

The Baltimore Catechism

33. Can we fully understand how the three Divine Persons, though really distinct from one another, are one and the same God?

We cannot fully understand how the three Divine Persons, though really distinct from one another, are one and the same God because this is a supernatural mystery.

34. What is a supernatural mystery?

A supernatural mystery is a truth that we cannot fully understand but which we firmly believe because we have God's word for it.

35. What do we mean when we say that God is the Creator of Heaven and earth?

When we say that God is the Creator of Heaven and earth we mean that He made all things from nothing by His almighty power.

36. Which are the chief creatures of God?

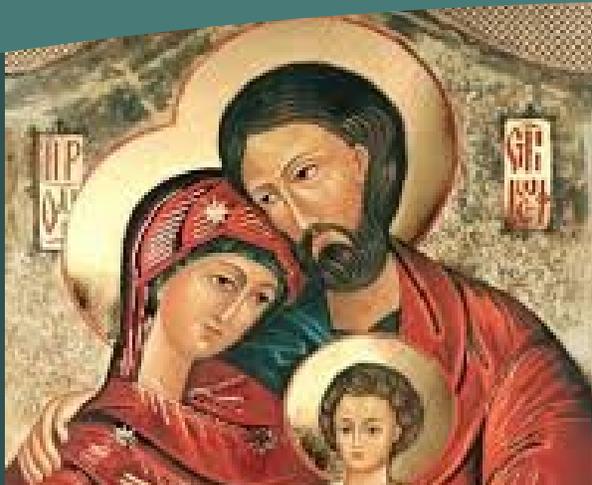
The chief creatures of God are angels and men.

37. What are angels?

Angels are created spirits, without bodies, having understanding and free will.

38. What gifts did God bestow on the angels when He created them?

When God created the angels He bestowed on them great wisdom, power and holiness.



This Issue

The Keys to Salvation –
Confession **P.1 & 2**

The Keys to Salvation – Confession

We are discussing the four keys to salvation. Last month, we discussed the first key to salvation: **prayer**. The second key to salvation is **confession**. What assumptions are you making about confession in general? Is one assumption “I’m a good person and I haven’t murdered anyone, so why do I need to go?” If this or something along these lines is an assumption you are making, then I would suggest that you have set a pretty low bar of morality for yourself. This is not a good strategy for advancing in your relationships, career or life, let alone your spiritual life.

Perhaps you are filled with utter fear and confusion when you consider having to go to confession: What do I say? How do I start? Where do I start? If you are feeling this way, you are actually on the right path! The feeling of confusion can be eliminated; the feeling of fear needs to be transformed and matured into a tool for faith and action.

As you know, confession is one the seven sacraments. Sacraments bestow upon us *sanctifying grace*. “The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of His own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it (CCC 1999).” Besides the act of making yourself more “holy,” it also affords you the benefits of becoming a better person. Do you want to change to become a better person? Of course, you do! But are you serious

about it? Are you actively working to improve yourself or are you instead busy arranging your life to root out inconveniences and sufferings?

Confession leads to humility and accountability and reduces selfishness. It helps us to go deep within and think about how we can better form our consciences to understand the subtle differences between good and evil.

Even more important than using the sacraments as a self-improvement strategy is that the graces of the sacraments bestowed upon you begin to put you right with God. Because when you are not actively receiving the sacraments, you are not right with God. God is righteously angry with you.

After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples who were gathered in the upper room, scared out of their minds. The very first thing Jesus said to them was “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained (John 20:19-23).” Christ commissioned them to forgive sins and preach in His name to all nations penance and remission of sins. Jesus **Himself** said that confession was required. It was the first thing He said after His resurrection. As God, He conferred the right to the Apostles. God speaks (and *breathes!*) and stuff

The Gift of Piety

Piety is the honor and reverence given to someone who is in any way responsible for our existence and our well-being. The gift of piety moves our hearts, first of all, to filial honor and reverence for God because He is our Creator and Redeemer. The devotional life of the Church is an expression of our honor and reverence for God and for all that belongs to Heaven. Piety also extends to our earthly parents and to all others whom God has placed over us in some way for our spiritual and material good. May the Holy Spirit renew the gift of piety within our hearts and homes, our parishes and communities, so that by our example of honor and reverence we may be a model to others of a life lived in and for God.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, you have fashioned everything out of nothing, giving life and breath to all that exists. You order everything according to your loving providence and establish the relationships by which our lives are nurtured and ordered. Confirm in us the gift of piety, so that by our honor and reverence for you and for those you have given to us, we may bear witness to the working of the Holy Spirit and become instruments of a new Pentecost in our time. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

SHOCKFactor™

Purgatory is not where people go for a "second chance." It's only for those whom God has destined for Heaven and for those who die in the state of grace. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us: "Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan and to decide his ultimate destiny" (CCC 1013).

"Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ ... The [New Testament] repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith" (CCC 1021).

The Keys to Salvation – Confession (cont'd)

happens! This cannot be ignored! Also, all throughout the Gospels, Jesus never trivialized or rationalized sin. For Jesus, sin is sin, a violation of love against God and neighbor. Jesus Himself forgave sins, and passed it on to the Apostles. Before Jesus physically healed anyone, He first said, your sins are forgiven.

So, let's assume that you have decided to go to Confession. What do you say? How do you start? Where do you start?

(While making the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been [number of years] since my last confession. And I convict myself of the following sins.

I recommend you keep it really simple to start:

- Confess that you have not been to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for all of this time.
- Confess that you have taken the Lord's name in vain for all of this time.
- Confess that you have willfully watched/looked at/entertained impure images, thoughts and desires.

Make no excuses. Make no attempt to explain why you have been away from your faith. Just admit it. When you finish confessing your sins, say:

And it is for these sins I seek forgiveness, penance and absolution. The priest may then say a few words of encouragement and will then give you your penance. Pences generally consist of

several Our Fathers and/or Hail Marys, or sometimes a decade of a Rosary. It's really hard to say what kind of penance you may receive. Remember though that priests are absolutely delighted to hear confessions from fallen-away Catholics!

After you receive your penance, the priest will ask you to make an Act of Contrition and then grant you absolution:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love.

I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Here is something you can try: Justify in your mind why you have become a fallen-away Catholic. Perhaps you'll become sensitive to inconsistencies and ambiguities in your thinking. Maybe you'll feel less sure of the past reasons you have used to avoid practicing your faith. I hope you feel this way! It could lead to being better prepared to look into your salvation with a fresh perspective.

I have been trying to make the case all these months that what should matter to you the most right now is your **salvation**. To think about salvation means you have to think about death. No one likes doing that. So many people are caught off guard by their own death or the death of their loved ones. Don't let this happen to you!

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. In your compassion, blot out my offense. O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.

My offenses truly I know them; my sin is always before me. (Psalms 51:1-2).

My dearest children: **You are in mortal danger!** I failed to properly teach you the precepts of the Catholic Church and the beauty, richness and completeness of the Catholic faith. This is why I've taken on this little project. My goal is to produce this newsletter every month and send it along with little tokens to help you appreciate the Gift. It's meant to serve as moments of reflection and discussion. I love you and God bless you!