



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Catechism

Q: Who made us?

A: God made us.

Q: Who is God?

A: God is our Father in heaven.

Q: Why did God make us?

A: God made us to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world and to be happy with him in the next.

When asked these questions, every older Catholic will automatically give the very same answers. They learned them by heart in the *Baltimore Catechism*, the definitive religious textbook for all Catholic children in the United States from the end of the 18th century until the Second Vatican Council in 1960.

The Catechism is a text that collects the fundamental Catholic truths. They are stated so clearly that most people can read them without need of further explanation. As is true for so much about the Church, the Catechism has a long and interesting history. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages, the truths and the prayers for the faith were inscribed on tablets like the Ten Commandments and were displayed in the house or church where they could be easily seen so that everybody could understand their content.

Following the invention of

the printing press sometime in the mid-1500s, what we know today as the Catechism was formulated. After the Council of Trent in 1566, *The Roman Catechism* was produced. It was a catalog of beliefs the Church determined Catholics needed to know so not to “fall into the errors of Protestantism.”

At the First Vatican Council in 1869, *The Roman Catechism* was updated and reissued. It was translated into English in the United States in 1885 and became known as the *Baltimore Catechism*. One hundred years later, in 1985, the Church began putting together a new Catechism. This was the first such major gathering of the teachings of the Church since the 1500s! The whole Church, giving input through their bishops, participated in its preparation. The pope officially approved it on June 25, 1992, in effect retiring the old *Baltimore Catechism*. The new book is called the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*...

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is divided into four parts:

- **The Nicene Creed.** What the Church believes.
- **The Sacraments.** What the Catholic Church celebrates.

• **The Commandments.**

What the Catholic Church lives.

• **The Our Father.** What the Catholic Church prays.

The new Catechism is characterized by its invitational style. It is less dogmatic in its approach; it shows truth in a more complex way, with much less absolutism. It shows the evolving nature of belief. On the other hand, it avoids opinions, that is, teachings by Catholic religious scholars whose thoughts have not yet made it into official Church Teaching.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Catholicism
O’Gorman and Faulkner, Alpha Press, 2003; pg 245-246

Issue 36

The Catechism

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Things to talk about:

- Do you have a *Catechism* in your house?
- Have you every read any part of the *Catechism*?
- What questions do you have about our faith?
- Where do you go to find answers to your questions?

The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

While the structure and design of the *Catechism* are themselves instructive, its contents certainly offer a thorough review of faith. This is a text for “adults only” in the most positive sense. It is designed particularly for post-Vatican II Catholics.

Adult education is crucial to the vitality of the U.S. Church. We’ve relied too much on the answers of childhood. The *U.S. Catholic Catechism* is not easy reading, but it does offer many entry points (stories, Q and A’s, discussion starters and doctrinal summaries). It doesn’t even seem crucial to begin at the beginning.

Catholics may be more engaged by beginning with their own burning issues, easily located through the 27-page Glossary. Its entries range from *abortion* to *vocation*, with *cremation*, *euthanasia*, *Gnosticism*, *subsidiarity* and *transubstantiation* in between.

In the 85-page Index, readers can locate entries on all these subjects and many more, some closer to the heart of belief than others, but all part of Catholic language and practice. Now believers have no excuse for shrugging their shoulders in bemused ignorance..

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Nov2006/Editorial.asp>



Saint of the Day: St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) 1891-1942

August 9 is the feast of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

A brilliant philosopher who stopped believing in God when she was 14, Edith Stein was so captivated by reading the autobiography of Teresa of Avila that she began a spiritual journey that led to her Baptism in 1922. Twelve years later she imitated Teresa by becoming a Carmelite, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Born into a prominent Jewish family in Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), Edith abandoned Judaism in her teens. As a student at the University of Göttingen, she became fascinated by phenomenology, an approach to philosophy. Excelling as a protégé of Edmund Husserl, one of the leading phenomenologists, Edith earned a doctorate in philosophy in 1916. She continued as a university teacher until 1922 when she moved to a Dominican school in Speyer; her appointment as lecturer at the Educational Institute of Munich ended under pressure from the Nazis.

After living in the Cologne Carmel

(1934-38), she moved to the Carmelite monastery in Echt, Netherlands. The Nazis occupied that country in 1940. In retaliation for being denounced by the Dutch bishops, the Nazis arrested all Dutch Jews who had become Christians. Teresa Benedicta and her sister Rosa, also a Catholic, died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz on August 9, 1942.

Pope John Paul II beatified Teresa Benedicta in 1987 and canonized her in 1998.

Comment:

The writings of Edith Stein fill 17 volumes, many of which have been translated into English. A woman of integrity, she followed the truth wherever it led her. After becoming a Catholic, Edith continued to honor her mother’s Jewish faith. Sister Josephine Koeppl, O.C.D., translator of several of Edith’s books, sums up this saint with the phrase, “Learn to live at God’s hands.”

Quote:

In his homily at the canonization Mass,

Pope John Paul II said: “Because she was Jewish, Edith Stein was taken with her sister Rosa and many other Catholics and Jews from the Netherlands to the concentration camp in Auschwitz, where she died with them in the gas chambers. Today we remember them all with deep respect. A few days before her deportation, the woman religious had dismissed the question about a possible rescue: ‘Do not do it! Why should I be spared? Is it not right that I should gain no advantage from my Baptism? If I cannot share the lot of my brothers and sisters, my life, in a certain sense, is destroyed.’”

Addressing himself to the young people gathered for the canonization, the pope said: “Your life is not an endless series of open doors! Listen to your heart! Do not stay on the surface but go to the heart of things! And when the time is right, have the courage to decide! The Lord is waiting for you to put your freedom in his good hands.

”From www.americancatholic.org/saintoftheday.html



Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

The Catechism of the Catholic Church can be found online at the Vatican website:
http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm

The “United States Catholic Catechism for Adults” can be found at any major bookseller.

For teens, St Mary’s Press offers “The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth” based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more the parables? Check out the following book and website for more information:

- *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Understanding Catholicism* O’Gorman and Faulkner, Alpha Press, 2003
- www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac1206.asp

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.