

## How to Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Quite early on, the name *catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. [CCC #4]

"Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life." [CCC #5]

This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve "as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries". [CCC #15]

This catechism is conceived as *an organic presentation* of the Catholic faith in its entirety. It should be seen therefore as a unified whole. [CCC #18]

The texts of Sacred Scripture are often not quoted word for word but are merely indicated by a reference (**cf.**). For a deeper understanding of such passages, the reader should refer to the Scriptural texts themselves. Such Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis. [CCC #19]

The use of **small print** in certain passages indicates observations of an historical or apologetic nature, or supplementary doctrinal explanations. [CCC #20]

The **quotations**, also in small print, from patristic, liturgical, magisterial or hagiographical sources, are intended to enrich the doctrinal presentations. These texts have often been chosen with a view to direct catechetical use. [CCC #21]

At the end of each thematic unit, a series of brief texts in small italics sums up the essentials of that unit's teaching in condensed formula. These **IN BRIEF** summaries may suggest to local catechists brief summary formula that could be memorized. [CCC #22]

The on-line pages of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are broken up into logical units, each containing the appropriate **footnotes** related to the text therein. These footnotes are not hyperlinked, but should be easily accessible nonetheless.

## How to use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Numerous **cross-references**—referring to other paragraphs that deal with the same theme—allow the reader to view each theme in its relationship with the entirety of the faith. [CCC #18] To make this on-line version more usable and readable, cross-references are also hyperlinked. Numbered paragraphs with a cross-reference are hypertext linked using the paragraph number. Un-numbered paragraphs (normally titles) with a cross-reference are hypertext linked using an asterisk symbol preceding the un-numbered paragraph. When clicked on, a JavaScript applet will be executed, opening a new window which displays the cross-reference paragraph number(s). Also note that the cross-reference paragraph numbers are presented chronologically; that is, the cross-reference numbers are provided in the order that they should be referenced.

### **\* Signs and symbols**

**1145** A sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols. In keeping with the divine pedagogy of salvation, their meaning is rooted in the work of creation and in human culture, specified by the events of the Old Covenant and fully revealed in the person and work of Christ.

Two types of **Table of Contents** are provided for your convenience:

- [A Standard Table of Contents](#) which includes hyperlinks to the major sections of the on-line Catechism
- [A Table of Contents with Paragraph Numbers](#) to help you select the major section you need if you know the paragraph number(s) for the information you seek.

A **cross-referenced Index** can be reached through one of the Tables of Contents listed above, or directly using the alphabetical index. This Index is internally linked (within the Index) and externally linked (into the *Catechism*).

Finally, to facilitate your navigation through the Catechism, St. Charles Borromeo has provided a **Search Utility**. Search results return the paragraph which matched your search criteria. To fully develop the topic of interest, click on the "Jump into the CCC" link under that paragraph to bring you to the appropriate section of the Catechism for full topical reading. If you know the paragraph number of the CCC you wish to read, just enter that number into the search text box.