



The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Seven Sacraments

Introduction

The final five sessions of CORE Training will focus on the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. For many of us, the last time we took a serious look at the sacraments was during elementary school when we were preparing for our First Holy Communion or Confirmation. Be assured that taking the time to study the sacraments again, from an adult perspective, will be enlightening and you will gain a deeper appreciation of the gifts that the Church provides to each of us.

The source of what Catholics believe is broken down into two sources: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Sacred Scripture is all contained in the Catholic Bible. Sacred Tradition on the other hand is not all contained in one source document. It is the teachings of the Church that stretch through over two millennia. While there is no single source for all Sacred Tradition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church contains much of it. It references documents from councils of the Church throughout its history. Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church (the teaching and governing body of Cardinals and Bishops) make up what is called our Deposit of Faith.

For this study, we will be using the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as our textbook. One of the objectives of this final area of study will be to immerse ourselves in the CCC. It is a goldmine of information about our faith, and it is not written in Latin. In other words, we can read and understand the CCC without having a degree in theology. Many of the questions that we have about our faith can be answered by simply finding the appropriate section and diving in. The CCC provides the reader not only what the Catholic Church teaches about a topic, but why. That is so important when answering questions from friends and family members – we need to explain the Big Picture – the why's of our faith!

Training Format

In the past the training has been focused primarily on the use of videos. During these final sessions there will only be a video for the first session. After that, the final four sessions will be led, not by the guides, but by the candidates acting as facilitators or leaders of the discussion.

As discussion leaders, candidates are not expected to develop a slide presentation or provide handouts. The method is to walk through the text within the CCC, one paragraph at a time, highlighting points that you found significant, interesting, or maybe a little surprising. The leader should also encourage other candidates in the cohort to participate – sharing areas that they found interesting as well. The goal is to facilitate a discussion on the text, not to provide a detailed presentation for the cohort.

The Guide will be demonstrating this technique during our first session. He will then be looking for volunteers to lead the final four sessions as listed below. Two candidates can team up for one session if that is preferred. One essential role of the facilitator is to keep the discussion moving! As facilitators, you will need to complete the entire section in the time that is assigned, so don't allow the discussion to get bogged down.

The best way to prepare as a facilitator is to read the assigned texts and highlight those texts that stand out to you. Then during the CORE Training, go through those points pausing to allow others to participate. You can also ask questions of the cohort to encourage discussion.



Below is a table that includes the session number, the topic we will be covering and the associated CCC paragraphs.

Session	Topic	Sacrament(s)	Catechism Paragraphs
19	Overview of Catechism and Introduction of the Sacraments	The Celebration of the Christian Mystery and Liturgy	1066-1209
20	Sacraments of Initiation I	Baptism and Confirmation	1210-1321
21	Sacraments of Initiation II	Eucharist	1322-1421
22	Sacraments of Healing	Penance & Reconciliation Anointing of the Sick	1422-1498 1499-1535
23	Sacraments of Service	Holy Orders, Matrimony & Sacramentals	1536-1690

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Types: The CCC is available in a few different formats. The most common version is the blue or green covered CCC that includes a glossary and analytical index. This version is good for those who like to dig deep for study purposes. Another is a white hard covered addition that does not contain the indices and costs less. Whichever you choose is fine. You should purchase a copy if you do not already own one. It will be good to have a hard copy in front of you during class to highlight and study as opposed to an online version only.

History: The CCC that we are studying was originally published in 1994 during the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II. Prior to that there was the Roman Catechism, also known as the Council of Trent Catechism, that was published in 1566 and aimed to clarify and reaffirm Catholic doctrine in the midst of the Protestant Revolt.

The revised CCC was commissioned by Pope St. John Paul II in 1985 with a mandate to summarize changes in the Church resulting from the Second Vatican Council. Upon publication in 1994, it was proclaimed by the Pontif as a comprehensive guide for teaching of the Catholic faith worldwide.

Content: The styles of the two catechisms are quite different. The Roman Catechism (Council of Trent) focused on counter-reformation information, addressing Protestant critiques directly. Its format was authoritative and prescriptive. The CCC tackles broader, modern, secular challenges and includes expanded teachings on social justice, human rights and ecumenism. Its format is dialogue oriented and uses a more pastorally sensitive tone with emphasis on catechetical clarity and engagement.

The CCC incorporates many excerpts from the Constitutions of the Church that were developed during the Second Vatican Council. These new theological understandings provided a greater focus on God's love and mercy.

Both of the Catechisms are broken down into four main parts:

- Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed)
- The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (The Sacraments)
- Life in Christ (The Moral Law / Ten Commandments)
- Christian Prayer (Our Father)



Navigation: When we are referencing the CCC, we always use the paragraph number as opposed to page numbers. It begins with paragraph 1 and ends with paragraph 2865. The paragraph numbers are written in **bold** type before each paragraph on the left side of the page. There are other numbers in *italics* located on the right- and left-hand side of the pages – these are cross references. These cross references direct the reader to other paragraphs in the CCC that are associated with the same topic.

The Seven Sacraments

A Sacrament is: An **efficacious sign of grace**, instituted by Christ, entrusted to the Church in order to sanctify the people.

Grace is a "*favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God*" CCC1996. There are two forms of Graces. The first is Actual Grace which is a temporary, supernatural interventions or "nudges" from God that help us perform good acts or turn away from sin. Sanctifying Grace, on the other hand, is a permanent, supernatural disposition that perfects the soul to enable it to live with God and act by his love. The ordinary source of Sanctifying Grace is through the Sacraments. It is received in Baptism and can be lost through mortal sin, but restored through Penance.

Grace is not just a reward but the necessary divine assistance for salvation, enabling us to cooperate with God in our own sanctification. In a nutshell, participating in the Sacraments enables us to become more like God, to partake of the Divine Nature, to become holy! The CCC states: *The fruit of the sacramental life is that the spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers of the divine nature. (CCC1129)*

The Seven Sacraments are:

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation

Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick

Sacraments of Service: Holy Matrimony and Holy Orders

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Sacraments. As stated previously, the sacraments are the ordinary means of receiving God's Sanctifying Grace. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is called the Source and Summit of our faith because it is truly the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Through each of the sacraments we partake of the divine nature – we share in the very nature of God. That is a Big Deal!

As Fishermen we need to take this final area of study seriously. Knowledge of the sacraments will empower us to more effectively share our faith with those we encounter in our families, in our work and in our Church. These final sessions of our CORE training will fill us with wonder and an increased appreciation for the gifts that we receive from our Father in Heaven. So, go forth with a great sense of awe at the gifts we have been given from our Father in Heaven!