

COMMUNION

[the central theme developed in the
Catechism of the Catholic Church,
www.usccb.org/catechism/text/index.htm]

God is love, and God's life is a mystery of personal loving communion. [2331] The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of divine life...the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. [234] The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity. [260]

Creation is the foundation of all God's saving plans, the beginning of the history of salvation that culminates in Christ. [280] The ultimate purpose of creation is that God who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all," thus simultaneously assuring divine glory and our beatitude. [294] All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures—their truth, their goodness, their beauty—all reflect the infinite perfection of God. [41] Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. [302] God wills the *interdependence of creatures*...Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other. [340] The order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which

exist among them. [341] There is *solidarity among all creatures* arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to God's glory. [344]

Humanity is the summit of the Creator's work. [343] The desire for God is written in the human heart, because humanity is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw humanity to communion with God. [27] Of all visible creatures only humanity is able to know and love the creator...The only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, the human person alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that humanity was created, and this is the fundamental reason for human dignity. [356] Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone...capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving oneself and entering into communion with other persons. [357] The divine image is present in every human person. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves. [1702]

By divine **Revelation**, the invisible God, from the fullness of divine love, addresses human beings as friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into divine communion. [142]

Creating the human race in the divine image, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the *vocation*, and thus the capacity and responsibility, *of love* and communion. [2331] The **vocation** of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son. This vocation takes a personal form since each of us is called to enter into the divine beatitude; it also concerns the

human community as a whole. [1877] All human persons are called to the same end: communion with God. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the community that people are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God. [1878] God who created human beings out of love also calls them to love—this is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For the human person is created in the image and likeness of God who is love. [1604] God speaks to the heart of his people in the language of the promise, with the accents of love and fidelity. [715] The revelation of the vocation and truth of humanity is linked to the revelation of God. The human vocation is to make God manifest by acting in conformity with one's creation "in the image and likeness of God." [2085] Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God...Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God"...reflecting the Creator's wisdom and goodness. [369] God created man and woman *together* and willed each *for* the other. [371] Man and woman were made "for each other"—not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh," they can transmit human life...By transmitting human life to their descendents, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work. [372] As stewards of God, the sovereignty of man and woman is not to

be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists," to share in divine providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them. [373]

Our attitude about our **neighbor** will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. [678] In our brothers and sisters we see the children of our parents; in our cousins, the descendents of our ancestors; in our fellow citizens, the children of our country; in the baptized, the children of our mother the Church; in every human person, a son or daughter of the One who wants to be called "our Father." In this way our relationships with our neighbors are recognized as personal in character. The neighbor is not a "unit" in the human collective, but "someone" who by his or her known origins deserves particular attention and respect. [2212]

Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life. [1997]

Sin is humanity's rejection of God and opposition to God. [386] Sin harms communion. [953]

Heaven is perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed. [1024]

Hell is the state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed. [1033]

After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity. [56] The work of creation culminates in the greater work of

redemption. The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation. [349] The gathering together of the People of God began at the moment when sin destroyed the communion of humanity with God, and that of humanity among themselves. [761] To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. [845] Called to beatitude but wounded by sin, humanity stands in need of salvation from God. Divine help comes to humanity in Christ through the law that guides and the grace that sustains. [1949]

Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. In Christ he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. [65] **The Word became flesh** for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God...so that we might know God's love...to be our model of holiness...to make us partakers of the divine nature.* [457-460] The Son of God has loved us all with a human heart. [478] Christ's whole earthly life—his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking—is *Revelation* of the Father. [516] Christ's whole life...had for its aim restoring fallen humanity to its original vocation... recovering the image and likeness of God... giving communion with God to all. [518] To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom...When Christ is formed in us the mystery of Christmas is fulfilled in us—the mystery of the “marvelous exchange”: Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity. [526]

To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth...The Church is “on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdom.” [541] *Everyone* is called to enter the kingdom. [543] At the end of time, the **Kingdom of God** will come in its fullness...The universe itself will be renewed. [1042] This mysterious renewal will transform humanity and the world. [1043] In this new universe... God will dwell with humanity. [1044] For humanity, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been “in the nature of sacrament.” [1045] The material world and humanity have a profound common destiny: transformation...restoration to their original state...sharing glorification in the risen Christ. [1046, 1947]

For us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's **Resurrection.** [349] The Father's will is “to raise up people to share in his own divine life.” He does this by gathering people around his Son Jesus Christ. [541] The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ. [638] Christian life is already now on earth a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ...When we rise on the last day we “also will appear with Christ in glory”...In expectation of that day, the believer's body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This dignity entails the demand that the believer should treat with respect his or her own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering: “The body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... You are not your own... So glorify God in your body.” (1 Cor 6:13-15, 19-20) [1002-1004]

The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the **Church**...the Spouse of his beloved Son. [79] The Father's will is "to raise people up to share in his own divine life." He does this by gathering people around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of the kingdom of God" inaugurated by Christ. [541] Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of people into the "family of God"... Into this union with Christ all people are called. [542] The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit. [688] The Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity. [738] "The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people." The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of people with God*. Because people's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the *unity of the human race*. [775] The People of God is marked by these characteristics: It is a People of God...one becomes a *member*... by faith in Christ, and Baptism...its Head is Jesus the Christ...its *status* is that of the dignity and freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells...its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us...its *mission* is to be salt of the earth and light of the world...its *destiny* is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by God at the end of time. [782]

The Church is the place where humanity must discover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled"...that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." [845] The ultimate purpose of the Church's mission is none other than to make people share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love. [850] Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy...and of their neighbors in want. A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods. [952] The Spirit of communion unites the Church to the life and mission of Christ. [1092] The Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together. [1108] To enter into the house of God, we must cross a *threshold*, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of new Life to which all people are called...the Church is the house of *all* God's people, open and welcoming. [1186] In the Church, in communion with all the baptized, the Christian fulfills his or her vocation. From the Church the Christian receives the Word of God...the grace of the sacraments...and learns the *example of holiness*. [2030] Becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to *God's family*, to live in conformity with God's way of life. [2233]

Ecumenism The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit. An adequate response to this call requires: permanent *renewal* of the Church in greater fidelity to her vocation; *conversion of heart* as the faithful try to live holier lives according to the Gospel; *prayer in common*; *fraternal knowledge of each other*; *ecumenical formation* of the faithful and especially of priests; *dialogue*; and

collaboration among Christians in various areas of service to humanity. [820-21]

The name “communion” can be applied to all the **sacraments**, for they unite us to God... But this name is better suited to the Eucharist than to any other, because it is primarily the Eucharist that brings this communion about. [950] The sacraments manifest and communicate to people, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons. [1118] The sacraments of Christian initiation lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. The sharing in the divine nature given to people through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. [1212] Initiated Christians carry the new life of Christ “in earthen vessels,” and it remains “hidden with Christ in God”... Still subject to suffering, illness and death, our new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. [1420] The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies... has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation. [1421] Holy Orders and Matrimony (sacraments at the service of communion) are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. [1534]

Liturgy means the participation of the People of God in “the work of God.” [1069] Liturgy refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity. In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbor. [1070] The liturgical assembly derives its unity from the “communion of the Holy Spirit” who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This assembly transcends

racial, cultural, social—indeed, all human affinities. [1097] While we wait in hope the Holy Spirit causes us really to anticipate the fullness of communion with the Holy Trinity. [1107] In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body... Communion with the Holy Trinity and with our brothers and sisters are inseparably the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy. [1108] Liturgy is an “action” of the *whole Christ*. Those who even now celebrate it without signs are already in the heavenly liturgy, where celebration is wholly communion and feast. [1136]

Communion of Saints Some of Christ’s disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory. [954] The union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ... is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods. [955]

God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts... Above all, the poor and humble will bear this hope. [64] Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises... **Mary** stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from God. [489] In the faith of his humble handmaid, the Gift of God found the acceptance he had awaited from the beginning of time. She whom the Almighty had made “full of grace” responds by offering her whole being: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.” “Fiat”: this is Christian prayer: to be wholly God’s, because God is wholly ours. [2617]

Believing in God means: *coming to know God's greatness and majesty...living in thanksgiving... knowing the unity and true dignity of all people... making good use of created things...trusting God in every circumstance.* [223-227] **Faith** is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared. [949] Faith, hope and charity adapt human faculties for participation in the divine nature...They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object. [1812]

Charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it governs, shapes, and perfects all the means of sanctification. [826]

Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time. [926]

The wonder of **prayer** is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we might thirst for God. [2560] The life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with God... Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is in communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is Christ's Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love. [2565]

Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the Father; his blessing is both word and gift. When applied to humanity, the word "blessing" means adoration and surrender to the

Creator in thanksgiving. [1078] *Blessing* expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and humanity. In blessing, God's gift and humanity's acceptance of it are united in dialogue...The prayer of blessing is humanity's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. [2626]

The personal relation of the Son to the Father is something that humankind cannot conceive of nor the angelic powers even dimly see: and yet, the Spirit of the Son grants a participation in that very relation to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God. [2780] When we pray to the Father, we are *in communion with him*, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Then we know and recognize him with an ever new sense of wonder. [2781] "**Our**" **Father** does not express possession, but an entirely new relationship with God...This new relationship is the purely gratuitous gift of belonging to each other...We confess that our communion is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, in their one Holy Spirit...The *Church* is this new communion of God and humanity...If we pray the Our Father sincerely, we leave individualism behind, because the love that we receive frees us from it..."**Our**" excludes no one. If we are to say it truthfully, our divisions and oppositions have to be overcome. [2786, 2787, 2789, 2790, 2792]