

**The Year of Faith and Sacred Scripture:
Encountering God's Word in the *Catechism***
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The Year of Faith

1. Began: October 11, 2012
 - a. 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II
 - b. 20th anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
2. A “summons to renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (*Porta fidei* 6).
3. Part of the New Evangelization

“... *knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one's own assent*, that is to say for adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes. Knowledge of faith opens a door into the fullness of the saving mystery revealed by God.” —Benedict XVI, *Porta fidei* 11

The Problem of Religious Illiteracy

1. Pew research poll: Basic questions about religion (May 19–June 6, 2010)
 - a. Highest score: Atheists/Agnostics (~65%)(D)
 - b. Lowest scores: Catholic (45%)
 - c. 45% of Catholics can recognize key Catholic teachings (e.g., Eucharist)
2. Marist Poll of Young Catholics (18–29) (December 23, 2009–January 4, 2010)
 - a. 82% morality is relative!
 - b. Only 20% think premarital sex is a real problem
3. Fallen away Catholics (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008)
 - a. Largest religious group in America: Catholics, 54.8 million
 - b. Second largest denomination: Southern Baptist, 15.1 million / Lapsed Catholics: 22.5 million
4. Archbishop Fulton Sheen's diagnosis of anti-Catholicism

There are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Roman Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church—which is, of course, quite a different thing. . . If, then, the hatred of the Church is founded on erroneous beliefs, it follows that [the] basic need of the day is instruction.¹
5. Crisis of “Catechesis” & Crisis of Catholic higher education

“Therefore ‘The Year of Faith,’ the Year of Catechism—to be very practical—are linked inseparably. We shall renew the Council only by renewing the content—later summed up again—of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. A serious problem for the Church today is the lack of knowledge of the faith, ‘religious illiteracy’, as the Cardinals described this situation last Friday. ‘Religious illiteracy’ and with this illiteracy we are unable to grow, unity is unable to grow. We ourselves must therefore recover this content, as a wealth of unity, not a packet of dogmas and orders but a unique reality which is revealed in its depths and beauty.” —Pope Benedict XVI²

The First Commandment

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” ³⁷And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and *with all your mind*. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment.—Matthew 22:34–38

¹ Quoted from Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (3 vols.; Rockford, Ill.; TAN Books, 1979), 1:ix.

² “Lectio Divina,” Meeting of His Holiness Benedict XVI with the Parish Priests of the Rome Diocese, Thursday, 23 February.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1. Request of Extraordinary Assembly in 1985 / committee led by Joseph Ratzinger / all bishops consulted
“... expresses what could be called the ‘symphony’ of the faith.”— Blessed John Paul II
2. Promulgated by Blessed John Paul II
 - a. Provisional text in 1992: 30 years after Vatican II
 - b. Final text in 1997
3. Blessed John Paul II on the *Catechism*:
I declare it to be *a sure norm for teaching the faith* and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion. May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!
4. Benedict XVI on the *Catechism*
In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, *all can find in the Catechism of the Catholic Church a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council. . . . (Porta fidei 11)*

The Structure of the *Catechism*

1. The “Four Pillars”:
 - a. Creed
 - b. Liturgy / Sacraments
 - c. Life in Christ / Morality (Ten Commandments / Beatitudes)
 - d. Prayer
2. Three-fold dimension of the mystery of faith (2558)
 - a. The Church *believes* in it (Creed): “The Church professes this mystery in the *Apostles Creed*. . . .”
 - b. The Church *celebrates* it (Liturgy): “. . . celebrates it in the *sacramental liturgy*. . . .”
 - c. The Church *lives* it (Morality and Prayer): “in a vital and *personal relationship* with God. This relationship is *prayer*.”

Scripture and the Creed (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 186)

From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her faith in brief formulae for all.¹ But already early on, the Church also wanted *to gather the essential elements of its faith into organic and articulated summaries*, intended especially for candidates for Baptism:

This *synthesis of faith* was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather *what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures*, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments.— St. Cyril of Jerusalem²

Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1. Scriptural emphasis
“[The *Catechism*] is shaped from one end to the other by the Bible. As far as I know, there has never been until now a catechism so thoroughly formed by the Bible.”— Joseph Ratzinger³
2. Vatican II and the Biblical Renewal of the 20th century
“. . . the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology” (*Dei Verbum*, 24).

¹ Cf. *Rom* 10:9; *I Cor* 15:3–5, etc.

² St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. illum.* 5, 12: PG 33, 521–524.

³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Gospel, Catechesis, Catechism: Sidelights on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997), 61; cf. also John Cavadini, “The Use of Scripture in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,” *Letter & Spirit* 2(2006):43–54.

The Bible and the Supreme Priority of the Church

“Leading men and women to God, to the God who speaks in the Bible: this is the supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the Successor of Peter at the present time”—Benedict XVI (*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Remission of the Excommunication of the Four Bishops Consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre*).

Catholic Teaching on Inspiration (cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 11–16)

God is the author of Sacred Scripture. “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” [DV 11].

“For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself” (CCC 105 citing Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 11).

Sacred Scripture is the *speech of God* as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 9)

In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.”
—Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 21

God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. “To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, *made full use of their own faculties and powers* so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was *as true authors* that they consigned to writing *whatever* he wanted written, and *no more*” (CCC 106 citing Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 11)

The Incarnational Analogy of Scripture (cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 13; Pius XII, *Divino afflante spiritu*, 20)

Word Incarnate	Word Inspired
Fully Divine	Divine Authorship
Fully Human	Human Authorship
Without Sin	Without Error

Encountering the Word of God in Scripture and the *Catechism*

Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.—St. Jerome (cited in CCC 112)

“. . . all the evil in the world is derived from not knowing clearly the truths of sacred Scripture”—St. Teresa of Avila (in Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 48)

It is in this sense that that the Year of Faith will have to see *a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Here, in fact, we see the wealth of teaching that the Church has received, safeguarded and proposed in her two thousand years of history.* From Sacred Scripture to the Fathers of the Church, from theological masters to the saints across the centuries, the *Catechism* provides a permanent record of the many ways in which the Church has meditated on the faith and made progress in doctrine so as to offer certitude to believers in their lives of faith. . . . On page after page, we find that what is presented here is no theory, but *an encounter with a Person who lives within the Church.* (Benedict XVI, *Porta fidei* 11)