
CHAPTER 8

Tradition: Handing On a Living Faith

Major Concepts

- A. **“We Are One Body.”** Pope John Paul II inspired almost two hundred thousand young people from more than seventy nations to gather as a global church at the 1993 World Youth Day in Denver. The pilgrims experienced firsthand the joy of belonging that comes from sharing the same Catholic faith, despite the amazing variety among them of languages, customs, living situations, and ways of expressing faith. *See CCC, nos. 93 (understanding faith); 170–175, 185 (one faith); 782–786 (People of God); 787–795, 1267–1270 (Body of Christ); 811–816, 820–836 (church—one, holy, Catholic); 863–864 (apostolate); 871–875 (mission of baptized); 880–886 (pope and bishops—source of unity); 949–953 (Christian community).*
- B. **Tradition.** Tradition is the process, guided by the Holy Spirit, by which the church deepens its understanding of everything considered essential to the faith and hands it on to every generation. Although some Christians believe that the Scriptures alone contain God’s truth, the Scriptures actually grew out of the Tradition of the early church. Catholics believe God uses both the Scriptures and Tradition to communicate divine truth. The Magisterium is responsible for discerning what the church’s Tradition is and for teaching these doctrines and dogmas. This teaching authority of the pope with the bishops helps unify the church in faith in the midst of its diversity. *See CCC, nos. 3 (faith handed on by Apostles); 74–95, 638, 857–865 (apostolic tradition); 101–133 (Scriptures); 168–169, 174, 688 (church hands on faith); 871–896 (pope and episcopal college); 1555–1561 (episcopal ordination); 2032–2039, 2663 (Magisterium’s authority).*
- C. **What All Christians Believe.** All Christians subscribe to the beliefs expressed in the Apostles’ Creed, which highlights faith in the Trinity. The Catholic church teaches that the Trinity is three divine Persons in one God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals that God is personal and relational, and God calls us to share in God’s own life of love. The whole Trinity brings about our salvation: God saves, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. Trinitarian images help us picture God the Father as a source, God the Son as a way that source is communicated, and God the Holy Spirit as a means by which the source brings forth good effects. *See CCC, nos. 26, 185–197 (creed); 27 (God’s relationship with humans); 150–175 (Christian belief); 152 (Spirit reveals Jesus); 198–203, 214–221, 279–304, 325–327 (belief in God the Creator); 232–260 (Trinity); 356–361, 1702 (humans created in God’s image); 456, 648, 683–689, 731–738, 813–816, 838, 855, 1271, 1997 (participation in life of God).*

D. Special Gifts of the Catholic Tradition. Catholicism has special qualities that make up its unique character. These include a sense of the sacramental, which means that God is encountered in the ordinary; an emphasis on the church community as essential to individual salvation; and a reliance on both human intelligence and faith in God to understand what God intends. Catholics are also unique in that they have a loving relationship with the saints, who are models and helpers for those still living. Despite the sinfulness of the church's members, the church continues to be guided by the Spirit of God, who will never abandon it. *See CCC, nos. 148–149, 273, 487, 494, 963–972, 2674–2679 (Mary—model of faith); 155–159, 286, 1704 (faith and understanding); 165, 2683–2684 (saints); 166, 775–776, 781 (community of faith); 814–819, 838 (church unity); 825, 827 (church—holy but imperfect); 946–959 (Communion of Saints); 1113–1130, 1210–1211 (sacraments); 1135–1162 (liturgy); 1343, 2180–2182 (Sunday obligation); 1667–1676 (sacramentals and piety); 1934–1942, 2419–2449 (social justice); 2030 (church—special gifts); 2044–2046 (church's missionary witness).*



Opening Teacher Prayer

Center yourself in the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit:

God enlightens everyone who comes into the world. Through all of creation, God makes known the unseen wonders of love so that we may learn to give thanks to our Creator.

You have followed God's light. Now the way of the Gospel opens before you, inviting you to make a new beginning by acknowledging the living God who speaks words of truth to us all. You are called to walk by the light of Christ and to trust in his wisdom. He asks you to submit yourself to him more and more and to believe in him with all your heart. This is the way of faith on which Christ will lovingly guide you to eternal life. Are you ready to enter on this path today under the leadership of Christ? (Adapted from the first promise of the rite of the catechumenate, *RCIA*, no. 76)

Reflect for a few moments on what that question means to you today as you prepare to teach the Tradition of the Catholic church. Close with the following invocation or your own spontaneous prayer, and the sign of the cross:

Provident God, bless me with all that I need
to serve you in truth.
In the name of
God, the source of all wisdom,
Jesus, the teacher of truth,
and the Spirit, who helps us live in truth.
Amen.



Concept A: "We Are One Body"



Review Questions: "We Are One Body"

Question. What is meant by saying that Catholics share a unity of faith? Who symbolizes and guarantees the church's unity?

Answer. Catholics worldwide have a unity of faith because they share the same beliefs, same sacraments, and same sense of meaning in their lives, no matter where they live or who they are. As leader of the universal church, the pope is a symbol and guarantor of the church's unity.

Question. Give five examples of the diverse situations from which the pilgrims to World Youth Day came.

Answer. Some came from war-torn countries, others from places of desperate poverty and famine. Some came from affluent countries where spiritual poverty, not material poverty, is the main challenge. Some were from urban centers where poverty and violence are growing; others came from rural and peasant environments where people increasingly are being driven off the land by huge corporations. Some came from European countries where the church has been in existence for more than a thousand years (e.g., Italy, France, Germany, Poland, and Ireland), and others came from countries where the church is a relative newcomer (e.g., some Asian and African countries). In some of the pilgrims' countries, the church is being persecuted; in others, it is an established part of the dominant culture.



Text Activities: "We Are One Body"

Activity 1

Do you know anyone, youth or adult, who went to World Youth Day in Denver in 1993? If so, interview the person about her or his experience, and write up the results of your interview.

Activity 2

Is your school culturally diverse? List all the different cultural backgrounds of Catholicism at your school that you can think of.



Additional Activities: "We Are One Body"

Unity in Diversity

This activity promotes an appreciation for what we hold in common with others as well as what makes us unique.

1. Divide the class into groups of four and appoint a recorder in each group. Give the groups each a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Tell them to

come up with five things that their members have in common with one another. These common elements should be less obvious than “We’re all human,” “We’re all Catholic,” or “We’re all ninth graders.” You may need to give examples, such as, “We’ve all seen [a particular movie]” or “We are all the oldest child in our family.” The recorder should write the five common characteristics on the top half of the newsprint.

2. Next, direct the students to find one thing about each person that is unique in the group—that is, not one other person possesses that characteristic. This unique characteristic should be based on the person’s preferences or style rather than on her or his experiences. It should be about things the person likes or dislikes, things that “come naturally,” things that are part of her or his preferred way of being. You may need to provide examples like these: “Jamal is the only one who is good in math,” “Maria is the only one who likes to get up early in the morning,” or “Terry is the only one who likes to read science fiction.” The recorders should write these unique characteristics on the bottom half of the newsprint.

3. When the groups are done, ask the recorders to hang their newsprint sheets on the wall, and allow the students a few minutes to look at them. Close by summarizing these points:

- You all share things in common, such as certain experiences and life situations. Some of these were noted in your group’s list. You also share similar emotions and thoughts with everyone else in your group.
- You all have experienced things that no one else has. You have preferences and thoughts that are uniquely your own. Only some of these were noted in your group’s list. These characteristics help to define you as individuals.
- This understanding of our differences and similarities is like the experience of World Youth Day that was described in the textbook. Young people from different cultures, different religious customs, different family situations, and so on, came together, and amid all the diversity, experienced unity in their shared faith. Unlike the things that you discovered were common to all in your small group, the things that Catholics hold in common are the beliefs and practices that are essential to Catholic faith, such as celebration of the sacraments and the Apostles’ Creed.

World Youth Day

World Youth Day is celebrated at different times of the year in different parts of the world. International World Youth Day is on Palm Sunday. However, the international *celebration* of World Youth Day, like the Denver event, is held biannually in the summer. In the United States, World Youth Day is celebrated annually on the thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time, usually in October. A World Youth Day resource manual, which includes activities, liturgy ideas, and other material is available from the United States Catholic Conference Publishing Services, 3211 Fourth Street NE, Washington, DC 20017; phone 800-235-8722. You might also contact your diocesan youth ministry office for more information and to learn about local events. Local parish youth ministers, too, might be helpful in providing information. If teenagers from your school or from local parishes have attended an international celebration of World Youth Day, you could invite them to speak with your class about the experience.

You might want to explore the possibility of organizing a group of students and teachers to attend the next international World Youth Day or a local event that celebrates World Youth Day. Or you might plan a school event that incorporates the theme and some of the elements of the international event.



Concept B: Tradition



Review Questions: Tradition

Question. What is the meaning of church *Tradition*? How does it differ from *traditions* in the church?

Answer. Church Tradition is the process by which the church reflects on, deepens its understanding of, cherishes, and hands on to every generation everything it believes is essential to the faith. The process of handing on the faith includes teaching, worshiping, and living the faith in everyday life.

Church traditions are customary practices like blessing oneself with holy water, genuflecting in front of the tabernacle, or making the stations of the cross. These traditions can be changed without losing something essential to Catholic identity and without harming the unity of the church.

Question. What is the Catholic understanding of a “Scriptures and Tradition” approach to knowing God’s truth?

Answer. Catholics believe that the Scriptures and Tradition are two interwoven means that God uses to communicate divine truth to us. God has given us the wisdom that comes from centuries of living with and reflecting on the mysteries that have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. God honors the capacity of human beings to reason, reflect, and learn over time in light of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit guides and inspires the church along the path of truth.

Question. What is the church’s Magisterium? Why is it needed?

Answer. The Magisterium (from a Latin word meaning “to teach”) consists of the pope, believed by Catholics to be the successor of Saint Peter, and the Catholic bishops of the world, the successors of the Apostles. The popes and the bishops are responsible for discerning what is essential to the faith based on the experience of the church’s members and on the work of theologians and biblical scholars, all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Magisterium is needed because if individuals had the authority to determine the church’s Tradition, we would have millions of versions of “the truth.” This would cause much confusion and probably a complete lack of unity.

Question. Give three examples of ways that church teaching may be expressed by the Magisterium.

Answer. [Any three of the following examples are correct.] (1) Pastoral letters written by bishops for their own dioceses, (2) statements or pastoral letters by national or regional conferences of bishops, (3) a major teaching document prepared with the advice of the world’s bishops—such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (4) documents written by a gathering of all the world’s bishops

(called an ecumenical, or worldwide, council, like Vatican Council II); or by a representative group of the world's bishops who meet about a particular topic, like global justice or the laity's role in the church (a worldwide synod), (5) a papal encyclical (a letter from the pope to the worldwide church) or an official declaration from the pope

Question. What are doctrines? What are dogmas? Give three examples of dogmas from the text.

Answer. Doctrines are official church teachings expressed by the Magisterium. Dogmas are doctrines taught under the fullest solemnity and authority of the church. Examples of dogmas are the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption. All dogmas are doctrines and may be referred to by either name; however, not all doctrines are dogmas.

Question. What is meant by infallibility?

Answer. According to the doctrine of infallibility, when the church makes a solemn definition on matters of faith and morals, the church is free from the possibility of error. Infallibility is seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit that protects the church from error.



Text Activities: Tradition

Activity 3

Talk with someone who has experienced Catholicism in a culture different from your own—for instance, in a Mexican, Filipino, Nigerian, or Vietnamese culture. Find out about one tradition of that culture that is not part of Catholicism in the dominant U.S. or Canadian culture. Describe the tradition in writing.

Activity 4

Agree or disagree with this statement and, in a paragraph, explain why: *I would rather believe in the living faith of the dead than the dead faith of the living.*

Activity 5

Do you think that deciding what is true should be left up to each individual, or do people need the guidance of the church to know what is true? Write a one-page reflection on this question.

Activity 6

If you were going to write a letter to the whole world about something you thought everyone needed to hear, what would you write about? State the topic you would choose, begin the letter "Dear Fellow Human Beings of the Earth," and write the first two sentences of your letter.

Activity 7

Describe in writing a situation in which you felt great unity in a gathering of friends, team members, schoolmates, youth group or parish members, or in a big public gathering. Explain why the gathering had a great spirit of unity, and describe what it felt like to be part of that unity.



Additional Activities: Tradition

Spending Time with Protestant Christians and Orthodox Christians

This chapter offers an opportunity to explore basic similarities and differences between Roman Catholicism and various other Christian denominations. Among numerous possibilities are the following:

1. Reflections from non-Catholic Christians. If your class includes students from Protestant or Orthodox Christian churches, invite them to share some reflections on the unique characteristics of their particular tradition, what they view as major differences between their denomination and Roman Catholicism as they understand it, and so on. Realize that just as is true of Roman Catholic young people, youth from other denominations will not always be familiar enough with their own tradition to speak comfortably about it. In such cases, suggest to them that they invite their minister to spend some time with your class to share insights on these topics.

2. A field trip. Plan a field trip to one or more Protestant or Orthodox Christian churches. First ask the students to identify any characteristics or elements of the church architecture or design that strike them as being different from Roman Catholic churches. After the differences have been identified, ask if they can explain the reasons for those differences in light of the material provided in this chapter. For example, many Protestant churches emphasize the pulpit and minimize the altar in their design—at least relative to the ways these are treated in Catholic churches. This reflects Protestantism's emphasis on the Scriptures. Also, Protestant churches typically have fewer icons, less artwork, and so on, than Catholic churches have. Explain that this is due to the Catholic understanding of God's Revelation, which recognizes the hand of God in the most concrete levels of life; this understanding leads Catholicism as well to a much more elaborate sacramental system than that of other churches. (Note: You may wish to save the notion of a field trip like this for your work with the next chapter, which is on sacraments and liturgy.)

3. Fundamentalist understanding of the Scriptures. Invite a representative of a fundamentalist church to explain to the class his or her understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and then compare this to the Catholic understanding explained in the student text.

The Local Church

This activity presents two options for helping the students to better understand the function of the Magisterium. The students will have the opportunity in this activity to contact their bishop and learn more about the structure of the diocese.

1. Visit the chancery. Plan a field trip to the chancery in your diocese. Arrange a tour of the chancery, as well as meetings with the bishop and other diocesan staff (especially directors of schools, catechesis, and youth ministry) who can talk about their jobs and how the church functions at the diocesan level. Have the students prepare questions in advance.

2. Write letters to the bishop. Direct the students, in small groups, to compose letters to the local bishop that include questions and issues of interest to them. Suggest that they request information about the diocese, such as a list of parishes, personnel, diocesan offices, decision-making policies, and committees. Perhaps your students would want to invite the bishop to visit and celebrate a school-wide Mass, which your class could plan.



Concept C: What All Christians Believe



Review Questions: What All Christians Believe

Question. Write the Apostles' Creed.

Answer. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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 the life everlasting. Amen.

Question. Give the "simple" explanation of the Trinity.

Answer. There are three divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—in one God.

Question. Describe the first lesson we learn from the doctrine of the Trinity.

Answer. We learn that God is personal and relational. The Persons of the Trinity are in loving relationship with one another and also with us.

Question. Offer one image or metaphor of the Trinity from the text and tell how it corresponds with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Answer. [Any of the following images is correct.] (1) Tertullian compared the Trinity to a river. Every river has a source, which we can think of as God the Father, source of all goodness. The river flowing out from its source can be likened to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who comes forth from the Father. The river irrigates the land and helps crops and other plants to grow, which is like the Holy Spirit acting in our life to change us, renew us, and bring forth good growth. (2) Another trinitarian image from Tertullian is that God the Father is like the sun in the heavens. Christ is like the sunbeam coming to earth, and the Spirit is the point where the sun hits the earth and brings us warmth and light. (3) Saint Augustine likened the Trinity to a fire source (the Father) shining its rays (the Son) into the darkness and making everything around it warm (the Holy Spirit).



Text Activities: What All Christians Believe

Activity 8

Choose one of the statements in the Apostles' Creed and write a list of questions you may have about it. Discuss these questions with your teacher, pastor, or youth minister. Write down the answers you arrive at.

Activity 9

Come up with another image of the Trinity besides the three given in the text. Draw a picture of it and explain the image in writing.



Additional Activities: What All Christians Believe

Trinitarian Blessing

This journal-writing activity invites the students to reflect on the role of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their life.

- Before class, write the following statements on a sheet of newsprint:
 - In the name of the Father who created the world, today I am thankful for [a blessing].
 - In the name of the Son who taught us how to live, today I would like to help [a person who needs me or an injustice I want to do something about].
 - In the name of the Holy Spirit who guides us, today I need help with [a problem or question].

Keep the newsprint out of view until you introduce that step in the activity.

Create an image of the Trinity by taking three slender taper candles (or birthday candles) and placing them close together in a bowl of sand so that when the wicks are lit, the three flames will be touching. Three wicks burning make a wonderful image of the Trinity—one fire, but three flames.

- Begin this activity by displaying the candles to the students and asking them what these candles might have to do with God. If necessary, give them hints until someone comes up with the Trinity. Next, light the candles slowly and deliberately; as you light each wick, proclaim aloud its corresponding scriptural quote (it's most effective if you memorize the quotes).

- First wick.** "The LORD appeared . . . in a flame of fire out of a bush" (Exod. 3:2).
- Second wick.** "Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world'" (John 8:12).
- Third wick.** "Tongues, as of fire . . . rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:3–4).

- After a brief period of quiet following the candle lighting, point out that while belief in the Trinity is shared by all Christians, the sign of the cross is unique to the Catholic Tradition. Explain the primary meaning of this gesture in your own words:

- The sign of the cross, a symbolic gesture that can easily become quite routine for us, has existed since the very early centuries in the church

and has multiple layers of meaning. It is used in both personal and communal prayer. In personal prayer, the believer forms the image of the cross by reverently touching the forehead, chest, and shoulders [demonstrate the gesture]. In communal prayer, the priest often blesses the gathered believers by tracing the cross in the air [demonstrate] while those gathered sign themselves. The gesture is used in other ways as well. For example, in the sacrament of anointing of the sick, the priest traces the cross on the sick person's forehead and hands.

The sign of the cross expresses two very fundamental beliefs of Catholic Christians:

- a. Catholics believe in the Holy Trinity, the central Christian dogma or teaching that holds that in the one God exist three divine persons—God the Father; God the Son, who is Jesus the Christ; and God the Holy Spirit. Each is distinct, yet the three are so totally united as to be the one God. Catholics see reflected in the Trinity itself the significance in Christianity of communal love: Christians are called not only to live together in a community of faith but also to see in the dogma of the Trinity that God *is* the ultimate community of love. Clearly this is a mystery of such depth and complexity that believers have pondered and prayed over its meaning since the death and Resurrection of Jesus.
- b. Catholics believe that Jesus' death on the cross, along with his Resurrection from the dead, redeemed humanity from the power of sin and marked the turning point of history.

By combining these two meanings of the sign of the cross—that is, the trinitarian blessing (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen”) and the physical tracing of the cross itself—Catholics sum up the very core of their faith.

4. Ask your students to join you in praying the sign of the cross slowly and reverently, thinking about each phrase and gesture as they do it. Afterward, tell them that you are going to do it again, but this time you will add new words to help them think about how this prayer applies to their own life. Direct them to join you in doing the gesture. Then begin:

- In the name of the Father who created the world, the God who made each of us and loves us for all we are and all we will be; and in the name of the Son who saved us and taught us how to live so that others might come to know God's love through our actions and through the love we show them; and in the name of the Holy Spirit who guides us through life, giving us the gifts of courage, strength, wisdom, understanding, and right judgment. Amen.

5. Retrieve the newsprint you prepared before class and hang it in a place where it is visible to everyone. Ask the students to take out their journal and complete the sentence starters.

The Nicene Creed

This exercise is intended to help the students reflect on the meaning of the Nicene Creed and to recognize it as a personal and rich expression of faith.

1. Make the following comments in your own words:

- Throughout its long history, the Catholic church has pursued a deeper understanding of Jesus and his message. Driven by the human need to name the God who is at the heart of the life experience of believers, the church has many times attempted to sum up the core beliefs of Christianity. The fruit of such attempts is a formal statement of faith called a creed, named from the Latin word *credo*, meaning “I believe.”
- Two creeds have taken on particular significance in the Catholic church: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed comes out of the early church and is the foundation for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Nicene Creed is named after the ancient city of Nicaea, in which the creed was first officially accepted by a council of the church's bishops in the year 325 C.E. and then affirmed in another council about fifty years later. It is this creed that is proclaimed by Catholics during every celebration of the Eucharist. Also, this same creed has been recognized as official teaching not only by Roman Catholics but also by Eastern Orthodox Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and the members of all major Protestant churches. Stress the profound significance of this fact: For over sixteen hundred years, tens of millions of Christian believers have been solemnly repeating this creed as a summary statement of their faith in Jesus and the God he revealed to us.



Handout 8-A

2. Distribute handout 8-A, “The Nicene Creed.” Point out that the creed speaks about five different but intimately related themes, and that, like the Apostle's Creed, it is structured by statements of belief about the Trinity. Note that after the initial statement, “We believe in one God,” the creed includes commentary on the central Christian beliefs. Ask the students to follow along with the creed as you briefly comment on each of those beliefs, as follows, using your own words:

- Catholics believe that God is the Creator of all that exists.
- Catholics believe that Jesus of Nazareth was not just a good man, not just a wise teacher or some kind of superhuman being created by God. They believe that Jesus was and is so totally one with God that he may be recognized as the divine Son of God. That is what is meant in the creed by the difficult language stating that Jesus was “begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.”
- Catholics believe that in Jesus, God took on human flesh, lived among us, and was eventually executed on the cross. Yet they also believe that death did not defeat Jesus, that God raised him up so that they could know that all Jesus taught us was true.
- Catholics believe that the Spirit of Jesus, the one called the Holy Spirit, remains among them, guiding the church and empowering believers not only to remember but also to live out the message of Jesus.
- Finally, Catholics believe that they are called to live out their faith in Jesus in community with one another, in “one holy catholic (*catholic* means “universal”) and apostolic (following in the tradition of the Apostles) church.”

3. As a homework assignment, direct the students to rewrite, in the middle column of the handout, the original Nicene Creed in a way that makes sense to them. They can be as creative as they like, but their versions must reflect what they believe to be the essential truth stated in the creed.

4. During the next class session, divide the students into groups of five. Taking one phrase at a time, direct the students each to share their personal version of the creed with the other group members and to make a decision on which version or combination best expresses the central truth in the original creed. The group's decision about a phrase should be printed in the right-hand column of *each member's handout*. They should continue until the entire creed has been discussed.

5. Next, distribute a sheet of newsprint and markers to each group, and have each group write its version of the creed on the newsprint and hang it in the classroom where all can read it. When all the groups have posted their creed, review them as a class, line by line, and invite any comments, questions, or insights regarding the way a group expressed a particular belief. If you care to take the exercise one step further, work toward a class consensus on a contemporary version of the creed.

6. You may wish to use each small group's creed for an opening or closing prayer during subsequent classes. The creed should be read aloud by the *entire group* that created it. In this way, the creed is reinforced as a communal rather than strictly personal statement of faith.

Note: This activity first appeared in the teaching manual for another text from Saint Mary's Press titled *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*. If your school is using that course, check with its teacher to make sure that she or he does not also plan to use this activity.

church's requirement that its members participate in the Eucharist each week-end to stay connected with the community's life of faith and be nourished by it, (2) the strong tendency in Catholicism to keep the faith of the church united through the Magisterium, rather than allowing groups within the church to hold different beliefs, and (3) the concern for justice in the world community, which the pope and bishops offer through Catholic social teaching.

Question. Describe the Catholic understanding of how reason and faith are both needed to know God, the meaning of life, and how to live.

Answer. We can use our own intelligence to look for evidence of God's existence in the world, and to determine what is right and wrong, but we also need faith in Jesus Christ to fully know God and understand how God wants us to live. Faith sheds light on what our reason tells us, and reason helps us understand and articulate our faith more clearly.

Question. Briefly explain why Catholicism includes devotion to the saints.

Answer. Devotion to the saints is really just an aspect of the sacramental and communal senses in Catholicism. Saints are like sacraments of God; they were flesh-and-blood people who today are still pointing us to God through the example of their lives. We honor them for that and treat them like family, recognizing that they are still part of the Body of Christ, that they care about us and want to help us.



Text Activities: Special Gifts of the Catholic Tradition

Activity 10

Think back on your day or your week. Describe one visible thing or action you experienced that can communicate God's presence.

Activity 11

Write how you would respond if a friend asked you this question: *Why can't I just relate to God one-to-one? Why is the church needed in my relationship with God?*

Activity 12

List examples of how both faith and reason are valued at your school.

Activity 13

Research the life of one saint who interests you. Write a report of that person's life, including questions you would want to ask that saint and things you most admire in him or her.

Activity 14

Give an example from your experience of a disagreement that was resolved peacefully, and a disagreement that led to violence, hurt, or resentment. Compare what the people involved did or said in each case to lead to a peaceful or not peaceful result.



Concept D: Special Gifts of the Catholic Tradition



Review Questions: Special Gifts of the Catholic Tradition

Question. What is meant by a sense of the sacramental?

Answer. In the Catholic vision of reality, all of the world is sacred because it is created by God and filled with the presence of God. God is with us in every aspect of our experience. This awareness of God's presence in the ordinary things and events of our everyday life and in the world around us is a sense of the sacramental.

Question. What is meant by the church's emphasis on the communal? Name three ways that this emphasis is shown in Catholicism.

Answer. Catholics believe that God is working in the world through communities of people, not just through individuals. And because human beings are made for relationships and community, God saves them through community, in particular the community of Jesus Christ called the church. Three ways that this emphasis on the communal is shown in Catholicism are (1) the



Additional Activities: Special Gifts of the Catholic Tradition

Sacramentals

This activity immerses the students in the many sacramentals that are part of the daily, weekly, and seasonal Catholic individual and communal religious expressions. You may prefer to use this activity in chapter 9, which is on sacraments.

1. Introduce the activity with the following thoughts, expressed in your own words:

- Sacramentals are actions, prayers, and sacred objects that help Catholics celebrate and express their faith and beliefs. They are spiritually enriching components of Catholic heritage, but they are less central to Catholic Christian faith than the seven official sacraments, which will be explored in the next chapter.
- Sacramentals have been a part of believers' lives since the beginning of Christianity. During the Middle Ages, when the "common folk" felt somewhat removed from the church because of its use of Latin and other unfamiliar practices, people began to place more and more emphasis on religious devotions, prayers, and objects that they could do or set up at home.
- Some of these devotions and prayers crossed the line from expressions of faith to acts of superstition, for example, trying to bring about good luck or chase away evil spirits.
- After the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Catholic church encouraged the use of sacramentals as a way for the people to maintain their faith as well as a way to distinguish Catholics from Protestants.
- Today the church continues to support the valid sacramentals that are part of Catholic faith, as long as they meet three key criteria:
 1. The truth they reveal is rooted in sound theology, the Scriptures, and Tradition.
 2. They direct us toward God and not to ourselves or other objects.
 3. They lead people to a deeper spiritual life.

(This information on the history of sacramentals is based on Dues, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, p. 180.)

2. This activity is set up as three learning centers. You can either lead the students through an experience of the sacramentals one learning center at a time, or you might invite two guests—such as a parish director of music and liturgy, a sacristan, or a priest—to assist you by leading the other two learning centers, thus working with three small groups of students that circulate around the learning centers.

The learning centers should contain items from the lists provided in step 3, and should be prepared in an informative and creative way in order to bring the meaning of sacramentals to life for the students. Some research may need to be done for an effective presentation. The learning centers also need to actively involve the senses and allow the students to immerse themselves in the experience. For example, instead of just telling the students about a chalice, pass one around for the students to see and feel; instead of just telling them about a liturgical song, teach it to them.

3. The specific learning centers, along with suggested topics, are as follows:

Prayers

- public and private devotions such as the Rosary, prayers to the Sacred Heart and Precious Blood, and novenas
- votive candles
- blessings of people, animals, objects, and events
- liturgical prayers such as the Lord's Prayer, the Glory Be, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed
- liturgical music, including traditional hymns, contemporary music, and Gregorian chant
- words and phrases such as *amen*, *alleluia*, and *hosanna*
- the litanies of the saints, the Blessed Virgin, the Holy Name, the Sacred Heart, Saint Joseph, and the Precious Blood
- sacred letters, words, and symbols such as *IHS*, *IXOYE*, *INRI*, Ω [alpha omega], \dagger [cross]

Sacred Objects

- liturgical garments such as the alb, the chasuble, and the stole
- religious medals such as a miraculous medal, a scapular medal, a Saint Christopher's medal, and crucifixes
- statues and artwork such as mosaics and stained glass
- liturgical objects such as the altar, the altar cloth, the sanctuary candle, the baptismal font, the holy water, the paschal candle, the chalice, the sacarium, the crucifix, the tabernacle, the incense and censer, the chrism, the lectionary, and the sacramentary

Sacred Actions

- gestures such as laying on hands, kneeling, standing, genuflecting, prostrating, bowing, striking the breast, folding hands, raising hands and eyes, making the sign of the cross, and offering a sign of peace
- rituals such as blessing the throat, anointing with oil, immersing, sprinkling water, celebrating the various sacramental rites, incensing, and marking the forehead with ashes

Communities of Faith

Direct the students to talk or write about an experience of church community of which they have been a part. Perhaps the experience enriched their faith, or perhaps it was not a positive experience. Instruct them to reflect on ways that the community could more authentically reflect the Body of Christ. Here are some communities that the students may have experienced:

- the assembly at weekend Mass or other church services
- a parish youth group
- a small faith community
- their family
- this school or this class

Prayer Service: Being Church

1. Explain to the class that Catholics have a tradition of seeking justice, respecting life, treating all people with dignity, standing in awe of nature,



Handout 8-B

believing in everlasting life after death, and engaging in deep spiritual communication with God in prayer.

2. Distribute handout 8-B, "I Pray," and tell the class to stand. Divide the students into two groups, facing each other. Have them alternate reading to each other the stanzas of the prayer.

3. After the students have read the prayer aloud, encourage them to reflect silently on their own prayer for the church. Invite volunteers to share their prayer for the church.

4. Read Heb. 13:1-3,5-6. Pause for some quiet reflection, then close with the Lord's Prayer.



Closing Teacher Prayer

Gather your thoughts in silence for a few moments. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for a gift you have received from God, or a prayer of petition for someone who needs God's care. Conclude with the following ancient prayer from our Catholic Tradition:

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that You are the one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I believe that Your Divine Son became [human] and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because You revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. (Klein, ed., *Catholic Source Book*, p. 10)

THE *Nicene* CREED

Original	Personal	Group
We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,		
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.		
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,		
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.		
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.		
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried.		

Original	Personal	Group
On the third day he arose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures;		
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.		
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his Kingdom will have no end.		
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.		
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.		
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.		
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.		

I Pray

Side 1

I pray that you will live a life of justice,
Protecting rights of those who have no power.
I pray you will know the presence of Christ,
And feel him with you in your final hour.

Side 2

I pray that you will breathe the air of freedom
And wisely exercise your vote and voice,
And heed the Spirit's guidance in decisions,
And seek the will of God in every choice.

Side 1

I pray that you will always love your neighbor
And be sensitive to hurts too deep to share.
I pray you will learn to listen to the suffering
And treat the helpless with respect and care.

Side 2

I pray that you are one with all Creation
And stand in awe of Nature every day.
I pray you humbly bow to your Creator.
I simply pray that you will always pray.

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I pray that you will live a life of justice,
Protecting rights of those who have no power.
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