Catholic Faith Handbook



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Brian Singer-Towns with Janet Claussen Clare vanBrandwijk and other contributors

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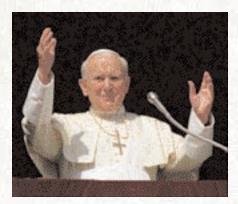
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Introduction

"My Dear Young Friends"

Pope John Paul II begins many of his talks to youth with these words. It is also a fitting welcome to this handbook about Catholic beliefs and practices. It may seem presumptuous to address you as a friend when we haven't personally met. But it is symbolic of a truth that the Holy Father (another name for the Pope) is constantly living out, the belief that we are all one family. Every member of the human race is a member of that family, united by the one God who created us all, which is why we should be able to call one another friends, despite differences in nationality or religious beliefs.

Within the human family is another large family, the family of those who are members of the Catholic Church. This handbook is a guide to that family, an overview of the important teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. You may be a member of that family, and as a baptized Catholic, you are using this handbook as a textbook or reference book in a religion class. Or you may be using this handbook as part of a program preparing you to become a member of the Catholic family. Or perhaps you are reading this handbook simply because you are curious about what Catholics believe and do. This handbook has been created for all these purposes. Its uniqueness is that it was created especially for teens and young adults. It is not a child's book. You will not find any cartoon



Pope John Paul II is an enthusiastic supporter of young people. characters or cute talking vegetables—which have their place, but not here! We have created it to respect your curiosity and provide you with honest, to-the-point answers. Every word and image has been carefully chosen to show you something about Catholic beliefs, art, culture, and history.

We who created this handbook care deeply about young people, and about the Catholic Church, so we dare to call you our dear young friends. We hope and pray that you enjoy using this handbook as much as we enjoyed creating it.

This Handbook and the Catechism of the Catholic Church

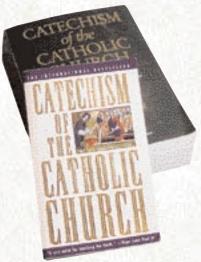
You may have heard of a book called the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (referred to from here on as the *Catechism* or *CCC*). Perhaps you have seen a copy at home or at school. It is a book of the most important teachings of the Catholic Church. The Pope himself approved the *Catechism*. Bishops, priests, youth ministers, teachers, and other adult Catholics use it as a reference book for authentic Catholic teaching. This handbook reflects the *Catechism* in its content and structure.

For example, the *Catechism* is divided into four major sections. Each section reflects an important aspect of Catholic teaching. This book follows the same structure. After a couple of introductory chapters, you will find the following sections:

- **Part A.** This section is an overview of what Catholics believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. It is based on the Apostles' Creed.
- **Part B.** This section is an overview of how Catholics worship God and encounter Jesus Christ through the seven sacraments of the Church.

- Part C. This section is about Catholic moral decisionmaking, sin, and conscience. The Ten Commandments are used as the basis for exploring and understanding what the Church teaches about specific moral issues.
- **Part D.** This section is about the Church's teaching on prayer. It talks about types of prayer, ways of praying, and what we pray for when we pray the Lord's Prayer.

In a way this book is like a *Catechism* for teens. It contains the essential teachings of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* but is presented using language and examples that will be easier for you to understand. Each chapter also contains additional short articles to help you further understand and live these teachings. The boxes on this page will explain the purpose of the five types of articles you will find in most chapters.



Did You Know

The chapters do not explain everything there is to know about the Catholic faith. They cover the essentials, the basics. The Did You Know? articles give additional information that a well-informed Catholic should be aware of. They provide you with the answers to questions like, "Why are the priest's vestments (special clothing worn during Mass) different colors at different times of the year?" or "How many Catholics are there in the world?" If you familiarize yourself with the Did You Know? articles, you can amaze your family and friends with your knowledge of Catholic trivia! The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the authoritative source for Catholic beliefs. This handbook reflects its content and structure.

The Live It articles contain ideas and advice for putting your faith into action. A faith that isn't lived out isn't true faith. The Letter of James says:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (2:14–17)

In the Live It articles, you will find advice on setting up a prayer time, suggestions for keeping control of your tongue, ideas on how to respond when someone questions your faith, and a description of how to go to confession. You will find that the Live It articles contain lots of solid, practical advice.

Looking Back

The Catholic Church has a long and rich history, and most of us are familiar with only a little piece of it. The Looking Back articles will help you understand and appreciate more of our history. They describe historical events, present the teaching of saints and Church leaders, and explain why certain Church councils were called. Through the Looking Back articles, you will gain a better appreciation of the wisdom of two thousand years of Church history.

Saintly Profiles

The Catholic Church has an important tradition of honoring women and men whose holy life is an inspiration to others. These are the official saints of the Catholic Church, and there are hundreds of them. The Saintly Profile articles give you

Introduction

short biographies of thirty-seven of these saints. These saints were chosen to represent the wide variety of people that have become official saints in the Catholic Church. Most of them are famous names that you will hear if you hang around involved Catholics for very long. We hope their stories will inspire you to learn more about these great people and to explore your own call to holiness. The date of each saint's feast day is also given, which is the day the Church designates for remembering and celebrating the saint's life.

Pray_{lt}

Prayer is a rich part of the Catholic tradition. As a young person, you may not yet have experienced all the ways in which Catholics pray. These articles will expose you to lots of different ways to expand your prayer life. They will teach you the Jesus prayer, how to create your own blessing prayer, and how to say traditional prayers like the rosary. Many of the articles explain different aspects of the liturgy, the public worship of the Church. They include quotes from the prayers used in the Mass and the sacraments so you can reflect on the meaning of these prayers more deeply.

Catholic Quick Facts

In addition to the material in the chapters, you will find a treasury of easy-to-access information at the end of the book. We call this information Catholic Quick Facts, and in it you will find the following sections:

- lists of Catholic beliefs and practices
- a collection of traditional Catholic prayers and devotions
- timeline with important dates and events from the history of the Catholic Church
- a list of patron saints and their causes
- a glossary of Catholic terms and their definitions

Introduction

Turn to Catholic Quick Facts when you want to find a prayer for a special need, find a list with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or look up the meaning of a word you are not familiar with. You may find it interesting just to browse through these lists from time to time.

How to Use This Handbook

You can make use of this handbook in many ways. You may be using it as a textbook for your parish religious education program or Confirmation preparation program. But this handbook isn't meant to be used just as a textbook. It's a guide you can use in many different ways.

For example, you and your Confirmation sponsor or mentor could read it together. When you meet, use the reflection questions at the end of each chapter to discuss how you feel about what you have learned and read. A parent might be interested in doing this with you as a way to brush up on his or her Catholic faith.

Maybe you want to use this book just for private reading, and go through it in your own time. The chapters are short, so it won't take you long to read through one. If you do read the handbook this way, we suggest that you keep a Bible close at hand. The handbook contains many references to Bible stories and passages that you will want to look up.

Or maybe you just want to keep this book handy as a reference when you have a question about the Catholic faith. The index in the back will help you quickly find a specific teaching or topic. The handbook was designed to make it quick and easy for you to find the information you need. Take it with you on retreats and conferences so that if questions come up, you have a resource handy with answers you can trust.

The people at Saint Mary's Press believe in you. We want you to experience the deep peace, joy, and love that come through faith in Jesus Christ and membership in his Church. We hope this handbook will help you to better understand what faith in Jesus and membership in the Church truly mean. With Saint Paul we pray, "that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). God bless you!

Being Catholic The "CliffsNotes" View

Being Catholic means many different things to people. For some people it means a whole culture or way of being in the world. It means Friday fish fries, Advent wreaths and crucifixes, having priests and sisters as friends, and saying rosaries, among many other things. For these folks, being Catholic is a wonderful way of experiencing God in the world and following Jesus Christ. We hope you know some Catholics like this.

On the other hand, many people's only understanding of Catholicism comes from what they see and hear in the popular media. They see the priest or bishop involved in a scandal, the Catholic social activist, and the nuns from *Sister Act*. The media also present us with the travels of Pope John Paul II and the heroic service of Mother Teresa and her sisters. The popular image of Catholicism formed by the media is filled with stereotypes and misinformation, and is an inadequate source for truly understanding what Catholics are all about.

This book will help you understand what motivates the devoted Catholic, and how to figure out what is true and what isn't true in what you see and hear in the popular media. This chapter begins with some basic facts about Catholics and a brief overview about what we believe as Catholics. But don't settle for this "CliffsNotes" view of Catholicism. Let it whet your appetite for exploring the rest of the book!

Why Are All These People Catholic?

It is estimated that there are just over one billion Catholics

Did You Know

How Many Catholics Are There?

Catholics in North America

Canada: 12.6 million Catholics (44 percent of the population) Mexico: 125.8 million Catholics (90 percent of the population) United States: 63.7 million Catholics (23 percent of the population)

Catholics in the World

Africa: 124.2 million (15.5 percent of the population) North America: 219.1 million (46 percent of the population) South America: 293 million (87.3 percent of the population) Asia: 107 million (2.9 percent of the population) Europe: 281.7 million (41.3 percent of the population) Oceania: 8 million (27.5 percent of the population)

(Source: 2002 Catholic Almanac)

living in the world. That is about 17 percent of the world's population. There are more Catholics than there are people in any other Christian denomination. There are also more Catholics than there are Jews, Hindus, or Buddhists—only Muslims have more members. Catholics and Catholic Churches can be found almost anywhere in the world.

So what do these numbers mean? Let's be honest. On the one hand, they do not necessarily mean anything at all. A religion isn't necessarily good or true simply because lots of people belong. The truth of Catholicism cannot be determined by how many people are Catholic.

On the other hand, the great number of Catholics in the world testifies to Catholicism's universal appeal and to the power that the Catholic faith has in people's lives. Since the Catholic Church's humble beginnings following the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, it has truly become a worldwide religion. People of every nationality and cultural background embrace it. Surely such a religious tradition must have something compelling to offer.

If you ask a dozen different Catholics what is compelling about their faith, you will probably get a dozen different answers. This

is one of the wonderful things about the Catholic faith! Its rich tradition provides something for all people, no matter what their particular personality or spiritual need may be. The Catholic Church includes people who desire quiet, meditative prayer as well as those who enjoy communal prayer filled with sound and action. The Catholic Church embraces people who desire a clear and unchanging set of beliefs, as well as those who want to explore how those beliefs are applied to different cultures and a changing world. The Catholic Church is made up of people who provide direct service to those in need as well as people who want to change structures in society to create a more just world.

But if you listen carefully, you will hear some common threads when Catholics talk about what is important to them about the Catholic faith. They often will talk about the beliefs of the Catholic faith that are rooted in the revelation of the Scriptures and Tradition (more on that in the next chapter). They also talk about the practices of the Catholic faith, the ways in which Catholics pray and make moral decisions. And they talk about the worldview of Catholicism, that is, the attitudes that Catholics display as they live out their faith in the world. Let's look briefly at these three areas: beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

Some Core Catholic Beliefs

The following list is meant to give you a quick glimpse of the core beliefs of Catholic Christians. These statements may leave you with many questions. In fact, we hope they raise questions for you, which is why you will find them explained in greater depth in later chapters.

- God created human beings to be in perfect union with God and one another.
 However, the sin of our first parents called original sin—deprived the human race of our original holiness and justice.
- Throughout human history God worked praying toget to restore the relationship of love and trust that was lost through original sin. He did this by entering into covenants—special relationships based on mutual promises—with Noah, Abraham and Sarah, and the people of Israel. But the people often broke their covenant promises.



Young People's Testimony

My first thought is that I am Catholic because I was raised Catholic. But that is not the only reason I am Catholic. Being Catholic is also feeling like I am part of God's family when I am in my church. It is also important to me that the Catholic faith is the only faith that believes that Christ is in the Eucharist and that the bread and wine are really the body and blood of Jesus Christ. These are the greatest reasons that I am a Catholic.

(Tara, age 17)

Catholicism means knowing you're never alone and never being left alone. It means knowing that someone is always there, even in spirit. Sometimes at night I like to lie in bed and wonder, "What place do I have in the Lord's plan?" Without my faith and love in our religion, I would be lost. Catholicism is more than the light in the dark; it's the light of the world. It's impossible to conceal because it's in the hearts of millions. We are all a part of Catholicism's great mysteries because we are its home-every one of us living and working and praying together.

(Laura, age 15)

- Ultimately God sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, as savior for the human race. Christ was both fully God and fully man. He became the perfect sacrifice for the forgive
 - ness of sins and the restoration of the relationship of love and trust between God and humankind.
 - Following his death Jesus was brought back to life in the Resurrection! Christ overcame death and opened heaven's gates for all the just.
 - The Holy Spirit has been at work in the world from the beginning of creation to the present day. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, and is also called the Advocate (Paraclete) and the Spirit of Truth.
- God has revealed himself to be Trinity, that is, the mystery of one God in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This mystery cannot be arrived at by reason but was revealed by Jesus Christ.
- Christ established the Catholic Church on the foundation of the Apostles. Christ and the Holy Spirit revealed the fullness of religious truth to the Apostles. The fullness of God's revealed truth is called Sacred Tradition, and is entrusted to the Apostles' successors, the bishops of the Church.
- The Bible, or the Sacred Scriptures, is another source of God's revealed truth for Catholics. The Bible is closely connected to Sacred Tradition. The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write what God wants us to know for our salvation.
- All people are destined for eternal life after death. The baptized who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their savior will find their eternal reward in heaven. Those who have rejected Christ will find their eternal punishment in hell.

Some Core Catholic Practices

Catholic practices are closely related to Catholic beliefs. Some important Catholic practices in worship and morality could also have been listed as beliefs in the previous section. As in the belief section, the practices listed here are not complete and

In this painting Mary and the Apostles are receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Do you think the artist conveyed the importance of Mary? How? should raise some questions that will be answered in later chapters.

- Catholics celebrate seven sacraments that form the basis of their worship, or communal prayer, together. The seven sacraments were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church to make the love of God real and present in the world.
- The sacrament of the Eucharist is the heart of the Church's life. We believe that in the sacrament we literally receive the body and blood of Christ in the appearance of bread and wine.
- Sunday, or the "Lord's Day," is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist. Catholics keep the day holy by attending Mass and resting from work, in honor of Christ's Resurrection.
- Catholics follow a special calendar with all the feasts and holy days of the liturgical year. The special seasons of Advent and Lent prepare us to understand God's great love, which we celebrate at Christmas and Easter.
- Catholics place a strong emphasis on living morally because we believe we are called to new life in the Holy Spirit. The moral code for this new life is based on the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.
- Catholics defend the dignity of human life, and Catholic morality is often described as pro-life. Catholics are opposed to anything that threatens the sanctity of human life, including abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and human cloning.
- Serving people in need and working to transform society are essential elements of Catholic life. We believe that the Church is called to be a sign of God's perfect Kingdom yet to come, by working for justice and human rights in this life.

Saintly Profiles

Mary, the First Disciple

Catholics have a special devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. We do not worship her or pray to her as God, as some people mistakenly believe. But we do honor her as the mother of God, and at times we ask her to approach Jesus with a special need or concern. She is the only person besides Jesus who was born without original sin, and at her death we believe she was taken up directly to heaven.

But Catholics wouldn't believe any of these things about Mary if we did not first believe that she was the first follower, the first disciple, of Jesus. Her yes to the angel Gabriel in the Gospel of Luke (1:26-38) made it possible for Jesus to come into the world. In the Gospel of John, Mary is the first person to believe that Jesus can work miracles, at the wedding feast of Cana (2:1-11). At the cross Jesus tells the beloved disciple, "Here is your mother" (John 19:27), which the Church teaches has the symbolic meaning that Mary is the mother of all believers. And Mary was present at Pentecost (Acts 1:14), receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and without a doubt she was very active in spreading the Gospel message about her son.

What an amazing woman! What trust she had in God, what heartache she suffered on account of her son, and what faith she had in Jesus and his message. Mary is a model for all who wish to follow Jesus more closely. She is our loving and patient mother, and we do well to honor her and ask for her prayers on our behalf—she will never turn a deaf ear to our requests.



Introduction to Christian Morality

Have you ever thought about how many decisions you make in the course of a day? Getting out of bed, deciding what to wear, hanging out with your friends, doing your homework, and chatting with your family all involve decisions. Fortunately most of our decisions are habits that come easily and don't require much thought. If we had to scrutinize every decision we make in the course of a day, we wouldn't get much done! Every decision we make has a right or a wrong value, even if we rarely think of it that way.

Go back for a moment to your decision to get up this morning. Waking up may not have been your conscious choice, but the decision you made to stay awake and start your day has a right or a wrong implication. What if you refused to get up and get going? How would that have been a right or a wrong decision?

When we venture into the territory of deciding between right and wrong, we are talking about **morality**, "the goodness

Words to Look For

0	morality	0	conscience	0	vices
0	Beatitudes	0	mortal sin	0	virtues
0	free will	0	venial sins		

Introduction to Christian Morality

or evil of human acts" (*CCC*, page 888). Morality can be a sensitive subject. Who decides what is moral: the Church? the government? the family? individuals? Some people would say that morality is just a matter of personal opinion.

Living in a society with freedom of speech and freedom of religion means that many voices are clamoring for our attention, suggesting different moral attitudes and actions. Undoubtedly people, culture, and the events in our life shape our morality. But God's gift of free will means that we have the ability to make conscious choices. So our question is, "How do we live the right way?" which for Catholics means, "How does God want me to live?"

Fortunately we have the Scriptures and Tradition to help answer that question. Although these sources of God's Revelation do not provide easy or precise answers to every situation, they include principles, guidelines, and rules that come from thousands of years of human experience. The Catholic Church has been a strong moral voice throughout history, and becoming familiar with what the Church teaches about morality can help us to "do the right thing." In this chapter we will look at some foundational principles for making good moral decisions.

Living as a Beatitude Person

The foundation of morality, of doing the right thing, is found in the first chapter of Genesis: We are made in the image of God, "God created humankind in his image, / in the image of God he created them; / male and female he created them" (1:27). From the moment you were conceived, you were made in God's image, meaning that you—and every other person on earth—are first and



Do the Right Thing

- Q. One of my teammates told me that the brand of basketball shoes our team is required to wear is made at a factory run by people who underpay and mistreat the workers. I want to respond to this injustice. But I also want to play on the team, which means wearing the shoes. Am I morally wrong to do so?
- A. Let's evaluate this situation by looking at the three sources of morality: (1) the action you want to do, (2) your intention, and (3) your circumstances. Let's look at the action-is it fundamentally right or wrong? It is hard to see how using something that was created in a system that mistreats people can be a good thing, so the action must be judged to be wrong. So, although you have a good intention-being on the team-the choice is still wrong. The final question revolves around your circumstances. Is any force taking away your freedom to make this decision? You are probably under some strong peer pressure, but it is hoped that you have the will to resist.

It would seem that your only moral choice is to refuse to wear the shoes. Explain your moral position to your coach, and maybe she will make an exception. Maybe the whole team will join your protest. This is the way the world becomes a better place, starting with one person refusing to cooperate with sin.

Christian Morality

foremost essentially good. When we choose wisely, we are acting in accordance with our true nature. This is why doing the right thing ultimately makes us happy.



Jesus taught about morality by using parables, such as the parable about the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), illustrated here by Vincent Van Gogh. What is Jesus teaching us about who our neighbor is through the story of the good Samaritan? Happiness is not determined by what we normally see in magazines, on television, or in the movies. Our source of happiness is not material success, fame, or unending hours of leisure and pleasure. Rather, what God intends for us is complete joy and a sense of well-being. Our ultimate destiny is to be eternally happy with God in heaven.

Jesus gives us a glimpse of this destiny in the **Beatitudes** (Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26). *Beatitude* means "perfect happiness or blessedness." Jesus describes Beatitude people with statements like, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These statements are at the heart of Jesus' message (*CCC*, number 1716). They

help us to understand what being a Christian is all about, so that one day we will share God's eternal life (*CCC*, number 1717).

Being made in God's image does not make us perfect; God gave us a soul, intellect, and **free will** to make our own choices. Although God wants each of us to be part of the Kingdom that Jesus spoke about, free will means that we have the freedom to accept or reject God's will. Adam and Eve exercised this freedom in the second Creation story, found in chapter 3 of Genesis. They chose to go against God's plan for them to live in harmony with all that God had created. They experienced the same choice that all humans have had to face: whether or not to do good and avoid evil.

Adam and Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit affected you, everyone who came before you, and those who will come after you. Their decision left us with a tendency to do the wrong thing, despite the promptings of our conscience. This inclination to choose evil and make moral mistakes is called original sin. (For a thorough explanation of original sin, see chapter 5, The Human Person.)

This is the dilemma each person faces. God created us in his image with a natural desire to follow the moral law, to do good and avoid evil. At the same time, because of original sin, we are inclined toward sin, or choosing to do the wrong thing. The ability to use reason to distinguish between right and

wrong is the work of our conscience. Our **conscience** is the interior voice that helps us to know right from wrong and then to act on that knowledge. We will talk more about the role of conscience in chapter 23, Sources of Moral Truth.

Moral development never stops, no matter how old we get, until we reach our final glorious destiny with God in heaven. The Scriptures and Church Tradition are our roadmap on this lifelong journey. The Beatitudes give us Jesus' vision for how to build a moral life. Being poor in spirit, merciful, and pure of heart describe the kind of person that Jesus was, and the kind of person we are called to be.

Looking Back

Words of Wisdom from John Paul II

To be truly free does not at all mean doing everything that pleases me, or doing what I want to do. . . . To be truly free means to use one's own freedom for what is a true good. (Pope John Paul II, *Dilecti Amici*)

The world tells us that it's not cool to be meek (gentle and humble) or to stand up for what we know to be just and true or to act as peacemakers. But no matter what the world says, Jesus emphasizes the importance of these attitudes. He calls them blessed because they help us find the true happiness that God created us to enjoy.

Human Freedom and Moral Choice

Did you ever stand in front of the refrigerator with the door wide open, staring at its contents? You know you want something, but you don't really know what. You try a slice of leftover pizza. That doesn't quite do it, so you go for a bowl of the triple-fudge-ripple ice cream with marshmallow fluff. After eating that you're full, but still not quite satisfied. You want and need—something more.

The same is true of our need for God. It is easy when living in the wealthiest nation in the world to try to satisfy our yearning for God with worldly values, like having lots of things, keeping ourselves constantly busy, or finding a boyfriend or girlfriend. If Adam and Eve had a tough time resisting their forbidden fruit, imagine how much more

Examination of Conscience

Use the following questions to evaluate how you are doing with your moral decision making.

Pray_{It}

- Is my heart set on God, so that I love him above all things? Or am I more concerned about the things of this world?
- Do I have a genuine love for other people, whether or not I like them?
- 3. Have I contributed to the wellbeing of my family by patience and genuine love?
- 4. Do I share my possessions with those who are less fortunate?
- 5. Does my life reflect the mission I received in Baptism, that is, to be a disciple of Jesus?
- 6. Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community, or do I care for only myself?
- 7. Have I been truthful and fair, or have I injured others by lying and cheating?
- 8. Have I done physical or emotional violence to others?
- Have I kept myself chaste and pure, especially by avoiding pornography and all sexual activity before marriage?
- 10. If I have been injured, have I been ready to forgive, or do I harbor the desire for revenge?
- 11. In my life choices, am I led by the hope of eternal life?
- 12. Have I tried to grow spiritually by regular attendance at Mass, through prayer, meditating on the Scriptures, receiving the sacraments, and living simply?
- 13. How have I used my time, my health, and the gifts God has given me? Have I fallen into the trap of alcohol or other drug use? (Adapted from *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, volume 1, pages 625–628)

challenged we are by thousands of messages that tell us true happiness can be found in the kind of car we drive, or the fashions or gadgets we "gotta have." The restless pursuit of popularity, pleasure, or prestige gets in the way of the authentic happiness that God promises.

But that's where our free will comes in. We can consciously choose the truly good life. Unlike animals whose instinct drives their actions, we can think about the moral aspects of our behavior both before and after we act. Of course, this gift of human freedom has a flip side. We are also responsible for the choices we make. Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Getting a driver's license gives you a greater degree of freedom to get places on your own, but it also means increased responsibility for your own safety as well as for the safety of others. Safe driving requires knowledge of traffic rules, but it also requires using your reasoning skills to recognize and avoid dangers that may not be covered in the drivers' handbook.

Moral freedom and responsibility are similar to the process of learning to drive. At first it is your parents and other adults who drive your moral decisions, teaching you right from wrong, getting you to the point where you can make those decisions on your own. As they let go and let you practice making your own choices, they expect that you will be able to respond to situations in the right way. As you become capable of assuming freedom and the accompanying responsibility, you accept the credit or the blame for the choices you make. If you choose a sinful course of action, you must also accept the blame. You must admit that you knowingly and deliberately did something wrong.

Although we are responsible for our actions, some factors may lessen the blame



Catholic Quick Facts is a mini-encyclopedia of information on Catholicism. In these pages you will find the following sections:

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 Patron Saints and Their Causes 	388
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Catholic **Quick Facts**

Catholic Beliefs and Practices

In using this collection of major Catholic beliefs and practices, be aware of two things:

- Many of the items that are only listed here are more fully defined in the glossary of Catholic terms and definitions.
 For example, here we list the seven Catholic sacraments; in the glossary of terms, we define each one.
- Behind many of these items, you will see a number in parentheses. That number refers to a paragraph in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church.* The referenced paragraph is often just the beginning of a complete discussion of the item that we can only briefly name here. If you would like more information on any of these beliefs and practices, look to the *Catechism* as a primary reference.

Two Great Commandments

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind, and with all your strength.
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

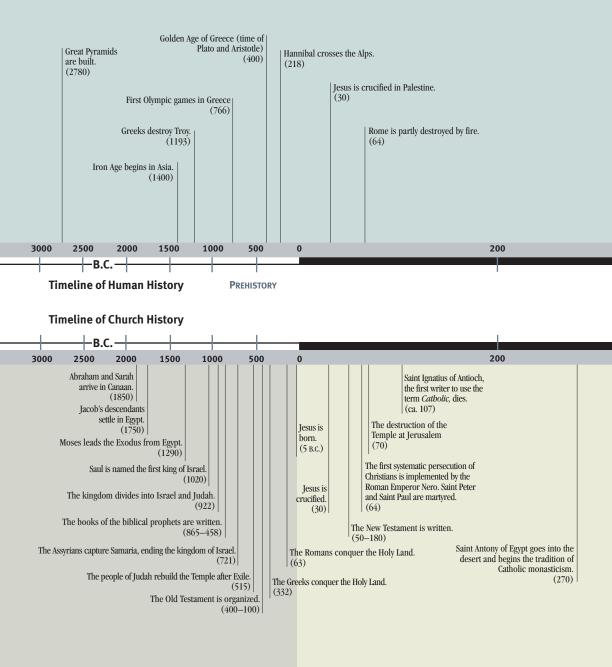
(Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 10:27)

Patron Saints and Their Causes

abortion, protection against, Catherine of Sweden [March 24] accountants, Matthew [September 21] actors, Genesius [August 25] addiction, drug, Maximilian Maria Kolbe [August 14] advertisers, Bernardino of Siena [May 20] alcoholics, John of God [March 8], Matthew [September 21], Monica [August 27] altar servers, John Berchmans [November 26] anesthetists, René Goupil [October 19] animals, Francis of Assisi [October 4], Nicholas of Tolentino [September 10] animals, domestic, Anthony of Egypt [January 17] apprentices, young, John Bosco [January 31] archaeologists, Damasus I [December 11] archers, Sebastian [January 20] architects, Barbara [December 4], Thomas the Apostle [July 3] art, Catherine of Bologna [May 9] arthritis, James the Great [July 25] artillerymen, Barbara [December 4] artists, Catherine of Bologna [May 9], Fra Angelico (Blessed John of Fiesole) [February 18], Luke [October 18] astronomers, Dominic [August 8] athletes, Sebastian [January 20]

Catholic Terms and Definitions

- **abortion.** The deliberate termination of a pregnancy by killing the unborn child. The Roman Catholic Church considers such direct abortion a grave contradiction of the moral law and a crime against human life.
- **absolution.** An essential part of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in which the priest pardons the sins of the person confessing, in the name of God and the Church.
- **abstinence.** The avoidance of a particular kind of food as an act of penance or spiritual discipline; in Catholicism, the avoidance of meat on certain days.
- **act of contrition.** A prayer of sorrow for one's sins, a promise to make things right, and a commitment to avoid those things that lead to sin. Such a prayer can be said anytime, but is always part of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.
- **adoration.** The prayerful acknowledgment that God is God and Creator of all that is.
- **adultery.** Sexual activity between two persons, at least one of whom is married to another. Prohibited by the sixth commandment.
- **Advent.** The four-week liturgical season during which Christians prepare themselves for the celebration of Christmas.

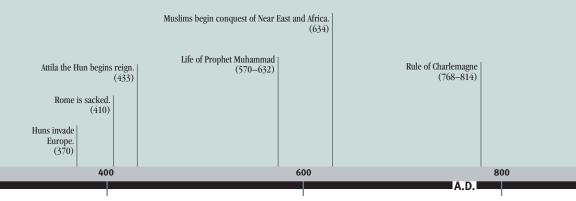


BEFORE THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST (B.C.)

LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE EARLY CHURCH

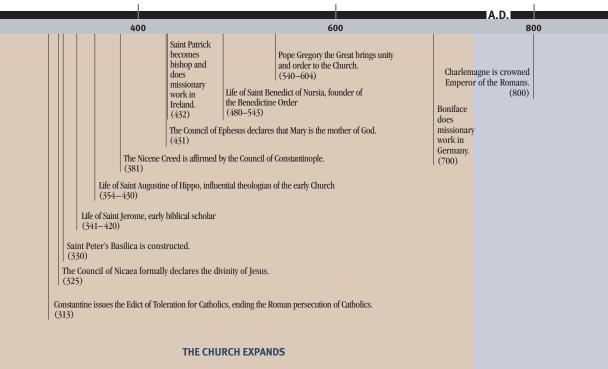
Important Church Figures

Saint Peter Saint Paul Saint Ignatius Saint Antony





Timeline of Biblical History



Important Church Figures

Saint Constantine Saint Augustine Saint Jerome Saint Patrick Saint Benedict Saint Gregory the Great Saint Boniface

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Chapter 34

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