

My Little Catechism

A Primer for First Confession and First Communion

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Dedication:
To my Grandchildren

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Bishop of Allentown

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Given this 22nd day of June, 2020 at the Chancery of the Diocese of Allentown.



Reverend Eugene P. Ritz
Chancellor

+ Alfred A. Schlert

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
Bishop of Allentown

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This catechism is meant to *supplement*, not *replace*, either the work of parents or the catechism being used by children in their school. Because of the brevity of the answers given in the text, parents may still need to elaborate the answers given in the text and answer children's questions.

There are two companion books that go with this catechism: *My Little Prayer Book*, which contains basic prayers for Catholics, and *My Little Book of Bible Stories*, which contains stories from the Bible.

All books are given in pdf files that can be printed on paper or uploaded to children's computer tablets. Many children have tablets or mobile devices that they use for games. But if the catechism and other books are uploaded to their computer tablets, then their catechism and prayers would be as easily accessible to them as their electronic games.

This catechism is in Question and Answer format. I did not write everything from scratch. Some of the text of this catechism came from old catechisms in the public domain. However, they have been edited, re-written if necessary, and updated to reflect current Church teachings. Many of the pictures used here are also in the public domain here in the U.S., although there are a few copyrighted ones that I took the liberty of using based on the concept of "fair use," as defined by Title 17, U.S. Code §107, for educational and non-commercial purposes. Picture credits and a link to their sources and license (when available) are given at the end of the book.

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“Let the children come to me” (Matt 19:14)

Artists: O.A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleaveland

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LESSON 1 GOD

Who made us?

God made us.

Who is God?

God is the Supreme Being who made Heaven, the earth and everything else. “Supreme” Being means above all beings.

Why did God make us?

God made us to be happy with Him forever in Heaven.

Can we see God?

We cannot see God, because He has no body. He is a pure spirit.

What kind of spirit is God?

God is a good Spirit, perfect in every way. Perfect because He is:

All knowing – He knows everything;

All-present – He is everywhere;

All powerful – He can make anything;

Eternal – He has no beginning, and will always be.

All-good, kind, merciful, as He is all-just.

How do we know that there is a God?

Our own hearts tell us that there is a God.

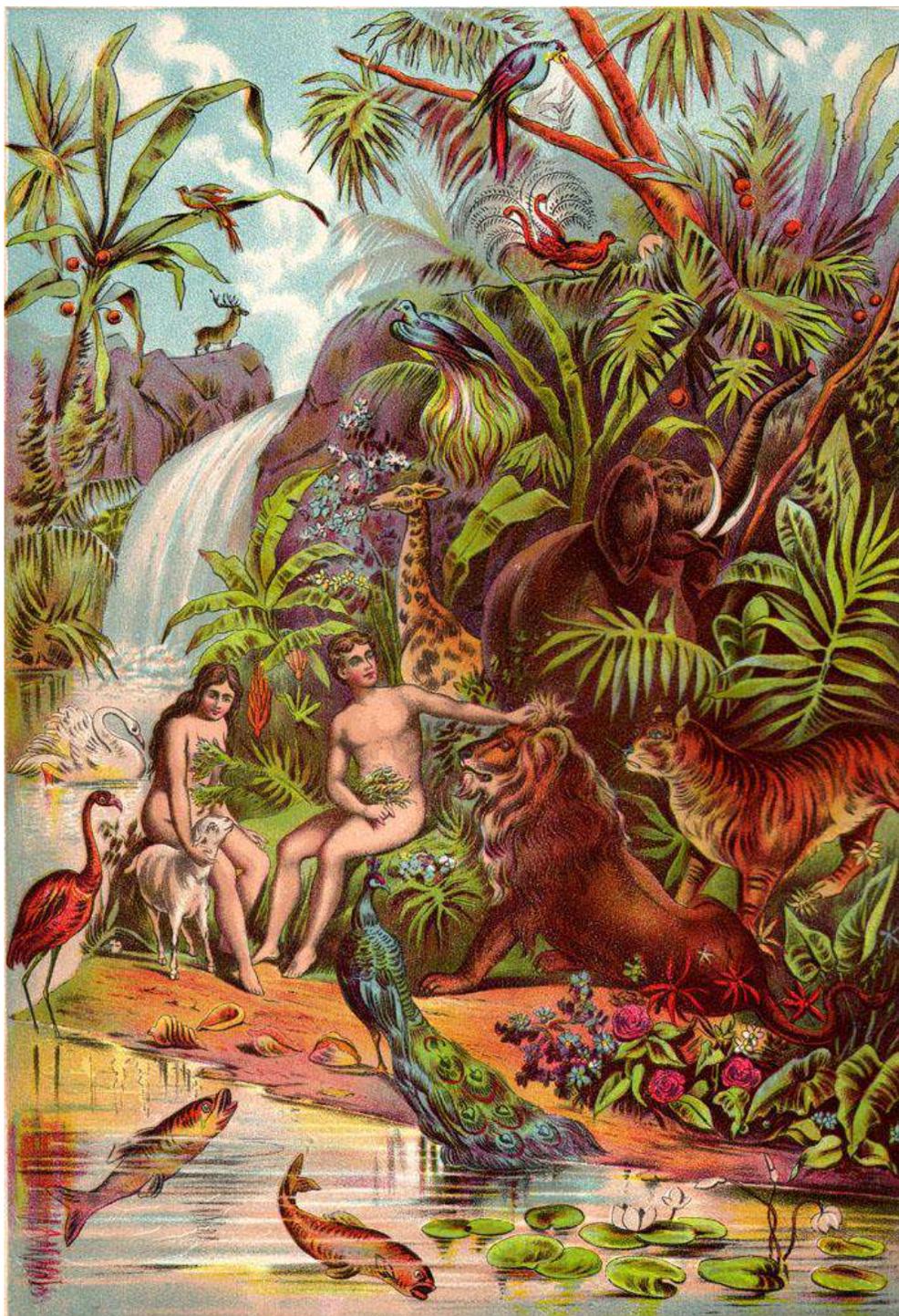


Fig. 1.1 Adam and Eve in Paradise

God made everything: the world, plants, animals and humans. The first humans were Adam and Eve. They were our first parents. Why aren't they wearing clothes? Because they were innocent when they were created, and had no shame.

Is there only one God?

Yes, there is only one God.

What is the greatest truth we learn about God?

The greatest truth we learn about God is the **Blessed Trinity**: that in one God there are three Divine Persons.

What are the names of the three Divine Persons in the Blessed Trinity?

The names of the three Divine Persons are:



The three Divine Persons are like the three corners of a triangle. In a triangle there are three corners but only one triangle. In God there are three Persons but only one God. Each Divine Person is different, just as each corner of the triangle is different. The Father is God, but is not the Son. The Son is God, but is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is God, but is neither the Father nor the Son. Each Person is God, but there are not three Gods. There is only ONE God.

Who tells us all we ought to know about God?

The Bible and the Church tell us all we ought to know about God.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a book that contains what God has revealed for our sake.

How do you make the Sign of the Cross?

You make a cross over your body (Teacher shows how) and say: *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

We begin and end our prayers with the Sign of the Cross to honor the Blessed Trinity.



Fig. 1.2 The Blessed Trinity
The dove represents the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 2 GOD THE FATHER, MAN, ANGELS AND SIN

How did God the Father show His love for us?

God the Father showed His love for us by creating us.

To whose likeness did He make us?

To His own image and likeness.

Is this likeness in our bodies or in our souls?

In our souls.

In what way is our souls like to God?

Because our souls are spirits, and are immortal, that is to say, our souls will never die.

In what else are our souls like to God?

As in one God there are three Persons, our souls have three powers: memory, understanding, and free will.

Which must we take most care of, our bodies or our souls?

Our souls, because “What does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?” (Matt 16:26) To save our souls we must believe in God, hope in Him, and love Him with all our hearts.

Before God made us, did He make anyone else?

Before God made us, He made the angels. They are also pure spirits and will never die. But they are not all-powerful, not all-knowing, and are not everywhere.

What do angels do?

Angels act as God's messengers, which is why artists often depict them with wings. In Heaven the angels sing songs and praise God unceasingly.

Is that all that the angels do?

Some angels watch out for us and protect us. They are called our **guardian angels**. Every child, man and woman has a guardian angel. We must often pray to our guardian angel to protect us.

Are all angels good?

No, some angels are bad and they want us to be bad, too. The bad angels, called demons or devils, tempt us to do bad things. They don't obey God, and they don't want us to obey God either.

Where do the angels live?

The good angels live in Heaven. The bad angels were expelled from Heaven by St. Michael. Some demons are on earth tempting people to join them in their wickedness. In the end they will all be cast into hell and punished with hell-fire forever.



Fig. 2.1 Demons cast into hell by St. Michael the Archangel
A painting by Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

Who else will be happy with God in Heaven?

Good people, who love and serve God, will be happy with Him in Heaven together with the good angels. Their happiness will never end; they will be happy forever.

What will happen to bad people, who do not love and serve God?

Bad people, who do not love and serve God, will be punished with hell-fire together with the demons. Their suffering will never end; they will suffer forever.

What makes us bad?

Sin makes us bad. Sin is any act of disobedience against God.

Are all our sins alike?

Our sins are not all alike. Some are small sins (called **venial** sins); some are big sins (called **mortal** sins). Refusing to play with your brother, is a small sin. Pushing him into the river to drown, is a big sin.

Does God punish all sins?

God punishes all sins.

Does God punish all sins with hell-fire?

God punishes only the big (mortal) sins with hell-fire.

Does God like to punish us?

God does not like to punish us. He wants us to be happy with Him in Heaven.

What do we call the sins we commit?

We call the sins we commit **actual sins**.

What is Original Sin?

Original sin is the sin that we do not actually commit. It was committed by our first parents, Adam and Eve. But since we are their children, we also suffer the punishment, just like when careless parents lose their house to fire, the children also lose their home.

How did Adam and Eve commit the first sin?

God told them not to eat the fruit of a certain tree that grew in the Garden of Paradise. But the devil appeared to them in the form of a serpent, and told them that if they were to eat the fruit, they would also become all-knowing and all-powerful like God. That was a lie. But Adam and Eve believed it, and they disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. (Read the “Story of Adam and Eve” in *My Little Book of Bible Stories*.)

What happened to Adam and Eve on account of their sin?

They were driven out of Paradise. Heaven’s door was closed to them, and they and their future children could no longer enter their former home (Paradise).

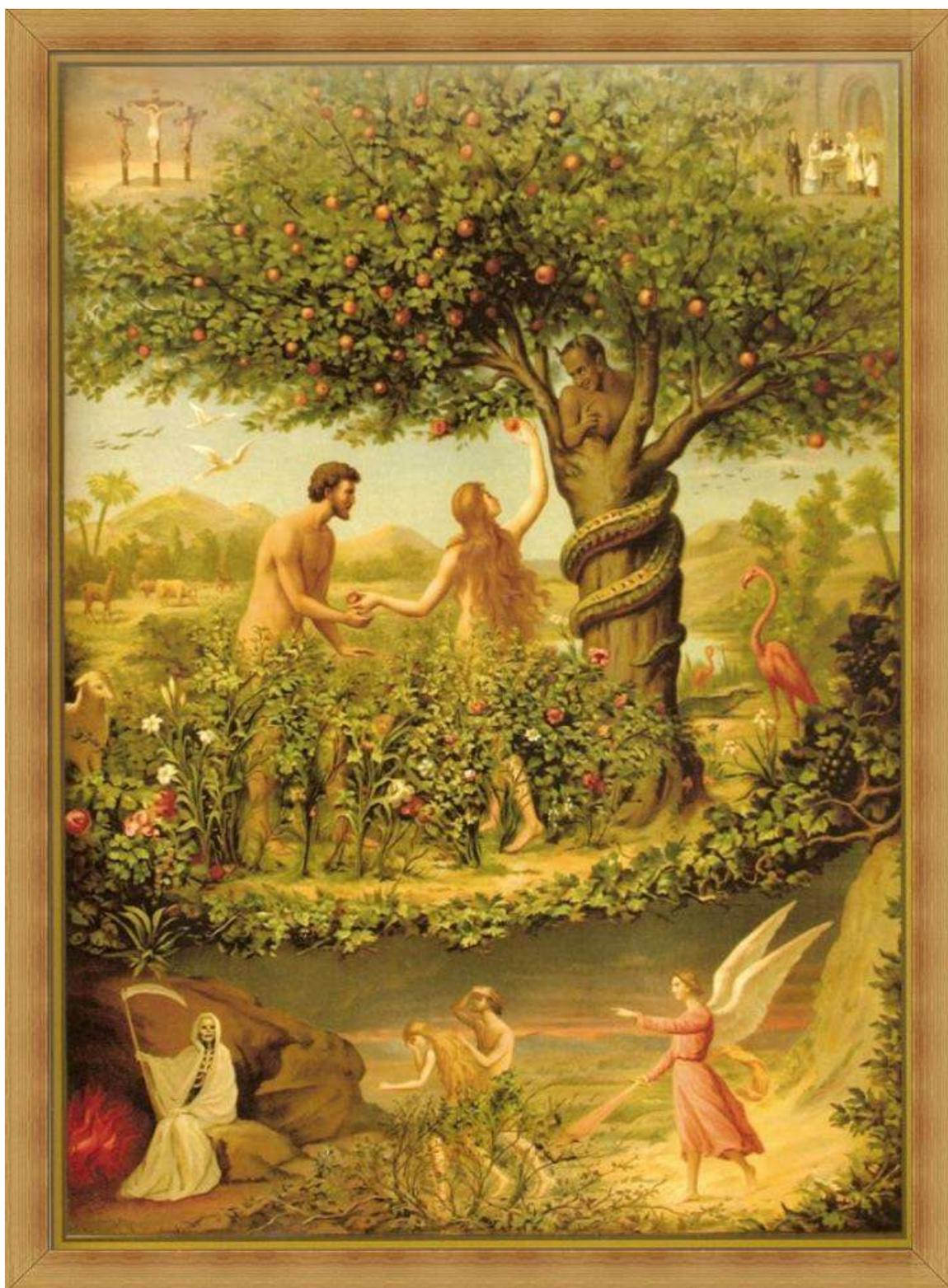


Fig 2.2 The Fall of Adam and Eve

LESSON 3 GOD THE SON, THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND ST. JOSEPH

Did God take pity on our first parents after their sin?

Yes, He promised to send them a Redeemer or Savior, someone who will save them and all of humankind from the punishment of sin.

Who was this Redeemer?

The Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the Savior of the World.

How did God the Son save us from this horrible punishment?

God the Son saved us from this horrible punishment by becoming human and dying for our sins. He obeyed God perfectly even though it led to His suffering and death.

Did God the Son cease to be God when He became human?

No, He remained God while also human, a God-man. This is called the mystery of the Incarnation.

When did God the Son do this?

God the Son became human and was born in Bethlehem on Christmas day over 2000 years ago.

What name did God the Son take as God-man?

As God-man, God the Son took the name of **Jesus Christ**.

Who is the Mother of Jesus Christ?

The **Blessed Virgin Mary** is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Fig 3.1 The Holy Family (Jesus, Mary and Joseph)
Artist: Giovanni Battista Salvi de Sassoferrato (1609-1685)

Who is the father of Jesus Christ?

As man, Jesus Christ has no human father, but he had a foster-father (or guardian), and that was St. Joseph. As God the Son, Christ's father is God the Father.

How did Jesus Christ suffer for our sins?

Jesus Christ was scourged, was crowned with thorns, and was crucified.

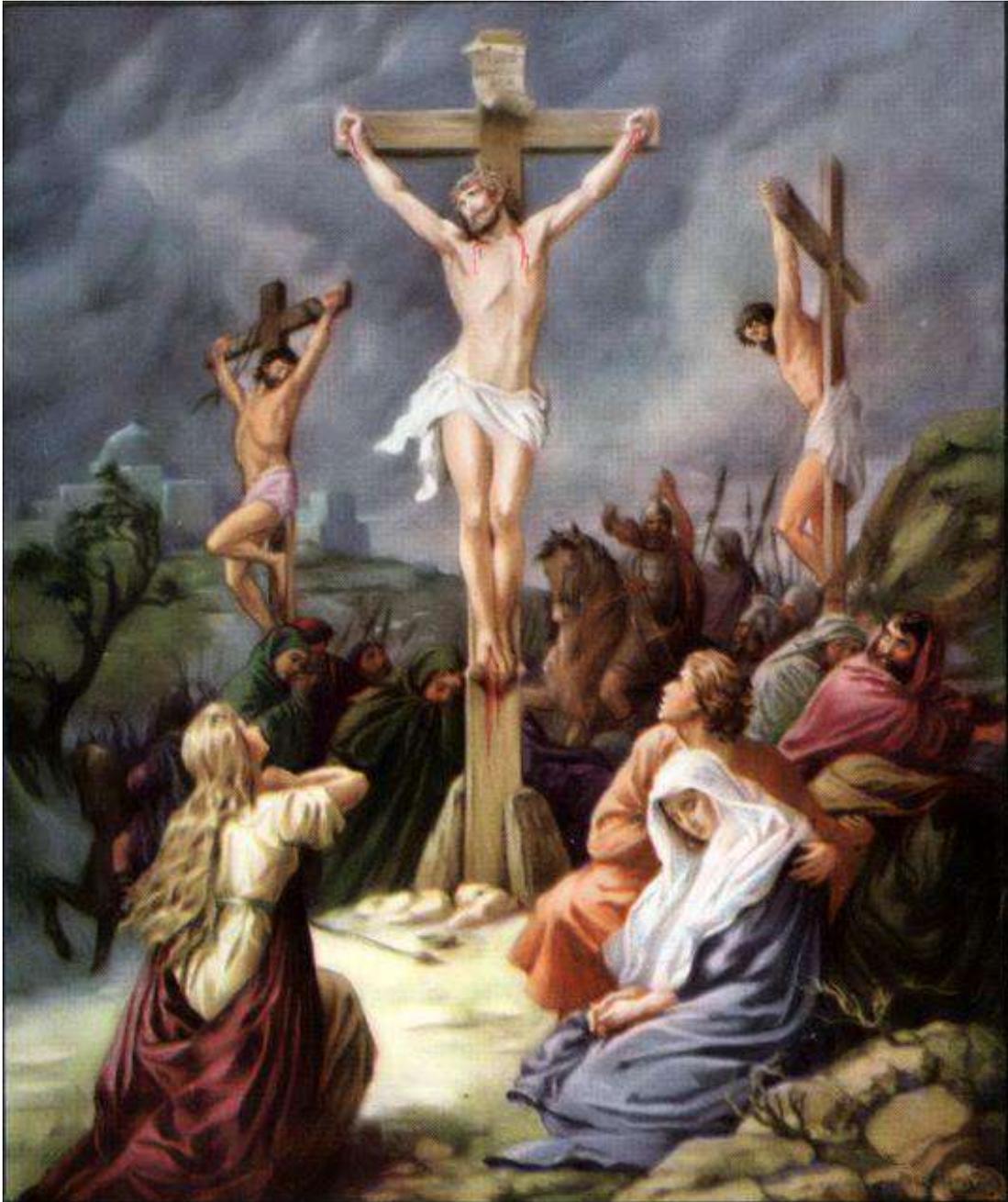


Fig 3.2 The Crucifixion

Artists: O.A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleaveland

On what day did Jesus Christ die?

He died on Good Friday.

Where was the body of Jesus Christ buried?

The body of Jesus Christ was buried in a new grave, cut out of a rock, on the mount not far from where He was crucified.

Did Jesus Christ remain in the grave?

No. By His own power He rose from the dead on the morning of Easter Sunday. His rising from the dead is called His **Resurrection**.

What did Jesus Christ do after rising from the dead?

He appeared to His Apostles and to other people several times to show them that He was not a ghost, but that He had truly risen. Then He stayed on earth for forty more days before going to His Father in Heaven. His going up into Heaven is called His **Ascension**.

The story of Christ's Death, His Resurrection and His Ascension into Heaven may be found in *My Little Book of Bible Stories*, Stories 8, 9 and 10.

LESSON 4 GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GRACE

How does the Holy Spirit show His love for us?

The Holy Spirit – the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity – shows His love for us by making us holy.

How does the Holy Spirit make us holy?

The Holy Spirit makes us holy by giving us sanctifying grace.

What is sanctifying grace?

Sanctifying grace is the divine life in our souls that makes us pleasing and holy before God. With sanctifying grace, we become adopted children of God, heirs of Heaven, and prince and princesses of His kingdom.

How long does sanctifying grace last in the soul?

Sanctifying grace remains in the soul until we commit mortal sin. Mortal sin removes this grace from the soul.

What other grace does the Holy Spirit give us?

The Holy Spirit also gives us actual grace.

What is actual grace?

Actual grace is the help which the Holy Spirit gives us to do good and avoid evil. It enlightens our mind and strengthens our will to do good deeds and resist the temptation to sin. Temptation to sin comes from the devil.

How can we gain sanctifying grace?

We can gain sanctifying grace first by the Sacrament of Baptism and, if we lose it by mortal sin, we can gain it again by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

How can we increase sanctifying grace and gain actual graces?

1. By prayer.
2. By good works.
3. By attending the Sacrifice of the Mass.
4. By receiving the Sacraments.

What is prayer?

Prayer is speaking lovingly to God. (See *My Little Prayer Book* for the common prayers you need to learn.)

What is a good work?

A good work is anything we do for the love of God, such as works of mercy.

What are some examples of good work?

Any work of mercy is good work. The following are some works of mercy:

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give drink to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To shelter the homeless

5. To visit the sick.
6. To teach the ignorant.
7. To forgive others willingly.
8. To pray for the living and the dead.

Does the Holy Spirit do anything more than give graces?

Yes, He also watches over the Church and protects it from error. The Church safely teaches us how to go to Heaven.

Why did Christ establish the Church?

Christ established the Church to teach, govern, and save all people. It is also through the Church that the Holy Spirit distributes His graces.

How do we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Church?

We receive grace by assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass and by receiving the sacraments.

What is the Sacrifice of the Mass?

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the re-enactment of Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross.

How should we assist at Mass?

We should assist at Mass with attention and piety.

What are the most common symbols of the Holy Spirit?

The most common symbols used to represent the Holy Spirit are the **dove** (for purity and holiness) and **tongues of fire** (for enlightenment and the warmth of divine love).

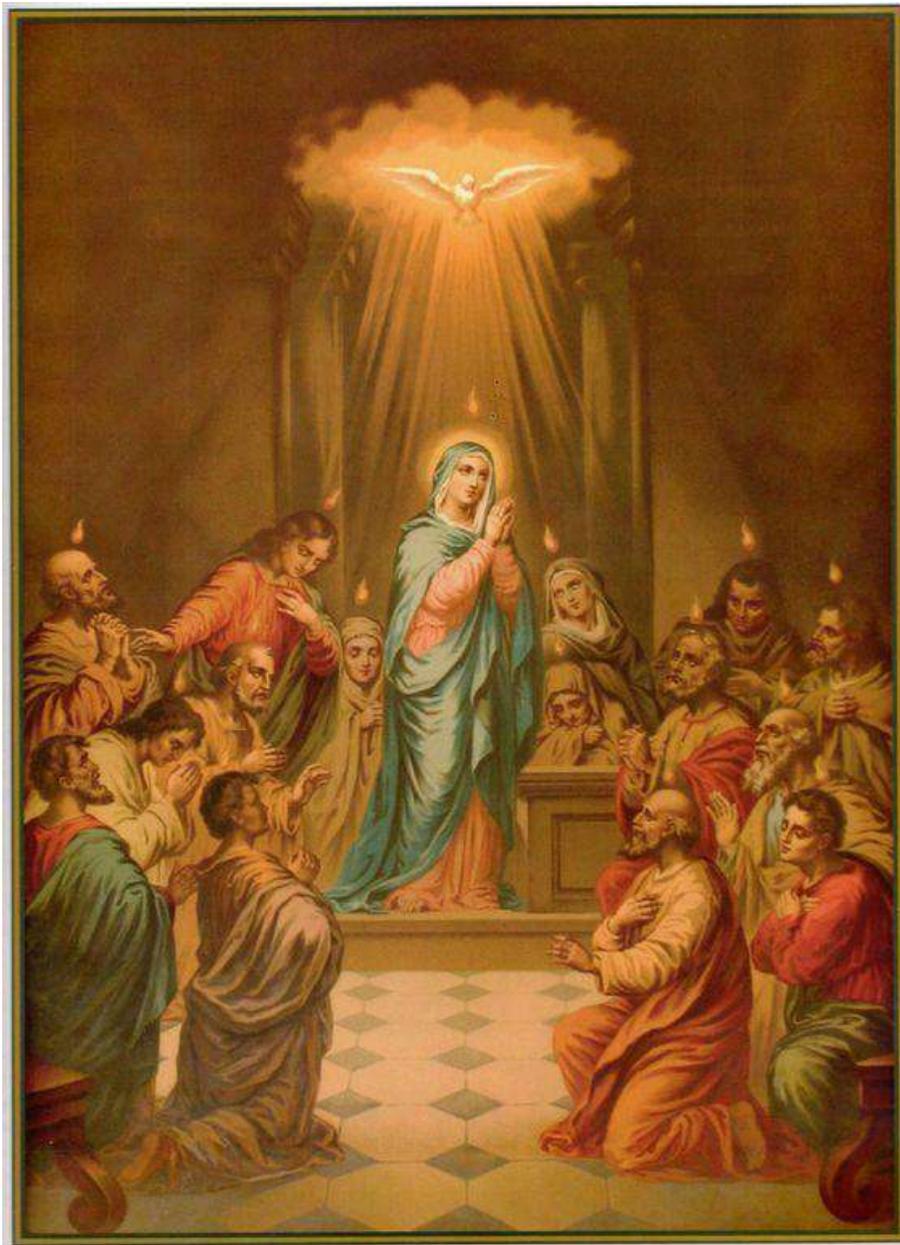


Fig 4.1 Pentecost

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

LESSON 5 THE SACRAMENTS

What is a sacrament?

A sacrament is a sensible sign of grace, instituted by Christ to sanctify our souls.

Do all sacraments give grace?

Yes, if we are duly disposed to receive it.

How many sacraments are there?

There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

What does Baptism do?

Baptism takes away original sin and any actual sin committed before Baptism, and makes us children of God and members of the Church.

How is Baptism given?

By pouring water on the person, with the words ordained by Christ.

Which words need to be said at the time the water is poured?

“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”



Fig 5.1 Baptism

What does Confirmation do for us?

Confirmation gives us the grace to be better and more faithful followers of Christ.

How is Confirmation given?

Confirmation is given by a bishop or by a priest who is granted the faculty of giving Confirmation. He prays that the Holy Spirit may come down upon us, and makes a small sign of the cross on our foreheads using holy oil (chrism).

What does the Sacrament of Reconciliation do for us?

Reconciliation forgives sins committed after Baptism and restores sanctifying grace that our souls lost by mortal sin.

How are sins forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

By the priest's Absolution, which he gives after hearing our individual confession and act of contrition.

What does the Holy Eucharist do for us?

It feeds and nourishes our souls with the true Body and Blood of Christ, which we receive in the form of bread or wine.

How must we receive the Holy Eucharist?

We must receive the Holy Eucharist worthily, that is, with a clean soul. If we have a big (mortal) sin, we need to confess it first in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Fig 5.2 Holy Communion

Receiving the Holy Eucharist is called “Holy Communion.” When you receive Holy Communion, you are receiving the true Body of Christ. The white, round Host looks like bread and tastes like bread, but it is NOT bread. It is the true Body of Christ.

What does the Anointing of the Sick do for us?

The Anointing of the Sick strengthens our souls during times of serious sickness and at the hour of death.

What does Holy Orders do for us?

Holy Orders gives us deacons, priests and bishops.

What does Matrimony do for us?

Matrimony unites a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage and gives them the grace to live together as responsible man and wife.

LESSON 6 THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Why did God make us?

God made us to love Him, serve Him, and be happy with Him forever in Heaven.

How can we love and serve God?

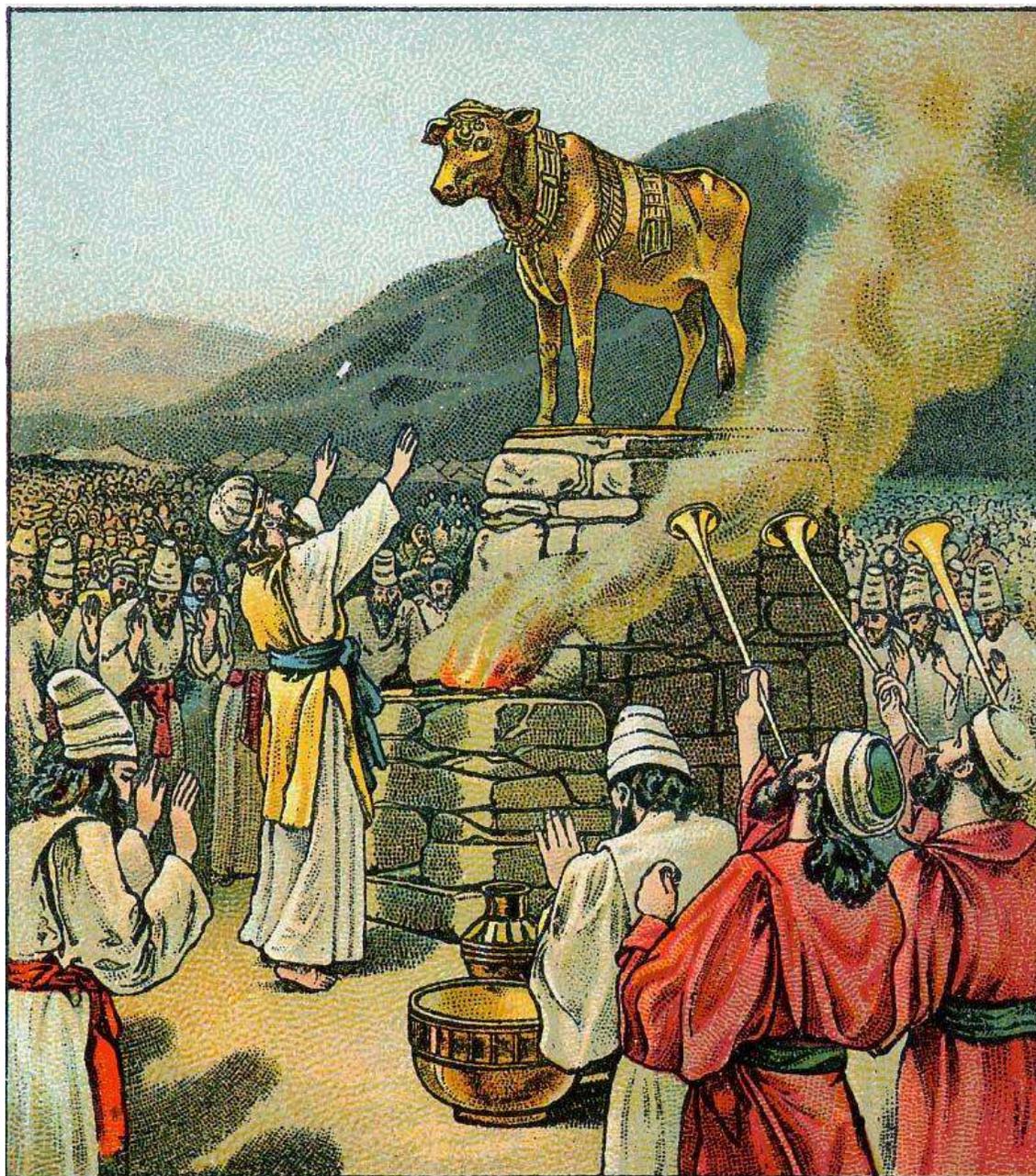
We can love and serve God by keeping the Ten Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, and by practicing the Virtues.

What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments are: (MEMORIZE THESE!)

I am the Lord thy God:

1. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day (Sunday).
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.



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WORSHIPPING THE GOLDEN CALF.

Ex. 32 : 1-35.

GOLDEN TEXT :—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Ex. 20 : 3.

Fig 6.1 Idolatry

Which is the chief and greatest commandment?

The chief and greatest commandment is the **love of God**: “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength” (Mark 12:30). In the Ten Commandments the first three commandments, 1, 2 and 3, are all included in the command to love God above all things.

What is the second greatest commandment?

The second greatest commandment is the **love of our neighbor** as ourselves. The rest of the ten commandments, (commandments 4 thru 10) are all included in the command to love our neighbor. Therefore, all the ten commandments can be summarized into just these two commandments: the *love of God* and the *love of our neighbor* as ourselves.

The love of our neighbor is best illustrated by the “Story of the Good Samaritan.” It is one of the stories of Jesus Christ that you can read in *My Little Book of Bible Stories*.

Note to Parents:

It is customary to explain the commandments by giving what each commandment *commands* and what it *forbids*. However, very young children seem to learn the concepts faster simply by giving them examples of sins against each commandment. The thorough and detailed discussion of each commandment may therefore be deferred to catechism in the higher grades.

What are some examples of sins committed against the Ten Commandments?

Examples of sins against the Ten Commandments are:

1. ***Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.***
 Worshiping idols or fake gods.
 Making games and TV more important than God.
 Neglecting to pray and study catechism.
2. ***Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.***
 Using God's name in jokes or making fun of holy things.
 Cursing and needlessly swearing in God's name.
3. ***Remember to keep holy the Lord's day (Sunday).***
 Working unnecessarily on Sundays and Holy days.
 Neglecting Mass on Sundays and Holydays.
 Misbehaving in Church.
 Not praying or paying attention during Holy Mass.
4. ***Honor thy father and thy mother.***
 Disobeying parents or teachers.
 Answering back or disrespecting them.
 Being mad at them when reprimanded.
5. ***Thou shalt not kill.***
 Killing an innocent person (murder) or oneself (suicide).
 Being unjustly angry with someone.

- Hating a person and/or seeking revenge.
 Quarreling and fighting unnecessarily or unjustly.
 Hurting ourselves or others.
 Exposing body or soul to danger.
 Not taking care of one's health.
 Eating or drinking too much.
 Leading others into sin.
- 6. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.***
 Looking at immodest shows on TV.
 Doing immodest things alone or with others.
 Saying or laughing at immodest jokes.
- 7. *Thou shalt not steal.***
 Cheating and stealing.
 Destroying property that belongs to others.
 Not returning what you borrowed.
- 8. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.***
 Telling a lie or spreading false rumors about others.
- 9. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.***
 Thinking of or desiring immodest things.
- 10. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.***
 Thinking of or planning on stealing or cheating.

Note: The above are only some examples. Are there other sins against each commandment that you can think of?

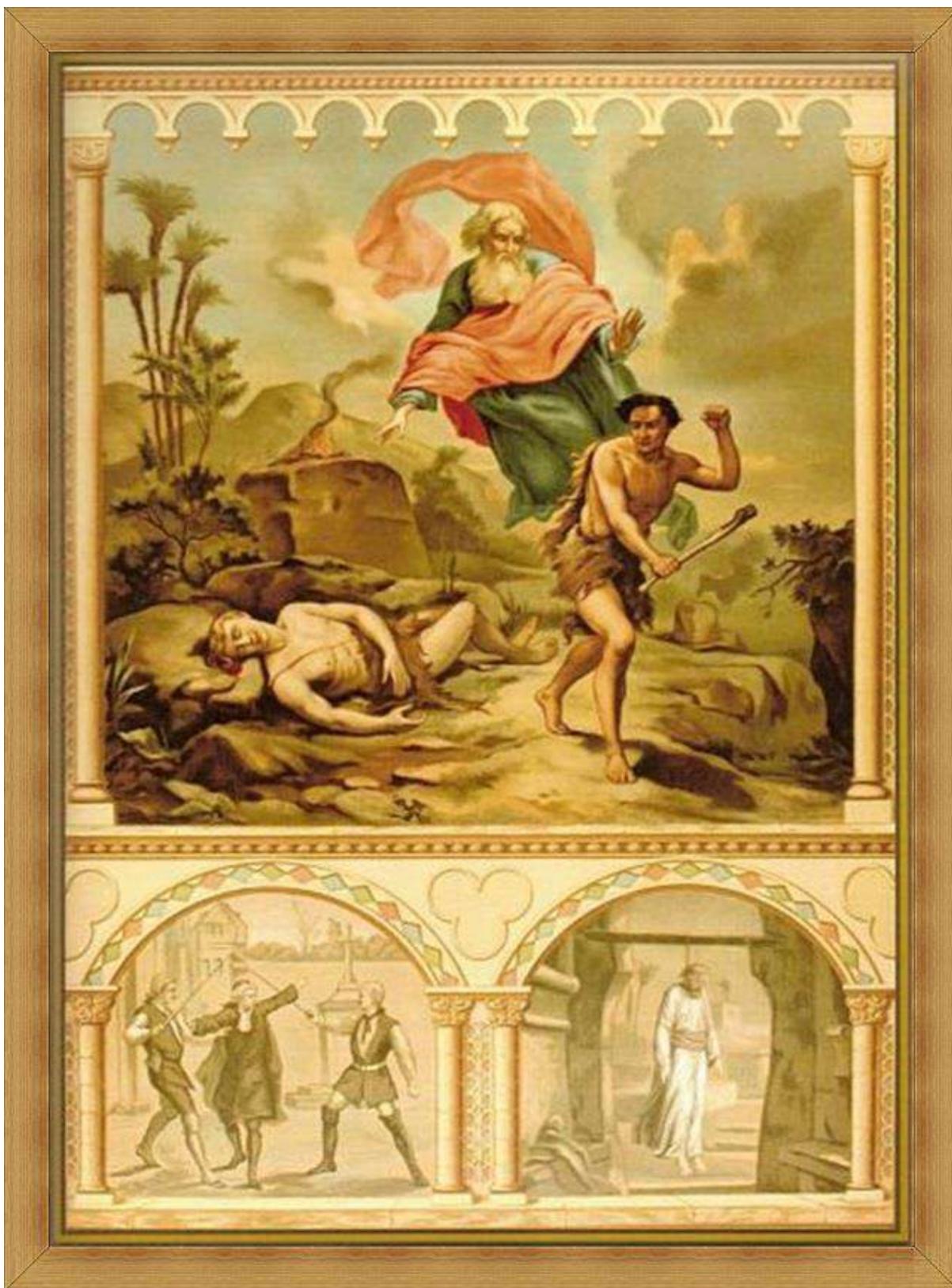


Fig 6.2 “Thou shalt not kill.”

What are virtues?

Virtues are good habits. The opposite of virtues are bad habits, called **vices**.

What are some examples of virtues and their opposite vices?

VIRTUES		VICES
Generosity	opposite of	selfishness/greed
Temperance	opposite of	gluttony
Diligence	opposite of	laziness/sloth
Humility	opposite of	pride

Are vices also sins?

No, but vices easily lead to sin. That is why we must remove our vices by practicing the virtues.

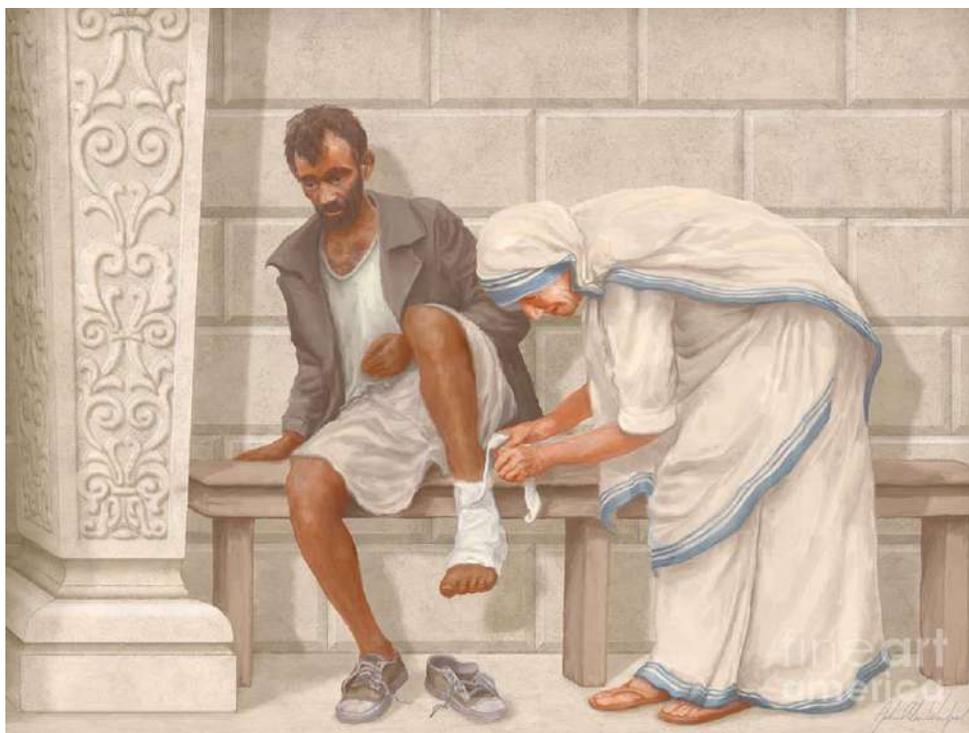


Fig 6.3 The Kindness of Mother Teresa
Artist: John Alan Warford

LESSON 7 THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

Why must we keep the precepts of the Church?

We must keep the precepts of the Church because they also are God's laws.

What are the precepts or laws of the Church?

The precepts of the Church are:

1. To hear Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
2. To confess at least once a year.
3. To receive Holy Communion during the Easter time.
In the U.S. this obligation, called “Easter duty,” can be fulfilled from the First Sunday of Lent until Trinity Sunday.
4. To keep the holy days of obligation holy.
5. To fast and abstain on the days appointed. To fast means to eat only one full meal during the day. To abstain means to refrain from eating meat.

NOTE: The law of fasting applies from age 18 until age 59. The law of abstinence applies from age 14 onwards.

LESSON 8 SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

How are actual sins committed after Baptism forgiven?

While original sin and any actual sins committed before Baptism, are forgiven at Baptism, the actual sins committed after Baptism are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

What must you do to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

To receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation you must be sorry for your sins and confess them to a priest. Sorrow for sin is necessary for forgiveness. Read the Story of the Prodigal Son from your *My Little Book of Bible Stories*.

Who gave priests the power to forgive sin?

Our Lord gave the Apostles and their successors (bishops and priests) the power to forgive sin.

What should make you sorry for your sins?

Your love for God and the fear of His punishment should make you sorry for your sins.

Should you be sorry for all your sins?

Yes! Even if you only confessed the big sins, you must still be sorry for ALL your sins, including the small sins.



Fig 8.1 The Repentance of St. Peter

This painting shows St. Peter being sorry for his sin of denying our Lord three times.

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

What sins must you tell in confession?

In confession you must tell all your big sins. You do not have to confess your small sins, but it is well to do so. A good rule is to confess the big sins first, then the small sins if you want to.

What are small sins?

Small sins (also called **venial** sins) are bad acts, thoughts or desires, but not so bad that they deserve to be punished with hell-fire. Examples of small sins: omitting to say your night prayers, thinking of not sharing your toys with your brother, etc.

What are big sins?

Big sins (also called **mortal** sins) are sins that are so bad that they deserve to be punished with hell-fire. Examples of big sins: cursing God, insulting your parents, killing an innocent person, setting a house on fire, etc. If you do something very bad by mistake (without full knowledge), or accidentally (without full consent), then it is not a mortal sin. It is only a mortal sin if you knew that it was a big sin, and you still decided to do it.

When is your confession bad?

Your confession is bad if you are not sorry for your sins, or if you hide a mortal sin during confession. Hiding a big sin in confession is itself a mortal sin deserving of hell-fire.

What if you omitted a big sin during confession because you forgot?

If you omitted a big sin through forgetfulness, then your confession was still good. However, you **MUST** still confess the sin that you omitted the next time you go to confession. Just tell the priest that you forgot to confess it during your last confession.

What if I am in doubt whether a sin is big or not?

Then tell the priest about your doubt, so that he can help you figure it out.

What happens when you make a bad confession?

When you make a bad confession, **NONE** of the sins you confessed is forgiven, and another mortal sin is added to your soul.

What must you do if you made a bad confession?

You must confess that you made a bad confession, and tell all your sins again to the priest, including those that you already confessed in your bad confession.

Can sins be forgiven if I can't go to church or if no priest is available to hear my confession?

Yes, as long as you are truly sorry for having broken your loving relationship with God.

How can I get God's forgiveness if I can't go to church or if no priest is available to hear my confession?

Sins, including mortal sins, can be forgiven even before you have the chance to go to confession by making a sincere **Act of Contrition**. However, the obligation to confess them remains, and you may NOT receive Holy Communion until after you have confessed all your mortal sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Fig 8.2 Children Praying the Act of Contrition

You can find the Act of Contrition prayer in *My Little Prayer Book*. Since you cannot go to confession as often as you sin, it is a good idea to say the Act of Contrition as often as you sin, or add it to your night prayers at bedtime.

LESSON 9 PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

How do you prepare for a good confession?

To prepare for a good confession you must first spend enough time to think about the sins you have committed against each commandment. This is called “examination of conscience.” Then be sorry for your sins, resolve not to sin again, and make a good Act of Contrition. The following list is only an **example** for the examination of conscience. You should include sins that you remember having committed, although they are not in the list below.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. Have you spent too much time on games or TV and missed your daily prayers? How often have you prayed without attention or devotion? Have you neglected to study your catechism?
2. Have you cursed or used God’s name in vain? Have you made fun of holy things?
3. How often did you miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days without a justifiable reason? How often did you come considerably late through your own fault? How often did you talk, laugh, or misbehave during Mass?
4. How often have you disobeyed or disrespected your parents or teachers? How often have you answered back or acted stubbornly?

5. Have you been angry; refused to speak to, or forgive others; hurt them bodily or their feelings? Have you hated anyone? Have you led others to sin? Have you sinned by eating or drinking too much or too little?
6. and 9. How often have you done anything immodest with yourself or with others? Have you watched immodest shows or looked at immodest pictures? Have you dressed immodestly to be a temptation to others? Have you had immodest thoughts or desires?
7. and 10. Have you cheated or stolen anything? If so, have you returned it? Have you damaged anything belonging to others and not made up for it? Have you desired to cheat, or to steal anything?
8. Have you told a lie? Have you said anything bad about others? Have you made known without need the hidden faults of others?

What are the qualities of a good confession?

A good confession must be **humble, sincere, and complete**. For example, it is not enough to say you stole money. You must also state how much you stole, how often you did the act, who you stole it from, and whether you committed the sin alone or with others.



**Fig 9.1 Boy making his confession.
Girl saying her penance after confession.**

How do you make a good confession?

When you go to the confessional to make your confession, do the following:

- Begin by saying, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.”
- Then say, “This is my first confession.” (NOTE: if this is not your first confession, you say instead, “I made my last confession _____ weeks ago.”)
- Tell your sins to the priest clearly and briefly.
- When finished, say “For these and for all sins of my past life, I am truly sorry, Father.”
- The priest will usually give you a short spiritual advice, and ask you to say a few prayers for penance. (You will say these prayers only after you leave the confessional.)
- He will now ask you to recite the act of contrition while he gives you the absolution.
- Done! You are a *friend* of God again, and there is now divine life (sanctifying grace) in your soul.

When you go back to your seat after confession, thank God for a good confession, say the penance prayers as soon as possible, resolve never to commit the same sins again, and follow the advice given to you by the priest.

LESSON 10 HOLY COMMUNION

How did our Lord show His special love for us?

Our Lord showed His special love for us by making Himself the food of our souls. We call this heavenly food Holy Eucharist.

What is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is the act of receiving the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a white, round bread, called a Host. In some cases, you can also receive the Blood of Christ in the form of wine.



Fig 10.1 The Holy Eucharist
Hand-colored lithograph, circa 1848

When does the host become the Body of Jesus Christ?

The bread (or the host) is changed into the Body of Christ at Holy Mass when the priest says, “This is My Body.” After the priest says these words, the Host still looks white and round, and still tastes like bread, but it is no longer bread. It is now the Body of Christ, actually the *whole* Christ, with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

How does this change happen?

By the power of God! Jesus Christ gave the Apostles and their successors (bishops and priests) the power to change the host into His Body, and the wine into His Blood at Holy Mass. But Body or Blood, it is still the *whole* Christ in each case.

Is Jesus Christ broken when the Host is broken?

No. When the Host is broken into several pieces, each piece becomes the *whole* Christ. When you see broken pieces of Host on a plate, it does not mean that there are now many parts of the Body of Jesus Christ on the plate. Rather, each piece of white Host, even the smallest piece or particle, is the *same, whole, undivided Jesus Christ!*

How often should we receive Holy Communion?

We should receive Holy Communion often, even daily if possible, but at least once a year during Easter. In the U.S. this obligation, called “Easter duty,” can be fulfilled from the First Sunday of Lent until Trinity Sunday.

What is necessary to receive Holy Communion worthily?

To receive Holy Communion worthily it is necessary:

1. To be free from mortal sin. If not, you must make a good confession first before receiving Holy Communion. Do not receive Holy Communion with an unconfessed mortal sin in your soul.
2. To fast one hour before receiving Holy Communion. No chewing gum, food or drink, except water.

Should we kneel or should we stand when receiving Holy Communion?

In the U.S. most people stand in line when they approach the priest or the Eucharistic minister to receive Holy Communion. Therefore, the U.S. Bishops decided that *communicants should remain standing* when they receive the Holy Eucharist. Traditionally, however, Holy Communion is received on the tongue while kneeling as a form of reverence. This practice is still *recommended*, especially when there are few communicants or when there is no risk of being a tripping hazard to others as one receives Holy Communion.

What form of reverence must be shown to the Holy Eucharist when receiving Holy Communion?

First, say your prayer (of adoration) before Holy Communion while still in the pew. Then kneel, if possible, when you receive Communion on the tongue. If you are receiving Holy Communion standing rather than

kneeling, show reverence to our Lord by *bowing the head* before the Blessed Sacrament, and by saying “Amen” after the priest or minister says, “The Body of Christ.”

Should Holy Communion be received in the hand or on the tongue?

In the U.S. receiving Holy Communion in the hand is *permitted*, but receiving Holy Communion on the tongue has been the traditional practice and is still *recommended*.

How is Holy Communion received in the hand?

When receiving Holy Communion in the hand and you are right handed, put your right hand under your left. When the priest puts the Host in your hand, pick it up with your right hand and put it in your mouth. If you are left handed, put your left hand under your right. When the priest puts the Host in your hand, pick it up with your left hand and put it in your mouth. Do not walk away with the Host in your hand. You **MUST** first put the sacred Host in your mouth *in the presence of the priest or minister* before walking back to your seat.

How is Holy Communion received on the tongue?

When receiving Holy Communion on the tongue, open your mouth wide and *extend* your tongue out so the priest or minister can put the Host properly on your tongue. Do not be embarrassed to extend your tongue. Many saints have done the same.

When should the sacred Host be swallowed?

You should try to swallow the sacred Host as soon as possible, and avoid spitting for some time. If the Host should cling to the palate, remove it with your tongue, but never with your finger.

What must you do after receiving Holy Communion?

After receiving Holy Communion, you should spend some time adoring our Lord, relishing His Divine Presence, thanking Him and saying your Prayer after Holy Communion. After the Mass and *throughout the day*, think of this great moment when our Lord Jesus came and gave you a “kiss” in your soul.

How long can you receive Holy Communion without first going to confession?

You can receive Holy Communion without going to confession as long as you remain free from mortal sin.

How often should you ordinarily go to confession?

It is good practice for those who receive Holy Communion every Sunday to go to confession once a month. But if you have the misfortune of committing a mortal sin at any time, then make your confession as soon as possible and *before* receiving Holy Communion again.



Fig 10.2 An Old Holy Card

Shows the Christ Child with a halo of thorns and holding three nails.
 From the Norman Castle Holy Card Collection,
 John J. Burns Library, Boston College

The End

Picture Credits and Sources

Frontpage Picture: “Let the children come to me.”

Artists: O.A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleaveland

An illustration from Lillie A. Faris’ *Standard Bible Story Book Readers*, Book One, 1925

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JesuswithChildren.jpg>

Fig 1.1 Adam and Eve in Paradise

From a book published in 1887.

Source: <http://karenswhimsy.com/church-clipart.shtml>

Fig 1.2 The Blessed Trinity

Source: http://marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Trinity_004.jpg

Fig 2.1 Demons cast into hell by St. Michael the Archangel

Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705), circa 1665

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luca_Giordano_-_The_Fall_of_the_Rebel_Angels_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Fig 2.2 The Fall of Adam and Eve

Source: <http://www.sendarium.com/p/catecismo-ilustrado-de-1910.html>, #60

Fig 3.1 The Holy Family (Jesus, Mary and Joseph)

Artist: Giovanni Battista Salvi de Sassoferrato (1609-1685)

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_family_Sassoferrato_Condé_Chantilly.jpg

Fig 3.2 The Crucifixion

Artists: O.A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleaveland

An illustration from Lillie A. Faris’ *Standard Bible Story Book Readers*, Book Six, 1929

Fig 4.1 Pentecost

Source: <http://www.sendarium.com/p/catecismo-ilustrado-de-1910.html>, #13

Fig 5.1 Baptism

Source: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Children/sacrament1.jpg>

Fig 5.2 Holy Communion

Source: <https://www.needpix.com/photo/1666367/communion-the-priest-church-faith>

Fig 6.2 “Thou shalt not kill.”

Source: <http://www.sendarium.com/p/catecismo-ilustrado-de-1910.html>, #40

Fig 6.3 The Kindness of Mother Teresa

A painting by John Alan Warford

Source: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/2-mother-teresa-john-alan-warford.html>

Fig 8.1 The Repentance of St. Peter

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

From Hermitagemuseum.org, CC BY-SA 4.0 International License

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reni_-_Repentance_of_St_Peter,_1635.jpg

Fig 8.2 Children Praying the Act of Contrition

Source: <https://gallery.coloringcrew.com/users-coloring-pages/praying-children-colored-by--88178.html>

Fig 9.1 Boy making his confession. Girl saying her penance after confession.

Source: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Children/sacrament2.jpg>

Fig 10.1 The Holy Eucharist

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_holy_eucharist-_la_sagrada_eucaristia_LCCN2002695875.jpg

Fig 10.2 An Old Holy Card

Source: <https://johnjburnslibrary.wordpress.com/2011/12/05/archives-diary-norman-castle-holy-cards/>