

THE CATHOLICISM SERIES

"Catholicism speaks through powerful words," states Fr. Robert Barron in his introduction to this adult formation program, mentioning the New Testament, the Confessions of St. Augustine, the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, the sermons of Blessed Cardinal Newman, and St. Therese of Lisieux's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*. "It also communicates through beauty," he remarks, mentioning the splendid fourteenth-century Orvieto Cathedral in central Italy, the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City, Bernini's breathtaking sculpture "Ecstasy of St. Teresa," and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

This dual focus is at the heart of Catholicism. There are the powerful words of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, Church fathers and doctors, popes, bishops and priests, saints and martyrs, mystics and theologians, poets and novelists, and others. Through inspired Scripture, theological study, philosophical reflection, sermons, autobiographies, poetry, novels, and essays, these men and women have declared and described the Faith from within the heart of the Church. Throughout this program, viewers are introduced to and meet again many of the most profound thinkers and significant writers of the Church.

In a different but complementary way, artists, architects, sculptors, painters, and musicians have used their talents to express and convey the beauty of God and His creation, the glory of the Gospel, and the mystery of the Church. "The function of all art," wrote Pope Pius XII, "lies in . fact in breaking through the narrow and tortuous enclosure of the finite, in which man is immersed while living here below, and in providing a window to the infinite for his hungry soul" ("The Function of Art"; April 8, 1952). This program seeks to provide a window to the infinite by showing and reflecting on some of the most splendid churches, sculptures, and places of Catholicism. "Souls ennobled, elevated and prepared by art," Pius XII noted, "are thus better disposed to receive the religious truths and the grace of Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ reveals the truth of God because He is God. In this respect, Christ is the living source and ultimate end toward which all creation is moving. Christ has revealed that the movement •[^]toward Him finds its proper trajectory through the Church—the inspired, finite reality that beckons and leads the soul to share communion with the Lord, who is the Truth Itself. CATHOLICISM presents the truth and beauty of the Faith so that all may discover for themselves the Truth and Beauty of the Lord.

The Study Guide for Episode One is divided into two parts. There are discussion questions for Understanding and for Application associated with each part.

OUTLINE: PART 1 (TRACKS 1-4 ON DVD)

- Both God and Human
 - Christ is the privileged door (Chesterton)
 - The divine humor (Dante's *Divine Comedy*)
 - "And on that sacred jest/die whole of Christianity doth rest" (Chesterton)
 - Jesus emerged as a deeply disconcerting and subversive figure
- Jesus is Lord
 - The Incarnation is the central "hinge" of Christianity
 - The question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" (Matt. 16:13)
 - Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius did not claim to be divine
 - Jesus compels a choice
 - Jesus is either God or he is a bad man and a liar; there is no middle ground
 - ".. .and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid" (Mk. 10:32)

(Discussion questions on next page)

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING - PART 1:

1. In what ways does the Incarnation reveal a "divine humor" and "sacred jest"? (CCC 461, 463, 654, 655) j
2. What is the significance of St. Paul and other New Testament writers describing Jesus as Lord? What are the Old Testament roots of that title? How would most first century Greeks or Romans respond to the statement, "Jesus is Lord"? (CCC 446, 448, 450)
3. What place does the Incarnation have in the beliefs of the Catholic Church? How does the Incarnation distinguish Jesus Christ from men such as Buddha, Mohammed, or Confucius? What options are available when one has to decide who Jesus Christ is? (CCC 423, 430-445)

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION - PART 1:

1. How can I demonstrate, in both my public and private actions, my belief that Jesus is Lord? Are there some areas of my life that I need to relinquish more to His lordship?
2. Do I sometimes doubt the Church's teachings about the Incarnation? What questions do I have about the person, actions, or teachings of Jesus? How can I go about addressing those doubts and questions?
3. How does sin undermine and harm my spiritual life? Do I need to go to confession more regularly, read Scripture more often, or spend more time in prayer? What are some steps I might consider taking in growing in my relationship with the Lord?

OUTLINE: PART 2 (TRACKS 5-8 ON DVD)

- 1. The Work of Jesus, the Messiah**
 - i. Described in the Torah (Law), Prophets, and Psalms
 - ii. The Messiah, the Anointed One, called to four tasks (N. T. Wright)
 - iii. Jesus accomplished the four tasks in the strangest way
- 2. The First Task: Gathering the Tribes of Israel**
 - i. This gathering is for the sake of the world
 - ii. The Kingdom of God is the call to be gathered and reunited
 1. Man is scattered due to sin
 2. God desires man to be gathered together into a people
 - iii. Jesus shepherded the people of Israel, forming the New Israel, the Church
- 3. The Second Task: Cleansing the Temple of God**
 - i. Adam was the first priest; the Garden of Eden was the first temple
 1. Adoration is perfect, proper alignment to God
 2. Original sin is the adoration of the wrong thing(s)
 - ii. Israel was a temple, created to teach right praise and to offer sacrifices
 1. Sacrifice is the act of giving something of creation back to the Creator
 2. The prophets spoke of God's presence leaving the Temple and looked forward to a new and perfect Temple
 - iii. The cleansing of the Temple by Jesus
 1. Not an act of rebellion, but of rebuilding
 2. The Temple to be rebuilt, however, was the temple of his body
 3. Jesus is the dwelling-place of God, die perfect sacrifice
- 4. The Third Task: Dealing with the Enemies of Israel**
 - i. The Davidic Warrior
 1. Israel was constantly oppressed by other peoples: the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Philistines, Romans
 2. This oppression was the result of Israel's sin
 3. Liberation from this oppression could come only from God
- 5. Jesus is a "Davidic Warrior"**
 - i. The power of God is revealed in a baby in a manger
 - ii. The baby Jesus was "behind enemy lines" (C. S. Lewis)
- 6. Godly humility vs. worldly power**
 - i. Worldly power: Quirinius, governor of Syria, and Caesar Augustus
 - ii. Heavenly power: the True Emperor, Jesus Christ
 - iii. The true emperor is not fed, but feeds (the Eucharist)
- B. Dealing with the Enemies of Israel: Palm Sunday and Holy Week**
 1. Jesus took on "all forms of human dysfunction;" the sins of the world
 2. He embodied the Sermon on the Mount while on the Cross
- C. The Resurrection**
 1. Completed the first three tasks of the Messiah
 2. The only good explanation for the early Christian movement, which logically should have died with Christ Jesus
 3. Not a symbol, metaphor, or fable
 4. "Shalom, peace:" Jesus shows his wounds to the disciples in the Upper Room
- 6. The Fourth Task: Reigning as Lord of the Nations**
 - A. "Jesus Kyrios" ("Jesus is Lord")**
 1. Pilate, by putting the sign over the crucified Christ, was, ironically and unwittingly, the first evangelist
 2. The words "Jesus is Lord" were fighting words in the first century, leading to direct confrontation with Rome and Caesar
 - B. However, it was through Rome that Christ and his Church would go out to all the world.**

- C. "Glad Tidings" was an imperial greeting; the good news (Gospel) was not about Roman rulers, but about the King of Kings**
- D. The Cross taunts Rome and its successors**

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING - PART 2

- 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 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 batde? (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)**

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION - PART 2

- 1. Do I need to contemplate more seriously the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross?**

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

TERMS AND NAMES:

Augustine of Hippo, Saint, (354-430). A bishop, Church Father and Doctor, and one of the most significant and influential philosophers and theologians in the Western world. He recounted his dramatic conversion from Manicheanism to Catholicism in his *Confessions*. Other famous works include *The City of God* and *The Trinity*, along with numerous homilies and commentaries.

Caesar Augustus (63 B.C. - A.D. 14). The first emperor of Rome who ruled over what is considered Rome's golden age and brought about Pax Augusta, the Augustan peace.

Chesterton, G. K., (1874-1936). An English journalist, apologist, and man of letters who is one of the most quoted authors in the English language. Agnostic in his youth, he was Anglican for many years before becoming Catholic in 1926. Best-known works include *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, and *What's Wrong With the World*.

Dante Alighieri, (c.1265-1321). An Italian statesman, the father of the Italian language, and one of the world's finest poets. His *Divina Commedia*, the *Divine Comedy*, is the finest epic poem in Italian literature and one of the great poems in world literature.

The Divine Comedy: One of the world's greatest poems, written by Dante Alighieri (c.1265-1321). The *Divina Commedia* is the finest epic poem in Italian literature, depicting the author's journey from hell to heaven. Its 14,233 lines are divided into three canticles—*Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise).

Incarnation: The Christian belief that God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, assumed human nature and became man, Jesus Christ, in order to save man from sin and death.

Kyrios: The Greek word for "lord." It was used to describe human rulers, but was also in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, to refer to God in place of the sacred name, Yahweh. It is used some 180 times in the New Testament to refer to Jesus, explicitly asserting belief in his divinity.

Lewis, C. S., (1898-1963). An Anglican author, apologist, and professor who wrote several bestselling and influential works of popular theology and apologetics. Lewis was an avowed agnostic in his early adult years but eventually embraced Christianity, in part through the writings of G. K. Chesterton and the friendship of J. R. R. Tolkien. Among his best-known works are *Mere Christianity*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Screwtape Letters*.

Messiah: A title of royalty, derived from a Hebrew word meaning "to anoint." It refers to the Lord's anointed one and was used in the Old Testament primarily in reference to kings, who were anointed as part of the ritual of their installation (cf. 1 Sam 10:1). By the first century, the term (Messias in Greek) was used to refer to a coming Davidic king who would, many Jews believed, save Israel from oppression and reestablish a Davidic kingdom.

Newman, John Henry Cardinal, (1801-1890). One of the most famous converts to Catholicism of the nineteenth century and a brilliant scholar, preacher, and apologist. As a young man he was a major figure in the Oxford Movement, but his study of early Church history convinced him to become Catholic. His most famous works include *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and *The Grammar of Assent*.

Pontius Pilate: Roman governor, or procurator, of Judea from A.D. 26-36, who condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion.

Torah: The first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), also called the "five books of Moses" or the Pentateuch. The name comes from the Hebrew word (*fora*) meaning instruction or law.

Wright, N. T., (b. December 1948). Anglican Bishop and a leading New Testament scholar. Key academic works include *The New Testament and the People of God*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, and *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

von Balthasar, Hans Urs, (1905-88) was a Swiss priest and theologian, considered to be one of the most important Catholic intellectuals and writers the twentieth century and praised by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI for his accomplishments. Incredibly prolific and diverse, he wrote over one hundred books and hundreds of articles.

Recommended Reading:

- *The Priority of Christ* by Robert Barren
- *Jesus and the Victory of God* by N. T. Wright
- *The Everlasting Man* by G. K. Chesterton
- *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis
- *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* by Larry W. Hurtado
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante

Dantes Divine Comedy:

Dante Alighieri (c. 1265-1321) was a statesman, the father of the Italian language, and one of the world's finest poets. His *Divina Commedia*, the *Divine Comedy*, is the finest epic poem in Italian literature and one of the great poems in world literature. Its 14,233 lines are divided into three canticles—*Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradise* (Paradise)—which have a combined total of 100 cantos (33 each, with one as a prologue).

In medieval literature, a comedy was not primarily humorous, as in modern comedies, but described a work with a happy ending. The word comedy comes from Greek words meaning happiness (*komos*) and singer (*aoidos*), thus referring to a work in which a poet would "sing" about a happy story. As Dante explained in a letter, a comedy "begins with harshness in some things, whereas its matter ends in a good way..."

The *Divine Comedy* describes Dante's journey from hell through purgatory and to paradise, a journey beginning during Holy Week, on the night before Good Friday, and ending on the Wednesday following Easter. The soul of the Roman poet Virgil guides Dante through Hell and on Mt. Purgatory. They are accompanied by Statius, another classical poet, during their ascent of Mt. Purgatory. In the Garden of Eden, Dante meets with Beatrice, who teaches him while guiding him to and through the nine celestial spheres of heaven. The last part of his journey, which culminates in an overwhelming vision of God, is in the company of the mystic St. Bernard.

Beatrice, in Canto VII of *Paradiso*, speaks to Dante about the Incarnation:

Therefore, for many centuries, men lay in their sick error, till the Word of God chose to descend into the mortal clay. There, moved by His Eternal Love alone, he joined in His own person that other nature that had wandered from its Maker and been cast down.

In her study of Western literature, *In the Light of Christ* (Ignatius Press, 2006), literary critic, novelist, and poet Lucy Beckett writes that reading Dante's epic poem "is an experience, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual, like no other." She also notes, "The Incarnation is for Dante the very heart of revealed truth, to which he refers again and again in the poem" (pp. 197, 198).