Presentation of Catechism

Good evening. I am going to attempt to introduce you to one of the books that we will use as a resource for sharing with you our Roman Catholic Faith. But before we start that let us begin with a prayer. And when we pray, we always address God in the Trinitarian formula:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

So, if you saw that link to Busted Halo that was in the homework assignment, you saw an explanation of what we mean when we say catechism, lower case “c”. Catechism is the general and essential teaching of the Church.

The Catechism (upper case “C”) is the collection of teachings that have been accumulated over the centuries from the commissioning of Peter (Mt 16:18, John 21: 15-19) and Jesus’ promise of an Advocate, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, John 14:25-27) Could someone, anyone find that particular passage and read it out loud?

Now the Reformation was a cataclysmic event in the history of Christianity, and the Church felt that there needed to be a more definitive format for teaching the general and essential teachings that had been handed down from the time of the Apostles. So, the first published forms of formal catechisms appeared at about that time.

I believe that the Jesuit, Peter Canisius, wrote the first Catechism in 1555. (If any of you have ever been to Buffalo, NY, you may know Canisius University, a Jesuit university like Regis or Loyola or Gonzaga or Holy Cross. So Canisius in Buffalo is named after St. Peter Canisius. So…. If you’re ever playing Catholic Trivial Pursuit…)

Anyway, shortly after that a more definitive Catechism was published and amazingly was used for over four hundred years, The Catechism of the Council of Trent.

In the United States the Bishops developed a Catechism for teaching youth about our faith. That was the Baltimore Catechism, and you will still hear American Catholics refer to the Baltimore catechism. I was taught from the Baltimore Catechism, I think my mom used this edition.

And that brings us to the current Catechism, the catechism that you have been given, the Catechism that we will reference over and over and over again throughout RCIA. Appropriately named The Catechism of The Catholic Church. As you have already seen in the homework assignments, we use the abbreviation CCC to refer to this essential textbook of our faith. And by the time we get to Easter, I dare say that you will know more catechism than many of those in the pews around you because of this incredible book.

The foreward was written by Pope, now Saint, John Paul II. It is worth reading. I have some of the highlights on this slide. The Second Vatican Council, technically the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council was convened by Pope, now Saint, John XXIII, continued and concluded under Pope Paul VI wanted a new and comprehensive Catechism to be developed, and under Pope John Paul II, that happened. The recommendation for a new Catechism came out of a meeting of bishops in 1985 under the leadership of Pope St. John Paul II. A commission of Cardinals and Bishops was convened in 1986. The first draft was sent to the world’s bishops in 1989; over 24,000 suggestions were submitted and evaluated in 1991. In the same year the final draft was sent to the Holy Father for approval. The final text was approved in June 1992. And so, on the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1992 the Catechism of the Catholic Church was published. The US/ English edition was released in 1994.

On the title page, you will see the quotation, Guarding the Deposit of Faith….

In the homework, there was a link to a single page explanation of what we mean by the term, The Deposit of Faith. I have included a copy of that in your handouts tonight. We will use the term, deposit of Faith from time to time, and so I thought it might be useful for you to have an explanation of Deposit of Faith.

The last item on this slide is from the foreword to the Catechism written by Pope John Paul II. I think it is inspired and inspiring. (Could someone please either read from the slide or from your copy of The Catechism this passage?) In this quotation you will see one of the highlights of the Catechism, i.e., lots of cross references to scripture or supporting documents. I happen to think and feel that this is one of the most beautiful and enduring aspects of our faith.

You may ask, “OK, what is the purpose of this Catechism?” And I would have to say this goes all the way back to the beginning of our Apostolic faith. And that is to say, how the Holy Spirit has continued to guide the Church through the centuries. Define **Doctrine**: ***a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief; Dogma***. Read the slide,

So how is the Catechism laid out: Introduction (which you should read), Parts, Sections, Chapters, Articles, Paragraphs.

You will see that we refer to certain paragraphs in the Catechism with the abbreviation, CCC and the number. Could someone find CCC 13

The Pillars of the Catechism, Read the slide.

And lastly, there are indispensable, invaluable aids within the Catechism including

Read the slide

If I may add one last thing on a personal note. If we could charge through this process, if we could just turn this into a discussion, and not dwell on certain pillars of our faith, not thoroughly introduce you to the Deposit of Faith, as we call it, we would be doing you a great injustice. You have honored us in expressing an interest in our Faith, and we will do our best to tell you about our Faith, but please be patient it will take us a little bit of time, and it will take an open mind and an open heart, we hope and pray, on your part. When you get to the end of this process, you will probably know more about what we believe, and the basis for what we believe than many Cradle Catholics.