

# A Journey in Faith: Catechumens' Booklet

## WELCOME!

This is the most important word we wish to share with you as you begin to explore our Catholic Faith.

Our Faith is not just *what we believe* – it is **how we live** that belief.

James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, taught as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*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.*

Catholic Faith is about believing and doing. We believe we are called to make the world a better place by sharing God's Love with **everyone**.

Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom.

For us as Catholic Christians, this comes about through every moment of life we share with others: showing our Faith through what we do and how we behave to **everyone**.

So WELCOME is our most important word.

We hope that you will accept our invitation to learn more about our Catholic Faith as you journey towards joining our community through receiving the Sacraments.

You will not be travelling alone: we, your catechists, are here to travel with you.

We hope that you will have questions – and we will do our best to respond to them in ways that you find helpful. We are **all** on the Journey in Faith, and we do not claim to 'have all the answers'; often it is the questions that are important and valuable – they make us think and reflect prayerfully on our lives, on the Church's teaching, and on the holy words of Scripture.

We ask three things of you:

- That you join us at each of our Journey in Faith meetings
- That you come 'with an open heart' ready to discover
- That you share the questions you have and your own insights, which have brought you to begin this Journey with us

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<sup>1</sup> James 2:14-17

If you ever wish to talk privately about anything, please be assured you can speak either with one of the catechists or with our priest, who will be happy to arrange a convenient time with you.

**You are WELCOME among us. We deeply value your presence and want to help you in your journey, wherever it leads.**

Our Journey of Faith programme has six themes.

We will explore each theme in one or more sessions, to give as much time as is needed to begin to understand, and to learn how to journey further. No theme covers everything and you are encouraged to further explore those which interest you most.

We also deeply encourage you to two practices central to our life of faith:

- The reading of scripture (the Bible, especially the New Testament and, particularly, the gospels)
- Giving time in prayer (this can be prayerful reading or reflection, or silent prayer, as well as trying some of the written prayers at the back of this booklet)

Be gentle with yourself: prayer and the reading of scripture are the journey of a lifetime. All we ask is that you give some time each day to these activities, so that your life of faith can grow deeper.

### Prayer – a simple beginning

Find a place where you can sit and be quiet – it can be at home, or somewhere else (for example, a church or somewhere else calm).

Give a period of time – for example, 15 minutes.

RELAX – think of this as a break from the rush and demands of daily life.

Now you can read from Scripture (for example, a gospel story about Jesus), or reflect on the beauty of the place where you are, or think about something that may be worrying you and ask God for help. Try not to get lost in your worries. If you find it hard to remain quiet and still, you may find it helpful to choose a prayer and repeat it several times (for example, ‘Jesus, please stay with me and help me’ – any words you choose, or one of the written prayers at the back of this booklet).

### Reading Scripture – a simple beginning

Find a place where you can sit and be quiet.

Choose a short text – the gospel stories about Jesus are an excellent place to begin.

Read the text a few times, slowly and gently. Let the words sink in – especially the words which Jesus himself says.

Think of Jesus speaking those words to you.

# The Themes of our Journey in Faith

## Theme 1: The Roots of our Catholic Faith

What is Faith?

Faith is more than simply belief: it involves a **giving of ourselves**.

Catholic Faith is not just about believing things but *giving ourselves to Christ*. As Catholics we believe in God, and that God has created everything we know. And we believe in Jesus as God's unique Son, who has saved us through his life, death, and resurrection. Christ has sent his Spirit so that we can belong to God and live as one Body, sharing Christ's salvation of all.

Our Faith is summed up in these words which we say together at Mass each Sunday:

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

This Creed (from the Latin word *Credo*, meaning 'I believe') is very old, dating from the Councils of Nicea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381). It captures the essence of Christian Faith and is shared today by many different Christian traditions.

As Catholic Christians, this is the Faith we share.

Is Faith rational?

Faith is not an end in itself: it is *for living*.

When we believe, the way we live changes, as does the way we look at things: life has meaning.

Sometimes people ask whether Faith is rational, whether – in the face of real life – it *makes sense*. As Christians we believe that, without Faith, life cannot make sense, since our meaning is not found in ourselves but in God, who created us for love. We find meaning in our love for God and for one another, as well as for our world.

How should we respond to other faiths?

We believe that Faith is a gift from God. As human creatures we could never grasp God; it is only because God has reached out to humankind that we can begin to recognise our Creator.

Therefore, all people of faith have received a gift from God and we recognise them as friends.

As Catholic Christians we recognise our close friendship with others who share the Faith we express in the Creed. But others who follow their own paths of faith in other religious traditions are also on the path towards God when they give themselves in love to God, to their brothers and sisters in humanity, and to the world.

## Theme 2: The living Faith of the Church

### A reflection on the Creed

The language of the Creed can appear difficult, so it is helpful to think about what is being said.

Notice that the first thing we say is 'I believe': this is a statement about *ourselves*.

The Creed centres on four statements:

- I believe in one God
- I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ
- I believe in the Holy Spirit
- I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church

#### **I believe in one God**

God is ONE, our Father, who has created everything we know.

As we continue our Creed, we say that Jesus is God's unique ('Only Begotten') Son, and that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son. Our belief is rooted in the Christian experience of God in Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit on his disciples. Although we have experienced God as Father, Son and Spirit, God remains ONE GOD undivided.

We share our Faith in One God with our Jewish and Muslim friends, as well as other Christians.

#### **I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ**

The earliest Christians recognised Jesus as 'Lord' – the one to whom we owe reverence and obedience. He was uniquely God's Son and, as his hearers recognised, he spoke with the authority of God. Later centuries tried to understand Christ's Sonship more clearly and the result of those questions (and struggles) were the statements in the Creed:

- Jesus was born of God, not created as we ourselves are created
- Jesus existed before time; he is eternal (as witnessed, for example, in the Gospel of John)
- Jesus was – and remains – both God and human; born of God in eternity and of Mary, a virgin, in time
- Jesus suffered and died to save us, rose from death, and will return when all are to be judged, and his kingship is everlasting.

#### **I believe in the Holy Spirit**

Throughout history, God's Spirit has given life to all creation. This Spirit, who spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament, came upon the disciples at Pentecost and is offered to us in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

The Holy Spirit is the fruit of the eternal love of God, ‘proceeding’ from Father and Son, and equal to them in Godhead. In worshipping God as Father, Son, and Spirit, we recognise the living power of God’s Love which speaks, creates, and transforms all of Creation.

### **I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church**

As God is ONE and undivided, so is the Church: whatever struggles we have suffered over the years, we remain **together** Christ’s Body (in the teaching of St. Paul).<sup>2</sup>

This Church is *holy* because it is given life by the Holy Spirit.

It is also catholic, a word which means it is everywhere.

This catholic Church is built on the lives and teaching of Christ’s first apostles.

The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church has its home in the people of God, gathered under the authority of the Pope and bishops who are, together, successors of the apostles chosen by Jesus to proclaim his gospel message.

We become members of this one Church through the sacrament of Baptism.

### **Why share what we believe?**

Jesus commanded his disciples to ‘proclaim the good news’:<sup>3</sup> the gospel message doesn’t stop when we receive it but is ‘living and active’<sup>4</sup> and *to be shared*.

Our **hope** - that is, our *looking forward* to the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom – demands that we share what we have found, so that others too can belong to the life of Christ’s Body.

### **The lives of the Saints – an example to us**

Many people have Journeyed in Faith ahead of us – some have done this so wholeheartedly that their lives and faith can inspire and encourage us.

At times life is difficult, and the example of others can help us continue in our own Journey.

St. Paul spoke of all Christians as saints<sup>5</sup> and so we are.

The Church declares certain people to be Saints so that we recognise the holiness in ourselves and strive to nurture it in faith and mutual love.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 7:4; Romans 12:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12,27

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 10

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:12

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and Philippians 1:1

## Theme 3: The Sacred Life of the Church today

### The Sacraments of the Church

God touches our lives at every moment: simply to live and breathe is the gift of God to us, just as the world around us is God's gift, with the creatures and people with whom we share it.

The Church recognises seven sacraments – particular gifts of God – which bring us into the life of God's People (the Church) and which nourish our shared life:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist
- Reconciliation
- The Anointing of the Sick
- Matrimony
- Holy Orders

By Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist we are brought into and nourished in the life of the Church.

Through the sacrament of Reconciliation, the hurts we have inflicted on ourselves and others are healed and forgiven by God.

The Anointing of the Sick strengthens us in mind and body and brings God's healing to our times of illness.

The sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders recognise two important paths in life (one in partnership with another person; the other in celibate life) and offer God's strength and support to the choices we make in how we are to live.

In becoming a Catholic you will encounter the first four of these sacraments, although if you are already a baptised Christian some sacraments do not need to be repeated. All Christians are baptised once, confirmed once and may marry or enter Holy Orders once.

The other Sacraments (Eucharist, Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick) may be received many times and we are encouraged to do so regularly, as appropriate.

### The Mass

The sacrament we celebrate most frequently is the Eucharist – the receiving of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the form of bread and, when possible, wine. Catholics are expected to attend Mass each Sunday unless they have good reason to be unable to do so.

This sacrament was established by Jesus on the night before he died, when he celebrated his last meal with his disciples.<sup>6</sup>

## Theme 4: Becoming a Catholic: Sacraments of Initiation and Forgiveness

The Catholic tradition is to receive catechumens into full membership of the Church at the Easter Vigil, the greatest celebration of the Church's year, when we recall Jesus' rising from death.

This is because the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism, for those who come from other non-Christian traditions, is itself a celebration and commemoration not only of Jesus' own baptism by John in the river Jordan at the start of his ministry, but also a making present of His saving action in His life, death and resurrection.

In Baptism we truly become members of Christ's Body and receive God's Spirit for our salvation and for the salvation of the world.

Those who have already been baptised with water 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' are not baptised again at the Easter Vigil because Christian Baptism is given only once.

Similarly, those who have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation do not receive it a second time, but all those who have not been confirmed receive this sacrament at the Easter Vigil.

For Catholics, the sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as 'Penance' or 'Confession') is fundamental to our recognition that we have all sinned against God and against one another, and we need to be reconciled.

All those being received into full communion with the Catholic Church will receive instruction and guidance on how this sacrament is to be celebrated, and this celebration will take place at some point before the Easter Vigil. It is our opportunity to share in the forgiving Love of God for us personally and for all humankind. It is a source of joy – and often great relief – for the many of us burdened by the actions and failures of our past lives.

Occasionally, where there is a pressing need – for example, the risk of death – a person can be received into full communion with the Catholic Church at any time of year.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:26-28



Young children and babies are generally baptised at a Sunday Mass – or, perhaps, at a Baptism ceremony – which might be at any time of year. Similarly, young people will receive the sacrament of Confirmation at some point during the year, once they are old enough. This is determined by and agreed with the Bishop, who usually administers this sacrament.

## Theme 5: Living life as a Catholic

As Catholics, we are members of Christ's Body, as Saint Paul taught:

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.<sup>7</sup>*

Paul's greatest teaching on this theme is in his Letter to the Romans:

*In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.<sup>8</sup>*

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.*

*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never*

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27

<sup>8</sup> Romans 7:4

*avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.<sup>9</sup>*

As members of Christ's Body we are called **together**: we are no longer alone and we do not face the trials of life alone. This demands courage and generosity, not only in recognising that we belong to one another in Christ, but in sharing the trials and difficulties of others.

It is never enough to simply come to church on a Sunday, forgetting about our Christian sisters and brothers at other times. Our Christian Baptism calls us to join with one another in sharing Christ's love and in witnessing to God's Love for all people through what we say and what we do.

We are called to 'seek the holy in the everyday and make the everyday holy'. We do this through our own prayer, but also in the love we show to others – not just our Christian brothers and sisters, but all people.

We also do this through celebrating the sacraments.

Throughout our lives as Christians, we are called to make Christ visible in the world through what we say and what we do. In this we are never alone: we act as One with our Christian sisters and brothers and in communion (unity) with all the holy Christians who have come before us and whose memory we celebrate throughout each year.

## Theme 6: Sharing our Faith with one another

We are called to share our Faith with one another: this means that, for Catholic Christians, faith is never a 'private matter'.

For some of us this is difficult: our faith perhaps feels too deeply personal to be talked about, or we might fear that what we believe could sound strange or unwelcome to others who believe differently or do not believe in God at all.

Jewish people have a wonderful tradition of argument. In their rabbinical schools they are taught that disagreement is the beginning of greater understanding. If we all kept silent, none of us would grow in our faith and, also, how could others come to believe in Jesus if no-one has ever spoken of Him?

This is not just the work of priests and catechists, it is for all of us.

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 12:4-21

We are not, usually, taught how to disagree and how to argue with kindness and compassion.

These days it seems easier to 'cancel' another person, rather than listening deeply to them and then responding clearly, calmly, and correctly to what they say.

The Church has struggled with difficult questions for thousands of years and it is only because of these struggles – and often bitter disagreements – that we have come to a deeper understanding of our Faith.

The Creed itself, which we say together each Sunday, is the fruit of centuries of deep and prayerful thinking and discussion – and disagreement.

Without this, the Church dies, both because our faith does not grow and deepen, and because those who disagree with us are not challenged to 'think again' (the literal meaning of 'repent') and open their hearts to faith and to deeper understanding.

So how do we argue with kindness and compassion?

- We have to listen deeply
- We have to remember that the other person is also deeply loved by God
- We have to place reliance on the many who have come before us; their faith and their teaching can help us respond well to the questions we face.

**On your own Journey in Faith, you will face questions and challenges. By asking others to help you to understand, and by sharing your own faith and understanding with them – being ready to hear voices 'other than your own' – you will not only yourself grow in faith and understanding but will help others to grow as well.**

## Some Catholic Prayers

### **Our Father**

Our Father,  
Who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou amongst women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### **Glory Be**

Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.

### **Hail Holy Queen**

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope.  
To thee do we cry,  
poor banished children of Eve:  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.  
Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us,  
and after this our exile,  
show unto us the blessed  
fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!  
Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,  
that we may be made worthy  
of the promises of Christ. Amen.

### **Memorare**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known  
that anyone who fled to thy protection,  
implored thy help,  
or sought thy intercession,  
was left unaided.  
Inspired by this confidence,  
We fly unto thee,  
O Virgin of virgins my Mother;  
to thee do we come, before thee we stand,  
sinful and sorrowful,  
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,  
despise not our petitions,  
but in thy mercy hear and answer them. Amen.

### **Come, Holy Spirit**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

*Lead:* Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

*Response:* And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **God Be in My Head**

*from the Sorum Primer (1527)*

God be in my head and in my understanding. God be in my eyes and in my looking. God be in my mouth and in my speaking. God be in my heart and in my thinking. God be at my end and my departing. Amen.

### **Day of the Week Morning Offerings**

**Sunday:** Grant, O Lord, that none may love Thee less this day because of me; that never a word or act of mine may turn one soul from Thee; and, ever daring, yet one more grace would I implore, that many souls this day, because of me, may love Thee more. Amen.

**Monday:** Father, we offer to you this day all our thoughts, words, and actions, all our sufferings and disappointments, and all our joys. And we unite our lives with that of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Tuesday:** Father, you have brought us to the beginning of a new day. Your hand is upon us to care for and protect us. We offer you our lives and hearts. May we always do your will and love our neighbour as ourselves. Amen.

**Wednesday:** Father, we offer to you this day all our thoughts, words, and actions, all our sufferings and disappointments, and all our joys. And we unite our lives with that of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Thursday:** Father, you have brought us to the beginning of a new day. Your hand is upon us to care for and protect us. We offer you our lives and hearts. May we always do your will and love our neighbour as ourselves. Amen.

**Friday:** O my God, I offer you all my thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings; and I beseech you to give me your grace that I may not offend you this day, but may faithfully serve you and do your holy will in all things. Amen.

**Saturday:** O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer you all the prayers, works, sufferings and joys of this day, for the intentions of your Divine Heart. Amen.

### **Morning or Evening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work. I give you my feet to go your way. I give you my eyes to see as you see. I give you my tongue to speak your words. I give you my mind to think as you think. I give you my spirit so that you may pray in me. I give you my self so that you may grow in me. So that it is you, Lord Jesus, who lives and works and prays in me. Amen.

### **Serenity Prayer**

*by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)*

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. Taking as Jesus did this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.

### **Canticle of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)**

*This prayer is particularly suitable for use at bedtime, or at the time of death*

At last, all-powerful Master,  
you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles  
and give glory to Israel, your people.