Episode 1: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. What were the four central tasks expected of the Messiah by most first century Jews? Where did those tasks originate and what are some examples of how they were expressed?

2. Why did the tribes of Israel need to be gathered? How did Jesus go about doing this? (CCC 1 541, 542)

3. What was the purpose of the Temple within ancient Judaism? How did Jesus identify himself with the Temple? (CCC 2099, 2100, 1197)

4. What enemies did Jesus conquer and how did he do battle? (CCC 559, 550, 635)

5. Why did Jesus die on the cross? What did He accomplish, fulfill, and embody in being crucified? (CCC 599, 613, 614, 616, 618, 622, 623)

6. Why is the historical and physical nature of the Resurrection so important to Christians? What is an historical argument in favor of the Resurrection? (CCC 638, 639, 643, 645)

7. Who was the first evangelist for the crucified Messiah? What is the irony of that fact? (CCC 306, 307)

8. Do I need to contemplate more seriously the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross?

9. We are all called to be evangelists and to spread the Gospel. How can I be a better evangelist of the good news? What dears of concerns do I have about evangelizing? What can I do about those fears or concerns?

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
Episode 2: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. How does the Catholic Church teach that Jesus is completely unique in his person and work? (CCC 454, 464, 614, 617)

2. Read Luke 6 and Matthew 5-7. In what ways are the two versions of the Sermon on the Mount similar and different?

3. How does the Sermon on the Mount express and fulfill the commandments of the Law? What are some of the key connections between the Sermon on the Mount and the Law? (CCC 1965, 1968)

4. What is the meaning of “happy” or “blessed” as used in the Sermon on the Mount? How is the biblical concept of happiness different from happiness as most people understand it today? (CCC 1716-29)

5. What are some of the paradoxical qualities of the beatitudes? How do they contrast with a worldly desire for power, honor, pleasure, and wealth? (CCC 1719, 1722)

6. What is the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount and Christ’s death on the Mount of Calvary?

7. What does it mean to “love your enemy”? How was and is this a radical teaching? (Matt. 5:38-39; Matt. 26:52)

8. What does the Parable of the Prodigal Son teach about the mercy of God the Father and the divine communion in which each of us is called to share? (1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Peter 2:4)

9. What are some of different opinions about Jesus that you have heard or read about? Why are they attractive to many people?

10. In light of the Sermon on the Mount, how should I understand the Law and view the Old Testament?

11. What does it mean to say that the one thing every person desires is joy? What are some of my experiences of joy? Did they, in some way, point toward an eternal, supernatural joy?

12. How do the Beatitudes challenge my priorities? Which of the Beatitudes is most difficult for me to understand or accept? Why?

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
13. How difficult is it for me to love my enemies? What can I do to grow in my love for my “enemies” or for those I dislike?

14. Have I ever acted in ways similar to the prodigal son? Or like his older brother? How do I sometimes fail to appreciate the mercy, love, and grace of the Father?
Episode 3: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. Why do you think God spoke to Moses from a burning bush? In what two ways did God identify himself to Moses? (Ex. 3:1-14)

2. God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” What does the name suggest or indicate about God? (CCC\(^1\) 206, 213)

3. Explain the difference between God as a being and God as Being itself. (CCC, 213)

4. What are the five ways Aquinas stated that the existence of God can be demonstrated? Which, for you, is the most understandable of the “five ways”? The most difficult? Why? (CCC, 31)

5. What does it mean to call God “Father”? (Matt. 28:19; CCC 238, 239)

6. If God is provident and all-knowing, why is there suffering and evil? (CCC, 309)

7. How has the Trinity been revealed to us? (CCC 261, 237, 244, Matt. 3:16-17, Matt. 28:19)

8. If you had been Moses, standing before the burning bush, how might you have responded?

9. In what ways have you responded to the call of God? What are some things you can do to “listen” to God more closely and be more attentive to his presence?

10. What about God do you wish to understand or contemplate more deeply?

11. Have you ever struggled with your belief in God in the midst of suffering or facing evil? How did you address your doubts and questions? Any new insight from this lesson?

12. What obstacles – intellectual, emotional, or spiritual – do you face in seeking to grow in your love for God and your knowledge of him? What can you do to address those obstacles?

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\(^1\) Catechism of the Catholic Church
Episode 4: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. What was the Annunciation? What was revealed to Mary about herself? About God's plan of salvation? And what was revealed to us about Mary? (CCC 1 484, 2676; Luke 1:31-33)

2. What are some of the reasons Mary is called a “new Eve”? (CCC 411, 501, 511, 726, 2618)

3. If you were asked, “Why do you believe Mary was sinless?”, how might you respond? What misconceptions might you have to address when giving your answer? (CCC 490-93, 722)

4. In calling Mary “the Mother of God,” what are we saying about Jesus? What is the difference between a “nature” and a “person”? Why is this important to understand? (CCC 466, 481)

5. Does the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception indicate that Mary did not need a Savior? Why or why not? How is this dogma often misunderstood or misrepresented?

6. What are some theological reasons for the dogma of the Assumption of Mary? (CCC 964-66)

7. What does God’s calling of a young Jewish girl suggest and reveal about his nature and about his plan of salvation?

8. What are some of the qualities exhibited by Mary that you admire the most, or wish to emulate? How can Mary’s example guide and inspire you to grow in your relationship with her Son?

9. If you were asked to explain why Mary is called “the Mother of God”, how would you approach the topic?

10. Do you practice a Marian devotion, such as the Rosary? If so, what has that devotion meant to you and your spiritual life? If not, is there a Marian devotion you might want to practice?

11. What does Mary's Assumption indicate to us about her life and about our calling as disciples of Jesus?

12. Have you ever visited Lourdes or another Marian shrine? If so, what was your experience?

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
Episode 5: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. In what ways were Peter and Paul similar? How were they different? (Acts 22:3; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Gal. 1:18)

2. How is Peter’s unique role expressed and proven in the Gospels? (Matt. 10:2; Matt. 16:16-18; Jn. 1:42; Jn. 21:15-17; Lk. 22:32)

3. What was the significance of Jesus re-naming Simon? How do the Old Testament images of kings, prime ministers, and keys help us to understand Jesus’ words to Peter in Matthew 16? (Matt. 16; 1 Kings 4:1-7; Is. 22: 19-23; CCC 1 551 - 555)

4. What is the relationship between the Transfiguration and the Cross? (CCC 554, 699)

5. What connections are made in the Gospels between Peter’s denial of Christ and Christ’s affirmation of Peter? (Jn. 18:18; Jn. 21:9; Lk. 22:61; Jn. 1:42; Matt. 16:16-20; Jn. 10:1-21)

6. What did Paul give up in becoming a Christian and an Apostle? How did his upbringing and education prepare him for his work as Apostle, preacher, missionary, and theologian? (CCC 32, 442)

7. Why did Paul put so much emphasis on the Resurrection in his writings? What is the connection between the Resurrection and the new creation? (1 Cor. 15:13-20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-9; Rom. 8:15-25)

8. What is justification? What is its place in the plan of salvation? (Rom. 3:21; CCC 2019-23)

9. What does God’s calling of a young Jewish girl suggest and reveal about his nature and about his plan of salvation?

10. What do the differences in the personalities and backgrounds of Peter and Paul suggest about discipleship, leadership, and how God works in and through the Church?

11. What did Jesus mean by calling Peter and his companions to become “fishers of men”? How has God called you to be a fisher of men?

12. Who do people today say Jesus is? Why? Who do you say he is? Why?

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
13. Have you ever experienced the temptation to deny or minimize Christ? To ignore him? If so, what brought about that situation? How does Christ extend his forgiveness to us?

14. What have you learned – or can you learn - from Peter and Paul that will help you in your relationship with Christ?

15. What does it mean to live “in Christ”? What are ways in which we can grow in God’s divine life and experience it more deeply and fully?
Episode 6: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. What does the Catechism mean in stating, “The world was created for the sake of the Church” (CCC\(^1\) 760)? How is the Church “the goal of all things”? What is the relationship between the world and the Church? (CCC 760, 168-9)

2. What are some of the biblical images or names used to describe or name the Church? (CCC 753, 756)

3. How is the Church a fulfillment and continuation of the Old Testament people of God? (CCC 761-62, 778, 781-82)

4. What does it mean to say, as St. Paul did, that the Church is the “new Israel”? How is the Church a fulfillment and continuation of the Old Testament people of God? (CCC 761-62, 778, 781)

5. What are the four “marks” of the Church? How is the Church “one”? (CCC 811-16)

6. How can it be said that the Church is holy when there are so many examples of sinful Catholics? (CCC 825)

7. What does “catholic” mean”? In what ways is the church “apostolic”? (CCC 830, 831, 857-63, 865)

8. What is the difference between doctrine changing and doctrine developing? What is the “deposit of faith,’ and how does it relate to the development of doctrine? (CCC 66, 78, 84-85, 94-95)

9. What are some of the common misrepresentations of the nature and mission of the Church you encounter? Which are the most difficult to counter or respond to? Why?

10. Is it sometimes difficult to see the Church as a supernatural body established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls? Is so, why? What can you do to better appreciate the supernatural character of the Church?

11. The word “ekklesia” means “to call out.” Who does the calling? From what have you been called? To what are you being called? How can you better hear and respond to the call?

12. What does the word “evangelization” bring to mind? What are some ways in which you have evangelized, or could evangelize? What are some steps you can take to evangelize better, or more often?

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\(^1\) Catechism of the Catholic Church
13. The Second Vatican Council emphasized that the laity “must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation.” What can you do to take part in this renewal? What challenges will you face in that work? How can you overcome those challenges?

14. How might studying and reflecting on the four marks of the Church increase both your understanding of the Church and you love for her?
Episode 7: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. In what ways can it be said that liturgy is “play” or “a sacred game”? What is liturgy not meant to be?

2. How should worshipping and praising God bring harmony and peace? How does it help establish order in one’s life? (CCC 374, 1844, 284; Jn. 14:27; Col. 3:14)

3. What is the main point of the Scripture readings and homily? What should good preaching accomplish?

4. What is sacrifice? Why and how is it so central to the liturgy? How is this centrality expressed during the liturgy? (CCC 1323, 1352)

5. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Eat my flesh” and “Drink my blood”? What are some ways in which the language of John 6 points to the liturgy and the Eucharist? (Jn. 6; Dt. 32:42; Ezek. 39:17-18)

6. The Catechism says the Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks and, “It is the same mystery” (par. 1336). What does this mean? (CCC 1367, 1374, 1413; 1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Cor. 1:23)

7. What did Pope John Paul II mean when he wrote that the Eucharist “is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth”?

8. How does approaching liturgy as “play” change how you understand or perceive worship of God? Do you think that such “playfulness” is contrary to the sacred nature of liturgy, or supportive of it?


10. Prior to attending Mass, spend time reading and reflecting on the Scripture readings for that liturgy. What do the readings tell you about God? About his plan of salvation? What do they reveal or help you understand about your life?

11. Read John 6 and ask yourself: How did Jesus go about revealing the truth about the Eucharist? How might you have reacted if you had been present? How do Jesus’ words challenge you? Encourage you?

12. Do you ever find the Eucharist, the Real Presence, or transubstantiation to be a stumbling block or cause for doubt? Why do you think many Catholics doubt or don’t believe in the Real presence?

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
**Episode 8: Questions for Thought and Reflection**

1. Why is justice considered “the heart and soul of the ethical life”? How is justice in the Catholic tradition different from in the modern world?

2. What is “elevated justice”? How did St. Katharine Drexel’s life give witness to the reality of elevated justice? (CCC¹ 1803-1804, 1810)

3. What are some examples of prudence? Of “supernatural prudence”? How did Therese model this supernatural prudence? (CCC 1806; Matt. 10:16; 1 Cor. 12:31)

4. Why do you think Therese’s approach to the spiritual life became so popular and widespread? Is it completely unique, or is it rooted in basic Catholic spirituality?

5. What are some of the differences between natural courage and supernatural, extraordinary fortitude? (CCC 1808, 2473)

6. How does Edith Stein’s journey to the convent differ from that of Katharine and Therese? What similarities are to be found? Why was she so willing to accept her death at the hand of the Nazis?

7. In light of the *Catechism’s* definition of temperance – “[it] is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods” – how was Blessed Teresa of Calcutta a great exemplar of this virtue? More to it, why is she an example of “elevated temperance”? (CCC 1809)

8. What do you find most impressive or unique about Katharine Drexel’s life? Do you think it was money or something else that held her back from embracing the decision to become a religious?

9. Is there anything holding you back from embracing God’s call and will in your life? If so, how will you address it?

10. What are some of the strange or fascinating qualities of Therese that intrigued or interested you the most? Why?

11. What does it mean to you to be a “little flower”? What are three or four ways in which you can work to become a “little flower”?

12. What challenges or difficulties are you facing that require courage? Reflect on the example of Stein and consider how it can help you in facing difficulties?

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¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church
Episode 9: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. What were some of the obstacles that Thomas Merton had to address and overcome in his journey toward the Church? How did Merton’s misconceptions about God hinder his spiritual life?

2. What are the basic types or forms of prayer? What is the most common type of prayer found in Scripture? Think of some examples. (CCC 1 2559-65, 262)

3. How can our appetites, desires, and interests hinder our prayer life? What did St. John of the Cross teach about this problem?

4. What is the “interior castle” that St. Teresa of Avila described? What are some of the methods or techniques she employed in order to pray more deeply?

5. In what ways is the “Our Father” a prayer of petition? Why did Jesus give his disciples that prayer? If prayer cannot change God, what is prayer really meant to accomplish? (CCC 2629, 2632, 2761-62, 2771)

6. What sort of prayer or prayers do you usually engage in?

7. What aspects of Thomas Merton’s journey and conversion can you relate to? Do you have questions or concerns that keep you from offering adoration to God more fully and joyfully?

8. St. John of the Cross was both a profound mystic and a brilliant poet. Many of the greatest prayers in the Bible – the Psalms, notably – are poems. Have you ever written a prayer to God in the form of poetry? Consider writing short prayers of adoration or petition in the form of poems or psalms.

9. What are the distractions that most hinder your prayer life? What are some ways you can change your routine or practice of prayer to lessen those distractions.


   Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you,
   All things are passing; God only is changeless.
   Patience gains all things. Who has God wants nothing.
   God alone suffices.

11. Is there something you wish to ask or entreat of God, but haven’t? Seek to offer that prayer of petition and to pray at the same time for the needs of three other people.

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1 Catechism of the Catholic Church
Episode 10: Questions for Thought and Reflection

1. What are the four “last things”? What is the difference between general eschatology and individual eschatology?

2. What is the theological basis for Dante depicting the Devil stuck in ice in the very bottom recesses of Hell? What other details are based upon Catholic teaching about Hell? (CCC\(^1\) 1033)

3. What is the relationship between love, free will, and Hell? (CCC 1036-37, 1057)

4. What are three faulty understandings of purgatory? What are three correct metaphors or descriptions of purgatory? (CCC 1030)

5. How is purgatory a continuation and fulfillment of Christ’s work of salvation? What Scriptural evidence is there for a belief in purgatory? (CCC 1987; 2 Macc. 12:42-46; Matt. 12:32; 1 Cor. 3:12-13, 15)

6. What are some descriptions of heaven found in Scripture? In Tradition? How would you explain the term “beatific vision”? (CCC 1024-1027, 1045, 1326)

7. What are some of the misconceptions or misunderstandings that exist about the “last things”? What understanding of Catholic teaching have you gained that might clear these up?

8. Which do you find more interesting: individual eschatology or general eschatology? Why might it be important to keep the two in balance and in proper relationship to each other?

9. If you were asked to explain the difference between purgatory and hell, how would you respond? Which of the two do you think is more difficult to explain? Why?

10. We are exhorted by the Church to pray for those who have died. This week, consider praying for someone who has died recently.

11. Read chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Revelation. Where do you see parallels between these Scripture passages and the Mass?

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\(^1\) Catechism of the Catholic Church