

Ten Talks

An Outline of the Catholic Faith

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Introduction

This pamphlet is presented as an outline sketch of the fundamental truths of the Catholic faith. It should be helpful for enquirers.

Details can be filled in either by the priest or other person whose assistance is sought in this matter, or by further reading on the particular topics.

A fuller treatment of these matters is given in the Catholic Enquiry Centre course advertised just below the contents outline of this pamphlet.

These lessons are available to all in book form from the Centre.

The outline which follows is brief, and is based on a simple pattern:

1. HISTORY OF SALVATION

(1) - God, Religion, the Blessed Trinity. (II) - Creation, the Fall, Original Sin. (III) & (IV) - Redemption, JESUS CHRIST.- His Work. (V) - the Church.

2. THE CHURCH CONTINUES JESUS' WORK OF REDEMPTION

(VI) - A The Spirit teaches us through the Church: the truths of faith. (VII) - B The Spirit guides us through the Church: Christian living and the commandments. -C The Spirit sanctifies us through the Church by: (VIII) - Firstly - Worship and -Secondly - the Sacraments. (IX) -Especially - the Mass.

3. FAITH AND REASON

(X) - Historical value of the Gospels.

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1. God, Religion, the Blessed Trinity

The importance of what we believe:

Every decision we make depends on what we believe, so it is foolish to say that we can manage without any beliefs or principles.

That is why the Catholic Church insists so much on what Catholics are to believe. (Not to mention Jesus' insistence! John 3. 9-21 is one example. See Mark 16.16: Matthew 8.5-13.)

The fact of God:

The world about us has so many beautifully planned things in it... take even the very simplest form of life. And these things did not just make themselves: they must have been arranged and made by someone else.

That intelligent planner we call God.

Everything we see about us began, was brought into being from something else, by something else. If anything at all has an explanation, then there must be someone or something at the start which is unmade, independent, timeless, not material. That being we call "God".

What is Religion?

If God is the ultimate reason for our being here, then the least we can do is to take notice of Him. Taking notice of God is religion. A child in the home who simply ignores his parents is weird. So are we --- though perhaps unconsciously - if we ignore God.

So... God made us...

WHY? Two ways of finding an answer: look at the way we are made or ask the producer. It is certainly important to know.

Did God tell us why he made us?

He did. Jesus was God and He told us that God made us to be happy like him and with him.

What is this happiness of God we are meant to share?

Jesus told us something about God and His extraordinary life: -three persons but one God: three "who's" and one "what". -perfect knowledge of one another. -perfect love of one another. -perfect union in that love. -all without possibility of ending or change. (Compare with the happiness which human love, with all its limitations, brings.)

AND WE ARE MEANT TO SHARE THAT KIND OF LIFE. But we can no more be happy like God than a table can be happy like a carpenter. We are different kinds of things from God, just as a table is something different from a carpenter. So God has to give us a special gift, a share in a life like his very own. This alone makes it possible for us to share His kind of happiness. This gift we call "grace".

God wants all men to share this gift. Whether we possess it or not depends on us; we can refuse to accept God's gift.

2. Creation, the Fall, Original Sin

Points made so far:

God made the world.

God made us, and He made us to share His own kind of life and happiness.

How did God go about giving man a share in this happiness which is God's own life?

God did not create men in heaven: instead the first men (man and woman) found themselves in this world. They would have to pass some sort of trial, prove that they deserved in some way the happiness God was offering them, before they could enjoy heaven.

God gave men some extraordinary gifts:

For man and woman originally there was no suffering, no toil.

There was to be no death, either: just a time of trial, and then if the trial was passed, a sharing in God's happiness, Heaven.

All the world of nature was subject to humans: the animals were tame.

The greatest gift humans first had was the gift of God's own life, or GRACE, which they had to have in order to be able to share God's happiness.

This gift, and others too, the first humans held in trust for their descendants. If they had not rejected these gifts, then we would have been born with them.

The "Fall": Its results -original sin:

Adam and Eve (or "the man" and "the woman" as the Bible refers to them) coldly and deliberately threw away those gifts by offending God. They were not weak as we are when our passions take command. They chose freely to cut themselves off from God, to reject Him.

The results:

(a) In man: Humans lost the extraordinary gifts God had given them.

Their children were born without those gifts.

Death and suffering made their appearance in the world.

Humans found it easy to do wrong and hard to do right.

(Note that these things are NATURAL... not punishments.)

(b) In man's relations with God, two effects:

- the offence to God, the barrier of the insult, which now existed between God and man.
- the loss of GRACE by men ...which meant that even if they were reconciled with God (i.e.- if the offence were removed) they were not capable of sharing in God's happiness.

3. Redemption, Jesus Christ

What is Redemption?

God's work in putting right the bad effects of original sin.

We have seen something of God's original plan for men, and how it was spoilt so that something drastic had to be done if men were to enjoy God's happiness as He had originally intended them to.

This "something drastic" we call REDEMPTION.

The person who brought it about we call Jesus Christ.

Who was Jesus Christ?

He was a real man: Lived at a certain place at a certain time. Had a body and soul like ours. Born like us, from a woman. Died like us. Ate, walked, talked, was hungry and thirsty ...had feelings as we do. He wept.

He was really God:

He claimed to be -God. (Mt. 16.17: John 10.22ff.) His holiness of life. His prophecy. The paralytic. (Luke 5.17-26.) His teaching and preaching. His miracles.

He was one person: No question of a split personality. No sudden changes in outlook or attitude. Never an ounce of deviation: "I have come to do the will of My father who is in heaven."

What did he do?

To make up for the offence to God which sin is, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, freely accepted to suffer and to die, thus making up for all sin in the most complete way possible.

To enable us to get again the gift of grace, Jesus -taught men truths we have to believe; -taught us how we must behave : . . gave us commands; -gave us a worship with which we must honour God.

To unite all men to himself so that his death could benefit them all, and to enable all men through the ages to gain the advantages of His sufferings and teachings, Jesus founded a Church. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit he guaranteed its teaching and leadership for all time, and gave it the job of representing Him in the world down through the ages.

It is this church now which is the source of the many blessings Jesus earned for us. Through the Church we can regain in a certain measure now, and in full measure later on, all the gifts lost by original sin.

4. Jesus' Work

God's plan covered so far:

God made us: we owe Him notice ...so religion is the most natural thing on Earth... taking notice of God. It is a duty independent of our feelings or sentiments.

God's plan for us: a time of trial, then happiness with Him and like Him in heaven: hence the need for GRACE or for a share in a life like God's.

Original Sin. Man's "spanner in the works".

God's repair work: Jesus Christ, man and God, comes to make up for the damage done, to give us back the life of God.

GOD: Our Father:

Jesus told us something more about God than we can know from simply using our intelligence...

God is our Father.

The prayer Jesus gave us. (Matthew 6.7 ff.)

What sort of father to us is God? Luke 15... prodigal son.

"Hail Mary"

We love our mothers despite the fact that we know they are human and have their weaknesses. We would have them be as wonderful as possible.

JESUS CHOSE AND MADE HIS MOTHER, SO SHE MUST BE THE MOST WONDERFUL OF CREATURES... AS GRAND AS SHE COULD BE MADE.

Mary's extraordinary power over Jesus: Cana. (John 2.) We honour Mary, because that pleases Jesus.

Jesus' work in the world:

Jesus not only died in order to make up for the offence of sin, but also came to give us the chance of regaining the gift of grace. To aid us in this:

He taught:

"Those who believe and are baptized will be saved..." John 6: believe His words or no longer be his apostles. "O you of little faith" - Jesus' only complaint.

Faith (i.e. point of view, conviction) is basis of all intelligent action.

He outlined our duties:

"there are two commandments..." (Matthew 22.37.) "...and He will say to those on His left hand..." (Matthew 25.41.)

He prescribed a form of worship:

"Do this in commemoration of Me..." (Luke 22.19.) "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood..." (John 6.53.)

"Those who believe and are baptized..." (Mark 16.16.) "You must pray always..." (Luke 18.1.)

To carry to all men this message, Jesus chose to found a Church which would be able to tell us through the guidance of the Holy Spirit

-the truths Jesus taught

-the duties He imposed

-the worship he prescribed.

How can we know which of the many churches today is the one with Jesus' authority? ...by examining what Jesus had in mind when he founded His Church, and by comparing this with the churches we see today.

5. The Church

We have already dealt with:

God's plan for us: why He created men;

man's distortion of the original plan;

God's remedy: Jesus Christ who came to give back to mankind the gift of God's life by

...revealing truths to be believed; ...telling us how we must act; ...giving us God-guaranteed rites.

But these things Jesus did almost two thousand years ago

To carry on his work when he (most inconsiderately!) decided to abandon earth, he could have left angels who would tell us what to believe and to do, and to administer the rites.

He did not.

He chose, instead a group of men to do just these things, He gave them extraordinary powers, He promised them the help of His Spirit who would be with them until the end of the world.

That organization which continues Jesus' work through the years, we call the Church.

But today there are so many churches

And all claim to be the true one. So we must find out what sort of Church Jesus had in mind.

What sort of church did Jesus found?

1. A church UNITED in faith: "teach them all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."
(Matthew 28.18.)

UNITED in worship: "baptizing them in the name of the Father..." "Do this in memory of me."
(Matthew 28.19, Luke 22.19.)

UNITED in authority: under Peter and his successors. (Matthew 16.18ff. John 21.15ff.)

2. A church which would administer the rites Jesus gave us to help us to get to heaven... a church in that sense HOLY.

3. A church which was meant for all men, whatever their creed or colour or race: a UNIVERSAL church.

4. A church whose original powers were vested only in the apostles Jesus chose, and so a church whose powers today can be traced back to the apostles: an APOSTOLIC church.

5. A church which cannot go wrong in telling us what we must believe and do to get grace - an INFALLIBLE church - otherwise Jesus could not have said that "it is good for you that I go," and His promise of the Spirit would be meaningless. (cf. John 17.)
6. A church IMPERFECT IN ITS MEMBERS: As Jesus himself told us. (cf. Luke 22.31ff.)
7. A church which would last till the end of the world: a PERENNIAL church. (Matthew 28.20.)
8. A church PERSECUTED just as Jesus himself was: "As they have persecuted me..." (John 15.20.) Only one church even claims to have these qualities as we have outlined them: the Catholic Church. To that church we are obliged to belong once we accept the fact that this is what God wants.

Ecumenism

- A. Ecumenism is an aspect of charity -we must love one another ...even those who disagree with us! -and therefore a duty of every Christian.
- B. We must recognize the many wonderful gifts of God which all the Christian churches and communities share.
- C. The unity which we seek must be the unity which Jesus Christ intended.

6. The Spirit Teaches Us Through the Church

THE TRUTHS OF FAITH.

We have seen so far God's plan for our happiness:

- He made us to be happy like Him, and so gave us a share in a life like His own.
- He became man to give back to us the gift lost.
- He left us a society or church to pass on to us all we need to get to heaven...

(a) truths we must believe;

(b) duties we need to carry out;

(c) worship we need to offer.

Truths a child of God must believe.

About God:

He made us.

He made us to be happy like Him.

He is three persons in one nature ...the wonder of life of utter knowledge and love - the life and happiness we are meant to share.

He so loved us that He died for us -knowing that we could make his death useless.

He left us his SPIRIT who abides in us.

He left us his Church to guide us infallibly.

About man:

Man will live forever: his soul can never die.

Man is intelligent and free.

He will go forever either to heaven or to hell.

Where he spends eternity depends on the way he lives this life.

None is condemned except through his own fault.

We were made for one reason alone, to be happy like God.

Man is king of creation: all else was made for our responsible use and convenience.

About the world:

All things were made by God, and so are good. But of course, they (by misuse of freewill) can be abused.

7. The Spirit Guides Us Through the Church

CHRISTIAN LIVING AND THE COMMANDMENTS

The value of the Commandments

God's commandments are a sign of his love: they are not meant as mere restrictions on our liberty, but as DIRECTIONS FOR HAPPINESS ...like signposts they are meant to help us to reach our goal.

They do not interfere with our freedom: we can break them if we like. (If we misuse the gift of freewill.)

They are like the manufacturer's instructions which accompany a new machine ...best to observe them if we want the machine to work properly.

They also teach us what is right according to God and therefore good for us and for our neighbour ...It is not enough to want to do "good"; we must first know just what is good and what is not.

The Great Commandment

Love of God.

Love of our neighbour for God's sake.

The Ten Commandments

Commandments 1 to 3: tell us how to show love of God.

Commandments 4 to 10: tell us how to show love of our neighbour.

Commandments of the Church:

Sunday Mass: God's family comes together. Paying our weekly account. Accepting the Father's invitation.

Fasting: A training to turn down what is attractive but bad. Jesus' own example.

Contributing to the needs of the Church: Giving back to God some of his gifts to us.

Sins of Omission

Words of our Lord, Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you did not give me to eat..."

The Catholic is an Apostle

Jesus' prime consideration was the will of his Father. His Father sent him "That men might have life and have it more abundantly." By Baptism and Confirmation especially, we are called to share this mission.

Can we say sincerely we care for Jesus and not care about those for whom he died?

Each of us has a duty of leading men to God

- primarily in the family; a specific responsibility of parents.
- also in our "environment" ...with all those we meet.

How can we help others to know and love God?

(a)pray for them;

(b)good example of Christian living;

(c)knowing our faith so as to be able to explain it to those who ask ...activity and formation in apostolic groups;

(d)speaking about our faith naturally and sincerely without waiting to be asked;

(e)helping through our work and with the means at our disposal those who dedicate their whole lives to this task.

8. The Spirit Sanctifies Us Through the Church

WORSHIP AND THE SACRAMENTS

Remember what is needed to live with God's life, to live as children of God:

- accept the truths Jesus taught
- carry out the duties he imposed
- give God the worship he asks.

Worship if well done will help us to do the rest well.

Actual Grace

To be a child of God is a gift of God: God's greatest gift to us.

But if we are God's children, then we should be -and we are, in fact - continually surrounded by His loving attention. God's inspirations, reminders and helps, which make it easier for us to live as his children, we call "actual graces."

Worship by PRAYER

Jesus' insistence: "Pray always."

Jesus' example: He always prayed before doing anything big. (Luke 6.12. Matthew 26.36.)

He suggested prayer as the solution of difficulties: "Pray therefore the lord of the harvest..." (Luke 10.2.)

He taught the apostles to pray: "When you pray, pray like this: say 'Our Father...' " (Matthew 6.9.)

"Some devils are cast out only by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 6 and 7.) (see Mark 9.29)

What is Prayer?

Keeping God company, speaking to Him, loving to be with Him. Words are not needed with God... He can read our thoughts.

Meditation:

Daily consideration of some truth or fact of importance for us or from the life of Jesus. Value of Gospels ...cannot love Our Lord unless we know him.

Worship through the SACRAMENTS

Jesus died to give us back the life of God which Adam and Eve lost for us by their original sin. The means principally chosen by Jesus to give us back this gift of grace was the sacraments.

The importance of signs in our daily lives: EVERY-THING WHICH AFFECTS OUR MINDS OR WILLS DOES SO THROUGH SIGNS. Language is simply a system of signs ...vibrations in the air. No wonder Jesus chose signs as a means of putting in our souls the gift of Grace.

Parallel between the sacraments and our ordinary lives: the sacraments give and develop and preserve the life of God in us ...

birth: Baptism

growth: Confirmation

medicine: Confession, Anointing with the Oils (Extreme Unction or Last Anointing)

food: Holy Communion.

society: Holy Orders and Marriage.

Baptism:

The first of the sacraments. Birth to the life of God in us. Implies in us the acceptance of God's will, of His truths, and a promise to live just as he wants us to.

It is given to infants because it is something good and real ...but the acceptance or rejection of the ultimate conditions depends on the individual who can renounce the gift of God. (John 3.5ff.)

Baptism gives us a POWER to act in the Church, to share in every Mass offered. (the Priesthood of the Faithful.) This power we can never lose, though we can prevent our ever using it by a misuse of the gift of freewill.

Confirmation

Sacrament of adulthood. Gives us added powers (cf. baptism) and added responsibilities, making us fully and bravely adult Christians. (Acts 8.14ff: 19.6.)

On our part, supposes a guarantee of loyalty to Jesus Christ in all things.

Penance or Confession or Reconciliation

Like medicine in case of illness: not pleasant to take but the effects are good.

God alone can forgive sin, but He can do it through men. Sin affects the whole Church.

The secret of what is told in confession is inviolable.

ESSENTIAL CONDITION FOR FORGIVENESS: TRUE SORROW. True sorrow means --- wishing we had not committed the sin; intending to avoid it in future; making up for the offence as much as we can.

Extreme Unction or Last Anointing or Anointing with the Oils for the Sick

Guarantees strength in sickness, and consolation and aid in death. (James 5. especially verses 14 to 15)

Holy Orders

Basis of the social structure of the Church.

It is through the Priesthood of Orders that Jesus chose to send us the fruits of salvation.

Priests are not necessarily perfect or saintly: they are simply men with God's delegation to represent Him in administering his sacraments. (Cf. delegation in marriage ...authority over children, representing God.)

Priests should be saintly: pray for them. They share in a special way the priesthood of Christ. (Cf Hebrews 5.)

Marriage

Sacrament of the great promise and the great responsibility.

Great promise: for life

Great responsibility: happiness here and hereafter of spouse and especially children.

The sacrament guarantees God's aid and the strength and courage necessary to carry out one's duty well. (Cf Ephesians 5.21ff. especially verse 32)

9. The Spirit Sanctifies Us Through the Church

HOLY MASS

God's people come together to worship the Father.

Our only real way of making up to God for our sins and weaknesses, and of thanking him properly for all he does for us.

Why do we give gifts?

- to say thanks for gifts given us
- to honour someone we respect and love
- to make up for an offence

- to better dispose someone towards us.

Same purposes in Holy Mass.

WHAT HAPPENS AT MASS?

God's people speak to God:

We tell him we are sorry for our sins.

We ask him to be indulgent towards our weakness.

We thank him for so much he gives us.

We ask him for the things we need.

God's people listen to their Heavenly Father

The word of God which shows us his great love for us, and asks for our response.

We offer our gifts to God

The very best we have: ourselves. The bread and wine signify food and drink, the stuff of which our lives are made.

The offering of money made at Mass is simply giving to God part of the work and energy expended in daily work.

But God does not need us. We are his creatures. What more can we give?

We offer to the Father his only begotten son Jesus Christ; because we are members of the church, the priest is our representative, the sacrifice is OURS.

And we know this offering is pleasing to the Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

God offers us a gift in return

Holy Communion: the life-giving nourishment we need to keep us going in the supernatural life, to grow and produce fruit as God's children, to unite us with Jesus Christ so that we may live as he lived. It is God's kiss of perfect reconciliation... the promise and guarantee of greater happiness to come in God's company.

"Living the Mass" means living out hour by hour the gift of our lives which we make to Our Heavenly Father at Holy Mass.

10. The Reasonableness of Catholicism

Faith and Reason

Catholicism is based on common sense.

There are two reasoned foundations for our attitude:

(a) the fact of God's existence provable by reason:

(b) the historical reliability of the Gospels... to be proved just as we would prove the reliability of any other historical work.

Historical Value of the Gospels

(a) Were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John really the authors?

Yes: there is much testimony in their favour, and none against it. The political details of life in Palestine could not have been known with such accuracy to anyone grown up after 70 A.D., the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. We can check the details given in the Gospels through archaeology and other testimony of the times. Even the style of writing supports the authentic authorship.

(b) Were the authors sincere?

They died for what they wrote, and suffered tremendously to make it known. They were incapable of inventing such stories. (Agony in the Garden.) They were not fanatics: there is no enthusing in the Gospels. The apostles were practically all originally fishermen: practical men.

(c) Did they REALLY SEE what they wrote? Did it really Happen? (Consult Luke 1. 1-4)

(i) Miracles are possible... God who made the world of nature can certainly accommodate it to his will.

(ii) Mass-hypnosis is hardly feasible: the apostles did not want to believe the miracles they witnessed. (Cf. the Resurrection.) Even Jesus' enemies admitted his miracles.

Matthew and John are eye-witnesses themselves. (See John 21.24 & 1 Jn 1.1 and Matthew 9.9) Mark reported Peter's account of the Gospel. (1 Peter 5.13) Luke consulted many first-hand observers. (Acts 1.1-2 & Luke 1)

(d) Have we the texts as they were originally written?

Numerous small differences are practically all immaterial. Comparison with other ancient "classical" works shows we have much more evidence to support the authenticity of the Gospel texts than we have of them. Many who reject the gospels as historical do so not on historical grounds at all, but rather because of attitudes which reject beforehand the possibility of miracles. It follows from this rejection of miracles - an attitude which needs to be proved - that books which mention miracles as facts cannot themselves be factual.

FURTHER READING

Among many books of instruction in the Catholic Faith the following may be found useful for further reading: The works of Frank Sheed, such as "A Map of Life". "Theology for Beginners"; "Theology and Sanity".

Books by Leo Trese, such as "The Faith Explained." ,or, "Christ in Us", Killgallon and Weber.

"Instructions for non-Catholics, by Parish Priests." "Father Smith Instructs Jackson".

The A.C.T.S. Publications have a range of pamphlets that expand particular points, among them: 561. "The Church Built on a Rock", Rev. H. A. Johnston, S.J. 1417. "Faith to Live By", Very Rev. E. J. Cuskelly, M.S.C. 1499. "Catholic Faith and Worship", Rev. T. White. Rev. P. Crudden's series, "Living the Sacraments" (eight pamphlets). 1572. "Reflections on the Church of God", Rev. P. Crudden. 770. "Prayers are always answered", Rev. D. A. Lord, S.J. 1566. "We Offer the New Mass". Rev. H. A. Johnston, S.J.
