

## LESSON 1: Christian Life



<b>FOCUS</b>	Discipleship (Holiness, Beatitudes)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 21, p.89-91)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Disciple; Holiness

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### TEACHER'S NOTES

1. The reading material for this and the following lessons in Theology are taken from *The Christian Story* (2007) Cluster Publications. The extracts are given below on a separate Lesson Materials page for easy reproduction.
  2. Key terms that appear in these extracts are explained in the glossary of the same text and are also given on the Lesson Materials page.
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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒ 📖 ⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

Learners identify their models – those whose way they follow – and discuss briefly why they follow these models.

#### 📖 Text

Read “Jesus is a model for humanity”.

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

Jesus’ call is to holiness. Let learners discuss the following question: How would you describe holiness in ordinary life? Make the links between the items in this word chain: holiness, wholeness, beauty, beatitude.

#### 📖 Text

Read “The holiness of Jesus challenges us”.

#### ⇒ Response

- Invite learners to present a figure from the present or the past whose living out of a particular beatitude inspires them.
  - Invite learners to write a paraphrase of the Beatitudes.
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### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What, would you say, is at the heart of Jesus’ message?
- If the Church is called to live according to the spirit of poverty, what does that mean?



## Lesson Materials

# Christian Life

### *✂ Jesus is a model for humanity*

Quite simply, what draws people to become Christians is the person of Jesus. Of all the great people who have ever inspired others, Jesus stands out as an extraordinarily attractive human being. Something about him finds an echo in the human heart. He seems to challenge the best that is in us, and to inspire a response.

There are Jewish and Muslim and Hindu people who admire Jesus yet do not choose to be Christians. So being a Christian must mean something more than just being an admirer of Jesus. Christians look at the humanness of Jesus and see it as a window into God. In Jesus, they see the invisible God made visible. And seeing the God in whose image we are made, they see what we are called to become. So Jesus becomes the Way (John 14:6). By following the example of his life, they become united to its whole movement and meaning.

### *✂ The holiness of Jesus challenges us*

**Holiness** hasn't got a very popular image. Many people associate it with emotionally unbalanced individuals who take refuge in religion. But Jesus turns our notion of holiness upside-down. We sense in him an extraordinary holiness, but we see nothing weak or sanctimonious there. There is nothing soft about his constant awareness of the Father, about his taking time to pray, about his constant search for the Father's will. This holiness doesn't switch us off. It is attractive. It challenges us to try living this way.

What Jesus became, and what he did, was made possible by his parents, Mary and Joseph, from whom he received his first knowledge of being human. His holiness grew out of learning from them total openness to the Spirit of God. We do not see Jesus as holy simply because he is God's Son, but because he placed himself totally at the disposal of his loving Father.

A good way to understand Jesus' holiness is to examine his 'Eight Beatitudes' (Matthew 5:3-12). They fall into two groups:

- A. The first two and the last two challenge us to surrender our self-sufficient and narrow way of thinking:
  - ❖ "poor in spirit": a total dependence on God, even for our own goodness, instead of relying on our own means
  - ❖ "gentle": the renouncing of violent and retaliatory approaches to justice, namely punishment and revenge
  - ❖ "peacemakers": a generous goodwill that actually seeks peace with those who have offended
  - ❖ "persecuted": a sticking to the path of good when nothing is to be gained from it; still giving our best when we are getting the worst in return

B. The four Beatitudes in the middle challenge us to constantly try to match up to God's goodness:

- ❖ “mourn”: caring so deeply that we are never happy to accept what is evil
- ❖ “hunger for justice”: being conscious that we can't be at rest while evil is still at work in the world and within us
- ❖ “mercy”: being compassionate towards those who offend us or who fail in some way, but especially towards those who are generally forgotten: the helpless, the disadvantaged
- ❖ “pure”: having no hidden motives, completely forgetting ourselves and wanting nothing in return for what we give

The Beatitudes reveal a lot about Jesus the person; so does the challenge in which he sums them up: “You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

If perfection is the quest of the **disciple** of Jesus, what actually does it mean? Many people today treat the idea with extreme caution because they see the state of perfection as an impossible ideal, or as something rigid and foreign to human nature. It is really quite different. In fact – if we allow the insight of Aristotle – with growth in holiness comes increased pleasure, for pleasure, he says, is the indispensable sign that something is being done properly. If we experience virtuous acts as painful or difficult, it is only because we are beginners. We are like unfit athletes who are just beginning to train.

Perhaps a word that better carries the meaning Jesus intended is ‘wholeness’. He encourages us to become fully human, or, as ... Wesley put it, perfect in love.

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### Holiness

Holiness is wholeness, oneness or simplicity. Holiness is the natural condition of God, or the way God is. When applied to myself as a human being, the quest for holiness entails a process of becoming, or growing into the person God imagines me to be. No one can look at God and live. Holiness is the precondition for knowing God face to face, since only something that is simple or non-divisible is safe from the possibility of being destroyed.

### Disciple

A disciple is a follower, or one who willingly takes on the spiritual discipline of a teacher. Jesus offered those who would be his followers the following challenge: “Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)

## LESSON 2: Following Jesus



<b>FOCUS</b>	Theological Virtues (Following Jesus)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 23, p.94-97)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Faith, Hope, Charity, Scripture, Salvation, Grace, Cardinal Virtues, Conscience

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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒ 📖 ⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

Recall the role that super-heroes play in the lives of pre-school children. What is the need or desire that is being expressed? Follow this with a discussion on the limitations that are common to the experience of being human.

#### 📖 Text

Privately read the sections “To follow Jesus, we need faith, hope, and love”, “Faith, hope and love are gifts from God” and “Faith, hope and love transform our capabilities.”

#### ⇒ Presentation

Give an in-depth presentation on the theological virtues, drawing on the relevant glossary items.

#### 📖 Text

Read the section “The Works of Mercy spell out faith, hope, and love”.

#### ⇒ Response

- Groups present concrete examples of their experience of the works of mercy – those they know about, those they have witnessed, and those that they have carried out themselves.
  - A personal reflection follows on the difficulties I experience in carrying out a specific work of mercy. Do I see my limitation in this respect? What gift do I need to develop in order to respond more courageously?
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### FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

As an extension exercise students read the glossary items referred to in the chapter and be ready to present an understanding of any given one to the class.

## Lesson Materials



### Following Jesus

✂ To follow Jesus, we need faith, hope, and love

So far, we have considered how people are attracted and encouraged to follow Jesus. But what actually enables and empowers a person to do it? We can get a clue by looking at the limitations a human being has to work with:

- ❖ Our understanding limits us to accept only what appeals to our reasoning.
- ❖ Our horizons limit us to aspire only to possibilities we can see and be sure of.
- ❖ Our concerns limit us to love only ourselves and our family and friends.

How do we get beyond these limitations to follow the way of Jesus? We need three abilities, namely faith, hope, and love (or charity):

- ❖ We need **faith** – belief in God – to trust God’s wisdom and truth on the journey we undertake towards life in response to God’s invitation.
- ❖ We need **hope** – confidence in God – to take responsibility for the destiny that God promises us and the world, allowing the expectations that arise in us as a result of this promise to draw us forward on the journey.
- ❖ We need love or **charity** – living in God – to relate to and to live with others as God does so that our destiny – the fullness of life – is made a reality.

Faith, hope, and love are often mentioned together in **Scripture**<sup>1</sup>, and the Church calls them the theological virtues because each of them comes from God through our relationship with him, and orientates us further towards God. George Vass describes their characteristics as follows:

*While faith is the search for the truth of God and love is the commitment to this divine exploration, hope is the capacity to choose and to awaken those hitherto unknown possibilities which still lie in the mysterious future.*<sup>2</sup>

✂ Faith, hope and love are gifts from God

When a computer allows me to perform a complex task through following a fairly simple set of clear instructions, we say it’s user-friendly. However, computers do not have an inborn ability to give me directions. It is people who make computers, and people who programme them to be user-friendly. Now this is not leading up to a parallel in which we are seen as mere instruments and God is our user, yet there is this parallel: it is God alone who gives us our ability to respond to him – namely faith, hope, and love. These are God’s gifts.

A gift is something that the giver wants us to have. We can’t earn a gift; we can only respond to it. Think of the gift of someone’s love, and you’ll see how true this is. Now faith, hope,

1 See Colossians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:3

2 George Vass. 2005. *The Sacrament of the Future*. Leominster, Hertfordshire: Gracewing, p 174

and love are God's gifts to us: we can't earn them; we can only respond to them. And that's how **salvation** happens: it comes to us as a gift, just as our very being is itself a gift to us and to others. That is, in fact, the literal meaning of **grace**. A person doesn't earn God's gifts as a *reward*; rather, Christian life is a *response* to the gifts of faith, hope, and love. Whatever good we do is a sign of the Spirit at work in us, and it is because of this that the Christian talks about 'witnessing to Christ'. To sum up, we are not saved by our powers and actions; rather it is the gift of salvation that empowers and activates us.

### Faith, hope and love transform our capabilities

When we say that faith, hope, and love are gifts, we do not mean that they are something foreign that the Spirit puts into us. We already have in us a natural, inborn kind of faith, hope, and love. For example, we believe the weatherman when he says that it's going to rain tomorrow, and we accept that it won't be a good day for an outing. Or we trust that we are able to succeed in getting a Diploma in Journalism, and we confidently set out on a three-year course at the Technikon. Or we are attracted to some people, and so we are affectionate and generous towards them. So, we have natural capabilities of faith, hope, and love. But they are limited. They lack the power to fulfil the aspirations that God's creative action places in our hearts when we are called into being. As human beings, we always want to transcend our present circumstances. And 'virtue', in fact, means a power rooted in grace, in the presence of God, to do just this.

For comparison, think about our eyesight: we have the ability to see, but it's limited. We can see shape, colour, and movement, but we can't pick up ultra-violet or infra-red, nor can we see the intricate cellular structure of a leaf or the surface features of the planet Jupiter. We design instruments such as the microscope and telescope to transcend our natural ability by increasing the range of our eyesight. Similarly, in order for us to respond to God's calling, our faith, hope, and love need to be transformed and given new power. This is where God's gifts of faith, hope, and love come in: they completely transform our natural abilities, and by doing so, fulfil their promise and potential rather like sunlight does for a stained-glass window.

But the theological virtues don't only transform our natural faith, hope, and love. They transform all our natural capabilities. Grace builds on nature. All of us have our natural capacities for generosity, courage, strength, patience, humility, prudence, kindness, justice, tolerance, temperance, and so on. These capabilities are called virtues, or good habits, and four of them, the **cardinal virtues** of prudence, justice, fortitude or courage, and temperance, are traditionally singled out as the most important ones.

The Spirit works through these natural virtues in every person who follows their **conscience**. So the virtues serve as a point of unity between all people of good will, of whatever faith - or none. However, the gifts of faith, hope, and love are essential to the one who would follow the Way of Jesus and be Christ's presence for others in the world. The way that faith, hope and love transform our natural capabilities and capacities is by giving us a new motivation to be just, a new energy to be patient, a new impulse to be generous, a new reason to be courageous, and so on. It is through these everyday good habits that Christians live out their faith, hope, and love. So patience, humility, generosity, and so on, become their ways of expressing that they believe God, that they confide in God, and that they love God.

## The Works of Mercy spell out faith, hope, and love

One very concrete way in which Jesus expressed our calling was his portrayal of how we're going to be judged (Matthew 25:31-46). His list of practical actions has formed the basis for a list which the Church calls the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy; and these have been matched by the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, also compiled from Scripture. Together these Works of Mercy spin out ways in which faith, hope, and love can be expressed practically.

### *THE SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY:*

- ❖ *to feed the hungry*
- ❖ *to give drink to the thirsty*
- ❖ *to clothe the naked*
- ❖ *to take in the homeless*
- ❖ *to visit the sick*
- ❖ *to visit those in prison*
- ❖ *to bury the dead*

### *THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY:*

- ❖ *to convert the sinner*
- ❖ *to instruct the ignorant*
- ❖ *to advise the doubtful*
- ❖ *to comfort the sorrowful]*
- ❖ *to bear wrongs with patience*
- ❖ *to forgive injuries*
- ❖ *to pray for the living and the dead.*

Notice how the one list is about visible things (to do with our bodily reality) and the other is about invisible things (to do with our spiritual reality). The twin lists quietly emphasise that both dimensions are important - that it would be unbalanced to care only about one dimension. And the shared name, 'Works of Mercy', emphasises that both kinds of actions are good and practical ways of responding to our calling to be other Christs.

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## **Faith**

Faith, hope, and charity are called theological virtues because they not only direct us towards God, but they come as gifts from God to enable us to make life's journey from a sense of restless incompleteness to shalom, the experience of fullness in union with the Mystery of Life, who is God. Faith, in particular, is the ability to give one's total assent, in trust, to God, the revealer of truth, who, in turn, is absolutely faithful.

## **Hope**

To hope means to look forward to some future good which, though hard to attain, is nevertheless possible. Hope is a fundamental human disposition, the "will to live", which holds that there is some sense to life, and some reward for honest search and effort. Hope, in the sense of a theological virtue, enables us to look forward to the fulfilment of God's promises, which lie beyond our vision and experience. Hope is an energy which gives us strength to move forward towards our goal, even when the way points, as it did for Jesus on the Cross, to a contradiction.

## **Charity**

Greek philosophy distinguishes between three kinds of love: *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*. *Eros* refer to passionate love, an intense desire for something. *Philia* refers to a fondness and appreciation of the other, whether friend, family or social group. *Agape* or charity (*caritas* in Latin) refers to the love of God. Charity is a gift (a

charism) that God freely offers to human persons enabling them to love as God loves. Charity does not contradict *eros* or *philia*, but seeks to transform them so that the person's love becomes universal as God's is. Through charity, the human person becomes the face of God in the world: he or she reflects the nature of God, who is love.

### **Scripture**

Scripture is that body of writing that has been accepted by the Christian community as being the authentic witness to, and interpretation of, Christianity's foundational revelation. (Robert Sheard)

### **Salvation**

The liberation of the human person from a situation of oppression to a new experience of freedom is variously called 'salvation' or 'redemption'. The idea of salvation suggests healing or making whole – a process, rather than a definitive act, which is the sense that 'redemption' (buying back) gives. The Church has never formulated a definitive of salvation or redemption, rather allowing theology to be enriched by these different ways of looking at the significance of the life and action of Jesus in human history.

### **Grace**

Grace is God's help or favour. But it is not something external to God that can be contained or measured. Grace is the very life or energy of God that is made freely available to human beings. Gratitude – the word comes from the same root as grace – is the appropriate response to God's loving, generous, free and totally unexpected and undeserved relations with human beings.

### **Cardinal Virtues**

The Latin word *cardo* means a hinge, or that on which a thing turns. The four cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude or courage, and temperance - are those around which all other virtues are grouped. Every moral virtue has at least one of the four qualities of being well judged (prudent), serving the common good (just), being restrained in some measure (temperate), or having firmness (courageous). Scripture names these four virtues in the Book of Wisdom (8:7).

### **Conscience**

Acting in conscience means doing what one believes to be good. While the word 'conscience' means 'with knowledge', human knowledge is always limited, and the consequences of any choice, even made in good faith, are often unpredictable. Thus conscientious living is not simply doing what one likes, but allowing one's conscience to be continually formed and informed. Conscience may be understood as the 'voice' of God within the person guiding him/her to grow more human through wise choices.

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## LESSON 3: Missing the Mark



<b>FOCUS</b>	Sin (Conscience)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 24, p. 98-99)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Sin, Mortal Sin, Venial Sin, Fundamental Option, Doctrine

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### TEACHER'S NOTES

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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

Discuss an experience of a good interaction with a person – good customer service, an action that went beyond the call of duty. How did it make you feel? How did you feel towards the person?

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

How does your church define sin?

Do you think the idea of sin has gone out of fashion? Do you ever hear anyone – outside of Church – using this term?

How would you define sin the light of this chapter?

Does the distinction between mortal and venial help in a practical way?

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## Lesson Materials



### Missing the Mark

*✂ We sometimes fail to be fully human*

We can refuse God's gifts, or allow those we have received to become inactive through disinterest or laziness. We described virtues above as good habits. Now habits, unpractised, begin to die. Losing good habits leads to developing bad ones, and this increases in us the likelihood of *sin*, or moving away from the destiny that God desires for us, and missing the mark of being truly human. When we turn our powers habitually to evil, we develop vices instead of virtues.

The way of being human is reflected most basically in God's Law which the Hebrew Scriptures codify as the Ten Commandments. There are three ways we can respond to this law:

- ❖ We can CONFORM and do the absolute minimum, avoid breaking the rules, just meeting our obligations.
- ❖ We can EXCEED its requirements and go beyond what it asks. We can take a generous approach, as Jesus asked.<sup>3</sup> This, as we saw, becomes possible through the transformation of our natural capabilities.
- ❖ We can FAIL and move into the area of sin.

*✂ Our failure harms all our relationships*

When we miss the mark, our failure harms all our relationships – with God, with ourselves, with others, and with creation as a whole. This failure we call sin can vary greatly in its weight according to its nature and how it happens. Traditionally, Catholic moral theology has distinguished between two kinds of sin: *mortal sin*, which brings about a break in our friendship with God, and *venial sin*, which harms the friendship without actually breaking it off. It's like the difference between a total collapse and a setback. The line between mortal and venial sin is drawn by four conditions:

1. It must be a very serious thing,
2. done in normal circumstances,
3. with full knowledge,
4. and with full consent.

If you look hard at these conditions, you'll see that they are as much about the person acting as the act itself. But is mortal sin possible? Can a person with full knowledge do something with such serious consequences? Yes, we are capable of such acts, just as we are capable of heroic, life-giving acts of love.

Mortal sin is a possibility in our lives, but not very likely if we are on the path to life and truth. Many people, perhaps as a consequence of insensitive teaching in early years, actually live in a state of anxiety, lest they have unintentionally committed such an act. But an

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<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 5:20-48; 19:16-22

unintentional act, however grave, can never be mortal in its consequence since full consent is lacking.

Nowadays, theologians are thinking more and more about the question "What is a moral person?" not merely "What is a moral act?" They're thinking about the great importance of the basic direction of a person's life, which they call the *fundamental option*. And they're asking: "What about a person whose life is strongly directed towards God, but who slips and sins badly on occasion? Obviously serious damage is done, but is that strong relationship with God suddenly and completely cut?" They're suggesting that there may be a category between mortal sin and venial sin, called 'serious sin'. This is a debated issue, not an established *doctrine*. But it's a good example of activity at the frontiers of theology. Theology has the task of testing established doctrine and suggesting ways of refining it so that it expresses more and more truly and relevantly the unchanging truth. But while theologians try to work out these bigger questions about morality, we've got to work out daily questions in a moral way. And this is where conscience comes in.

Now my ability to recognise, say, a particular bird-call, or the quality of a goalkeeper's skill, depends on how much I know and how well my judgement has developed. It's the same with conscience. How well I recognise right from wrong depends on how well *formed* and how well *informed* my conscience is. Yes, we do have some natural instinct for right and wrong, but it can end up immature, or even warped. The responsibility for educating my conscience lies partly with my family and community and partly with myself. My family and community must guide me by sharing our inherited codes and by helping me broaden my perspectives and awareness; and I must honestly seek the guidance I need and reflect prayerfully on the questions that face me.

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## **Sin**

To sin, trespass, or transgress means to go beyond some imposed limit. The limit may be a law or a boundary, whose crossing implies a guilt to be pardoned or a debt to be settled. In Christian terms sin is to go beyond the law of human nature - to do something that brings a negative consequence.

### **Mortal Sin**

'Mortal' means 'deadly' and something is deadly if it separates one person from another without a way of return. Physical death separates loved ones who can only be reunited beyond death. Sin that is 'mortal' separates the human person from God, and there is no way the person can return to friendship without God stretching out a hand in forgiveness. Just as physical death is not the end of a person's existence, but a disembodiment of the spirit, so neither does sin that is deadly mean the end of existence, but an experience of it separated from God's love.

### **Venial sin**

A venial act is something excusable, of no great consequence in itself, and easily forgiven. With regard to confessing venial sin, we could imagine God saying in response: "No problem: don't mention it."

### **Fundamental Option**

'Fundamental option' refers to a theory of morals according to which each person gradually develops in a basic orientation of his or her life, either for or against God. This fundamental direction is said to be *for* God if one's life is fundamentally devoted to the love and service of others, and *against* God if one's life is essentially devoted to self-love and self-service. Proponents of the theory hold that a single act, however seriously sinful, cannot change such an option, and one's relationship with God is thereby not altogether severed. The Church's Magisterium has cautioned against such an understanding, maintaining the possibility that a person's fundamental moral disposition can be changed by a particular act. The likelihood of this being so is another matter, and the theory does bring comfort to sensitive or scrupulous minds who are forever trying to judge themselves and their status before God.

## Doctrine

Doctrine means teaching. The term arises from the Latin 'doctor' which means teacher. Certain writers have received the title Doctor of the Church because of the great advantage the whole Church has derived from their teaching. Among them are Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Thérèse of Lisieux. The Church's doctrines, or teachings, are faithful interpretations for particular times and circumstances, of the core Christian teaching (*kerygma*) which has been handed down from the Apostles.

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## An Additional Note on Conscience

God creates us in the state of *freedom*. Normally we are at liberty to choose whether to act or not in a specific situation. We are responsible for our free choices. With these choices, we choose our own ultimate destiny, since every action has its consequences.

We use our natural faculty called conscience to apply the general principles of the law to specific situations, judging specific actions to be right or wrong in accordance with objective guiding principles or norms.

The idea of conscience is not always clearly understood. Here are a few points to bear in mind<sup>4</sup>:

- Conscience is common to all human beings. All are bound to seek, embrace and live the truth faithfully.
- We must do our best to cultivate a well-formed and well-informed conscience in ourselves and those we influence.
- We must take responsibility for our actions and thus always seek seriously to discern the right choice to make. We should seek to resolve doubt rather than act upon it.
- We will be judged according to how we formed and followed our conscience.
- Conscience, like any intellectual ability, can err.

(Paul Faller. 'Knowing and choosing the good' in *Catholic Education*, Vol 16, Issue 3, August 2007)

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<sup>4</sup> Gleaned from Bishop Fisher on Conscience and Authority. "Struggling to Recover a Catholic Sense". [Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org) - ZE07030301. Vatican City, March 3, 2007

## LESSON 4: Faith



<b>FOCUS</b>	Faith (Reason, Creed)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 25, p. 100-104)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Creed, Paschal Mystery

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### TEACHER'S NOTES

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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒⇒📖⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

- Discuss faith in daily life: driving a car, getting into a taxi, eating bought food, taking the lift, relying on another, or reflect on the question: How have I exercised my faith in human beings today?
- Come up with a tentative definition of faith in the ordinary human sense.

#### ⇒ Discussion-Reflection

Extend the idea of faith to God by proposing the definition given on page 100 of *The Christian Story*: “Faith is the ability to believe in God so that we accept actively what God reveals.” Discuss it while focusing on the two questions given on page 101:

- How do we know that what we are hearing comes from God?
- How do we know what God is really saying?

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Response

If the Creed is a symbol of Christian faith, then it expresses and points to that faith. Invite learners to choose an article from the Apostles’ Creed and to suggest what difference holding this belief makes to living like Jesus did?

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### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Which is more important – orthodoxy or orthopraxis, holding beliefs or living them out?
- Is it possible to have faith in God without belonging to some religion?

## Lesson Materials



### Faith

Since the three theological virtues are basic to realising our full potential, we're going to take a closer look at each of them. We'll start with a basic description of faith, and then unpack it:

***FAITH is the ability to believe in God so that we accept actively what God reveals.***

*✎ Faith is the ability to believe*

There are many things in life that we just have to accept in faith. Life is too short for us to learn everything by personal experience; and our powers are too limited to reason out everything neatly. Every day of our lives we take other people's word about things and act upon it – at work, at home, on television, on the streets, among our friends, and so on – as long as we feel we are being told the truth. So we do have the natural ability to accept truth in faith, to believe without needing proof. The gift of faith extends this ability to a deeper kind of truth: God's truth. Religious faith is the ability to believe God without needing proof. It's the ability to take God's Word for things we cannot see. It's the ability to accept that God is telling us the truth, and to act upon it. It may help you to think of this ability as a kind of positive prejudice. Think of one of your best friends: when she tells you something, you don't wait till she's finished before you decide whether to believe her – you believe her from the word go, because you have already made up your mind about her credibility. That's an example of positive prejudice, and faith is like that.

Many times when we say we 'know' something, we actually mean that we *believe* it - for example, when I say I 'know' someone loves me. And believing is a kind of knowing: it's the only kind of knowing we can have about things that can't be proved. So faith, the ability to believe, is our ability to know the truth.

Knowing God's truth means seeing things in a new way – from God's point of view. Imagine a tiny ant crawling across a huge painting. As far as it can see it's crossing a pink carpet; but if it could see from the artist's point-of-view, it would know that it was crossing the large nose of one of the painted figures. Now that's the sort of thing that faith enables us to do: to see things from the point of view of the artist, God. This is sometimes described as 'seeing with the eyes of faith'.

This ability to believe God, to know God's truth, to see things from God's point of view, is produced in us by grace, God's Spirit at work in us. That's what we mean by calling faith a gift from God.

*✎ Faith focuses on God and what God reveals*

Now you may have spotted two hidden problems in what we're saying about faith. We say that faith is the ability to accept that God is telling us the truth, but there are two things we're taking for granted:

- ❖ How do we know that what we are hearing comes from God?
- ❖ How do we know what God is really saying?

Firstly, how do we know that God is really there in what we are hearing? Putting it very simply, we experience signs, and something in us recognises what these signs point to. When we hear a rattling whirr up in the sky outside, we don't have to go outside to see what it is: we recognise it as a helicopter. When we feel a tickle in the throat and dull pains in the arms and legs, our body simply knows that we've caught an illness – we don't have to go off to a laboratory to see the virus under a microscope. Similarly, something in us is able to recognise signs of God in our experience, in the experience of other people, and most specially in the person of Jesus. That 'something in us' is grace, or the Holy Spirit living in us. So faith is not a leap in the dark, or an act of blind trust. It is, according to Bernard Lonergan, 'the knowledge generated by religious love'<sup>5</sup>, when a person says 'Yes' to a voice that awakens in them a sense of being called or chosen, or just simply valued beyond their own reckoning.

Secondly, how do we know what God is really saying? The simple answer is: by learning God's language. God doesn't speak in a language like English or Sotho or Hebrew or Greek. God speaks in the language of actions and experiences. That's the real language of the Bible. In fact, the Bible was written to teach us that language so that we could understand what God is saying to us in the experiences of our lives. Nowhere does God use this language more clearly than in the life of Jesus. Something in us is able to understand this language. Again, this 'something in us' is the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit guides not only the individual Christian, but the whole Body of Christ, through the reflection of its local communities, through the dialogue of its expert theologians, and through the direction given by its teaching authority.

Learning God's language is one thing: we also need to speak it, and this we cannot do if we do not understand it. Faith is not at loggerheads with reason. They are the two feet we need in order to walk ever deeper into the mystery of life. Or, to use another image, faith and reason illumine one another. *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* stresses that God's revelation and our responses to it must be realised in this modern age of science, secularism and social transformation:

*In language intelligible to every generation we should be able to answer the ever-recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of, and understand, the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often-dramatic features of the world in which we live.*<sup>6</sup>

So faith focuses on God, and what God has revealed to us, and continues to reveal. Faith is both a *commitment* to God and a *conviction* about the truth that God reveals. Both of these meanings are suggested by the Latin word *credo*, which means 'I believe'. Its roots are *cor*, meaning 'heart' and *do*, 'I put'. We can therefore say that we put our hearts into what we believe.

### Faith is something active

If faith is truly a commitment and a conviction, then it has to be something active. Imagine a man who becomes engaged to be married and keeps telling his fiancée how much he

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5 Quoted in Sebastian Moore. 1985. *Let This Mind Be In You*. New York: Harper & Row, p 41

6 Vatican II. *Gaudium et Spes*, paragraph 4

loves her and how much he longs to be married to her, yet constantly dodges the subject of the wedding-date and avoids any planning for married life. His fiancée is soon going to get the message that his 'commitment' is nil, his 'conviction' a lie, and the engagement-ring an empty symbol. Similarly, if I choose to be confirmed as a Christian, and even go to Church every Sunday, yet avoid letting my faith touch or challenge my lifestyle in the slightest way, then my 'faith' is a dead thing, my Church-going – like the engagement-ring – an empty symbol. Jesus did some very straight talking about this<sup>7</sup>.

Let's say it again: Christians are called to be followers of Jesus, not his fan-club – disciples, not devotees. Jesus is not only God's messenger; he actually *is* God's message. And the only way to accept that message is to try to live as Jesus did. The tough news is that it's always a struggle and that we may not succeed noticeably. The good news is that it is the quality of the struggle that counts in God's eyes. Further-more, we receive another gift called hope that acts powerfully to draw us forward through the struggle.

### The Creed spells out the Christian faith

Right back in the earliest centuries, effort was put into spelling out what the Church believes. Several creeds have emerged, right up to our own day, but Christians still commonly use two of the earliest versions to express the beliefs that are fundamental to their lives: the basic Apostles' Creed, and the Nicene Creed (AD 381) that is recited at Sunday Mass.

#### *THE APOSTLES' CREED*

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;*

*and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead;*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.*

Notice the structure of the Apostles' Creed which, like the Nicene Creed, falls into three parts, each centred on one person of the Trinity:

- ❖ the first part is about the Father and God's work of Creation;
- ❖ the second part is about the Son and God's work of Salvation or Preservation; and
- ❖ the third part is about the Spirit and God's work of Sanctification or Transformation.

Notice how the **Creed** highlights the two central mysteries of the Christian faith: the Trinity is emphasised by the three-part structure; and the Incarnation by dwelling longest on Jesus Christ.

Notice also how the **Paschal Mystery** is stressed: the part about Jesus Christ concentrates on this. And notice how the Church is mentioned in the same breath as the Holy Spirit who gives it life. The Creed doesn't include everything that the Church believes. It contains what is foundational. So, for instance, it doesn't mention the values we believe in, but it

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Matthew 7:17-18, 21; Luke 6:46; James 2:14-20



does offer the foundation for those values. And these foundations are accepted by most, if not all, Christian churches and communities.

Creeds act in some sense as a measure of right belief or orthodoxy, but they remain silent about right action, or orthopraxis. This bears thinking about, especially in light of the fact that the truth of the Christian is not judged so much by what one says one believes, but by how one acts (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus provides us with a statement of orthopraxis in the Eight Beatitudes which we considered in Chapter 21.

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### **Creed**

A creed may be simply seen as a statement, which summarises the belief of a religious community, but, in practice, it has a deeper, symbolic significance. To recite a creed in a liturgical setting is a confession of faith, and a commitment to live accordingly. Furthermore, while a creed cannot state every detail of belief, it does symbolise the whole content of that faith. In the early Church, the baptismal creed, which we know today as the Apostles' Creed, was known as the *Symbolum Apostolicum* since it functioned as a password or sign or token whereby members of the Christian community could recognise one another.

### **Paschal Mystery**

Pasch is another name for Passover. The Paschal Mystery refers in the first place to the experience of Jesus in his death and resurrection to new life – his Passover from the world of space and time to the 'new heaven and earth'. Christians are initiated into this mystery through their baptism.

## LESSON 5: Hope



<b>FOCUS</b>	Hope (The Lord's Prayer)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 26, p. 105-107)
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	Beatific Vision

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### TEACHER'S NOTES

9. The reading material for this and the following lessons in Theology are taken from *The Christian Story* (2007) Cluster Publications. The extracts are given below on a separate Lesson Materials page for easy reproduction.
10. Key terms that appear in these extracts are explained in the glossary of the same text and are also given on the Lesson Materials page.
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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒📖⇒]

#### ⇒ Reflection

- Begin with a breathing exercise to still the heart and mind.
- Imagine how your life and the life of all beings in the world might be. Give your imagination the freedom to dream without limits. Paint, draw, sculpt or write down the image that comes to you.

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Response

Create a prayer experience centred on the Our Father. Share reflections on the hope it brings and the action it may inspire you to.

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### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- What is the difference between the theological virtue of hope and wishful thinking?
- What is the relationship between faith and hope?
- What role does the imagination play in a hopeful life?
- What is the hope of all hopes for you?

## Lesson Materials



### Hope

Next, we single out hope for a closer look. Again, we'll start with a reference-definition.

***HOPE is the ability to trust God so that we confidently expect what God has promised us.***

#### *Hope is the ability to trust*

There's an old saying that goes: 'Where there's life, there's hope'. Part of the truth of this saying is hidden until you turn it around: 'Where there's hope, there's life'. Life without hope isn't human life at all – it's barely survival. In fact, without hope, people die of despair. So hope is basic to human life – it's what drives us and keeps us going. We need to have a goal to aim at, a dream to strive for, a future to live towards. We're made that way. The ability to hope has important consequences. It gives us an optimistic outlook – that things can change, things can get better – so that we don't give up.

Some of our aims are temporary, like a particular project or achievement we hope to successfully complete. Others last practically a lifetime, like the hope to be a good husband or wife, mother or father. Still others are handed on to the next generation. Our short-term hopes are shaped by our long-term hopes, and our hopes shape our lives.

We have a natural ability to trust in the promise of the future. The gift of hope extends and transforms this natural ability by offering us promises beyond our natural horizons. Hope is the ability to rely on and base one's decisions on promises that extend beyond what seems possible, what seems sensible, and what seems to be the end of life, that is, death. Hope allows us to look forward – to be drawn forward by a promised future which we desire.

#### *Hope focuses on God and what God has promised*

What are these promises that extend beyond our natural horizons? Basically, there are two kinds: promises about here-and-now and promises about eternal life. Mostly we're familiar with these promises in Jesus' words.

In hope, then, we count on God's faithful care which never fails, even when we die. We could also describe hope as a trustful following of Jesus' choices. Whichever way we look at it, our hope is ultimately focused on God. Because God is trustworthy, his promises are trustworthy. Because Jesus is trustworthy, his choices are trustworthy.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Hope is something confident*

Often people say, "I hope..." when what they mean is nothing more than, "I wish..." or, "Wouldn't it be nice if..." The great thing about the hope which the Spirit gives us is that

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<sup>8</sup> See Matthew 5:3-12; 6:4, 6, 18, 33; 7:11; 10:19-20, 39; 11:29; 16:18, 19; 18:19-20; 19:21, 29; 21:22; 25:40; 28:20

it is *confident*. It's not wishful thinking or vague optimism. Nor is it the expectation of a handout. But, in hope, we strive forward in the confidence that what God has promised will become the reality of our lives. In other words, we rely on God and depend on God's promises.

Throughout the history of the Church, hope has given Christians the confidence to let go of the things in which people usually put their security, and to live in a way that doesn't seem practical or rewarding. Think, for example, of martyrs and consecrated celibates, conscientious objectors and freedom fighters. Think of all those who have given up comforts and wealth, given up careers and success, given up the opportunity of marriage and family-life, given up their country or liberty, or even their lives for the sake of God's Kingdom. This is the kind of confident hope that Jesus is talking about in his parables of the treasure and the pearl (Matthew 13:44-46).

Hope, together with faith and love, endures beyond death (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is not as if all is revealed and all possessed in eternal life. No, the horizons of eternal life are limitless and radically beyond our control. The more God is revealed in the *beatific vision*, the more we are swept away by God's incomprehensibility. Hope therefore is needed to direct and empower the never-ending and ever-deepening commitment of faith and love.

### The 'Our Father' spells out the hope of the followers of Jesus

When Jesus was asked to teach his disciples to pray, he responded with seven petitions which we have come to call the Lord's Prayer. The choice of those petitions demonstrates a centering of all hopes on God. And the petitions are a fine spelling-out of what we hope for from God.

<i>Our Father in heaven,</i>	<i>Give us today our daily bread,</i>
<i>Hallowed be your name.</i>	<i>And forgive us our sins,</i>
<i>Your Kingdom come;</i>	<i>As we forgive those who sin against us.</i>
<i>Your will be done on earth as in</i>	<i>Save us from the time of trial</i>
<i>heaven.</i>	<i>And deliver us from evil.</i>

Take a closer look at the 'Our Father'. It starts by calling God 'Father'. This expresses trust in God. Then it expresses trust in God's promises:

- ❖ The first half (three petitions) expresses confidence in those promises that stretch beyond our known horizons.
- ❖ The second half (four petitions) expresses confidence in those promises that refer to here-and-now (Matthew 6:33, 7:11).

When we pray this prayer, we are putting all our security in God, trusting in the wisdom of God's Plan and the sureness of God's care. Calling God 'Abba' or 'Father' demonstrates our understanding that we are in personal relationship with a God on whom we can count.

#### **Beatific Vision**

The beatific vision is the direct perception of God enjoyed by those who are in heaven. And since in beholding God face to face, we find perfect happiness, the vision is termed "beatific". In this vision we shall be like God, for we shall see God as he really is (1 John 3:2).

## LESSON 6: Charity



<b>FOCUS</b>	Charity (Ten Commandments)
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<i>The Christian Story</i> (Chapter 27, p. 108-111)

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### TEACHER'S NOTES

11. The reading material for this and the following lessons in Theology are taken from *The Christian Story* (2007) Cluster Publications. The extracts are given below on a separate Lesson Materials page for easy reproduction.
  12. Key terms that appear in these extracts are explained in the glossary of the same text and are also given on the Lesson Materials page.
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### LESSON SUGGESTIONS [⇒ 📖 ⇒]

#### ⇒ Discussion

- Discuss different love relationships, trying to define different types.
- Present an understanding of the words *eros*, *philia*, *agape* and *caritas*. The first three are different aspects or types of love as named in the Greek language. The fourth is a Latin term from which comes the English word 'charity'. The two readings below will help in this.

#### 📖 Text

Read the chapter.

#### ⇒ Response

In groups, choose one of the commandments to work with. Using the example 'You shall not kill' on page 111 to guide you, spell out the questions and issues arising in our century that deal with the chosen commandment.

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## EROS, PHILIA, AGAPE & CARITAS

### Reading 1: from 'Deus Caritas Est' (Benedict XVI)

#### *A problem of language*

2. God's love for us is fundamental for our lives, and it raises important questions about who God is and who we are. In considering this, we immediately find ourselves hampered by a problem of language. Today, the term "love" has become one of the most frequently used and misused of words, a word to which we attach quite different meanings. Even though this Encyclical will deal primarily with the understanding and practice of love in sacred Scripture and in the Church's Tradition, we cannot simply prescind from the meaning of the word in the different cultures and in present-day usage.

Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word "love": we speak of love of country, love of one's profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbour and love of God. Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison. So we need to ask: are all these forms of love basically one, so that love, in its many and varied manifestations, is ultimately a single reality, or are we merely using the same word to designate totally different realities?

### *"Eros" and "Agape" – difference and unity*

3. That love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings, was called *eros* by the ancient Greeks. Let us note straight away that the Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship) and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term *philia*, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John's Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love. In the critique of Christianity which began with the Enlightenment and grew progressively more radical, this new element was seen as something thoroughly negative. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity had poisoned *eros*, which for its part, while not completely succumbing, gradually degenerated into vice. Here the German philosopher was expressing a widely-held perception: doesn't the Church, with all her commandments and prohibitions, turn to bitterness the most precious thing in life? Doesn't she blow the whistle just when the joy which is the Creator's gift offers us a happiness which is itself a certain foretaste of the Divine?

### **Reading 2: An Appeal for Charity (Mark Diller)**

Charity begins with love--literally. Back in the 4th century, Pope Damasus commissioned ascetic scholar St. Jerome to prepare a Latin translation of the Bible now known as the Vulgate, since the translation was into the common people's "vulgar" Latin. Jerome's sources were mainly in Greek, and in trying to get from Greek to Latin, one of the first problems he faced was what to do with *agape*--with love.

#### *Agape?*

*Agape* is a Greek word meaning "love." But it's love of a special sort. The ancient Greeks had a number of words for love, each with different connotations. For example, you've almost surely heard the Greek love word *eros*, and you can probably guess what kind of (erotic) connotations it carried.

*Agape*, on the other hand, implied a holy or brotherly love, as in "Love (*agape*) the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love (*agape*) your neighbor as yourself." Jerome's problem was that he lacked a good Latin equivalent for *agape*. Latin's primary love word was *amor*, but its meaning was very broad. The love of a parent, brother, friend, lover--all sorts of love were *amor* in Latin. So Jerome turned to *caritas* instead.

#### *Caritas?*

*Caritas* is a Latin word that used to mean "dearness" or "high price." By extension, it sometimes meant "esteem," "affection," or--in an indisputably chaste sense--"love."

By choosing it as his Latin *agape*, Jerome lent great importance to *caritas*--and to words, like "charity," that ultimately rose from it. He also inadvertently set up a schism in English Bibles. Some versions, like the King James Bible, talk of charity ("And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"). Others go right from *agape* to love ("And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love").

<http://knowledgenews.net/moxie/todaysknowledge/an-appeal-for-charity.shtml>

## Lesson Materials



# Charity

We've looked at faith and hope. Now let's look at the virtue that St Paul called 'the greatest of these' (1 Corinthians 13:13): charity, or love.

***CHARITY is the ability to love God, and the people in our lives, in the same way as God loves.***

*✂ Charity is the ability to love*

The word 'love' is often limited to mean mere attraction, or even abused to mean crude lust. However, human nature is capable of love that is deep and enduring, going beyond the self, provided that there is some basis of attraction. Think of the natural love of a mother for her child, or think of our ability to love friends truly. The gift of charity enables us to extend this love to those who are beyond the limits of our natural love: to God in the first place, and, as a result, to those we don't find attractive, such as the stranger, the poor, the foreigner – even our enemies. With the ability to love God as our Creator comes the ability to love anyone else as God's child, and, indeed, all creatures as expressions of God's goodness.

Scripture has a great deal to say about the quality of true love.<sup>9</sup> In fact, most of Jesus' teaching is a spelling-out of what it truly means to love. The Spirit's gift of love is the ability to rise to Jesus' challenge.

*✂ Charity focuses on God and the people God gives us to love*

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment, he replied by bringing together love of God, love of self, and love of neighbour: he said one resembled the other (Matthew 22:34-40). What's the connection? This is the very question Jesus seems to be answering when he says that whatever we do to our needy neighbour, we do to him (Matthew 25:35-40). Jesus values and identifies himself with every human person, and, since in the Christian understanding, Jesus is the sacrament of God's presence, every human person becomes identified with God.

It's pretty ordinary to love those who love us, as Jesus remarked (Luke 6:32-33). But it takes a whole lot more to love everyone that God gives us to love: people we live with and those we work with, people we like and those we find disagreeable. It takes a love relationship with God to orientate us to be loving in all our relationships. But it is in this very loving of another that God becomes most real to us. "The person who surrenders his/her life to God's call," says Sebastian Moore, "will come to know God with a sureness surpassing all other knowing. For that person will come to know God in the movement of her/his own heart as it stretches out to God."<sup>10</sup>

Charity, it is said, begins at home. One of the people God gives me to love is often too obvious to be noticed: it is myself. Since our task is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, we must surely love ourselves! Charity gives us a new appreciation of our

<sup>9</sup> See 1 John 3:18; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 7:12; John 14:15; Luke 10:27

<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Moore. 1985. *Let This Mind Be In You*. New York: Harper & Row, p 64

loveliness and loveableness, and a healthy new approach to loving ourselves. Indeed, if we do not love ourselves, we cannot love another, even God.

### *☞ Charity is something God-like*

Since God sees all there is, faith and hope are not part of God's life, except that Jesus responded to his Father's gifts of faith and hope. But love is God's life: in fact, 'God is love' (1John 4:16), and love is life-giving. As we grow in charity, we grow to be like God, a channel for life, and that is our destiny (Matthew 5:48). God sees everyone as worthy of love. Charity enables us to see everyone this way too, since it draws us out of ourselves, and therefore helps us to overcome those things that snare us within, such as alienation, despair, and marginalisation.

When we look at Jesus, we see what it means to love with God's own love (John 13:14). And Jesus' challenge to us is to love as he loved. Precisely this was the characteristic by which he wanted his followers to be recognised (John 13:35). Charity is the most God-like thing in human life; that's why it's the greatest of the theological virtues.

Christian love is, furthermore, what makes us essentially human. It is the authentic source of energy which we need to bring our task of transforming the world to its completion. No other power is capable of doing this.<sup>11</sup>

What does true love mean in practice? Scripture answers: 'This is what loving God is - keeping his commandments' (1John 5:3). The Ten Commandments (or Decalogue which means 'ten words') spell out for us what our love is to be.

#### *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:*

- 1. I, the Lord, am your God; you shall not have other gods beside me.*
  - 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*
  - 3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.*
  - 4. Honour your father and your mother.*
  - 5. You shall not kill.*
  - 6. You shall not commit adultery.*
  - 7. You shall not steal.*
  - 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*
  - 9. You shall not covet your neighbour's spouse.*
  - 10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.*
- (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

It's important to see that all of these commandments boil down to love. Taking a lead from Jesus' words, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments", we could re-read the negative-sounding commandments as saying: "If you love me, you will/will not..." When Jesus summed up the whole of God's law in two commandments, both of them were about love (Matthew 22:36-40).

At first glance, the Ten Commandments may seem too simple and basic a code to cover all aspects of human life. But we need to remember that the Commandments come to us from a culture that spoke in concrete images, not the abstract language of our times. Each Commandment is about some essential issue, but the issue is presented in the form of a concrete example. The example implies a whole family of other samples which spin out

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<sup>11</sup> See Norbert Wildiers. 1968. *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*. London: Collins, p 156



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the issue. For example, the issue in 'You shall not kill' is the sanctity of life. This is our landmark in dealing with such questions as:

- ❖ abortion (the foetus's life is human: humanness isn't something that's added magically at some arbitrary moment)
- ❖ euthanasia (the value of a human life is not to be judged by our limited, emotion-swayed perception)
- ❖ medical ethics in general
- ❖ physical violence, war, and self-defence
- ❖ killing animals for pleasure
- ❖ drug abuse and alcohol abuse
- ❖ suicide
- ❖ reckless driving... and so on.

There is, of course, also the positive side, and we could make a list of things the commandment encourages us to do in preserving life and showing it respect.

Think about this analysis of the Ten Commandments:

Areas of experience where love is exercised	Relationship with God	rejecting idols (substitute gods) (1) reverence for God (2) time for God (3)	Directly about love of God
	Human relationships	respecting authority (4) respect for life (5) sexual responsibility (6) marital fidelity (9) respect for truth (8)	About love of neighbour
	Material goods	honesty and fairness (7) respect for ownership (10)	

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