

September 11**The Journey**

The RCIA journey consists of four periods: precatechumenate, catechumenate, purification & enlightenment, and mystagogy & the neophyte year. This journey includes not only these periods for making inquiry and maturing, but also the steps marking the inquirers' progress, as they ascend to the next level. These three steps are to be regarded as the major, more intense moments of initiation and are marked by three liturgical rites: the first by the rite of acceptance into the order of the catechumens or rite of welcoming for the baptized; the second by the rite of election or enrollment of names; and the third by the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation or reception into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Class Topic 9/14: Introduction and welcome – team members, sponsors, and inquirers.

September 18**RCIA Mandate**

Most parishioners think of the RCIA as “just another ministry”. Actually, the bishops of the United States have *mandated* that RCIA be implemented in all parishes of the United States as the normative way for initiating adults and older children into the Catholic Christian community. The entire Christian community is responsible for the initiation of its newest disciples. Every baptized parishioner has a role in initiation of our new members. We are part of that mentoring community that apprentices the new disciples. By observing our prayer, words, deeds and actions in the parish and in the broader community our newest members learn what it means to live as a Catholic Christian today. We provide the examples. We are the models. RCIA depends on the parish because we make up the Christian community.

Class Topic 9/21: Orientation – RCIA overview and faith journey.

September 25**Apologetics**

Catholic apologetics is the defense and explanation of the teachings, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Church. Its goal is to remove objections, shed light on difficult or misunderstood matters, and ultimately help win minds and souls for Jesus Christ. Apologetics is the activity of helping people answer the question: "Why should I be Catholic?" It does so by engaging the mind to reach the heart. Knowledge of the Faith is necessary, of course, since the Church's teaching about Jesus Christ, or the Eucharist, or the communion of saints cannot be defended without knowing something of substance about them. There is much to comprehend about the Catholic Church and her teachings, but the most basic study materials should include the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. All Catholics should have some basic knowledge of apologetics since they will all undoubtedly encounter questions and challenges about what they believe.

Class Topic 9/28: Apologetics

October 2**Church Fathers**

The Early Church Fathers were the ones empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13 and 1 John 4:6), and who personally handed on the oral teaching of Jesus Christ before the New Testament canon was created. Christian tradition begins with the writings of the Early Church Fathers, teachings of those taught directly by the apostles and in a line of succession beyond them. They were not only taught by the 12 apostles, they were also first-hand witnesses to the creation of the Church worldwide. The Early Church Fathers were the leaders and teachers of the early Church. Some of their writings were composed to instruct and / or to encourage the faithful. Other writings were composed to explain or defend the faith when it was

attacked or questioned.

Class Topic 10/5: Early Church-Early Church Fathers

October 9

Catholic Church

Every Christian believes that Jesus Christ established and sustains a community of faith, hope and love for all believers. This community we call His Church. The Church that Christ founded is the Catholic Church which has a formal earthly structure established by Christ and which continues under His authority and protection. The Catholic Church is the only church that can claim to have been founded by Christ personally. Every other church traces its lineage back to a mere human person such as Martin Luther or John Wesley. The Catholic Church can trace its lineage back to Jesus Christ who appointed St. Peter as the first pope. This line of popes has continued unbroken for almost 2,000 years. God rules, instructs and sanctifies His people through His Church. Under her teaching office, the Catholic Church preserves the Word of God. She is the custodian, keeper, dispenser and interpreter of the teachings of Christ. And she accomplishes this under the protection of the Holy Spirit.

Class Topic 10/12: History of the Church

October 16

Church Hierarchy

The major hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church:

Pope: Leader of the Catholic Church; responsible to serve the whole Church and the faith that has been handed down.

Cardinal: Appointed by the pope to serve as his principal assistants and advisers in the central administration of church affairs. Collectively, they form the College of Cardinals.

Archbishop: A bishop of a main or metropolitan diocese, also called an archdiocese. A cardinal can concurrently hold the title.

Bishop: Ordained to shepherd and administer to the people of God in a diocese. They possess all the graces and designation of deacon and priest, and can ordain to Holy Orders.

Priest: Ordained to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and administer most of the sacraments. He can be with a particular religious order or committed to serving a congregation.

Monsignor: An honorary title given by the Pope to a priest in recognition of his contributions to the Church.

Deacon: A transitional deacon is a seminarian studying for the priesthood. A permanent deacon can be married and assists a priest by performing some of the sacraments.

Class Topic 10/19: Hierarchy of the Church-Catechism

October 23

Nicene Creed

Catholic belief is succinctly expressed in the profession of faith or *credo* called the *Nicene Creed*.

"Our profession of faith begins with *God*, for God is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the *Father*, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works."

---the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 198

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the St. Jerome web site for the complete schedule. Class time is 6:45-9:15pm every Wednesday in Jordan Hall. As a member of the parish you are asked to pray with and for those in the initiation process.

Class Topic 10/26: Nicene Creed

October 30

Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium

The Council of Trent reaffirmed the centrality of sacred Scripture as "the norm of norms" for Christian faith. But it reiterated that Christian *Tradition*, representing the time-tested truths that emerge over the Church's history, is also a "fountain" of divine revelation. As Catholics, we interpret Scripture and Tradition within the Church, guided by its teaching *magisterium*; the pope and bishops in union with him. Aided by the Holy Spirit, the magisterium helps protect the Church from needless errors and wrong turns.

Four Marks of the Church

The main reason the Church is *one* is because of Jesus, its founder. In saying the Church is *holy*, the Body of Christ is holy because Jesus is the head of its members, who, though imperfect, seek to live holy lives. The word *catholic* means "universal," and it is that universality found in every land and culture that also points out unity of faith and belief. The Church Jesus founded is *apostolic* because he appointed the apostles to be the first leaders of the Church.

Class Topic 11/2: Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium – 4 Marks of the Church

November 6

Mass

Catholics worship God in a variety of ways, but the chief act of corporate or communal worship is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Eastern churches, Catholic and Orthodox, this is known as the Divine Liturgy; in the West, it is known as the Mass, an English word derived from the Latin text of the priest's dismissal of the congregation at the end of the liturgy ("*Ite, missa est.*"). Throughout the centuries, the liturgy of the Church has taken a variety of regional and historical forms, but one thing has remained constant: The Mass has always been the central form of Catholic worship.

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Class Topic 11/9: Mass

November 13

Prayer

Prayer, the lifting of the mind and heart to God, plays an essential role in the life of a devout Catholic. It is prayer which allows us to adore God, by acknowledging his almighty power; it is prayer that allows us to bring our thanks, our petitions, and our sorrow for sin before our Lord and God. While prayer is not a practice unique to Catholics, those prayers that are called "Catholic" are generally formulaic in nature. That is, the teaching Church sets before us how we ought to pray. Drawing from the words of Christ, the writings of Scripture and the saints, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she supplies us with prayers grounded in Christian tradition. Further, our informal, spontaneous prayers, both vocal and meditative, are informed by and shaped by those prayers taught by the Church. Without the Holy Spirit speaking through the Church and through her saints, we would not know how to pray as we ought.

Class Topic 11/16: Prayer

November 20**Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving originated at a time when the spiritual dimension of life was an integral part of people's lives. Eighteenth-century Puritan society was centered in a deep, abiding faith in God. These "pilgrim people" of America found it natural to give thanks to God for all their blessings. Thanksgiving still offers a great opportunity to reflect on all that God has done for us and to give thanks to God in recognition of that goodness and providence. On Thanksgiving, we integrate the great blessings of our lives with the source of life, our creator. This Thanksgiving let those of us who have much and those who have little gather at the welcoming table of the Lord. At this blessed feast, may rich and poor alike remember that we are called to serve one another and to walk together in God's gracious world. With thankful hearts we praise our God who like a loving parent denies us no good thing.

Class Topic 11/23: No class – Thanksgiving holiday

November 27**Eucharist**

The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life. The Eucharist commemorates the Last Supper Jesus celebrated with his disciples. What Jesus said and did that night with the bread and wine forms the basis for the Church's sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus gave thanks over the bread and wine and he identified the bread and wine with his body and blood. He gave them the bread to eat and the wine to drink. Finally, he told his disciples that his coming death was for the forgiveness of sins, and he prefigured that death by breaking the bread and pouring out the wine.

Holy Orders

Deaconship, priesthood, and bishopric are the three stages in the sacrament of Holy Orders as it was instituted by Christ. At each stage, as in every sacrament, there is an increase in sanctifying grace. At each stage there is the imprinting of a character upon the soul; each successive character, like a progressively brighter sun, enveloping and containing the one that has gone before.

Class Topic 11/30: Eucharist – Holy Orders

December 4**Penance**

The current law of the Church states that a person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess (Canon 916). But we celebrate Reconciliation not merely because we have to, but because it is a sacrament, a sign and celebration of God showing forth his mercy "by reconciling the world to himself in Christ and by making peace for all things on earth and in heaven by the blood of Christ on the cross"

Anointing of the Sick

Anointing "is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death" but is intended for all those who are seriously ill. Consequently, what we formerly called "Extreme Unction" is now more properly called "The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick". We now think of this sacrament in a different way: it is a community celebration, sickness involves more than bodily illness, and anointing heals us through faith.

Class Topic 12/7: Penance – Anointing of the Sick

December 11**Baptism**

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission:

"Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

Confirmation

Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Its effects are to root us more deeply in being children of God, unites us more firmly to Christ, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us, strengthens our bond with the Church, associates us more closely to her mission of bearing witness to Christ, and helps us and more strictly obliges us to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.

Class Topic 12/14: Baptism – Confirmation

December 18**Christ's birth**

Even though the Bible does not record a specific celebration of a feast of Christ's birth, the Infancy Narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke form the basis of the Christmas celebration. Thus, the history of Christmas ultimately goes back to the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ around 4 BC. At least by the time of St. Matthew and St. Luke's Gospels, Christians began to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ, and its significance. A few of the early Church Fathers speculated about the birth of Jesus, but the actual liturgical celebration of Christmas cannot be fixed with certainty before the very early 4th century. While various 3rd century Church Fathers believed Jesus was born on December 25, the earliest surviving reference to December 25th as the liturgical celebration of Christmas is in the Philocalian calendar, which shows the Roman practice in AD 336. The Apostolic Constitutions (c AD 380) mandate the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25th, and his Epiphany on January 6.

Class Topic 12/21: No class – Christmas holiday

December 25**January 1 – The Solemnity of Mary**

In the 4th and 5th centuries debates about the nature of Christ raged in the Church. The debate was about the relationship of Christ's divine and human natures. At the center of this debate was the title of Mary. Since at least the 3rd century, Christians had referred to Mary as *theotokos*, meaning "God-bearer." Related to *theotokos*, Mary was called the mother of God. The patriarch of Constantinople from 428-431, Nestorius, objected and suggested that Mary was only the mother of Jesus' human nature, but not his divine nature. Nestorius' ideas were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, and again at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. The Church decided that Christ was fully God and fully human, and these natures were united in one divine person, Jesus Christ. Thus Mary could be called "mother of God" since she gave birth to Jesus who was fully divine as well as human.

Class Topic 12/28: No class – New Years holiday

January 1, 2017**Marriage**

Marriage, as a Christian sacrament, is a lifelong and faithful union of a man and a woman mutually committed to sharing their life and love together. Modeled after and strengthened by God's own love for his people, it's an intimate partnership in which each person gives the other freedom to grow and which is directed toward bearing fruit. Formerly Catholics often thought of the Sacrament of Marriage as a one-time blessing given at the wedding. Indeed the sacrament has a special significance on the wedding day itself but the sacrament and its power continue. Today there is more emphasis on the lifelong graces of marriage and on the couple's response to those graces. Sacramental marriage is a lifelong blessing

available to those couples who pledge themselves to fidelity, growth and service. As they continually reaffirm their "yes" to each other, they acknowledge, draw upon and witness to the power and presence of Christ in their lives.

Class Topic 1/4: Marriage

January 8

Grace

The Catholic Church proclaims to its people that, just as the Bible indicates, justification and redemption come through the grace given by God because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Human beings cannot earn redemption or salvation. Neither is it won through good works. Good works are done through God's grace in response to God's redemptive work in Christ. Accordingly, Christ is the unique mediator between God and human beings. Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace.

Class Topic 1/11: Liturgical Church - Grace & Justification

January 15

Church Practices

A traditional Catholic is someone that views the traditions of the Church not just as an optional extra to Catholicism but practicing our faith and living our lives with the wisdom passed on from our fathers in faith is a necessary and intrinsic part of Catholicism. Being a Catholic is not just about believing as the Church has believed but is also about worshipping God in the way the Church has passed down to us.

Sacramentals

Sacramentals are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace. Sacramentals can be material things; blessed objects, such as scapulars, Rosaries, Crucifixes, medals, Holy Water, etc. or actions; the Sign of the Cross, genuflection, prayers, etc.

Class Topic 1/18: Church practices - Sacramentals

January 22

Live with Jesus

Every single year, aware Catholics "re-live" the Gospel, from Christ's Incarnation and Birth to His Ascension and Heavenly reign. In Spring He enters the world by coming to rest in Mary's immaculate womb; nine months later, in winter, He is born, circumcised, and given a Name. He is raised in the Holy Family, and meets His cousin, John. He goes into the Desert and we go with Him during our Lenten Season. Then follow His Passion and Agony, which are soon vanquished by His Resurrection, His Ascension, and the Pentecost. Now He reigns forever, and we await His Second Coming as we prepare to celebrate again His First Coming. Then the cycle begins again, like a wheel that's been spinning for two millennia. The Catholic who is aware of this wheel is necessarily aware of Christ; the Catholic who also celebrates the Feasts well and practices the traditions of the Church lives intimately with Him.

Class Topic 1/25: Tour of the Church – Reflection questions

January 29**Church Documents**

At the top of the hierarchy of authoritative Church documents are apostolic constitutions and decrees issued by Popes. These legislative documents, containing dogmatic or doctrinal elements, along with the Code of Canon Law have binding authority on the entire Church. Papal teaching documents, encyclicals, apostolic letters, apostolic exhortations, and "*motu proprio*" documents expound or explain existing law. This is a small sample of various Church documents, read more about Church documents at www.adoremus.org.

Canon Law

The Canon Law of the Catholic Church is a system of rules governing the expression and practice of the Catholic faith. The assembled body of written canon law is called the Code of Canon Law. Canon law relates to the practical application of divine law, which comes from God. Canon law forms a body of human laws insofar as church authorities can change it, but it remains closely related to divine law in that it regards what cannot change.

Class Topic 2/1: Church Documents – Canon Law

February 5**Bible**

The Bible, although a witness to divine revelation, is a human text, not an oracle. God did not dictate the Bible any more than God literally created the universe out of nothing in seven calendar days. In fact, most of the Old Testament texts were composed gradually, often over centuries, by generations of people who committed to writing, and repeatedly revised, material they first encountered as oral or liturgical traditions. These traditions, which expressed the people's interpretation of God's action among them, were taken up again and again as new circumstances required their retelling and reformulation. Although the New Testament texts were composed over a much shorter period of time they also began as oral traditions about Jesus told and retold in the first Christian communities. These traditions were gradually committed to writing in diverse circumstances that determined what was included, emphasized or reshaped in the telling. The biblical texts, then, bear all the marks of human composition: historical conditioning, prejudice, factual error and moral limitation, as well as deep theological and religious insight into the mystery of God's relationship with humanity. It is this twofold character of the biblical text, its mysterious divine depths expressed in humanly fallible language, which makes interpretation necessary.

Class Topic 2/8: Bible

February 12**Mary**

The beloved disciple John tells us of the last gift that Jesus gave to all of us before He surrendered His life for the redemption of the world. That gift was His Mother: "When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there whom He loved, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home" (John 19:26,27). Jesus gave us His Mother.

The Our Father

The words of the Our Father are signposts to interior prayer, they provide a basic direction for our being, and they aim to configure us to the image of the Son. The meaning of the Our Father goes much further than the mere provision of a prayer text. It aims to form our being, to train us in the inner attitude of Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5). (source: "Jesus of Nazareth" by Pope Benedict XVI)

Class Topic 2/15: Mary – The Our Father

February 19

Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the scientific, natural and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancies. NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.

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Class Topic 2/22: Natural Family Planning – Q&A

February 26

Ash Wednesday

The Second Vatican Council called for the renewal of Lent, recovering its ancient baptismal character. This recovery was significantly advanced by the restoration of the catechumenate mandated by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972). As Catholics have increasingly interacted with catechumens in the final stage of their preparation for Baptism, they have begun to understand Lent as a season of baptismal preparation and baptismal renewal. Since Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, it naturally is also beginning to recover a baptismal focus. It is a clear call to conversion, to that movement away from sin and toward Christ that we have to embrace over and over again through our lives. As the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday calls us to the conversion journey that marks the season. As the catechumens enter the final stage of their preparation for the Easter sacraments, we are all called to walk with them so that we will be prepared to renew our baptismal promises when Easter arrives.

Class Topic 3/1: Attend Ash Wednesday Mass

March 5

Angels

Scripture speaks about different “orders” or types of angels. First, there are the *Seraphim*, who surround the throne of God and glorify him with songs of praise and adoration (Isaiah 6:3). There are also *cherubim*, who guard God’s presence (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 10:4-8; Psalm 99:1). There are three archangels as well, who have more direct interaction with God’s creation: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael is depicted as a mighty warrior leading God’s army in war against Satan (Revelation 12:7; Jude 9). Gabriel is the high messenger who announced God’s plan to Mary and Zechariah (Luke 1:18-19, 26-28). And Raphael is known as the angel of healing for the way he delivered Tobit from blindness and Sarah from demonic harassment (Tobit 8:1-3; 11:7-14).

Scripture also makes brief mention of other angelic orders, but does not explain them: Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). Over the centuries, saints and theologians have proposed different hierarchies of angels, as well as different names for these orders. But no matter their differences, they all agree: Angels are very real—and they are very active, both in the heavens and on the earth.

Class Topic 3/8: No class – Spring break

March 12**Temptation and Sin**

We cannot protect ourselves from all temptations, from all suggestions that God's ways are too costly or too difficult. Every sin is a lie because it presents itself as some type of shortcut around God's ways. We can always pray that God will help us to resist temptations. In fact, if we recognize every temptation to sin as some type of lie, then our repeated decision to live in the whole truth about God, ourselves and others should help us to do what we know is right.

Theological Virtues-Faith, Hope, Charity

The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. (CCC 1813)

Class Topic 3/15: Temptation & Sin – Theological Virtues

March 19**End Times/4 Last Things**

In Roman Catholic theology the term eschatology has traditionally referred to teaching about "the four last things," which are *death*, *judgment*, *heaven* and *hell*. Eschatology refers to the area of Christian faith which is concerned about "the last things," and the coming of Jesus on "the last day": our human destiny, death, judgment, resurrection of the body, heaven, purgatory, and hell.

Saints

The Catholic Church's veneration of saints dates back to the beginnings of Christianity. The Catholic Church recognizes the value of having specific role models and helpers to assist us during the course of our daily lives. This is why certain saints are given patronage of particular groups, activities or situations, which are usually connected with some aspect of their lives. In this way we can develop special relationships with saints whose causes align closely with our personal needs. We call upon the intercession of that ever-growing blessed communion in heaven, those spiritual companions who through their prayers continue "to do the good" from their celestial watch posts on high.

Class Topic 3/22: End Times/4 Last Things – Saints

March 26**Social Justice**

Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring glad tidings to the poor . . . liberty to captives . . . recovery of sight to the blind"(Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with "the least of these," the hungry and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:45). Catholic social teaching is built on a commitment to the poor and based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Our commitment to the Catholic social mission must be rooted in and strengthened by our spiritual lives. In our relationship with God we experience the conversion of heart that is necessary to truly love one another as God has loved us.

Class Topic 3/29: Social Justice – Holy Week

April 2**The Ten Commandments**

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses as he was leading the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. In this uncertain time, God was their rock, the only certainty they knew.

He offered them a relationship with him: they would be his people and he would be their God. The Ten Commandments established the Israelites' responsibilities in this relationship. God promised to be present to protect and care for them; they promised to live by God's commandments. Jesus summarized them as the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:37-39). In Jesus' summary, we find why the commandments are still meaningful: they teach us how we should relate to God, self, others, and things. The Ten Commandments are a measuring stick for examining our priorities, choices, habits, and consciences.

Class Topic 4/5: Morality – Ten Commandments

April 9

Examination of Conscience

A good Catholic examination of conscience can be a great help in making a new start in the life of faith. We use an examination of conscience to help call to mind our sins and failings during a period of quiet reflection before approaching the priest in Confession. It's important for a good Catholic examination of conscience to be thorough. This will help you learn about things that you may not be aware of. It's also a chance to *develop* your conscience. This is a critical aid for the beginning Catholic. A Catholic examination of conscience traditionally follows the outline of the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Catholic Church.

Class Topic 4/12: Examination of Conscience – Confession

April 16

Conversion

Conversion is the ever present call of the already committed Christian to grow both in the faith and in the living of it. It means deepening our relationship with God and our fellow Christians. Conversion is a lifelong process. It encompasses the stages of development we naturally go through in our lifetimes. As we become progressively more open to God's presence in our lives we become more sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.

The Laity

A lay person is an adopted child of God, a sister or brother of Jesus, and an heir to God's wealth of grace and life eternal, called to build God's kingdom here on earth. Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and possess the right to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world.

Class Topic 4/19: Conversion – The Laity

April 23

Your Spiritual Gifts

While we all have spiritual gifts in sufficient strength to live a good life, St. Paul said to the Corinthians that some of us are prophets and some are teachers. He meant that it's quite likely that we will develop some gifts more fully than others. Some express great spiritual gifts, and others demonstrate very practical gifts. But they all come from the same source: God. And they are all activated in the same way: trusting God and trying.

Family Life

In today's world it is not easy to bring up a family within a Christian framework. The values of a consumer society are so often opposed to the values of Jesus Christ. That's why the Catholic Church puts so much emphasis on the importance of family life. A happy and stable family provides the kind of

atmosphere in which family members learn to relate to others; to care, to share, to love, and to forgive.

Class Topic 4/26: Your Spiritual Gifts – Family Life

April 30

Your Prayer Life

If we ask God to teach us to enjoy prayer, the Spirit will plant the impulse toward prayer in our hearts. If we pay attention to that impulse and honor it by praying we will be drawn more and more to God. We must learn to listen and be aware of God's response to our prayers. Stay alert to inner changes; compassion, peace, harmony, etc. What delight when we know them to be God's loving response.

Discernment

Discernment, seeking God's will in the decision making process, can be complex due to our lack of self-knowledge, our lack of inner freedom, and our desire to have God say yes to what we ourselves want. We should make a sincere effort to learn the various methods to discern God's will in our life decisions. God doesn't ask that we always be right; he asks only that we always try to be honest and act out of our best understanding of a particular situation.

Class Topic 5/3: Your Prayer Life – Discernment

May 7

Holiness

It is Catholic belief that God calls everyone to be holy. According to Vatican Council II: "Therefore in the Church, everyone... is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Thessalonians 4:3; see Ephesians 1:4)... It is expressed in multiple ways by those individuals who, in their walk of life, strive for the perfection of charity, and thereby help others to grow" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #39).

Evangelization

Evangelization involves much more than bringing the gospel to people who have never heard the Good News before. It also means bringing Christians to a deeper awareness of Christ touching their lives. Through evangelization, hearers of the Word of God become better equipped to become doers of the Word. Thus evangelization forms the basis for all ministry within the Church.

Class Topic 5/10: Holiness – Evangelization