

## Navigating the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

“We thank the Lord wholeheartedly on this day when we can offer the entire Church the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for a catechesis renewed at the living sources of the faith...the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in the Church, and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the people of God...It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past.”  
(Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, p. 3, 4, Pope Saint John Paul II)

- **The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* includes Four Parts:**

Part One: The Profession of Faith, with the main focus on the Apostles’ Creed

Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery with the main focus on the seven Sacraments

Part Three: Life in Christ with the central focus on the Ten Commandments

Part Four: Christian Prayer with a central focus on the Our Father

These **Four Parts of the *Catechism* originate from Acts 2:42:**

“The Apostles devoted themselves to

- the teaching
- to the breaking of bread,
- to the communal life,
- and the prayers.”

- In addition to the page numbers in the *Catechism*, the most important type of referencing is **paragraph numbers** in the left margins.

- The first and last paragraph number for each Part are:

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 1) The Profession of Faith                  | 1 - 1064    |
| 2) The Celebration of the Christian Mystery | 1066 - 1690 |
| 3) Life in Christ                           | 1691 - 2557 |
| 4) Christian Prayer                         | 2558 - 2865 |

It is helpful to have these numbers handy when looking up a particular topic in the Index. In the case that you want teaching from one of the four parts of the *Catechism*, you will know what to look for more quickly.

- “Numerous **cross-references in the margin** of the text (italicized numbers referring to other paragraphs that deal with the same theme) allow you to view each theme in its relationship with the entirety of the Faith.” (CCC paragraph 18) Turn to **paragraph 210** in the Profession of Faith. There are two numbers referenced in the margin: **Paragraph 2116** which refers you to a paragraph in the third pillar on how we are to live and **paragraph 2577** in the fourth pillar on how we are to pray.

The *Catechism* states that it offers itself as an organic account of a living *whole*, one in which the different elements are united and are presented in relational fashion (see CCC 11, 18). It also asks to be read in this manner.

In other words, the four pillars of the *Catechism* are interrelated.

Note: The numbers in the margin are strategically located. The content of the specific line where a paragraph is referenced in the margin, when you look up the corresponding paragraph, it will have similar content.

**Paragraph 210** explains Israel’s sin of building the Golden Calf and how God hears Moses prayer of intercession as Moses agrees to walk in the midst of an unfaithful people. related with the paragraphs referenced in the margin?

**Paragraph 2116**, found in Part III – Life in Christ, explains that all forms of divination, such as the building of the Golden Calf are to be rejected as this contradicts the honor, respect and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

**Paragraph 2577**, found in Part IV – Christian Prayer, relates that “From this intimacy with the faithful God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, Moses drew strength and determination for his intercession. He does not pray for himself but for the people whom God made his own.”

- Turn to paragraph 396. The **Scriptural footnotes** given in the paragraph are referenced at the bottom of the page.
- Turn to paragraph 413. As you can see, the summary at the end of each section is called **IN BRIEF**.
- There is an extensive **Index of Citations** provided in the back of the *Catechism* for the English version in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The Index of Citations include the paragraph numbers in the *Catechism* where the following are cited or paraphrased:
  - Sacred Scripture (both Old and New Testament)
  - Professions of Faith
  - Ecumenical Councils
  - Particular Councils and Synods
  - Pontifical Documents (written by Popes)
  - Ecclesiastical Documents
  - Canon Law
  - Liturgy

- Ecclesiastical Writers such as St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Thomas Aquinas
- The **Index of Citations** begins on page 689. In the **Index of Citations**, if you turn to the Scriptural verse that you are referencing, you will find paragraph numbers listed that will provide teaching and/or related information for this Scripture. This is most helpful for looking up a specific Scripture passage that you will hear at an upcoming Sunday Mass. Or in teaching on the Prodigal Son, you could look up Luke 15:11-24 and find a paragraph that explains the steps of conversion in the story of the Prodigal Son.
- The **Index** begins on page 753. In the **Index**, you can look up key words, such as abstinence, Baptism, Cardinal Virtues, discernment, gluttony, Holy Spirit, parents, Purgatory, worship as well as an extensive amount of other key terms and find paragraph numbers in the *Catechism*. In addition, these referenced paragraphs include Scripture passages that are footnoted and would be helpful in speaking about the specific topic. Many times Catholics are asked where a specific teaching is cited in the Bible. This makes it easy to find those Scripture passages.
- The **Glossary** begins on page 864. In the **Glossary**, you will find the definition of key terms in the language of the Faith, including such words as Prayer, Beatific Vision, concupiscence, contemplation, Deposit of Faith etc.