

## **Faith (Response to Revelation)**

(Excerpts from Catholicism for Dummies)

### **Faith (belief in God and all that He has revealed as proposed by the Church)**

- You have faith if you trust the word of someone else.
- Faith means agreeing with, believing in, trusting something – without hard, cold evidence – that you can't know or comprehend on your own.
- Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed (CCC 150).
- Faith is a personal act – the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith isn't an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone (CCC 166).
- Faith is a gift from God. He offers it freely to anyone and everyone, but it must be freely received as well.
- For those who believe, no explanation is necessary, and for those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.

### **Having Faith in Revelations (the Word of God)**

- Catholics believe the Word of God comes in two forms:
  - **The spoken word:** Also called the unwritten word or Sacred Tradition.
  - **The written word:** Known also as Scripture or the Bible.
- Key differences between the Catholic and Protestant perspectives on the Bible:
  - The belief in one or two channels of revelation.
  - The interpretation of the biblical text.

### **Man's Response to God (CCC 142-184)**

- Faith involves an assent of the intellect to will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.
- "To believe" has a twofold reference:
  - To the person and to the truth.
  - To the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.
- We must believe in no one but the Triune God.
- Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit.
- "Believing" is:
  - A human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.
  - An ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our faith.

The Church is the mother of all believers.

“No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.”

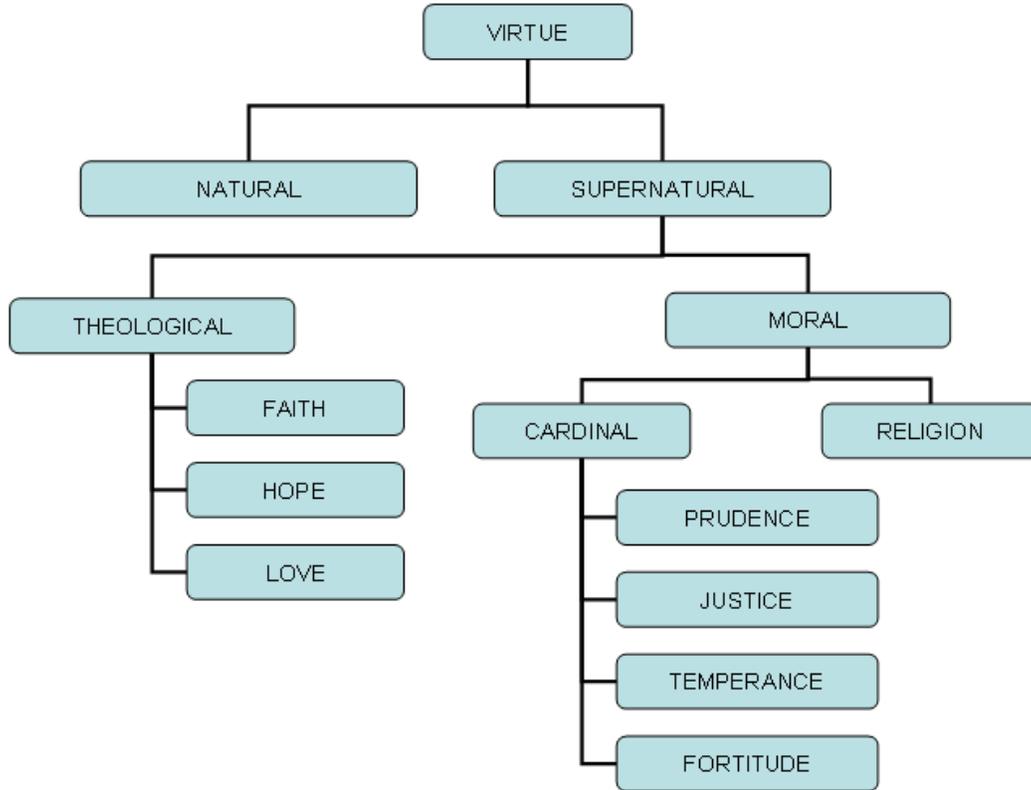
(St. Cyprian, De unit. 6:PL 4, 519)

- We believe all “that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed” (Paul VI, CPG para 20).
- Faith is necessary for salvation.  
The Lord himself affirms: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
- “Faith is a foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come” (St. Thomas Aquinas, Comp. theol. 1, 2).

### St. Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> century philosopher)

- The human mind seeks different kinds of truth:
  - **Scientific truth** (also known as empirical truth) is known by observation and experimentation. So, for example, you know that fire is hot by burning your finger with a lit match.
  - **Philosophical truth** is known by using human reason. You know that two plus two equals four, for example. So if two chairs are in a room and someone says, “I’ll get two more,” you know by using reason that the total will be four chairs. You don’t need to count the chairs after they arrive.
  - **Theological truth**, known only by faith, is the final and highest level of truth. It can’t be observed, and it can’t be reasoned; it must be believed by faith – taken on God’s word, because he revealed it.
- Five proofs for the existence of God (Summa Theologica)
  - **Through motion** – everything is placed into motion by some other “mover”, but there must be a “prime mover” not moved by anything else.
  - **Through causality** – the cause of all causes was never an effect but always a cause.
  - **Through necessity** – everything in the universe is basically contingent on (dependent on) something else to exist. One being must be necessary in order to keep the contingent (unnecessary) beings in existence.
  - **Through gradation** – hierarchy of creation (inanimate matter, plants, animals, human beings, and angels). The final and ultimate level of existence is a Supreme Pure being who has no beginning and no end.
  - **Through governance** – rather than being mere chance, life on earth is no mistake, and it follows a plan (by the Great Governor) that puts order into chaos.

## Handout



### Capital Sins

**Pride** – distorted self importance (one places himself before God and neighbor)

**Avarice** – also called covetousness, avarice is wanting things to which we do not have a right

**Lust** – more than just sexual passion, lust is an inordinate desire for something (e.g., food, wealth, sex)

**Anger** – harboring dislike and aversion toward someone; anger does not allow a healthy perspective

**Gluttony** – having too much of something; e.g., food, drink, shopping

**Envy** – serious jealousy; it means that if we cannot have what another has, then we do not want him to have it either

**Sloth** – spiritual laziness

### Opposing Virtues

**Humility** – seeing ourselves as we truly are

**Liberality** – generosity with our goods and talents

**Chastity** – generosity with ourselves and temperance with our desires

**Patience** – also called meekness, patience is the virtue of putting God and others before ourselves and acting with gentleness

**Sobriety/Temperance** – using created goods well, with proper limits

**Brotherliness** – wanting the best for others and being happy for their goods and successes

**Diligence in the service of God** – to persevere in our spiritual life

**Prudence:** Natural prudence indicates the best way to earn money; whereas supernatural prudence indicates the best way to get to heaven and to help others get there.

**Justice:** Natural justice includes the work of the civil court; whereas supernatural justice includes teaching the Faith to children.

**Temperance:** Natural temperance includes dieting to lose weight; supernatural temperance includes offering up food for penance.

**Fortitude:** Natural fortitude includes athletic training; supernatural fortitude includes suffering martyrdom.

### **Saint Thomas More: An Example of Prudence and Justice**

After studying for many years at Oxford, building a reputation as a respected attorney, and authoring widely popular works of political literature, such as his classic, *Utopia*, Saint Thomas More was appointed Lord Chancellor of England by King Henry VIII. When the Protestant Reformation hit England, Saint Thomas More was faced with a choice that forced him to use the virtues of prudence and justice. King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his lawful wife Catherine of Aragon. The Pope refused to give the Church's blessing so, in 1531, King Henry VIII separated the Church in England from that of Rome. He then called himself "Protector and Supreme Head of the Church of England." In doing so, King Henry broke with the Holy Father and the true Church and demanded that Saint Thomas More do the same. For several years, Saint Thomas More openly opposed the King's move and finally Henry had him imprisoned in the Tower of London where he stayed for fifteen months. On July 6, 1535, Saint Thomas More was condemned to death for refusing to recognize the King as head of the Church of England. Before losing his head, Saint Thomas declared: "I die the king's good servant, but God's first." In justice Saint Thomas gave God his due over that of the king, and in prudence he did the right thing in the best way possible, even though it led to his death.

### **Saint Maria Goretti: An Example of Temperance and Fortitude**

Saint Maria Goretti died when she was twelve years old. Shortly before she died, a young man who worked with her family tried to make her commit an act of impurity. When she refused, he stabbed her several times. She died from these wounds shortly after, but before she died, she forgave the man who had killed her. Although she was only twelve, she showed remarkable temperance and incredible fortitude in refusing to be unchaste and carrying that refusal even to death. After her death, the young man was imprisoned and remained unrepentant until, one night, Saint Maria Goretti appeared to him in a dream and gave him some flowers, showing that she had forgiven him. Upon his release nearly thirty years later, he went directly to Saint Maria's mother and asked her to forgive him. Her mother replied that if her daughter could forgive him then she could do the same. In 1950 this man was in Saint Peter's Square watching as Pope Pius XII canonized Saint Maria Goretti.