and obey his command: "Do this in memory of me."

To willfully miss Mass on Sunday is to commit a sin that is mortal or deadly. Much like the rejection of air, water, and food kills. We can't survive without the spiritual food offered by God in the Mass. And we have a serious natural obligation to render public worship to our Creator and Sustainer—without whom we vanish. Thus, God commanded us to keep the Lord's Day holy and his Church states that those who deliberately fail in the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation "commit a grave sin." (CCC 2181)

How to attend Mass: (1) Be acutely aware that you are in the presence of Christ's bloody sacrifice on the cross: "In your mind's eye transport yourself to Calvary." (St. Padre Pio) (2) Prepare your soul through prayer. (3) Wear appropriate clothing when meeting an important person. (4) Listen to what God is telling you through his Word, the Scriptures. (5) Pray using words of the Mass and consciously refer them to God. (6) Offer yourself with Jesus. (7) Receive Jesus worthily in communion. Go to confession first if in the state of mortal sin. (You commit mortal sin when you offend God in a grave matter, with full knowledge and consent). To receive him in a state of mortal sin is to commit a new sin—the very grave sin of sacrilege. (8) Thank God profusely for a few minutes after the Mass.

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CONFESSION: SIMPLE REASONS, SIMPLE STEPS

Simple reasons and steps to receive the great miracle and the great joy of God's mercy

Why do I have to go to Confession?

Because your sins have offended your loving Creator who died to make you his divine child.

(Cf. CCC 291, 2096, 598) Your sins are the cause of his agonizing, blood-soaked death on the cross.

Your grave sin causes the loss of friendship between you and God, and the loss of the greatest treasure in your soul: grace, God's gift of divine life, greater than the natural universe! Without grace, we cannot enter heaven. Upon dying, souls in mortal sin (sin in grave matter, with full knowledge and full consent) go to hell with its eternal pains. (Cf. CCC 1035)

Above all, what pleases God the most, taught Pope Francis, is forgiving you. God is the compassionate Father of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. He looks forward to embracing you, covering you with kisses and making merry with you in Confession. "God never gets tired of forgiving us... His mercy is infinitely greater than our sins." (Francis)

Forgiveness in Confession is "the greatest miracle" (Jesus to St. Faustina) and brings "the happiest moment in life". (Bl Alvaro)

Why go to Confession to a priest? Why not straight to God?

1. *It is God who determines how he will forgive us.* Not us. It's the offended party not the offender who says, "I forgive you".

2. *God said "confess your sins to one another" (Jas 5:16), and gave power to men to forgive our sins.* He breathed the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and said: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (Jn 20:23). God wanted us to confess to priests to be forgiven of our sins. It is biblical to go to confession!

3. *God made Confession a sacrament: a concrete sign through which our merciful Father embraces us and gives us back the great treasure of grace we lost in sin.* Confession makes us feel the blissful cheer of the heavenly celebration when the prodigal son returns home.

4. *God is a good Father who wants to assure us by making us know we are forgiven.* He wants to lift the burden of guilt we carry by making us hear him say through his priest, "I absolve you". What a great relief and joy to go to confession!

5. *We also offended the Church, so we also need to be reconciled with her.* Because all Christians form one body, our sins hurt the members of Christ's body. It's fair that we say sorry to the Church's head, Christ, through his representative, the priest.

6. *As a baptized member of the Church, we follow the laws of this society.* As any good member of a community, we do not do just anything we fancy. Instead, we relish God's laws.

The best devotion, according to St. Josemaria, is to say sorry to God often. When we commit the slightest faults or commit a sin, we return to God at once and embrace him anew, and we know that this gives him utmost happiness. Going to Confession shows the sincerity of our contrition, our decision to act right and follow God.



False excuses exposed

1. *"I am ashamed. I'm shy."* Since you were not ashamed to do evil, it should be easier not to be ashamed to do the good deed of confessing.
2. *"Priests are men like me."* God became a man, and he gave men power to do divine things: write God's Word, to give God's blessings, and forgive our sins (give us God's embrace!).
3. *"Priests will know my sins."* Priests are gravely bound to secrecy, and have heard hundreds of confessions of the same type of sins. Your sins are not special.

How do I go to Confession?

Only 3 simple steps: 1) *Examine your conscience.*

Try to remember all your sins since your last Confession, and be sorry for them. 2) *Confess to a priest.* Say "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was: (state when). My sins are: (tell your sins and their frequency)." When done, the priest will give advice and ask you to say an Act of Contrition, while he gives the absolution. 3) *Do the penance the priest gives.*



Simple guide to an examination of conscience: List of sins based on God's ten commandments.

1st – 3rd: Disrespect for God. No total love for God. Self-centered, not God-centered. Missing prayers, Sunday Mass, other duties to God. Superstition. Distrust, disbelief in God. Communion in mortal sin. Idolatry. **4th:** Disrespect, disobedience to parents and authorities. Neglect of family and social duties. Poor religious and moral education. **5th:** Indifferent to the spiritual and material needs of others. Wishing evil on others. Harming, bullying someone. Bad example. Overeating. Hatred. Substance abuse. Drunkenness. Self-mutilation. Thoughts of suicide. Murder. Abortion. **6th and 9th:** Impure thoughts, desires. Immodesty. Porn. Masturbation. Denial, abuse of marriage rights. Contraception. Premarital, extramarital sex. Homosexual acts. **7th and 10th:** Wasting time at work. Indifference to the poor. Envy. Cheating. Stealing. Not returning, damaging other's property. Not paying debts. Materialism. Paying unjust wages. Not doing duties to society and the environment. **8th:** Lying. Gossiping. Calumny. Destroying the good name of another.

Most important: contrition centered on the Crucified



Jesus' key message is: Repent! Change your heart! Be holy by beginning again and again. The secret of the Christian life is to center our minds on Jesus' passion, death and rising. To look at Him pierced by our sins, whose wounds heal us with his boundless love.

So we will joyfully encounter Jesus often in Confession: at least monthly. Popes go to confession weekly or every two weeks. Some went daily. They *strongly recommend* that we go often to help us (1) avoid the build-up of sin, (2) advance speedily in virtues, and (3) keep the desire for holiness alive. And so we will be Jesus' joy-filled friend, who bring others to meet him in the miracle of Confession.

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PUTTING CONFESSION AT THE CENTER

Pope Francis called us during the Year of Mercy to “put the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more”

CONFESSION: CENTRAL IMPORTANCE



Touch the greatness of God’s mercy and find meaning in life. So many people, including young people, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us *place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more* to touch the greatness of God’s mercy. (Pope Francis)

Renew the world most powerfully. *To a great extent, the renewal of the Church throughout the world depends on the renewal of the practice of the sacrament of Penance and the growth in holiness that the sacrament accomplishes.* (Benedict XVI)

Rejoice in the gift of pardon and healing. Let us then remember always that God never tires of forgiving us. Let us *truly value* this sacrament and rejoice in the gift of pardon and healing that comes to us through the ministry of priests. (Francis)

Meet with our Father who rejoices. We need to teach others, teach our children, our youngsters to make a good confession. It’s about going to meet with our Father who pardons us, who forgives us and who rejoices. (Francis)

Joins us with God in intimate friendship. The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship (CCC 1468).

Feel the joy of God who forgives everything. ‘Father, I don’t go to confession because I have committed so many really bad sins, so many that I can’t be pardoned.’ No, this is not true. If you go to confession repentant, He will forgive everything. So many times He doesn’t even let you speak! You start to ask for forgiveness and He lets you feel that joy of forgiveness before you have even finished confessing. (Francis)

Stress call to conversion to those who receive communion unprepared. In the face of a widespread phenomenon that many among the great numbers who receive Communion make little use of Confession, we must *emphasize Christ’s basic call to conversion. We must stress that the personal encounter with the forgiving Jesus in the Sacrament is a divine means* which keeps alive in our hearts a consciousness of sin in its tragic reality, and which actually brings forth fruits of conversion. (St. John Paul II. He went to Confession weekly.)

FREQUENT CONFESSION: STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

Christian leaders’ duty to encourage. The Synod of Bishops recalled that Bishops have *the pastoral duty of encouraging frequent confession.* All priests should dedicate themselves with generosity, commitment and competency to administering the sacrament of Reconciliation. (Benedict XVI. He went to confession weekly)

Form the conscience, battle evil and move forward. Confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless *strongly recommended by the Church.* Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. (CCC 1458)

Like regular cleaning to avoid build up of dirt. Helps us mature. Even if it is not necessary to go to confession before each Communion, it is *very helpful to confess with a certain regularity.* It is true: our sins are always the same, but we clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen but it builds up. If I never go to confession, my soul is neglected and in the end I am always pleased with myself and no longer understand that I must always work hard to improve. And this cleansing of the soul which Jesus gives us in the Sacrament of Confession helps us to make our consciences more alert, more open, and hence, it also helps us to mature. (Benedict XVI)

Receive advice. Needed by all. We are all sinners. *Even the pope goes to confession every two weeks because the pope, too, is a sinner.* My confessor hears what I say, offers me advice and forgives me. We all need this. (Francis)

Speedy advance in many virtues. For a constant and speedy advancement in the path of virtue *we highly recommend the pious practice of frequent confession,* introduced by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For by this means we grow in (1) a true knowledge of ourselves and in (2) Christian humility, (3) bad habits are uprooted, (4) spiritual negligence and apathy are prevented, (5) the conscience is purified and (6) the will strengthened, (7) salutary spiritual direction is obtained and (8) grace is increased by the efficacy of the sacrament itself. (Ven. Pius XII. He confessed daily)

Learn to be merciful. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father’s mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful. (CCC 1458)

Keep the desire for perfection alive. When we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently the desire for Gospel perfection is kept alive. Even when one is moved by the desire to follow Jesus, if one does not go regularly to confession, one risks gradually slowing his or her spiritual pace to the point of increasingly weakening and ultimately perhaps even exhausting it. (Benedict XVI)



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TIME ALONE WITH GOD'S LOVE: INDISPENSABLE PATH TO MAN'S ONLY GOAL

Discover a key secret on how ordinary people like you can become a saint

WHAT IS MENTAL PRAYER? Mental prayer is loving God by spending time alone with him. It's a heart-to-heart talk, praying with our own words, a conversation with the one we love. It's quiet time with God.

WHAT IS MAN'S ONLY GOAL? God. Since he is love, he made you to *be one with him: to be a saint*. In uniting yourself to him with all your heart, without reserve, as Jesus said, you attain the best happiness now.

WHY IS GOD IMPORTANT? Because he is our *Creator*, the source of everything we are and own; our *Sustainer*, for without his conserving power we vanish; our *Sole Satisfier*, the only one who can satisfy all the longings of our heart. God is our *Purpose and Meaning*. Jesus is the one real center of our life. He is not only important. He is the only thing important. All the rest of the "important things" (our family, relationships, virtue, career, health, possessions, leisure, etc.) get their importance on how much they lead us to him. This is what Jesus told Martha who was concerned with many urgent and important things: "The one thing necessary" is to *direct our whole heart to Jesus*. He is the one *Measure* of the worth of everything, especially our lives. And not to be totally one with Jesus, not to be a saint, is in the end the only tragedy and failure.

WHY IS TIME WITH GOD INDISPENSABLE TO REACH HOLINESS? Because we become one with God only through love. And we grow in love only by *allowing God to love us*, to pour himself into us through the sacraments such as frequent confession and Mass, and through intimate dialogue with him. Since we were made from nothing, we can't reach God without God. To go up an infinite distance, we need to be lifted by an infinite elevator. We are swept up to God, only if we are in close contact with God. Thus, Jesus our model spent time alone with God as part of his routine. The saints who followed him taught: "Mental prayer is the breath of life for our soul. Holiness is impossible without it." (St. Mother Teresa) "All saints became saints through mental prayer." (St. Alphonsus de Liguori) Sanctity, said Benedict XVI, is "nothing other than to speak with God as a friend speaks with a friend, allowing God to work, the Only One who can really make the world both good and happy." Everyone, even children and the weakest sinner, can have a daily heart-to-heart talk with God, and so everyone can become a saint.

WHAT PRINCIPLES I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PRAYER? Pope Francis said: The most important subject we have to learn is *love*. And what is important in love is not loving, but *allowing ourselves to be loved by God*. Jacques Philippe explained this. **1st principle: The primacy of God's action:** What matters most in prayer is not what we do, but *what God does in us*. He is the source of all our activity, he sanctifies and heals us. He is fire who warms us even if we don't do or feel anything special. So, *just be there with him and allow him to love you*. Look at his love, Jesus' loving gaze, his eyes. "God loves us" is the summary of all the truths in the world. God's love is the center of all. Just allow God to act. **2nd principle: Primacy of love above everything.** Prayer is not a matter of studying and thinking a lot, but about loving a lot. And true love means receiving God's love: In this is love, not that we loved God, but he loved us first (1 Jn 4:10) We have to shift from (a) wanting to be the center through our activity to (b) putting God in the center, his rightful place. We accept the fact that we came from nothing and are full of defects, and allow God to pour himself to us. A prayer focused on loving and trusting, and nothing else, might be less grand in our sight, but is better in God's. **3rd principle: God love us and gives himself to us through Jesus' humanity.** Contemplating all the details and words in Jesus' life story in the Gospels is a key way of receiving God's love. He is the Way.

HOW LONG SHOULD MENTAL PRAYER BE? Start with 5 to 10 minutes a day. Since you won't get to know anyone within such a limited time, the minimum is 15 minutes daily which you have to build up over time. "One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: *one makes time* for the Lord." (CCC 2710) To say "I don't have time" is to prefer created activities over their very origin and purpose, the one End-Goal of all activities. When we are with God, we arrive and rest on The Goal; he gives us the big picture and multiplies our time.



HOW ELSE CAN I LOVE GOD IN PRAYER?

Listen to what God says and discuss it with him. Aside from what we hear in our conscience, we listen to God when we read and reflect on (1) his Word, the Bible, especially the Gospels where we see Jesus act; (2) the teachings and liturgy of his Church, his Body; and (3) the writings of his saints. Many saints always had a spiritual book handy for prayer. **Share your thoughts and the events of your day.** Talk to God about "yourself—joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries, weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions—and Love and reparation. In a word, getting to know him and getting to know yourself—'to get acquainted!'" (St. Josemaria) When you meditate on the Bible stories about Jesus, imagine yourself present there and apply them to your daily life. **Call Jesus by name and call God "Daddy."** A simple way to pray, called the Jesus Prayer, is to keep on repeating the name "Jesus", or the phrase "Jesus, I love you." You can use the name Jesus uses to call God: "Daddy." **Do the acts of prayer.** A-adoration, C-contrition, T-thanksgiving, S-supplication. Pattern your desires after Jesus' "Our Father", the most perfect prayer which has seven perfectly ordered petitions. **Discuss with God how you can improve your relationship and your daily life.** God will inspire you to be a better child of God, member of your family, worker and member of society. Formulate specific steps and make a firm commitment to put them into action.

HOW CAN I SUSTAIN MY PRAYER?

(1) Internalize the deepest truths about prayer, God and yourself. (a) *The greatest in the Kingdom are the littlest children.* Mary was favored by God for he loved her "lowliness". "God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble," those who know their weakness and trust God like his littlest child. (b) *We live as we pray.* The quality of our life depends on the quality of our prayer. To have the best quality of life, offer the best quality prayer. (c) *We pray as we live.* If we don't have a sincere desire to love God with all our heart as he commanded, our prayer will fall into a rut. However, if we truly direct our whole heart, mind and strength to God the whole day – struggling to do his will in our ordinary life and material setting—God will give himself to us. **(2) Do it at a fixed time at the best time.** Love is commitment to give the best. For love is defined as *willing* the good of the other, not feelings that come and go. **(3) Never give up.** Love is fidelity. "Be loyal and you will end up madly in love with God." (Bl Alvaro) **(4) If you can, pray in front of the Eucharist.** It is where Jesus' body is. **(5) Get a coach.** To be a real athlete requires a coach. How much more the most important quest of our life? The Christian life is a battle – against the devil, sin, our evil urges. A spiritual director will guide us and pray for us.

HOW DO I BATTLE THE 3 DS? In all our battles, the first step is ask God for his omnipotent help. **(1) Distractions.** Talk to God about the events or people that cross your mind. If distractions are persistent, check whether these matters have become higher priorities for you than God. If so, ask God to purify your heart of attachment to creatures. "Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve." **(2) Dryness.** We pray to please God; not to please ourselves. Praying without emotional thrills transforms us into a grain of wheat which dies, bearing much fruit. Faithful prayer no matter how distracted and dry is more meritorious and fruitful than fervent prayer done only when we feel good. (See Jacques Philippe) If dryness is due to a heart entangled in sin, the battle requires a plea for conversion and the confession of our faults. **(3) Discouragement.** Repeated falls should remind us that the sick, not the healthy, need a physician. Be patient and trust God to take you up to a higher level of childlike humility each time you are deeply sorry and begin anew. (CCC 2729; 2731; 2737)

HOW DO I START? "Put yourself in the presence of God, and as soon as you have said, "Lord, I don't know how to pray!" you can be sure you've already begun." (St. Josemaria)

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The best way to raise your children is praying in the family – St. Josemaria

WHY IS PRAYER IMPORTANT FOR FAMILIES?

Social science research has shown that people who are religiously involved compared with those who are not: (1) spend more time on their homework and work harder in school, (2) have better academic record, (3) have greater happiness, life satisfaction, morale, and positive attitude, (4) show significantly greater self-control and decreased drug use and delinquency, (5) have lower suicide rates, (6) are more than twice as likely to volunteer, and give more money to charities, report tender, concerned feelings for the disadvantaged, (7) live an average of seven years longer. [See marri.us for scientific references]

Pope Francis, speaking to families in Manila, taught: *Resting in prayer is especially important for families. And don't forget when the family prays together, it remains together.* This is important. In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why it is so important to pray as a family.

Rest in the Lord. Rest is so necessary for the health of our minds and bodies, and often so difficult to achieve due to the many demands placed on us. But you may say to me: Holy Father, I want to pray, but there is so much work to do! This may be true, but if we do not pray, we will not know the most important thing of all: God's will for us. And for all our activity, our busy-ness, without prayer we will accomplish very little.

On Family Day, Pope Francis said: But so many people say to me: But how can we? .. there is never a good time... Yes, all that is true enough, *but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God... all of us! We need his help, his strength, his blessing, his mercy, his forgiveness.* And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents ... praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.

In Joy of the Family, where he speaks of family prayer in at least 11 points, Pope Francis wrote: A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God... With a few simple words, this moment of prayer can do immense good for our families.... It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important. Hence moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.

Pope Benedict XVI taught: *If we do not learn to pray in the family, it will be difficult to fill this gap later.*

St. Josemaria said, when asked, "Do you think some acts of piety should be lived in the family?" *I think it is precisely the best way to give children a truly Christian upbringing.* Scripture tells us about those early Christian families which drew new strength and new life from the light of the Gospel. St Paul calls them 'the Church in the household' (1 Cor 16:19). Children learn to place God first and foremost in their affections. They learn to see God as their Father and Mary as their Mother and they learn to pray following their parents' example.

St. Josemaria taught that parents should: (1) teach by example first, then by word; kids don't like insincerity; (2) explain prayer as speaking with God as a friend and father; (3) show prayer as a family tradition; (4) not force their kids. Freedom is key to loving God truly; (5) explain that prayer calls us to practice the virtues during the day.



HOW CAN FAMILIES PRAY AS A FAMILY?

DAILY PRAYERS. The family is called to join in daily prayer... and thus to grow in love. (Pope Francis)

Morning and Night Time Prayers. These prayer formulas, like the other daily

prayers, can be supplemented by personally praying out loud. Some families pray the morning prayers and the rosary in the car on the way to school.

Grace before and after meals. Before: Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen. **After:** We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits, O Almighty God, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Noontime Prayer: Angelus. Tip: Put an alarm or ring a bell at noon to call the family together. Some families pray this also at 6 PM. **V.** The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. **R.** And she conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Hail Mary) **V.** Behold the handmaid of the Lord. **R.** Be it done unto me according to thy word. (Hail Mary) **V.** And the Word was made Flesh. **R.** And dwelt among us. (Hail Mary) **V.** Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God. **R.** That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. **Let us pray:** Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mental Prayer. Each one has a quiet time with God for 5 minutes or more to (1) receive God's love and strength, (2) love God above all, (3) interact with Jesus who is alive in the Gospels, as his friend.

DAILY TO WEEKLY PRAYERS

Holy Rosary. Making the rosary a family prayer is very pleasing to me. I ask that all families strive to do so. (Our Lady of America) Some families pray the rosary before or after lunch, or dinner, on Saturdays, the special day of the week dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Holy Mass. The family's communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of the Sunday rest. There, spouses can always seal anew the paschal covenant which united them and which ought to reflect the covenant which God sealed with mankind in the cross. (Pope Francis)

Meditating on the Bible. Read the Bible often, especially on Sundays, husband and wife, parents and children. (Pope Francis) Some families read and discuss the Bible or Bible commentary on the way to Church.

WEEKLY TO MONTHLY PRAYER

Confession. It is very helpful to confess with a certain regularity. It is true: our sins are always the same, but we clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen but it builds up. And this cleansing of the soul which Jesus gives us in the Sacrament of Confession helps us to make our consciences more alert, more open, and hence, it also helps us to mature. (Benedict XVI)

Parents should gradually explain each of these prayers based on the teachings of the Catechism, the Popes and good Catholic writers.

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THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF EDUCATION: A GUIDE TO CATECHESIS

The most important aspect of educating children is passing on the faith. – Bishop Javier Echevarria

This guide, useful for family and parish catechesis and teaching Religion in school, condenses the teachings of the Vatican's General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), the Popes and the Synod on New Evangelization (Synod).



HELP THE LEARNER TO FOCUS ON AND OWN THE GOAL: A FAITHFUL RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE

Begin teaching by helping the learner know and love the one goal of catechesis: “**communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ**”. (GDC 80) The one end-goal of all men, as taught by Jesus in the greatest commandment, is to love God with *all* our heart, *all* our mind, and *all* our strength, and love others for God: to be a saint! Thus to fail to be a saint is the *only* tragedy. All doctrine has “no other objective than to *arrive at love*.” (CCC 25) True love means “willing the good of the other.” (St. Thomas) And so Christians truly love God and give the best to others if they freely choose to do so, and confidently persevere, despite unruly feelings and worldly pressure.

SET THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CATECHESIS

1. Strongly emphasize the first and principal proclamation. “God loves you and gave his life for you and is near you”. This is the summary of all we know about God, and what helps everyone to love him in return. This most solid message has “great spiritual power” to bring about the starting point of catechesis: “conversion of hearts”. (Synod, GDC 61-62) The whole education in the faith is about helping students enter more deeply into this central truth. **2. Examine reasons for belief.** The learners should see clearly that they are believing, not because their family and friends believe, but because what they believe is true (agrees with reality) and highly reasonable. Clarify why (a) God is real, (b) Jesus is God, (c) the Catholic Church is Jesus’ one true Church. **3. Ensure that students have received the key sacraments:** Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Confession. Without grace, divine life, growth in the Christian life is impossible. **4. Be warmly welcoming and give a joyful Christian example.** (cf. CCC 6)

EMPHASIZE THE KEY WAYS TO REACH THE GOAL

1. Facilitate an encounter with a living person. To help the learner to become Jesus’ intimate friend, we need to shift from (a) merely teaching truths about God to (b) *introducing Someone*. Education in the faith should “have as an objective not only the intellectual adherence to Christian truth, but also the *creation of a personal encounter*.” (Synod) In catechesis, Christ is taught—everything else is taught with reference to him. (CCC 427) Jesus is alive, and he is the one who teaches and gives grace through the educator, the priest, the Bible and catechesis. An effective practice is to recommend: “As you acquire doctrine, you can meditate, you can realize that God is looking at you, and that you are looking at him.” (St. Josemaria)

2. Focus on the essentials: make the kerygma the central and oft-repeated message. The truth that God who is alive “loves us and died to save us, and is near us” is called the kerygma. This has to be the center of all teachings, “which we must *announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis*, at every level and moment.” (Pope Francis) The kerygma is expressed in many ways, but the core of God’s love is his mercy and his thirst for our love. We help the learner achieve the goal of catechesis—union with Jesus—when we teach all the key dimensions of faith for the learners to encounter Christ in them: (1) *Creed*: We believe in God’s love, (2) *Liturgy*: We celebrate and receive Jesus’ life of love, (3) *Morality*: We live Jesus’ life of total love, (4) *Mission*: We live Jesus’ life of total love in saving souls, (5) *Prayer*: We live Jesus’ life of total love in dialogue with God, (6) *Community*: We live Jesus’s life of total love with others. (GDC 84)

3. Emphasize the key places of encounter and identification with Christ.

a. Gospels and Personal Prayer. To help students know Jesus and become one with him, catechesis should “*base itself constantly on the Gospels*...the heart of all the Scriptures.” (GDC 41) A key way to develop friendship with Jesus, possible even for little children, is quiet time of conversation with him. A simple way to do this is to block off some minutes to just be there alone with God as friend, and to allow him to love us, while loving him above all in return. Another way is to read the Gospel of the day and to talk to God about the words that strike us. St. Josemaria taught that religion “is studied properly when the subject becomes a topic for prayer.” Thus during

catechesis, an effective practice is to make each one pause to pray to God about the Christ’s teachings in silence. Also the teacher should encourage students to pray about these on their own by blocking off time for personal prayer, and to encounter Christ in all activities, offering them as prayer.

b. Liturgy as a Place of Encounter Par Excellence. The liturgy found in the Mass, Confession and the other sacraments is the “*best school of faith*.” (Synod) It makes present the Paschal Mystery, the very summit of God’s love, the center of the Christian life. Educators should echo the strong recommendation of the Church for frequent Confession and Mass, and help students understand why nothing is more important than these.

c. Family Prayer. “It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important. Hence moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.” (Pope Francis) Family prayer “is *precisely the best way* to give children a truly Christian upbringing.” (St Josemaria)

d. Christ’s identity: Son of God and Savior. “We have become Christ himself.” (CCC 795) Each one then has to always identify himself as a child of God with Christ’s mission to save souls. Students should feel the serious and joy-filled responsibility to exercise the three offices of the Savior: priest, prophet and king who Christianizes society. From early on, they have to take initiative and bring their family, classmates, friends, neighbor and the poor closer to God. “Young people should *become the first to carry on the apostolate* directly to other young persons.” (Vat II, Apostolate of the Laity, 12)

e. Christ in the Poor, the Sick and all Men. A high impact encounter with Christ is performing the works of mercy for people in need: “whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done it to me.” (Mt 25:40) Good catechists encourage families to love and visit the sick and poor. Teachers should also emphasize that love for the poor is “mainly translated into privileged religious care.” (Pope Francis)

f. Christ as Reason and Truth. Since the goal is to *consciously choose* to be one with Christ, doing his work of Christianizing the secularist society, it is key that Christians “live a faith that comes from the Logos, Reason.”

(Benedict XVI; Jn 1:1 – Logos is Word or Reason) Students should be able to generate convincing arguments for the rationality of choosing the Catholic religion and the natural law, and of critiquing the present-day errors. They should know the reasoning for the truths of Social Doctrine they ought to spread in their secular work and in the country. The teacher should ensure that no falsehood is taught or willful omissions of key doctrines occur, as these are a betrayal of Christ who is the Truth and the Light in darkness.

g. Christ as Perfect Man. Imitating Jesus who is Perfect Man, students should be trained to practice all the human virtues, like integrity, justice, cheerfulness, courtesy, loyalty, responsibility, sincerity, humility, work, etc.

h. Christ in the Beautiful Lives of the Saints. “Nothing can bring us into close contact with the beauty of Christ himself other than the world of beauty created by faith and light that shines out from the faces of the saints.”

(Benedict XVI) Mary, the greatest saint, is the shortcut to encountering Jesus.

4. Attract through the positive: joy, beauty, the greatness of God. Teachers “should appear as people who share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite to a delicious banquet...the Church grows by attraction” (Pope Francis) Effective catechists show excitement and amazement at God’s infinite beauty, wisdom and generous self-giving.



5. Follow the pedagogy of God and of the Church. God’s teaching method is our model. God became man to make it easy for us to see God. And so Jesus’ story is key, as well as the stories he told of the Kingdom. Sacred images, which John Paul II recommended to be used in praying the rosary, are “extremely effective in communicating the Gospel.” (Intro to the Compendium 5) Follow the pedagogy of the CCC, GDC and the Popes. Good teachers discern the background, culture, interests and level of the learner.

6. Embody the goal (freely chosen intimate union with God) and help the students keep it always in mind. “Today’s world needs persons who speak to God to be able to speak of God. Remember that Jesus did not redeem the world with beautiful words or showy means, but with suffering and death.” (Benedict XVI) The catechist has to faithfully persevere through the ups and downs of life to deeply know God in prayer and in the Church’s doctrine, and give the best in teaching – with punctual regularity.

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MEDITATING ON THE BIBLE

It is easy for you and your family to learn how to pray using the world's greatest book

Why should we meditate on the Bible?

- **You will meet Jesus in person.** “Jesus himself is present in his word” (Vat II, SC 7)
- **You will hear God speak.** When you pray, you speak to God, when you read the Bible, God speaks to you, says St. Augustine. We don't have to wait for him to speak to us first. He has already spoken. (Pope Francis)
- **You will be nourished.** Jesus' word is the most nourishing food for the soul, says Pope Francis.
- **You will feel God's love.** The Bible is the greatest love letter ever written.
- **You will help change the world.** Pope Benedict XVI said that when Christians rediscover Bible meditation, there will be a “new springtime”.

Pope Francis taught: A Christian's *first task* is to listen to the word of God, to listen to Jesus, because he speaks to us and saves us with his word.

How do I meditate on the Bible?

It's as simple as *talking with* a close friend!

Because Jesus told us: I have called you my friends. And the original word he used refers to his intimate circle!

When you *talk with* a friend, there are three things that happen: (1) your friend talks first and you listen, (2) you talk and then he listens; (3) you agree to do something. Simple!

You can find these three elements in the steps for Prayerful Reading of Scripture or *Lectio Divina* (divine reading) outlined by Pope Benedict XVI:



(1) *Reading* (what the Word of God says) and *Meditation* (I listen to what God is telling *me*, e.g. a phrase that strikes *me*)

(2) *Prayer* (what I tell Jesus: thank you, sorry, help me, or use prayers in the Bible, etc.) and *Contemplation* (I look at Jesus with love and he looks at me with divine love)

(3) *Action* (I do something to love God above all and love my neighbor)

How can I make my meditation even more fruitful?

In line with many Catholic saints, St. Josemaria said: My advice is that, in your prayer, you actually *take part in the different scenes* of the Gospel, *as one more* among the people present. First of all, *imagine the scene* or mystery you have chosen, to help you recollect your thoughts and meditate.

Remember: all of Christ's actions described in the Bible are God's actions. They are eternal and timeless. We can interact with them at this moment.



What is the best part of the Bible to pray about?

Pope Benedict XVI taught there is a very deep union between the Bible and the Mass. (Bible scholars say that all the books were collected as one Bible to be read for liturgical worship!) And so Pope Benedict said that the “correct approach to Scripture” is to “savor the deep meaning of the word of God” in the *three readings and the prayers of the Mass* of the day. (VD 52-55; cf The Way 86)

The best part of all is *the Gospel*. St. Therese of Lisieux said: Above all it's the Gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer. My poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there, hidden and enthralling meanings. The Catechism taught: Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the *mysteries of Christ*, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. (CCC 2708)

If I don't understand something in the Bible, what do I do?

Since the Bible is a book of the Catholic Church, it is her teachers who can best explain it. These commentaries can be found in in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Navarre Bible, etc.

What are the best attitudes to have while meditating on the Bible?

A loving focus on Jesus and his divine look of love for us. The important thing in prayer, said St. Teresa, is not to think much, but to love much. Also, Jesus said: *the greatest* in the kingdom of heaven is whoever *humbles himself like a child*. St. Josemaria wrote: give yourself as children do... pray as children pray.

When and how should my family and I read the Bible?

Remember: love means working on the relationship and putting time. Pope Francis taught: “The Bible is not for putting in a shelf. It is for reading it *often, everyday*, either individually or in groups, husband and wife, parents and children; maybe at night, *especially on Sundays*.”

In family *lectio divina*, these steps can be followed: (1) Reading – each one takes turns reading a few verses of the Gospel of the day, or other preselected portions, (2) Meditation, (3) Prayer, (4) Contemplation, (5) Discussion – each one shares with the others what struck them, and his thoughts and prayer.

What's the single most important advice on prayer?

Just do it! (Kreeft) Jesus said: We need to pray continually and never lose heart.

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LOVING OUR MOTHER MARY

Beautiful and wise sayings, and practical ways to show our love

MARY IS OUR LOVING MOTHER. Behold your mother. (Jesus) Am I not here, your mother? Are you not under my protection? Are you not happily under my mantle? (Our Lady of Guadalupe) Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. (St. Irenaeus) There is no one, after God, who loves us as much as this most loving Mother does. Put together all the love of mothers for their children, all the love of husbands for their wives, and all the love of the Angels and Saints for the people under their care, it could never equal Mary's love for even a single soul! (St. Alphonsus de Liguori) She loves you as if you were her only child in this world. Treat her accordingly: tell her about everything that happens to you, honour her and love her.... Love the Mother of God madly, for she is our Mother too. (St. Josemaria) What a joy to remember that she is our Mother! (St. Therese of Lisieux)

Our help in difficulties and in sin. The greater sinners we are, the more tenderness and compassion she feels for us. (St. John Mary Vianney) Love for our Mother will be the breath that kindles into a living flame the embers of virtue hidden in the ashes of your indifference... To Jesus we go and to him we 'return' through Mary... In the darkness of the night, when a little child is afraid, it cries out: "Mommy!" That is what I have to do, to cry out many times with my heart: "Mother! Mommy! Don't leave me." (St. Josemaria) If the winds of temptation blow, look to the star of the sea by calling out to Mary. If you are disturbed by the memory of your sin, think of Mary. In every danger, moment of anguish, or doubt, invoke Mary. You will never be lost if you think about her. (St. Bernard) If you ever feel distressed, just say this simple prayer: "Mary, Mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now." I must admit — this prayer has never failed me. (Bl. Mother Teresa)

She is the easy path to God. The Madonna is the shortcut to get to God. (St. Padre Pio) The world being unworthy to receive the Son of God directly from the hands of the Father, he gave his Son to Mary for the world to receive him from her. (St. Augustine) When the Holy Spirit finds Mary in a soul, He enters that soul completely and communicates Himself completely to that soul. (St. Louis de Montfort) Before, by yourself, you couldn't. Now, you've turned to our Lady, and with her, how easy! (St. Josemaria)

Her great dignity, beauty and power. God could make a greater world and a greater heaven, but He cannot exalt a creature more than by making her His Mother. (St. Bonaventure) From the fact that she is the Mother of God, she has a certain infinite dignity. (St. Thomas Aquinas) Mary is the most beautiful of God's creatures. (Ven. Pope Pius XII) She is omnipotent in supplication. (Tradition) The Son never refuses the Mother anything she seeks. (St. Alphonsus)

LOVING MARY LIKE HER CHILD, JESUS. Become little. Look at the way your kids look at you, hug you, and think that you can do the same with our Blessed Lady...A mother's greatest desire for her children is to have them close to her. (St. Josemaria) Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did. (St. Maximilian Kolbe). You can never love her enough. And Jesus will be very happy, because the Blessed Virgin is His Mother. (St. Therese) After God, our greatest glory and greatest joy is Mary. (St. Bonaventure)



Having devotion to Mary. Devotion to Mary is delicious, sweet and nourishing. (St. John Vianney) Devotion to you, O Mary, is a pledge of salvation which God grants to those whom He wills to save. (St. John Damascene)

Greeting Mary. When you 'hail' Mary, she immediately greets you! If you greet her, she will answer you right away and converse with you! (St. Bernardine) St.

Bernard used to say to her, "I salute you Mary." One day she replied to him, "I salute you my son, Bernard." (St. John Mary Vianney) O Mary, what must you yourself be, since your very name is so loving and gracious. (Bl. Henry Suso) The Angelus makes us relive in a way that great event in human history, the Incarnation, to which every "Hail Mary" refers. (St. John Paul II)

Praying and spreading her rosary. It is Our Lady's favorite prayer. (Bl. Paul VI) It is to contemplate with Mary the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love (St. John Paul II) Saying the rosary is the most pure joy of my heart! (St. Francis de Sales) Pray the rosary every day. Our Lady has repeated that in all her apparitions. (Sr. Lucia) One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved. (Our Lady to Bl. Bartolo)

Praying the family rosary. There is no surer means of calling down God's blessings upon the family... than the daily recitation of the Rosary. (Pope Pius XII) Making the rosary a family prayer is very pleasing to me. I ask that all families strive to do so. But be careful to say the Rosary with great devotion, meditating on each mystery and striving to imitate in your daily lives the virtues depicted. (Our Lady of America) How beautiful is the family that recites the Rosary every evening! (St. John Paul II)

Accompanying Mary at Jesus' sacrifice. The first Marian devotion is the Holy Mass... we recall the silence and recollection with which Mary accompanied her Son to Calvary. (St. Josemaria) The Passion of Christ was as it were mirrored in the heart of the Virgin, in which might be seen faithfully reflected, the spitting, the blows, and all that he suffered. (St. Lawrence Justinian) The heart of Mary was so filled with motherly tenderness and compassion for men that no one ever suffered so much for their own pains, as Mary suffered for the pains of her children. (St. Jerome)

Consecrating oneself to Mary. Since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother. This devotion consists in giving ourselves entirely to the Blessed Virgin, in order to belong entirely to Jesus. (St. Louis de Montfort)

Saying short prayers to Mary. Let us not be shy about repeating short prayers to her throughout the day. (St. Josemaria) O Mary, I want to be always your child. (St. Dominic Savio) *Totus tuus, I am all yours.* (St. Louis de Montfort and St. John Paul II)

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Top Ten Instructions of John Paul the Great on the Rosary, “the Most Effective Means of Fostering a Christian Prayer Life”

One of the greatest Popes of all time, whose towering sanctity and influence is based on his Marian devotion, gave specific instructions on how we can profit the most from this powerful devotion.

At the end of his life, Pope John Paul II strongly encouraged praying the Rosary, and the topmost reason for doing so, he said, was that the Rosary is “the most effective means of fostering...a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer.”

Even when his life was waning, John Paul the Great felt that God wanted him to be the Pope who will lead the Church at the beginning of the new millennium. And moved by God, he gave the Church a master plan, in a document titled *At the Beginning of the new Millennium*, containing his vision on how the Church can bring about a new springtime of Christianity in this new age.

The highest priority he specified for the Church is *a training in holiness*, and this in turn, he said, calls for “a Christian life distinguished above all in *the art of prayer*.” And the most effective way is the Rosary.

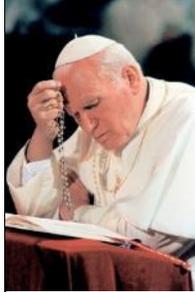
Years before, St. Josemaria, a saint who John Paul II described as the apostle of the laity for modern times, taught that the Rosary is *the secret to becoming great*. In his book, the Holy Rosary, St. Josemaria explained the logical connection between praying the Rosary and great sanctity:

- > to become great, become little
- > to become little, love as children love, give yourself as children give themselves, pray as children pray
- > to love as children love, love our Lady
- > to love our Lady, get to know her
- > to get to know her, pray her Rosary well.

Drawing from the wisest Church teachings on learning prayer and knowing the challenges of today, John Paul the Great gave specific instructions and recommendations on how we can pray the Rosary in the most beneficial way:

1. Do not just recite the Rosary. Contemplate the life of Jesus with the heart of Mary while praying. Without contemplation, the Pope stressed, the Rosary would lose its meaning, like a body without a soul. The Rosary is above all a meditation on the mystery of Jesus Christ, a contemplation of how he lived God’s life of love.

2. Aim at becoming friends with Christ, learning his life, and becoming one with him. John Paul II said that the “Rosary mystically transports us to Mary’s side.” It is by interacting with Jesus and Mary, listening to them, helping them, admiring them, that we learn their deepest attitudes and virtues, their way of serving and responding to challenges and to joys.



3. Meditate on each of the mysteries. All the mysteries help us “remember Christ”, to imitate Mary, the greatest saint, who pondered all the events of Christ life in her heart.

4. Announce each mystery and use an icon to portray it. This, he said, is “a great help in concentrating the mind on the particular mystery.” God became man precisely so we can go to the invisible God through what is

visible. That is why Benedict XVI said that sacred images are “extremely effective in communicating the Gospel.” With the internet, one can easily find these icons.

5. After the announcement, read a related Biblical passage. This, he taught, allows God to speak, and there is no word that matches the efficacy of God’s word. Benedict XVI, who emphasized the power of meditating on Scripture to bring about a new springtime in the Church, repeated this recommendation. He said that this practice would “encourage the memorization of brief biblical passages relevant to the mysteries of Christ’s life.” [For a list of biblical passages, google “primacyofreason rosary biblical passages for contemplating”]

6. Pause for a few seconds after the announcement to focus attention on the mystery. Silence has great power to help us to pray and meditate. St. Josemaria recommended a three to four second pause.

7. Lift your heart to God the Father during the Our Father. This is an important moment to remember what Pope Francis repeatedly calls “our deepest identity”, our being children of God, little ones who are totally in need of God.

8. Remember that in the Hail Marys the center of the prayer is Jesus. The whole Rosary, and especially its most repeated prayer, the Hail Mary, is a Christ-centered prayer. In the Rosary, our main purpose is to look at Jesus’ face, together with Mary whose whole heart was centered on Jesus.

9. Give importance to the Glory Be, because giving glory to the Trinity is the goal and high point of contemplation. Jesus leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is “the central mystery of Christian life”, and our whole life and eternity is a sharing in the life of the Trinity. (CCC 261; 265)

10. Ask that our prayer improves our daily life. Thus we pray at the end that “by meditating on mysteries of the Rosary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise.”

The Rosary, John Paul II stressed, “offers the ‘secret’ which leads easily to a profound and inward knowledge of Christ.” At the end of his document on the Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, he wrote: A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture ... and in the context of your daily lives. May this appeal of mine not go unheard!

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THE POPE: Christ on Earth

His role, responsibility, mission and the best attitudes towards him

1. What do we believe about the Pope?

We call the Pope “Father”, because the *Pope represents God as our Father, who loves us, who made us, and who sent his Son to die on the cross for us. The Pope represents God our Father in a special way, because like a good parent he guards the truth of the revelation which Jesus Christ handed on to his apostles, the chief of whom was Simon whom Jesus called in his own language Cephas, meaning “Rock”. We believe that the present Pope is the successor of Peter.* (CATEW FAQ)



2. What is the biblical and historical basis for calling the Pope “Vicar of Christ” and “successor of Peter”?

Jesus told Peter: “*I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” (Mt16:17-19)

“The keys of the kingdom” refer to the power of a prime minister of the King and chief teacher (Is 22:22). Jesus also told Peter alone “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.” (Jn 21:15-17) It was upon Simon Peter alone that Jesus bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold. (*Pastor aeternus*)

Jesus gave Peter a unique position of preeminence among the apostles. This made him the supreme authority in the early Church. Rome - the local Church that Peter led and the place of his martyrdom - became after his death the internal reference point of the young Church. Every Christian community had to agree with Rome; that was the *standard for the true, complete, and unadulterated apostolic faith.* (YOUCAT) The early Christians referred to Peter’s Roman Church as “presiding” (Ignatius, 1st -2nd c.), “of superior origin” and standard of “true Faith” (Irenaeus, 2nd c.), “Chair of Peter”, “the principal” (Cyprian, 2nd-3rd c.), and “the primacy” (Augustine, 4th-5th c.).

3. What is the Pope’s responsibility?

As successor of St. Peter and head of the college of bishops, the Pope is *the source and guarantor of the Church’s unity.* He has the supreme pastoral authority and the *final authority* in doctrinal and disciplinary decisions.

As the highest pastoral and doctrinal authority, he *watches over the transmission of the true faith.*

Unity in matters of faith and morals, which is guaranteed by the Church’s Magisterium, or teaching authority, with the Pope at the head, is one reason for the remarkable resilience and influence of the Catholic Church. (YOUCAT 141)

Through the Pastors of the Church, in fact: it is Jesus who guides, protects and corrects the sheep, because he loves them deeply. (Pope Benedict XVI quoted by Pope Francis)

4. What is the mission of the Catholic Church led by the Pope?

The mission of the Church is to *proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God* begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples. (Compendium 150)

The Church’s first purpose is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of men with God.* (CCC 775; italics in the original) In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become *missionary disciples.* (Pope Francis)

5. What are the best attitudes towards the Pope?

a. *See Christ in the Pope.* Love for the Roman Pontiff must be in us a delightful passion, for in him we see Christ. ... the Pope, “the sweet Christ on earth”, as Saint Catherine of Siena, liked to repeat.



b. *Love, obedience, affection.* Your deepest love, your greatest esteem, your most heartfelt veneration, your most complete

obedience and your warmest affection have also to be shown towards the Vicar of Christ on earth, towards the Pope. We Catholics should consider that after God and the most Holy Virgin, our Mother, the Holy Father comes next in the hierarchy of love and authority.

c. *Know his thought and live it.* Faithfulness to the Pope includes a clear and definite duty: that of knowing his thought, which he tells us in Encyclicals or other documents. We have to do our part to help all Catholics pay attention to the teaching of the Holy Father, and bring their everyday behavior into line with it.

d. *Pass on his words.* Welcome the Pope’s words with a religious, humble, internal and effective acceptance. And pass them on. (Replies a-d, from St. Josemaria)

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LOVING THE POOR

Take part with your family in the adventure of encountering Jesus in the poor and gaining great wisdom from it

WHY LOVE AND VISIT THE POOR?

- **Each person has an infinite dignity.** This teaching of the Popes is based on each one having the image and likeness of God, and the fact that Jesus has united himself with each one, especially the neediest: “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me,” said Jesus. (Mt. 25:40)
- **Loving the poor heals our pettiness, selfishness and materialism.** Blessed Alvaro del Portillo said: ‘It makes us see that often we are concerned about foolish things that are simply the result of our own selfishness and pettiness.’ The Catechism states that “Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use.”
- **The poor give us great wisdom.** Pope Francis told us of the wise lessons we can learn from them: dignity is not based on possessions; humility; trust in God; generosity; spirit of detachment. St. Josemaria wrote that “The poor are my best spiritual book”. (Furrow 827)
- **Being with the poor is a soul-enriching encounter with Jesus Christ.** St. Josemaria explained that the goal of visiting the poor is “to see Jesus in the poor, the sick, the helpless, the lonely, the suffering, in the child. So [young people] will learn to wage a great battle against misery, against ignorance, against disease, against suffering.” He said that “contact with poverty is an occasion that the Lord usually uses, to enkindle in souls desires of generosity and divine adventures. At the same time, it makes young people aware of always having a heart for justice and love.”
- **Through almsgiving, we practice the virtues of charity, mercy and justice.** The Catechism calls almsgiving “one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.” Because God created all the goods of the world for everyone, the Catechism explains through the words of two great saints: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.” (St. John Chrysostom) “More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice..” (St. Gregory the Great)
- **God hears their cry and asks us “to give them something to eat.”** (Mk 6:27) “The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (Jas 5:4)
- **We follow the lead of Jesus and his Vicars, the Popes who want a Church of the poor for the poor.** “Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of of society’s most neglected members.” (Pope Francis) The option for the poor “is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty”. (Benedict XVI) Pope Francis taught that Matthew Chapter 25 which speaks of love for the least and of using our talents is “the standard by which we will be judged” at the end of our life.

HOW DO WE LOVE THE POOR?

- **Show great respect, love and caring for the poor, especially those closest to you.** Pope Francis taught: “what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but *above all* an attentiveness which considers the other ‘in a certain sense as one with ourselves.’ This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person.” Start with just pay and extra caring for your household help.
- **Work so as to “be able to give to those in need.”** (Eph 4:28) Pope Francis taught that the economy’s key concern is the dignity of each person and that business is a “noble vocation to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all.”
- **Be involved in efforts to alleviate the problems of the poor and solve poverty.** Take part in and donate to educational endeavors. Work “to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor” and reject “all forms of injustice and corruption which, by stealing from the poor, poison the very roots of society.” (Pope Francis)
- **Pray for the poor and for good government.** Pray for the poor people that you see in the streets, the slums, on TV and in the web. When you pray “Give us this day our daily bread”, think of replenishing the needs of all the poor people. Pope Francis taught us to ask God for politicians who will fulfill their lofty vocation in politics, solving the roots of the world’s evils and practising charity at the macro level.
- **Give spiritual help.** Pope Francis emphasized that “Our preferential option for the poor must *mainly translate* into a privileged and preferential religious care.” Help in teaching catechism to the poor.
- **Make visits to the poor.** (1) *Identify the poorest people in the area or the most needful among the sick in the public hospital.* Visit those who are most in need of consolation. (2) *Bring gifts.* Children can contribute to the gifts from their allowance to help them live the spirit of poverty and generosity. St. Josemaria recommended gifts that the poor do not usually receive. Give them spiritual items too, which can help them pray, e.g. prayer cards, rosaries. It will console them greatly, if we promise to pray for them and their needs. (3) *Interact and converse with each person with warmth and affection.* This is the most important element of the visit. “The greatest gift we can give to them is our friendship, our concern, our tenderness, our love for Jesus. To receive Jesus is to have everything; to give him is to give the greatest gift of all.” (Pope Francis’ undelivered speech for his Encounter with the Youth in the Philippines)



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STRATEGIES FOR A GREAT FAMILY

Discover the wisdom-filled principles revealed by Jesus through his Church's Catechism and his Vicars, the Popes

BEAUTY OF MATRIMONY

Marriage and its mission. God who is love and who created man and woman for love has called them to love. By creating man and woman he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage: "So that they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Mt 19:6). God said to them in blessing "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). The conjugal community is established upon the covenant and consent of the spouses. Marriage and family are ordered to the good of the spouses, to the procreation and the education of children.

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other *with the love with which Christ has loved his Church* [with self-sacrifice]. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Entrust self to Jesus. "To spouses, God the Father gives his Son Jesus, not to condemn them, but to save them: if they entrust themselves to him, he will bring them healing by the merciful love which pours forth from the Cross, with the strength of his grace that renews and sets married couples and families once again on the right path. The love of Christ can restore the joy of journeying together." (Pope Francis)

True love, not feelings. "You can't base a marriage on feelings that come and go. But rather on the rock of true love, *the love that comes from God*. When we pray 'Give us this day our daily Bread', when it comes to marriage, we can say: *Give us this day our daily love*. Being in love means saying three phrases more often than not: *May I? Thank you and I'm sorry*. It's important to acknowledge that *your spouse is a gift from God*. When you receive a gift from God, you say Thank You. There is no such thing as a perfect husband or wife. It's us who do exist, sinners. Jesus tells us a secret: *Never let the day end, without apologizing... A small gesture is enough*." (Pope Francis) Love means "willing the good of the other" (Aristotle and St. Thomas) and "total self-giving" (John Paul II).

The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. *Large families* [are] a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity. "The sons and daughters of large families are more inclined to fraternal communion... a school of solidarity and sharing." (Pope Francis)

PARENTS: PRINCIPAL EDUCATORS

Your children are God's. Parents must regard their children as *children of God*. Every spiritual soul is created immediately by God. It is not "produced" by the parents. Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, they educate their children to fulfill God's law.

Teach Jesus' greatest commandments. God has loved us first. The ten commandments then make explicit the response of love that man is called to give to his God. Jesus said: 'You shall love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Mt 22: 36-39)

First responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule.

Family catechesis and choice of school. "There cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this *ministry of being their own children's catechists* and to carry it out with tireless zeal." (John Paul II) "The breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith is caused by a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families." (Francis) As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators



Virtues and chastity. Education in virtues requires an apprenticeship in *self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery* – the preconditions of all true freedom. It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people about the dignity of married love [and] the *value of chastity*.

First school of Christian life and human enrichment. All members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way by the reception of the sacraments [frequent confession and Sunday Eucharist], prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.

Educate in right use of reason. Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their *young children* and providing for their physical and spiritual needs. *As the children grow up*, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

Spiritual over material. Interiority over instincts. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the material and instinctual dimensions to *interior and spiritual ones*. The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into *solidarity and social responsibilities*. Children owe their parents respect, gratitude, just obedience, and assistance. Filial respect fosters harmony in all of family life.

Give good example and discipline. Parents have a *grave responsibility* to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them.

Live in the truth. Men could not live with one another if there were not mutual confidence that they were being truthful to one another. "Parents must actively ensure the moderate, critical, watchful and prudent use of the media [and] train the conscience of their children." (John Paul II)

First vocation: follow Jesus. Family ties are important but not absolute: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37). Parents must *support with joy* their children's choice to follow Jesus in whatever state of life.

Domestic church and family prayer. The family is the "*domestic church*" where God's children learn to pray "as the Church" and to persevere in prayer. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. "How much peace would flow into family relationships if the family would begin again to pray the Rosary" (JPII). "Read the Bible often, especially on Sundays, husband and wife, parents and children" (Pope Francis).

Except for the quotes, the bracketed portions, and some headings, the text is taken from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (366, 1642, 1661, 1657, 2067, 2083, 2205, 2222-2229, 2251, 2373, 2469-70, 2685) and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (337, 460, 462). In support of the New Evangelization, please copy and distribute. Or sell with or without profit. Online at: <https://paref.edu/ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/strategies-for-a-great-family/>

PURITY AND THE BEST REMEDY AGAINST LUST

A cure for the deadly sin that leads to hell "more than any other sin" (Our Lady of Fatima) and a way to live a pure life of happiness!

All men are born wounded, inclined to evil, a tendency called "concupiscence", a rebellion of the flesh against the spirit—the very root of the Culture of Death. To get cured, we take three steps: 1) *Go to the best doctor.* 2) *Take the best medicines.* 3) *Live a healthy lifestyle.* By doing these, we grow in the beautiful virtue called chastity or holy purity.



GO TO THE BEST DOCTOR: Ask Jesus to heal you.

For any illness of the soul, there is only one best doctor: Jesus, who said: Without me you can do nothing. "It is not possible to lead a clean life without God's assistance. He wants us to be humble and to ask for his aid." (St. Josemaria) Beg Jesus to grant us the virtue of chastity, the intelligent leadership of our sexual desires and the freedom of true love. "Purity is the fruit of prayer," taught St. Mother Teresa. To attain purity, we have to cease trying to rely on ourselves (Benedict XVI) and cast our cares on God. (St. Augustine) A short biblical prayer is "If you wish, you can make me clean." In the net, you can find many prayers for purity. The key is to repeat them with the humility of a powerless child.

TAKE THE BEST MEDICINES: Allow Jesus to heal you.

Jesus' most powerful cure for lust is his wounds. "By his wounds we are healed," says the Bible. To heal us, Pope Francis taught, "Jesus invites us to behold these wounds, to touch them as Thomas did." St. Josemaria advised: "Enter into the wounds of Christ crucified. There you will learn to guard your senses. You will have interior life." "If an impure thought strikes me, I resort to the wounds of Christ. If the heat of lust rises in me, it is extinguished by recalling the wounds of Christ. I have not found a more effective remedy. In them I sleep soundly and rest unafraid," wrote Abbot John of Fécamp, the most popular spiritual writer during the Golden Age of Christendom.



Recalling the passion and the wounds of Christ gives us (1) *contrition* for our sins that caused those painful wounds, (2) *gratitude* for all the graces that come from those merciful wounds, the source of the entire Church, and (3) *love*, in return for God's ultimate expression of love.

Purity is pure love. And the key to love, life's most important subject, said Pope Francis, is not our loving, but "allowing ourselves to be loved." So let us center our life on the one truth behind all that exists: God loves us, died to save us and rose to give us his life. Making our minds and hearts revolve around Jesus' supreme love in Calvary is the secret to the sweet joy of daily life and our deep conversion from lust.

Always carry a crucifix and kiss it. Etch in your memory images and films such as the *Passion of the Christ*, which portray Jesus' bloody sacrifice and console him, and rejoice in his rising. His passion and rising are made present in the sacraments, giving us grace. Go often to Confession and the Eucharist. At Mass, "in your mind's eye transport yourself to Calvary," (St. Padre Pio) the outpouring of God's infinite love.

Included in Jesus' healing love are the truths about sexuality. He teaches these through his Catholic Church's Theology of the Body. We need to flush out the diabolical lies that poison our culture and instead remind ourselves many times of God's liberating truths—about Happiness, Love, Bodies, Sex, Chastity, and Holiness (HLBSCH).

Truth 1: HAPPINESS only comes from true love. Not from selfishness. Selfishness only produces the sadness of guilt. God is love and he designed us to love God with all our heart, and to love others for God, as his greatest commandment states. We brim with supreme joy when we truly love.

Truth 2: LOVE means willing the good of the other person and total self-giving. Not fleeting feelings. Not evil, animal instincts. Our love is

true when we freely choose to love God and give our best for others, despite our unruly feelings and worldly pressure.

Truth 4: BODIES are persons (children, images and temples of God) to be revered, served and saved. Not objects to be used for selfish ends. A look of lust, taught Jesus, is "adultery in the heart". Instead, thank God for the beauty of human bodies and see Jesus in them.

Truth 4. SEX is a sacred gift that enables us to make a gift of ourselves and of immortal souls with God in marriage. Not a toy. Humans are incarnate spirits. We express self-giving love not just by our souls, but also by our bodies, and sexuality. In marital sex, one expresses love in the life-long gift of self and in the gift of children.



Truth 5: CHASTITY is a joyful Yes to true love freed from selfishness through self-mastery. Not a negative. Since you cannot give a gift that you do not have, you have to master your body to be able to give it freely and help others. Chastity is intelligent leadership of our emotions and sexual urges. As we discipline our appetite intelligently by eating right to be fit and healthy, we channel our sexual urges to be able to give real, flourishing and joyful love.

Truth 6: Sanctity is man's great calling: to be one with God in the total gift of ourselves in marriage or in apostolic celibacy.

LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: Live Jesus' life of love.

Be immersed in God's love. Center your heart on Jesus' boundless love for us, engrave in your mind his truths, and live a Christian life: prayer, generous service, hard work, sobriety, and bouncing back at once after a failure since God's infinite mercy never wanes. Fasting is not only an evidence-based habit for good health but also a logical remedy for lust, taught by the Church. St Josemaria advised singing love songs to God.

Very important: preventive confession or mentoring. When you are feeling weak, receive the divine help offered in Confession. This is a very effective habit. St. Josemaria taught that humility ("I need help") and sincerity form the foundation of victory: "if you open your heart wide, you will not be defeated." Remember: An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. And Confession is Jesus' strengthening power.

Strengthen your motivation to choose purity. Emotions are like noisy passengers in your car. No matter how noisy and nagging they may be, you are still in control of your free will. Feeling a temptation is not the same as choosing it. Clearly, eternal hell is not an option; while God is Infinite Beauty, Deepest Happiness, and the Sole Satisfier our hearts' desires. Always keep in mind that impurity is incompatible with the goal of being a good person, a trusted worker, family member and citizen.

Scorn impure urges and fly away at once to Jesus and Mary. Sexual sins are filthy: shamefully egoistic, irrationally animalistic and destructively addictive. The "one last sin" is a poisonous trap that only leads to more and worse sins: a joyless spiral. Show forceful repugnance to the hoggish temptation ("Yuck!") then shun it fast. "You do not win by resisting, because the more you think about it, the more it sways you. You win by fleeing, avoiding unclean thoughts completely," (St. Thomas Aquinas) and running to embrace Jesus on the cross, where he won the final victory over evil. Our mother Mary hugs us there.

Web Content Filtering
more than increasing productivity



Identify and avoid the triggers to lust. Avoid occasions of sin: images, sights, situations of boredom and loneliness. Check the moral content of movies (e.g., free CNS movie guide) and use computer filters (e.g. K9 Filter is free).

Be an active advocate of the New Sexual Revolution of the Theology of the Body. If you live to survive, you will fall off the edge pushed by the wild, raging current of the present Culture of Death. Take part in the exhilarating adventure of bringing about a new culture of true, total self-giving love. Read more about it (e.g. Chastity.org; Chastityproject.org). Spread it. You can, for example, spread the use of this article as a first step. ©

In support of the New Evangelization, please copy and distribute, or sell with or without profit: Online copy at: <https://paref.edu/ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/purity-and-the-best-remedy-against-lust/>

GIVING REAL LOVE TO YOUR CHILD:

An outline on how parents can educate their children in human sexuality

To protect your family, as Pope Francis urged, parents have to teach that *sex is for total self-giving love*.

The outline is based on the Vatican's [Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family](#).

REASON: Why do I have to teach this?

(1) *Your child's happiness depends on it.* If training a child to read and write prepares for a good life, how much more training to love in a family! The great five-word conclusion of Harvard's longest study is: Happiness is love. Full stop. (2) *Your child is threatened by diabolical falsehoods.* Porn access and a sex-crazed media promote seeing *sex as a trivial toy* and *bodies as things to be used* for selfish ends. (3) *Porn is as addicting as heroin. Its use lowers academic performance.* (4) *Eternal life is at stake.* Our Lady of Fatima in 1917 warned: More souls go to hell for sins of the flesh *than for any other sin.* (5) *It's your grave and joyful duty.* No one else but you are ultimately accountable for your child's education. So overcome your discomfort for the sake of your child. Remember: Only truth sets free!

CONTENT: What truths do I have to teach? (HLG-BS-CS)

Truth 1: HAPPINESS only comes from true love. Not from selfishness. Selfishness only produces the sadness of guilt. God is love and he designed us to love God with all our heart, and to love others for God, as his greatest commandment states. God told parents to teach this commandment. We brim with supreme joy when we truly love.

Truth 2: LOVE means willing the good of the other person and total self-giving. Not fleeting feelings. Not evil, animal instincts. Our love is true when we freely choose to love God and give our best for others, despite our unruly feelings and worldly pressure.

Truth 3. GOD is the ultimate source of true love. Not our actions. The key to love, taught Pope Francis, is not our loving, but allowing ourselves to be loved by God. So let us [center our life on the one truth behind all that exists](#): *God loves us, died to save us and rose to give us his life.* Making our minds revolve around Jesus' loving deeds in Calvary is the secret to the sweet joy of life and our deep conversion from lust. This ultimate love of God for us is "made present" in Mass and in Confession, and so we frequently go to these sacraments.

Truth 4: BODIES are persons (children, images and temples of God) to be revered, served and saved. Not objects to be used for selfish ends. A look of lust, taught Jesus, is "adultery in the heart". Instead, thank God for the beauty of human bodies: "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Mighty God." (Ps 84:1), and see Jesus in them.

Truth 5. SEX is a sacred gift that enables us to make a gift of ourselves and of immortal souls in marriage. Not a toy. Humans are incarnate spirits. So we [express total self-giving love not just by our souls, but also by our bodies](#), and sexuality.

Truth 6: CHASTITY is a joyful Yes to true love. It is pure love freed from selfishness through self-mastery. Not a negative. Since you cannot give a gift that you do not have, you have to master your body to be able to give it freely and help others. Chastity is intelligent leadership of our emotions and sexual urges. As we discipline our appetite intelligently by eating right to be healthy and fit, we [channel our sexual urges to be able to give real, flourishing, joyful and faithful love to others](#). Unchastity, however, leads to dissipation and infidelity.

Truth 7: SANCTITY is God's design for man: to love God above self in a gift of ourselves in marriage or in apostolic celibacy. God meant sex to express total self-giving within marriage with two inseparable meanings. (1) Giving one's bodily fertility to cooperate with God in generating a child: A new immortal spirit is an inestimable gift to the spouse (baby-making or procreative meaning of sex), (2) Giving one's whole life until death (bonding or unitive meaning). Only the [sacred covenant of the sacrament of marriage](#) provides for the good of children (growth and education in a stable family), and the good of the spouses (total committed love). Thus, these are sins against God and self-destructive evils, for they go against our design to love God above self: 1) *masturbation* – selfish self-seeking, not self-giving;



2) *fornication* – no total, committed, life-long self-giving union, 3) *contraception* – anti-procreative (= anti-good), a willful no to new humans, while natural family planning is moral: non-procreative, accepting nature's rhythm. Contraception is a lie in the sexual language of total self-giving by willfully withholding fertility.

Since sex means self-giving love, the greater vocation is celibacy. It gives up the great good of marriage for total self-giving union with God, Love Himself. Like Mary, it gives birth to a multitude of spiritual children. Parents are to support this calling with joy, as an immense honor, a sign of God's predilection and particular affection for their family and values.

PEDAGOGY: How and when do I teach?

(1) Teach gradually—suited to their age and intelligence—and repeatedly. Use moments like pregnancy and birth. (2) **Very important: Be ahead** of the need and the bad influence of peers. (3) Have one-on-one friendly chats: dad with son, mom with daughter. (4) Build a home environment of growth in real love and moral virtue. (5) Train in the critical use of media. Protect from falsehoods. Check moral content of shows and movies (e.g., free [CNS movie guide](#)). Use computer filters (e.g. [K9 Filter is free](#)).

Innocence (5 years old to age of puberty): *Your child is at ease with the body, not interested in sex.* (1) Protect their innocence. Give indirect formation on chastity, unless needed. Correct wrong information and bad habits. Teach modesty. (2) Develop virtues: teamwork, obedience, generosity, self-denial, reflection to control instincts (habit of reading); (3) For girls: Show the Virgin Mary as model of motherhood (4) For boys: Develop friendship with dad. Teach that masculinity means service and responsibility. Train in self-control over aggressiveness. No to machismo.

Puberty: *Your child discovers his inner world (deep questions, feelings of love, intense joys) and experiences sexual changes. More vulnerable to emotional influences.* (1) Be more attentive. (2) Give detailed information ahead of peers about characteristics of both sexes and on sexual changes. [Free flyer: [A Boy's Guidebook](#), [A Girls' Guidebook](#).] (3) **Key moment** to teach the value and the great joy of chastity, the dignity of marriage, and the liberating power of the moral law. Explain the conscience as the moral judgement of reason and God's voice. Teach how to manage emotions. (4) For boys: Help them avoid erotic fantasies by teaching respect for women and the sacredness of procreation. (5) Correct trivialization of sex.

Adolescence: *thinking of future plans; more sexual problems emerge.*

(1) Model the beauty of fidelity in marriage and to God. (2) When needed, give serene explanation of morality. (3) In view of sexual problems, give spiritual advice to win over lust through prayer, centering the heart on God's supreme love and healing in Christ Crucified, going to mass and also to confession to receive God's mercy; and fleeing at once from temptations. (4) Warn that abuse of sexuality leads to loss of capacity for love and contempt for life (e.g. abortion). Warn against selfish self-seeking through masturbation. Exercise tough love: say no to sin. (5) Teach them to follow Christ above all within His plan for each. (6) Foster ideals of service with practical deeds, e.g. home chores. (7) Teach: one-on-one dating is only for discerning marriage. Supervise parties: parents are responsible for their teenage kids. (8) Cultivate a taste for what is beautiful and true. (9) Help avoid an excessive closing on in oneself. Teach: 90% of our problems come from thinking too much of ourselves. (St. Josemaria) (10) Teach them to go against the evil current trend of hedonism, and instead influence the environment with positive values, by realizing their social responsibility and their Christian mission to evangelize the world.

READINGS: Know more to teach better. Free on-line resources:

[Chastity.org](#); [Achieving Chastity in a Pornographic World](#); [Parents, Children, and the Facts of Life](#). See: [Catholic Chastity Resource List](#)

To protect families, please make copies and share generously. Please pass it on to schools, communities, offices, associations, movements, parishes, etc.! <https://paref.edu.ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/giving-real-love-to-your-child/>

The Pope's Most Insistent Message

Published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 26, 2015

If there is one message that Pope Francis wanted to tell the Filipinos, this will probably win first place in repetition: *Protect the family. Protect children.* He mentioned this three times in his Encounter with Families, his first major talk directed to everyone. Then he used the word “protect” in the context of families and children six times in his very last and most important message for all the Filipinos at Luneta. That’s a total of nine times.

Since “to protect” means to keep someone safe from harm, then all of us whom he called to protect families should know the precise harm Pope Francis was referring to.

In his meeting with families, he talked about two levels of harms. There is the level of external “pressures”: countless families are still suffering from the effects of natural disasters. The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. Pope Francis emphasized that “too many people live in dire poverty”

But what Pope Francis focused on was the threat that actually destroys families. The source of this destruction, he calls “ideological colonization”. It comes from outside the country, but it destroys each Filipino family from the inside, creating an internal implosion.

Unfortunately though, the key phrase that clearly expresses his thought was not caught by the translator not even by the official Vatican translation. Praising Paul VI’s teaching against contraception as a courageous stand before the wolves, Pope Francis said Paul VI saw “esta amenaza de destrucción de la familia por la privación de los hijos”, which translates as “this threat of the destruction of the family through the privation of children”. It is not a mere “lack” that destroys; it is the willful “no” to procreation.

Fortunately, the Pope kept on repeating the basic idea, detailing to us its moral roots: “The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life. I think of Blessed Paul VI in a moment on the challenge of that growth of populations, he had the strength to defend openness to life.”

When I heard Pope Francis say that the family is destroyed by the privation of children, I recalled Manny Arejola, who was an executive of the Population Commission. When he found out through personal visits that his programs were spectacularly depriving families of the emotional and economic benefits of children, he turned around and became an ardent proliferer.

Why can contraception destroy the family from the inside?

Because the family, by its very internal workings, was envisioned by God to teach what Pope Francis told the youth as “most important subject you have to learn in life: To learn how to love.”

The family is all about real love – total self-giving love. (What kind of love says “I give you everything except...?”) Contraception instead offers selfish, nontotal and lying “love”. While expressing an embrace of total self-giving, contraception willfully withholds fertility. Unlike natural family planning which is non-procreative, contraception is anti-procreative. It willfully goes against procreation, that glorious cooperation with God to give the most sublime gift of love to the spouse: the gift of a new immortal, God-like spirit, a child of God.

Poisoning the family at its source, contraception sends off a flood of selfishness based on falsehoods. In the words of Paul VI, it “could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards... and reduce [woman] to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of [man’s] own desires.” This famous prophecy is now clear to everyone. Porn is found at the click of a mouse. Adultery is publicly promoted. The University of Pennsylvania found that due to contraception, 3 out of 4 women in the US now engage in premarital sex.

To protect though is not only a negative. It also means to keep something whole. Pope Francis called the Filipino families the “country’s greatest treasure” and he asked us to “nourish them always by prayer and the grace of the sacraments.”

True love uses the mind. Responsible parenthood means avoiding breeding like animals –thoughtlessly, and begetting more children thoughtfully to express generous love. The Pope described the great beauty of a large family a few weeks ago: “The sons and daughters of large families are more inclined to fraternal communion... In a world that is frequently marred by selfishness, a large family is a school of solidarity and sharing.”

Pope Francis came with mercy and compassion. Like the good shepherd imaged in his pectoral cross, he came to embrace the lost sheep. But like any true shepherd he wanted, with courage, to protect God’s sheep from ravenous wolves.

He did come with mercy. He showed it magnificently in Tacloban. But the Pope also showed mercy in strict consistency with the principle that he, together with his bishops, wrote in the final document of the last Synod: the most merciful thing is to tell the truth in love.

The family is in danger. Protect it. The family is beautiful. Keep it safe.

But let us not just protect it with our hearts alone, let’s do it with our minds and hands, as the Pope taught. And because he calls us to prophetic witness, let us protect the family with our words as well -- by passing on his most insistent message.

KEY FACTS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

One-page leaflet in plain language on one of the most confusing issues of our time and a support for people who are struggling with same-sex attraction (SSA)

1. Same-sex attraction is not the same as homosexual behavior.

- 1.1 *Same-sex attraction* (SSA) - this is usually not a choice, but a result of multiple factors.
- 1.2. *Homosexual behavior* - this is a choice, because 50% of people who performed homosexual actions before age 15 never did it again.
- 1.3. *Homosexual self-identification* - a choice of what to label oneself. (Source: Samesexattraction.org, [FRC](http://FRC.org), [Top Ten Myths](http://TopTenMyths.org))

2. Homosexuality is not genetic.

Researchers Bearman and Brückner of Columbia and Yale University found in 2002 that among male identical twins (who have the same genetic code) only 6.7% are both gay and 5.3% both lesbians. Compare this to 98% of identical twins who have the same eye color, showing this is determined by genes.

3. Same-sex attraction has multiple causes:

- 3.1. *Sadness and loneliness due to father and child relationship* characterized by abandonment, hostility or disinterest.
- 3.2. *Weak masculine identity and loneliness due to lack of male peer acceptance* due to inability to play team sports
- 3.3. *Mother perceived as domineering, overly demanding*
- 3.4. *Sexually abused*
- 3.5. *Traumatized by important males* (for females)
- 3.6. *Failure to identify and have friendships* with same-sex peers
- 3.7. *Separation from parent* during critical time of development
- 3.8. *Narcissism and profound selfishness* (Sources: [Homosexuality and Hope](http://HomosexualityandHope.org), [People can change self-survey](http://Peoplecanchange.org))

4. Psychiatric disorders are far more common among people with same-sex attraction.

Recent research has shown that depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal ideas, & conduct disorder are prevalent among them. ([HH](http://HH.org))

5. Homosexual unions have negative implications:

- 5.1. *Short-lived*. Married people in the US stay together for an average of 9.8 years. Cohabiting 1.7, gays 3.5, lesbians 2.2.
- 5.2. *Health hazard*. ‘Coupled’ homosexuals are more apt than ‘single’ gays to engage in highly risky, unsanitary sex, resulting in AIDS, hepatitis, etc. More than 50% (85% in PH) of all new HIV infections occur in gays and men who have sex with men (MSM).
- 5.3. *Highest rate of domestic violence*. In marriage, the average rate of domestic violence is less than 5% a year. Unmarried report 20% to 25%. Lesbians couples 48 -58%, and gays 29-39%.
- 5.4. *Homosexuals make poor parents*. 0.6% children with non-homosexual parents reported sex with their parents or stepparents. For children with gay parents, 50% of sons reported sex with their father and 18% of daughters reported sex with a stepmother. Children of gays scored lowest in math and language skills, were least popular. (Source: [Family Research Council](http://FamilyResearchCouncil.org), [Getting the Facts: Same-Sex Marriage](http://GettingtheFacts.org); [amFAR](http://amFAR.org).on spread of AIDS)

6. Bible: acts are “an abomination” (extremely disgusting and hateful) . “Dishonorable, unnatural”.

- 6.1. If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an *abomination*. (Lev 20:13) “Abomination” means an extremely disgusting and hateful thing. (Merriam-Webster)
- 6.2 God gave them up to *dishonorable passions...unnatural... men committing shameless acts with men* and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their *error*. (Romans 1:26-28)
- 6.3 Fornicators, adulterers, sodomites [homosexuals]...—*none of these will inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Cor 6:9-10)

7. Catholic teaching: A disorder and a trial. Homosexual persons are accepted with compassion.

- 7.1 Everyone should *accept his or her sexual identity*. (CCC 2333)
- 7.2 *Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered*. They close the sexual act to the gift of life and do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity.
- 7.3 *This inclination constitutes a trial* for most of those who have these tendencies. *They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity*. Avoid any sign of unjust discrimination. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.
- 7.4. *Homosexual persons are called to chastity*. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. ([CCC 2357-9](http://CCC.org))

8. Therapy: resolving emotional pain and training in chastity

- 8.1. *Healing of homosexual attractions and behavior*: key to recovery is admitting powerlessness, learning to forgive, and an intimate, loving friendship with Christ. “Only God’s love is powerful enough to overcome the painful loneliness and sadness.” It is good for people with SSA to discuss their problems with someone who knows these facts, and be open to God’s will and great joy: <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/homosexuality/ho0011.html>
- 8.2. *People Can Change*. Strategies, stories of change and resources: <http://www.peoplecanchange.com>
- 8.3 *The Battle for Normality: A Guide for (self-) Therapy for Homosexuality*. Proven ways for self-therapy with hundreds of successful experiences: <http://www.jonahweb.org/sections.php?secId=238>
- 8.4 *Chastity education internet resources*. Jason Evert’s <http://chastity.com/research/document-library>; <http://paref.edu/ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/key-facts-about-homosexuality/>
- 8.5. *Support group: Courage Community*. Find the local chapter at: http://www.couragerc.net/Chapter_Listings.html

Download one-page leaflet here:
<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/64318356/KEY%20FACTS.doc>

Please distribute generously in order to dispel ignorance of these key facts.

Science Facts on Contraceptives

The world's leading scientific experts and extensive research found in peer-reviewed science journals have already resolved the key questions surrounding the use of contraceptives.

1. The pill and the IUD kill children.

When does human life begin? At fertilization, when the sperm penetrates the egg. This was the “overwhelming agreement in countless scientific writings”, and of top experts (including scientists from Harvard Medical School and the Mayo Clinic) at an eight day hearing of the US Senate.¹ This is science’s “final answer”, as per the American College of Pediatricians.²

Mayo
Clinic

Do birth control pills and the IUD kill the young human being? Yes. After trying to prove that the pill is not abortifacient, Dr. Walter Larimore found 94 studies showing that the pill does kill the young human baby -- after the egg has been fertilized. He published his findings in the scientific journal of the American Medical Association, and stopped prescribing the pill.³ The *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* of 2005 showed that the intrauterine device brings about the “destruction of the early embryo.”⁴

2. The pill injures women’s health.

Is the pill safe? The International Agency for Research on Cancer in a 2007 study made by 21 scientists reported that the pill causes cancer, giving it the highest level of carcinogenicity, the same as cigarettes and asbestos.⁵ A 2010 study showed that it “carries an excess risk of breast cancer.”⁶ It also causes stroke,⁷ and “significantly increases the risk” of heart attacks.⁸ Several scientific journals have stated that the natural way of regulating births has no side-effects, and is 99 % effective.⁹

International Agency for
Research on Cancer

HARVARD

3. Wide use of contraceptives destroys the family.

Will the greater availability of contraception improve the stability of families? Wide contraceptive use leads to more premarital sex, more fatherless children, more single mothers, more abortions, according to the studies of Nobel prize winner, George Akerlof: “As we have documented, the

4. Wide contraceptive use leads to greater poverty.

norm of premarital sexual abstinence all but vanished in the wake of the technology shock.”¹⁰

Is contraceptive use correlated with poverty? Akerlof linked increased number of fatherless children and single mothers due to contraception with greater poverty. In another research study, Akerlof concluded that contraception leads to a decline of marriage, less domesticated men, more crimes and more social pathology and thus more poverty.¹¹

Isn’t population control connected with economic development? “No clear association” is the answer of Simon Kuznets, Nobel Prize winner in the science of economics.¹² Many later studies confirmed this, including a 2003 study of the RAND Corporation, a world leader in research associated with 30 Nobel Prize winners. It also stated that population growth is beneficial if there are good institutions, education and trade.¹³

5. Wide condom use promotes the spread of AIDS.

Will the wide use of condoms lower the rate of HIV/AIDS in a country? It will increase it, according to the “best studies”, concluded Harvard Director for AIDS Prevention, Edward Green. Availability of condoms makes people willing to take greater sexual risk, thus worsening the spread of AIDS. He showed that fidelity and abstinence are the best solutions to the epidemic.¹⁴ A 2011 research at *The Lancet* links hormonal contraception with double the risk of AIDS.¹⁵

What’s the difference between contraception and natural family planning (NFP) when both of them result in not having children? Unlike NFP which is *non*-procreative, contraception is *anti*-procreative. While NFP does not do anything to fight the beginning of new humans, contraception willfully counters the great, incalculable good of procreating a human being. NFP is comparable to grandma dying of old age (accepting the natural process of aging) and contraception is like deliberately doing something so she will not live.

Help dispel ignorance of these facts. Please make copies and spread *generously*. Sell with or without profit. Online: <https://paref.edu.ph/personal-formation/spiritual-formation/executive-summaries-of-catholic-doctrine/science-facts-on-contraceptives/>

¹ Subcommittee Report, S-158, 97th Congress, 1st Session 1981, 7.

² American College of Pediatricians, *When Human Life Begins*, 2004

³ Larimore and Stanford (2000). “Postfertilization effects of oral contraceptives and their relationship to informed consent.” *Arch Fam Med* 9 (2): 126–33.

⁴ Stanford and Mikolajczyk (2005). “Mechanisms of action of intrauterine devices: Update and estimation of postfertilization effects.” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (W.B. Saunders Comp) 187: 1699–1708.

⁵ “Combined Estrogen-Progestogen Contraceptives.” IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans 91, 2007.

⁶ D. Hunter, et al. *Oral Contraceptive Use and Breast Cancer: a prospective study of young women*, *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* 2010 Oct;19(10):2496-502.

⁷ Kemmeren, et al. (2002). “Risk of Arterial Thrombosis in Relation to Oral Contraceptives (RATIO) Study: Oral Contraceptives and the Risk of Ischemic Stroke.” *Stroke* (American Heart Association, Inc.) 33: 1202–1208.

⁸ Baillargeon, McClish, Essah, and Nestler (2005). “Association between the Current Use of Low-Dose Oral Contraceptives and Cardiovascular Arterial Disease: A Meta-Analysis.” *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (The Endocrine Society)* 90 (7): 3863–3870.

⁹ P. Frank-Hermann, et al., *The effectiveness of a fertility awareness based method to avoid pregnancy in relation to a couple’s sexual behaviour during the fertile time: a prospective longitudinal study*, *Human Reproduction* 22 (5): 1310–9.

¹⁰ “the pregnancy rate was 0.6 per 100 women and per 13 cycles when there was no unprotected intercourse in the fertile time.” *British Medical Journal, American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Lancet, Contraception, Fertility and Sterility*.

¹¹ Akerlof, Yellent and Katz (1996). “An Analysis on Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in the United States”. *Quarterly Journal of Economics (The MIT Press)* 111 (2): 277–317;

¹² Akerlof, “Men Without Children.” *The Economic Journal* 108 (1998)

¹³ Kuznets (1974) *Population Capital and Growth*, Norton

¹⁴ Bloom, Canning, Sevilla, “The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change.” RAND Corporation, 2003, 17.

¹⁵ Green (2011) *Broken Promises: How the AIDS Establishment Has Betrayed the Developing World*. Polipoint Press

¹⁶ Hefron, et. Al. (2011) *Use of hormonal contraceptives and risk of HIV-1 transmission: a prospective cohort study*, *Lancet Infect Dis* 2011 Oct 4

LIVE-IN: Research facts and analysis on cohabitation

1. What does live-in relationship mean? Also called cohabitation, live-in relationship is an arrangement of an unmarried man and an unmarried woman who live together in a sexual relationship.

This practice is spreading due to ignorance and myths.



2. What are the findings of social science on cohabitation?

Modern research has exploded myths and justifications for living together.

Since we want to avoid a broken home, we want to check out if we are compatible. Studies show that couples who live together before marriage have double the chances of divorce than those who don't. Living in does not help build the habits of commitment, mutual communication and support that are at the foundation of marriage. People who divorce tend to be people who do not have a high level of commitment and self-sacrifice to think of the other person. Thus, living together is "the worst possible preparation for marriage" and is "a training for divorce." (C. Colson)

Marriage is expensive. We'll be able to save. Research shows cohabiting couples have lower incomes than the married. Married men with kids are more motivated and committed to become more responsible and productive. In marriage, there is more sharing of economic and social resources, acting like an insurance pool as protection from uncertainties. The convention that marriage has to be luxurious is wrong. You should be part of the change to sobriety.

It's easier this way. We will be happier. Studies demonstrate that people who are cohabiting experience lower levels of subjective well-being and higher levels of depression, domestic violence and murder. One researcher suggests that due to the lack of long-term commitment, couples who live together are less motivated to develop their conflict resolution and support skills. Also, compared to married couples, cohabitators are less connected to the community and the church, thus get less emotional, social and material support.

This is the modern way. Marriage is outmoded. Modern contraception made it obsolete. Historical research shows that cohabitation and contraception were common in the ancient Roman empire. This led to the mistreatment of women, considered as toys for sexual pleasure, the degeneration of families, and then the moral decay of society. The Christian vision of marriage and family brought respect, dignity and happiness to families and to society.

But we love each other. If your love is real and not a matter of volatile feelings, you will want to give the best for each other, and for your relationship. And research and proven wisdom has shown that cohabitation is bad for your partner, for your future marriage, and children.

3. I am concerned of its effects on our children. "The poverty rate among children of cohabiting couples is five fold greater than the rate among children in married-couple households. Compared to children of married biological parents, children age 12-17 with cohabiting parents are six times more likely to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems. Likewise, adolescents from cohabiting households are 122 % more likely to be expelled from school and 90 % more likely to have a low GPA (Grade Point Average)." "One of the greatest problems for children is the high risk that the couple will break up."

4. Isn't marriage just a piece of paper? No, marriage between a man and a woman is a natural institution proven to benefit society in forming responsible citizens through the centuries. This is why it is sanctioned and supported by governments.

5. Ours is called "trial marriage." You can try out cars and bikes, but not humans. Humans cannot be "used" like material things. Humans are incarnate spirits with great dignity who can only be revered, served and protected.

6. Why is fornication or nonmarital sex said to be morally evil? What's the ethical reasoning behind this common view? Because sex like a smile and a frown is a body language with its own meaning. The embrace of sex says "I love you" by giving your whole life, your children, your family, and your future. The only way for your sexual action to express this truthfully and the only way for you to ensure that your children are raised with the secure love of a mother and father is when it is done within a sacred covenant to commit yourselves entirely to each other. This is what marriage is. Sex before marriage is a lie. Your action says, "I give you my whole self", but you have held back your total commitment to the other person, to your children, and also to God. Lying in a matter of such grave importance is objectively evil.

7. With everything you've said, no wonder ancient wisdom and world religions are strongly against premarital sex! In Islam, living in is *zina*, fornication, which is absolutely forbidden and is severely condemned as irresponsible and immoral. Buddhists considered it *kamesu micchacara*, a sexual violation. It is condemned by Hinduism. The Jewish Torah prohibits it: There shall be no *kedeshah*, promiscuity, among the daughters and sons of Israel. (Dt 23:17) St. Paul taught that the *porno*i, fornicators, will not inherit the Kingdom of heaven. (1 Cor 6:9)

8. Okay, what are the benefits of separating now? (a) You will be practicing chastity, showing your future spouse that when you are married, you will be chastely faithful, and you can be trusted. (b) You will have the space to build your problem-solving and communication skills. Cohabiting couples "often turn to sex to restore emotional intimacy. This pattern leaves relational issues unresolved." (c) You will appreciate the other as a person not a toy. (d) You will practice self-mastery: the basic condition for loving self-giving, the ingredient for a happy marriage and family. (e) You stop immorality and polluting society with bad example.

9. Non-Catholics, even pagans, love the rituals of Catholic weddings. What's so great about Catholic marriage?

According to the Church, the bond of marriage between a man and woman expresses in a most beautiful way the unbreakable bond of love between Christ and his people. Marriage is a sacrament which gives spouses grace, divine life, to love each other with Christ's self-sacrificing love for his Church. In this way, the Catholic Christian family shares in the deep happiness of God's love.

SOURCES. The article puts together ideas from: [Cohabitation myths and statistics](#), [Should we live together?](#), [Cohabitation: Bad for Men, Worse for Women, and Horrible for Children](#), [Facts Behind Cohabitation](#), [Cohabitation](#), [Living Together](#).

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THE POPE'S MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE TO YOUR FAMILY

Selected quotes from Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia, the Joy of Love

IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

- The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.
- The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church.
- Don't you realize that the family throughout the world is in crisis? Don't we realize that the falling birth rate in Europe is enough to make one cry? And the family is the basis of society. Do you not realize that the youth don't want to marry? Don't you realize that the lack of work or the little work available means that a mother has to get two jobs and the children grow up alone? These are big problems. (Interview on the document)

I. CHRIST AND THE FAMILY



- In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound; the core of that message, the kerygma [God loves us and is near us], is what is most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary.
- If a family is centred on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life.
- Emphasis should be given to the importance of family spirituality, prayer and participation in the Sunday Eucharist, and couples encouraged to meet regularly to promote growth in their spiritual life and solidarity in the concrete demands of life.
- It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important.
- A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God with a few simple words, this moment of prayer can do immense good for our families.
- Many are touched by the power of grace experienced in sacramental Reconciliation and in the Eucharist, grace that helps them face the challenges of marriage and the family.
- Every morning, on rising, we reaffirm before God our decision to be faithful, come what may in the course of the day.

II. LOVE AND MARRIAGE

- It is important that marriage be seen as a matter of love, that only those who freely choose and love one another may marry. When love is merely physical attraction or a vague affection, spouses become particularly vulnerable once this affection wanes or physical attraction diminishes.
- True love between husband and wife involves mutual self-giving, includes and integrates the sexual and affective dimensions.
- Develop a routine that gives a healthy sense of closeness and stability through shared daily rituals. These could include a morning kiss, an evening blessing, waiting at the door to welcome each other home, taking trips together and sharing household chores.
- There is growing danger represented by an extreme individualism which weakens family bonds.
- The strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all a family's problems, it can always grow, beginning with love.
- What really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak.
- The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures.
- Love is ever ready to be of assistance.
- Persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, Commitment, fidelity and patience.
- Our loved ones merit our complete attention.
- Greater emphasis on personal communication between the spouses helps to make family life more humane.



III. PROCREATION AND CHILDREN

- The word which appears most frequently in the Old Testament after the name of God, is "child". Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that children are a wonderful gift from God and a joy for parents and the Church. Through them, the Lord renews the world.
- The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon capable of revealing God the Creator and Savior. For this reason, fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life.
- Responsible parenthood does not mean unlimited procreation or lack of awareness of what is involved in rearing children.
- Large families are a joy for the Church.



IV. EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

- It is important to reiterate that the overall education of children is a "most serious duty" and at the same time a "primary right" of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right.
- What is most important is the ability lovingly to help children grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy. Only in this way will children come to possess the wherewithal needed to fend for themselves.
- Where are your children existentially: where they stand in terms of their convictions, goals, desires and dreams? Where is their soul?
- It is important thing is to teach them sensitivity to different expressions of love, mutual concern.
- Develop the habit of giving real importance to the other person.
- It is important to train children firmly to ask forgiveness and to repair the harm done to others.
- Distractions abound, including an addiction to television. This makes it all the more difficult for parents to hand on the faith to their children.
- One of the most important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope. This does not mean preventing children from playing with electronic devices, but rather finding ways to help them develop their critical abilities. When children or adolescents are not helped to realize that some things have to be waited for, they can become obsessed with satisfying their immediate needs and develop the vice of "wanting it all now". When we are taught to postpone some things until the right moment, we learn self-mastery and detachment from our impulses.
- Sex education can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving. The sexual urge can be directed through a process of growth in self-knowledge and self-control capable of nurturing valuable capacities for joy and for loving encounter.
- Show a person that it is in his own interest to do what is right. Today, it is less and less effective to demand something that calls for effort and sacrifice, without clearly pointing to the benefits which it can bring.
- Strengthening of the will and the repetition of specific actions are the building blocks of moral conduct.
- Help children view the world with the love of Jesus and who can understand life as a call to serve God.
- Marriage preparation begins at birth... Those best prepared for marriage are probably those who learned what Christian marriage is from their own parents, who chose each other unconditionally and daily renew this decision.



LAST ADVICE

- May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.

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KNOW YOUR MISSION AND OFFICES

Discover your mission orders and your positions of responsibility to change the world

WHAT'S MY MISSION?

Not just secret agents, but everyone is eager and excited to know their mission orders – the objectives and tasks we are sent to accomplish, the contribution people expect of us, the meaning and purpose of our life.

When we were baptized, says the Bible, we “*put on Christ*.” That is why we can exclaim, “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*” (Gal 3:20; 2:20) ***Christ lives in me!*** “We have become not just Christians, but Christ himself,” cried St. Augustine. (CCC 795) Who is Christ who lives in me? Jesus Christ is God himself who became man for *only one mission*: to save all men from sin and make us one with God. The name of Jesus means “God saves”. And the word christ means “messiah”, people who have been consecrated by God for a saving mission: priests, prophets, and kings.

As another Christ, we have only one mission: *to bring all men to love God with all their strength*, and we have a responsibility to exercise his three offices that fulfil his one mission. These offices are the solutions to the great evils all men suffer due to sin. ***Our priestly office*** addresses the lack of sanctifying grace, a share in God’s life, without which we cannot enter heaven. ***Our prophetic office*** solves people’s ignorance, lack of knowledge of God and his plan, “the origin of all moral deviations”. (CCC 2087) ***Our kingly office*** addresses our wayward tendencies and passions.

If a Christian does not exercise Christ’s mission and responsibilities, he is like salt that “has lost its taste,” said Jesus. “It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.” (Mt 5:13)

OUR SPECIAL VOCATION: let your light shine before men

Christ told us: “*You are the light of the world*,” and so the Christian laity’s *special vocation* that we should know best is “to seek the kingdom of God ***by engaging in secular affairs and directing them according to God’s will ... to enlighten and put in order all things in the world.***” (CCC 898)

It is in the midst of our world, our home, the office, the streets, in places of entertainment, in the mall, in government, business, and media, that we are called to find God, and to *make Christ’s superabundant love, mercy and wisdom permeate all things*. We have “the preeminent responsibility to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth.” (Vat II, AA; CCC 900)

To accomplish this, we are called to *take initiative*: not to wait passively for others to make a move, but to take the first step in making things happen, beginning a chain of events that can Christianize the world. We are tasked to be creative: “*discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities*” with the beauty, harmony and supreme joy that comes from the fullness of love and truth. (CCC 900)

OUR PRIESTLY OFFICE: Union with Jesus, praying and offering sacrifices to sanctify the world from within

We will be able to put order in the world only if we are put order in our lives. If we put God first in everything, others second and ourselves last. “*He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit*,” Jesus told us. “*For without me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5). If we are intimately one with Jesus, all our “works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, even the hardships of life patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.” By *offering all these at Mass, we take part in the Sacrifice of Christ on the cross* that saves all men through time. (CCC 901) The saints, who allow God to work by praying always, are the best reformers of society.

The one purpose of our life is to love God with all our heart, a love that impels us to know him deeply: to meditate on his teachings that come to us through his Church, especially its Bible and Catechism, to go frequently to confession and the Eucharist, where his love is poured into us. “The love of Christ urges us,” sets us on fire, impelling us to save many souls. (CCC 864)

OUR PROPHETIC OFFICE: Evangelizing and teaching the faith

“Thanks solely to this encounter with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated.” taught Pope Francis. We are freed from sin and inner emptiness, and we are filled with the joy of the truth. “For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?”



It is above all with a life lived in God who is Love that we evangelize, and a key part of this life is to obey his last command: *Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* (Mt 28:19-20) This Great Commission still echoes, and should be echoed by us to many Catholics who have forgotten it.

Pope Francis stressed: Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to *be actively engaged in evangelization*...What about you? ... Sharing our enthusiasm “falls to each of us as a daily responsibility... bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers. This takes place in the middle of a conversation... on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.” Training in this “should start with the children’s earliest education. Parents should teach them little by little to be solicitous for the material and spiritual needs of their neighbour,” recalling that the spiritual is above the material. (Vat II; Mt 4:4)

As prophets who speak of Christ, it is very important that we often meet Christ, to learn him well in the four parts of his Church’s Catechism (the Creed, Sacraments, Morality and Prayer) and *be involved in helping people meet him in catechesis*. First, in our family through family Sunday school, and then to as many people as we can reach: by teaching, spreading catechetical materials and using the means of social communication. The Church’s “increase in numbers, even more her inner growth and correspondence with God’s plan *depend essentially* on catechesis.” (CCC 7)

OUR KINGLY OFFICE: Correcting common practices that breed sins, and effectively permeating education, culture, media, business and government, and other social institutions with true moral values

Our first duty as kings is to *rule over our self*. Christ, the true King, reigns by giving his life on the cross in obedience to the Father, and through his sacraments he sends us his powerful graces to “deny ourselves” and to “overcome the reign of sin”. “That man is rightly called a king who makes his own body an obedient subject and, by governing himself with suitable rigor, refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul.” (CCC 908)

“Moreover, by uniting their forces let the laity so *remedy the institutions and conditions of the world when the latter are an inducement to sin*, that these may be conformed to the norms of justice, *favoring rather than hindering the practice of virtue*. By so doing they will impregnate culture and human works with a moral value.” (CCC 909)



Starting in their family and workplace, citizens *should take part in public life as far as possible*. (Comp 410) We are called to make the greatest possible impact, *helping people to understand and live true moral values*: caring for the poor, upholding the truth, fighting corruption and excessive inequality, respect for life and human dignity, support for marriage and the family, working for the common good, reverence for human sexuality, support for religion, social justice, respecting rights and freedom, promoting virtue, care for the environment, and the social principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Stress should be given to a “*hierarchy of values, which subordinates physical and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.*” (CCC 1886) With our zeal, all these should fill up the community, media, university and government. And we do so with secular and scientific reasoning, as they are all truths of the natural law that will surely make human life flourish.

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10-POINT GUIDE TO CONSCIENCE IN VOTING

One can be guilty of grave evil if one is careless in electing public officials and one can do much good if one votes properly

1. Do good and avoid evil. Each one is answerable for the moral choices he makes. Choose politicians with the character, public policy and capability that will do good. Avoid politicians who will do evil.

2. Every citizen is obliged to do as much good to society as he can.

It is good to vote for politicians who will work for the common good and do much to all using good means. It is good to encourage, support and vote for such politicians, and to help foster the growth of many such politicians.



3. It is good to oppose evil. And very good to oppose public policy and politicians whose actions or inaction will spread evil.

4. Never do evil in order to do good. A good end never justifies evil actions. A good end for society never justifies using immoral means to achieve that end. It is evil to steal, kill, lie and promote sexual disorders in order to “improve” society.

5. It is evil to directly cooperate in evil. It is evil to vote for a politician who is in favor of intrinsically evil actions, such as abortion, contraception, divorce, devaluation of marriage and the family, murder, violation of human rights, etc. if the voter’s intent is to support these actions. In voting this way, one would be guilty of grave social evil by formally cooperating in that evil.

6. One is allowed to vote for a politician with an immoral public policy on two conditions:

(1) If one rejects that immoral policy and (2) if one votes for that person for other morally grave reasons that are proportional to the immorality. If one’s reason for support is not proportionate to the great evil that will be done, then one will somehow be guilty of this evil.



7. What to do when all candidates are in favor of an intrinsic evil: one may decide (1) not to vote for anyone, or (2) to vote for the candidate who is considered less likely to push for immoral actions and more likely to work for the common good and foster moral values. This choice is a matter of doing good by limiting the evil that can be done by the other candidates if they were elected.



8. Not all actions and policies have the same moral value.

Some actions and policies are better than others. Immaterial, interior and spiritual things (values and morality, education, human life, religion, human rights, culture, serving the poor and the weak) are more important than physical, material things (economic wealth). Foundational for society are: (1) respect for human life in all stages, (2) strengthening marriage and the family, (3) upholding truth and justice, (4) care for the poor and the weak, (5) respect for rights and freedom, (6) fighting unjust inequalities and corruption, and (7) promotion of virtues.



9. Prudence is a key virtue to practice. Prudence means to discern what is truly good and choosing the right means to achieve it. It implies an honest, objective and diligent study of the facts about the person and his past performance vis-à-vis the key results expected of him. Because of the great influence of an elected official on society, it is evil to make a hasty, emotional, self-interested, and purely partisan choice in such a grave matter. It is important to reflect and make prudent decisions, while at the same time respecting the pluralism of legitimate political opinions given the varying circumstances and specific situations, and the limits of politics as the art of the possible.

10. Respect for the dignity of the human person is the foundation of all morality. Everyone is called to serve each person and all persons. Each one has a duty to participate in socio-political action as much as he can to create a more humane, just, and peaceful society that will do good for each human being.

This guide is based on the document, [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), by the USCCB.

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LEADERSHIP WISDOM OF ST. JOSEMARIA

Management practices from one of the most productive leaders of modern times

Useful for anyone in authority: business leaders, government officials, parents and teachers

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

Make Others Great. Sensible men surround themselves with learned people who live a clean life as well as possessing knowledge, and become, through their help, men who can really govern. They are not in this matter deceived by their humility, for in making others great they themselves are made great.



Fill the Training Gaps. Don't get annoyed. Irresponsible behavior often denotes poor formation or a lack of intelligence, rather than want of good spirit. Teachers and directors should be expected to fill in those gaps with the responsible fulfillment of their duties. —You should examine yourself if you are in such a position.

Delegate Responsibility. Ask for an Account. A fundamental rule for good management is to give responsibility to others without this becoming for you a way of seeking anonymity or comfort. I repeat, delegate responsibility and ask each person to give an account of how his job is going, so that you can "render an account" to God; and to souls, if necessary.

The Best is the Enemy of the Good. People have to be taught how to work, but their preparation need not be overdone, for actually doing things is a way of learning too. They should accept in advance their unavoidable shortcomings - the best is the enemy of the good.

Demand With Affection and Flexibility. Governing often consists in knowing how to *draw good* out of people, with patience and affection. Good governance knows how to be flexible when necessary, without falling into the mistake of not asking enough of people.

Collegial Leadership. Decisions of governance taken lightly or by someone on his own are always, or nearly always, influenced by a one-sided view of the problems. —However good your training or talents might be, you must listen to those who share with that task of direction.

Not Becoming Indispensable. When you are not around, other people should be able to go ahead with the work you have in hand, thanks to the experience you have generously passed on to them and to your not having made yourself indispensable.

See the Positive too. Try to be properly objective in your work of governance. Avoid the inclination common to those who tend to see rather - and sometimes only - what is not going well, the mistakes.

Hear all Sides. When you judge, listen to all the bells and, if possible, know the bell-ringer. Don't judge without having heard both sides. Even people who think themselves virtuous very easily forget this elementary rule of prudence.

What God says is First. You are in a position of authority and you go by what people say? You are an oldie! —First of all you should worry about what God will say; then, very much in the second place, and sometimes not at all, you may consider what others might think.

Not Ignoring Problems. You must not solve problems, your own or those of others, by ignoring them..

Apply the Right Remedy. When in our own life or in that of others we notice something that isn't going well, then a clear sign of prudence is to apply the appropriate remedy by going to the root of the trouble, resolutely, lovingly and sincerely. There is no room here for inhibitions, for it is a great mistake to think that problems can be solved by omissions or procrastination. Once the wound has been laid bare, the cure should be applied in full.

VIRTUES OF LEADERS

Understanding: an Effective Help. I think it is very good that you should try daily to increase the depth of your concern for those under you. For to feel surrounded and protected by the affectionate understanding of the one in charge, can be the effective help which is needed by the people you have to serve by means of your governance.

Charity: Not Terrorizing. The good shepherd does not need to fill the sheep with fear. Such behavior befits bad rulers, and no one is very much surprised if they end up hated and alone. When you are dealing with problems, try not to exaggerate justice to the point of forgetting charity.

Good Manners of Service. Authority. This does not consist in the one above *yelling* at the one below, and he in turn to the one further down. In such a way of behaving - a caricature of authority - apart from an evident lack of charity and of decent human standards, all that is achieved is that the one at the top becomes isolated from those who are governed, because he does not serve them. Rather it could be said that he uses them!

Humility to Learn from Others. But... do you really think you know it all just because you have been placed in authority? — Listen carefully: the good ruler *knows* that he can, that he *should*, learn from others.

Study: Non-Biased. How sad it is to see some people in positions of authority speaking and making judgments lightly, without studying the matter in hand. They make hard statements about persons or matters they know nothing about, even permitting certain *prejudices* which are the result of disloyalty!

Prudence. To be prudent the first step is to acknowledge our own limitations. This is the virtue of humility. Through it, we admit that in certain matters we cannot cover everything, that in so many cases we cannot take in all the circumstances that have to be borne in mind in order to make a fair judgement. So, we look for advice; but not from just anyone. We go to a person with the right qualities.

A person is prudent not because he never makes a mistake, but because he corrects his errors. He shows his prudence in preferring to miss the mark twenty times rather than give in to an easygoing 'do nothing' attitude.

Order. Virtue without order? Strange virtue... When you bring order into your life your time will multiply, and then you will be able to give God more glory, by working more in his service.

Know how to Obey. When you are told what to do, let no one know how to obey than you; whether it is hot or cold, whether you feel keen or are tired, whether you are young or less so, it makes no difference. Someone who "does not know how to obey" will never learn to command.

Responsibility. The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link.

Fortitude to Correct. There is a great love of comfort, and at times a great irresponsibility, hidden behind the attitude of those in authority who flee from the sorrow of correcting, making the excuse that they want to avoid the suffering of others.

Benefits of All-boys and All-girls Schools:

What the best research says on the advantages of single-sex schools

Are there benefits to single-sex schooling?

The best research on this topic was sponsored by the U.S. government in 2005. The research demonstrated “a single-sex school advantage by far” over coed schools, according to a director of the research.



Do those results refer to academics?

Yes, they found better results in math, science, English, and social studies achievement. But advantages extend to social and emotional development of the children too.

But isn't this just one study?

The U.S. study is a meta-analysis covering 2221 studies worldwide. Then they culled the 40 best. The review showed that “positive results are three to four times more likely to be found for single sex schools than for coeducational schools in the same study for both academic achievement and socio-emotional development.”

That's quite impressive. Do they explain why girls' schools and boys' schools are better?

There are more than a dozen reasons! For one, teachers observe that there are less distractions. Children are prone to distraction. What more when they are with the other sex who have a different learning style, or to whom they can be attracted.

In single-sex schools children compete on fairer grounds. Girls develop faster than boys, and boys can easily get discouraged when faced with such competition. Then boys can pull down the rest of the class, meaning the girls.

One of my concerns is that my children go to the best colleges.

Your child will have better chances to achieve that through a single-sex school. There was a randomized experiment done in Korea, whose results were published on January 2012. A randomized experiment is the most reliable evidence in all scientific research, since it eliminates bias and pre-selection.

The study found that 45% of boys from single-sex schools entered college compared with only 39% of the boys from coed schools. For the girls, it's 44% of girls from all-girls schools and 40% of girls from coed schools. So the research concluded that “Attending all-boys schools or all-girls schools rather than attending coeducational schools is significantly associated with higher average scores.”

Aren't kids helped by the presence of the opposite sex to behave better?

Not in the majority of cases. Based on studies, when kids of the same sex are together, they give themselves more mutual support, a sense of community and greater confidence. Thus, they participate more and are more engaged.

Won't coed schools make children more well-rounded?

The opposite is true. Coed schools tend to perpetuate stereotypes of girls as good in creative arts and boys as strong in math, science and leadership. In single-sex schools, teachers can address the unique needs and interests of the students, making them strong in areas where they are usually weak. Let's not forget too that children don't want to appear as having some of the good habits of the other sex, lest they be teased as being girlish or boyish. This tendency is lessened in single-sex schools.

But isn't it that kids get inspired by the opposite sex to study harder?

Again, you are talking about exceptions. In most cases, based on recent research findings, the effect of the interaction between the two sexes means less homework done, less enjoyment of school, lower reading and math scores.

You mentioned earlier that there are social and emotional advantages.

U.S. government research points to less sexual harassment, less delinquency and other student behavior problems, more community involvement, more positive self-concept among children, more positive student role models, more leadership opportunities, and higher career aspirations. Children in these schools put more value on grades and leadership rather than on attractiveness and money. These schools also allow for more opportunities for social and moral guidance.



I am concerned that my high schooler will not learn how to deal with the opposite sex in a single-sex school.

As you might already have observed, the alumni of the top single-sex schools of this country are very capable of dealing with the other sex, and in fact they are known to have an edge on the basis of their culture, manners, and self-confidence. Boys' schools and girls' schools have the privileged condition of providing age and gender-appropriate guidance and social skills training to their students.

But if all of this is true, why isn't single-sex schooling the mainstream way of educating the kids?

The news has not yet spread. That's the reason behind this Q&A! And for your information, there is a revival of single-sex schools even in the public schools in the U.S. From only 4 single-sex public schools in 1998, there were already 540 such schools by 2010. An expert said that “21st Century education will be single-sex schooling.”

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10 Reasons Why Same-Sex “Marriage” is Harmful

1. It Is Not Marriage. Calling something marriage does not make it marriage. Marriage has always been a covenant between a man and a woman which is by its nature ordered toward the procreation and education of children and the unity and wellbeing of the spouses.

The promoters of same-sex “marriage” propose something entirely different. They propose the union between two men or two women. This denies the self-evident biological, physiological, and psychological differences between men and women which find their complementarity in marriage. It also denies the specific primary purpose of marriage: the perpetuation of the human race and the raising of children.

Two entirely different things cannot be considered the same thing.

2. It Violates Natural Law. Marriage is not just any relationship between human beings. It is a relationship rooted in human nature and thus governed by natural law.

Natural law’s most elementary precept is that “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.” By his natural reason, man can perceive what is morally good or bad for him. Thus, he can know the end or purpose of each of his acts and how it is morally wrong to transform the means that help him accomplish an act into the act’s purpose. Any situation which institutionalizes the circumvention of the purpose of the sexual act violates natural law and the objective norm of morality.

Being rooted in human nature, natural law is universal and immutable. It applies to the entire human race, equally. It commands and forbids consistently, everywhere and always.

3. It Always Denies a Child Either a Father or a Mother. It is in the child’s best interests that he be raised under the influence of his natural father and mother. This rule is confirmed by the evident difficulties faced by the many children who are orphans or are raised by a single parent, a relative, or a foster parent.

The unfortunate situation of these children will be the norm for all children of a same-sex “marriage.” A child of a same-sex “marriage” will always be deprived of either his natural mother or father. He will necessarily be raised by one party who has no blood relationship with him. He will always be deprived of either a mother or a father role model.

Same-sex “marriage” ignores a child’s best interests.

4. It Validates and Promotes the Homosexual Lifestyle. In the name of the “family,” same-sex “marriage” serves to validate not only such unions but the whole homosexual lifestyle in all its bisexual and transgender variants.

Civil laws are structuring principles of man’s life in society. As such, they play a very important and sometimes decisive role in influencing patterns of thought and behavior. They externally shape the life of society, but also profoundly modify everyone’s perception and evaluation of forms of behavior.

Legal recognition of same-sex “marriage” would necessarily obscure certain basic moral values, devalue traditional marriage, and weaken public morality.

5. It Turns a Moral Wrong into a Civil Right. Homosexual activists argue that same-sex “marriage” is a civil rights issue similar to the struggle for racial equality in the 1960s. This is false.

First of all, sexual behavior and race are essentially different realities. A man and a woman wanting to marry may be different in their characteristics: one may be black, the other white; one rich, the other poor; or one tall, the other short. None of these differences are insurmountable obstacles to marriage. The two individuals are still man and woman, and thus the requirements of nature are respected. Same-sex “marriage” opposes nature. Two individuals of the same sex, regardless of their race, wealth, stature, erudition or fame, will never be able to marry because of an insurmountable biological impossibility.

Secondly, inherited and unchangeable racial traits cannot be compared with non-genetic and changeable behavior. There is simply no analogy between the interracial marriage of a man and a woman and the “marriage” between two individuals of the same sex.

6. It Does Not Create a Family but a Naturally Sterile Union.

Traditional marriage is usually so fecund that those who would frustrate its end must do violence to nature to prevent the birth of children by using contraception. It naturally tends to create families. On the contrary, same-sex “marriage” is intrinsically sterile. If the “spouses” want a child, they must circumvent nature by costly and artificial means or employ surrogates. The natural tendency of such a union is not to create families. Therefore, we cannot call a same-sex union marriage and give it the benefits of true marriage.

7. It Defeats the State’s Purpose of Benefiting Marriage. One of the main reasons why the State bestows numerous benefits on marriage is that by its very nature and design, marriage provides the normal conditions for a stable, affectionate, and moral atmosphere that is beneficial to the upbringing of children—all fruit of the mutual affection of the parents. This aids in perpetuating the nation and strengthening society, an evident interest of the State. Homosexual “marriage” does not provide such conditions. Its primary purpose, objectively speaking, is the personal gratification of two individuals whose union is sterile by nature. It is not entitled, therefore, to the protection the State extends to true marriage.

8. It Imposes Its Acceptance on All Society. By legalizing same-sex “marriage,” the State becomes its official and active promoter. The State calls on public officials to officiate at the new civil ceremony, orders public schools to teach its acceptability to children, and punishes any state employee who expresses disapproval. In the private sphere, objecting parents will see their children exposed more than ever to this new “morality,” businesses offering wedding services will be forced to provide them for same-sex unions, and rental property owners will have to agree to accept same-sex couples as tenants. In every situation where marriage affects society, the State will expect Christians and all people of good will to betray their consciences by condoning, through silence or act, an attack on the natural order and Christian morality.

9. It Is the Cutting Edge of the Sexual Revolution. If homosexual “marriage” is universally accepted as the present step in sexual “freedom,” what logical arguments can be used to stop the next steps of incest, pedophilia, bestiality, and other forms of unnatural behavior? Indeed, radical elements of certain “avant garde” subcultures are already advocating such aberrations. Homosexual activist Paul Varnell wrote in the Chicago Free Press: “The gay movement, whether we acknowledge it or not, is not a civil rights movement, not even a sexual liberation movement, but a moral revolution aimed at changing people’s view of homosexuality.”

10. It Offends God. This is the most important reason. Whenever one violates the natural moral order established by God, one sins and offends God. Same-sex “marriage” does just this. Accordingly, anyone who professes to love God must be opposed to it.

Marriage is not the creature of any State. Rather, it was established by God in Paradise for our first parents, Adam and Eve. As we read in the Book of Genesis: “God created man in His image; in the Divine image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’” (Gen. 1:28-29) The same was taught by Our Savior Jesus Christ: “From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother; and shall cleave to his wife.” (Mark 10:6-7). Genesis also teaches how God punished Sodom and Gomorrah for the sin of homosexuality: “The Lord rained down sulphurous fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He overthrew those cities and the whole Plain, together with the inhabitants of the cities and the produce of the soil.” (Gen. 19:24-25)

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