

**Holy Trinity Catholic Church**  
**RCIA Class Transcript**  
**Introduction to Catholicism**  
**Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley**  
**Date: September 14, 2004**

Welcome to our very first RCIA class for this year. I hope all of you have the handouts that we gave out. If you take a look at the schedule of classes, you can see that tonight is really an Introduction to the Faith, and it's an overview of the RCIA, which actually stands for the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*. If your kids are, let's say 10 or 12 years old, and are going through the program, it's called the RCIC, which is the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Children*. This class is designed to help you deepen your knowledge of the Faith. Many of you are born and raised Catholic; you just want to brush up on your Faith. Others come from many different, wonderful religious backgrounds and denominations; you just maybe want to learn more about what we teach, and you're most welcome. It's great to have all of you here.

I'll just show you the schedule, if you take a look at that. Next Tuesday, we cover the Existence of God, and the Blessed Trinity, and how God reveals Himself to us through Divine Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Tradition. We'll cover the Old Testament and New Testament, and we'll talk about prayer, and how to grow into a deeper relationship with God. We'll cover how God created the Angels and the creation of the Earth, and get into who Jesus Christ is, the Divinity of Christ; how Christ is both true God and true man. We have a guest speaker coming in to give our parish retreat, which is a wonderful experience. We'll continue with the life of Christ, then get into the history of the Catholic Church, how Christ founded the Church upon the Apostles, a little about the history. Then we'll go into the topics of Sin and Morality, and the Holy Spirit and Grace, and how we're saved and sanctified. We'll talk about what is Mary's role in God's plan, and what is the role of the Saints. Then we come to the Tour of the Church, where we explain all the different vestments that the priest wears, and all the sacred vessels that are used at Mass. Then we come into the section on the Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, the Eucharist, Matrimony, Confession, and Anointing of the Sick. Those are the seven Sacraments. We'll also explain the Mass and go through all the parts of the Mass. We cover, as we get to the end, the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. The last four classes are on the Ten Commandments, and we go through the Ten Commandments in detail.

When we go through that entire thing, we've covered all the teachings of the Church in just a few short months. It goes very quickly. It might seem like a lot of classes, but they do go very quickly, and we do take a break around Christmas. Sometimes we get snowed out, but we will try to reschedule any classes that we miss. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, we'll have a Prayer Service, and then the rehearsal for the Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil Mass is at Brentsville High School, and that's of course, the night before Easter. That's when people can receive the Sacraments,

their First Holy Communion and Confirmation. That's a little bit of an overview of the schedule of classes.

Let me just spend a moment or two explaining The Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism is really a textbook of all the teachings of the Faith. What you have here is really right from the horses' mouth. So many times, people get their religion from secular newspapers. But what you need to do, if you really want to find out what exactly does the Catholic Church teach, then you go to The Catechism, the official catechism of the Catholic Church. And we're very blessed that this has come out in recent years, because the last universal catechism was 450 years ago, during the Council of Trent. That was the Roman Catechism. Now, there were other national Catechisms, like the Baltimore Catechism; those are more at a national level, that actually came out in 1885: but this catechism is really called the Catechism of Vatican II. So, you're getting all the teachings of the Faith put into language that is easy to understand.

One thing you'll find out is that none of the doctrines of the Church have ever changed, that all the teachings of the Church on issues of Faith and Morals have remained constant. For example, the early Christians believed in the Trinity; we believe in the Trinity. They believed in the Divinity of Christ; we believe in the Divinity of Christ. The Seven Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, those teachings can never change. Certain practices can change, like the Mass from Latin to English, and eating meat on Fridays and certain practices can change: but doctrines can never change, and issues of Faith and Morals can never change.

Here you have the basic teachings of the Faith in this Catechism. It is divided up into four parts. The four parts of The Catechism, and I'll write them down for you up here, are what's called the Four Pillars of the Faith. The first is the Apostle's Creed. There are actually 12 articles in the Apostle's Creed, and this covers the Profession of Faith. This part of The Catechism goes for the first couple hundred pages. It represents 40 percent of The Catechism. It goes through the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord..." I think all of us are familiar with the Apostle's Creed, because many other denominations pray it as well.

The second Pillar of The Catechism would be the Seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, etc. And this takes up about 25 percent of The Catechism.

The third Pillar of The Catechism is the Ten Commandments. This part is also about 25 percent of The Catechism. It is spent going through the Ten Commandments, how to live our Christian Faith. This part here, the Seven Sacraments, deals with the Christian mystery, the Liturgy and the sacramental life.

And lastly, the Christian Prayer. This is basically 10 percent of The Catechism. These would be the seven petitions of the Our Father. The Our Father is broken up into seven petitions: “Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done...” An easy way to remember is 12, 7, 10, 7. The entire Faith can be summarized under those categories: the Apostle’s Creed, the Seven Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and Prayer.

Take a look at The Catechism, and I’ll explain a little bit how it works. You’ll notice that on your handout, on your sheet, The Catechism’s readings are listed under the paragraphs, rather than under pages. For example, when you get home later on, or sometime during this week, I’d recommend reading the Introduction to the Faith, which is the first 25 paragraphs. Next week, when we cover the Existence of God, those topics are covered from paragraph 26 to paragraph 73, and then paragraphs 142 to 184.

At the end of every chapter, there is a section called “In Brief”, which gives a nice summary of what’s contained in the chapter. Another thing I’d like to show you is in the back, because this part I think will be very helpful, if you turn to page 757. For example, if you want to look up a particular topic, you maybe want to look up what does the Church teach about Angels, well then you can go to this subject index and look up on page 758, for example, all the places that talk about the Angels and the demons. And it’ll give you the paragraph numbers. It talks about:

- The fall of the Angels
- Their free decision
- Who Satan is
- Their intelligence
- Their free will
- Guardian Angels
- Heaven
- The Angels’ role in salvation history
- The significance of Angels for the Church

No matter what topic you’re interested in – Baptism, Confession, the Eucharist; this subject index is very helpful.

The other book that we use is called The Faith Explained. This is a wonderful book. It was written by a priest named Father Leo Trese. If you could take a look at this book, I’ll share a few thoughts about it. It’s an excellent book. I’ve given this book out to hundreds of people over the years, and it’s very easily written; it’s sort of conversational language. These were talks that a priest gave to people that were going through classes just like these. This will deal with these similar topics:

- What is God like
- How does God reveal Himself
- The Angels
- The Divinity of Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The Church

It goes through the Commandments, and then in part three, the Sacraments and Prayer. All catechisms are divided up into those four sections, as well. You'll notice on the handout that, for example, I'd recommend for next week reading pages 19 – 32. As long as you remember that The Catechism goes by paragraphs on the sheet, and The Faith Explained goes by pages.

The other handout we have for you is this nice little card that has a lot of prayers, very beautiful prayers, that I encourage you to read through, and to become more familiar with these prayers over the course of the next couple of weeks.