

Adult Catechism Class for April 13, 2015

Part 1: Scripture Passages:

Matthew 16: 15-19: He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Colossians 1:15-20: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Part 2: Is the Catholic Church the Only way to Eternal Salvation?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, following historic Christian theology since the time of the early Church Fathers, refers to the Catholic Church as "the universal sacrament of salvation" (CCC 774–776), and states: "The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men" (CCC 780). The Early Church Fathers show that the early Church held the same position on this as the contemporary Church does—that is, while it is normatively necessary to be a Catholic to be saved (see CCC 846; Vatican II, Lumen Gentium 14), there are exceptions, and it is possible in some circumstances for people to be saved who have not been fully initiated into the Catholic Church (CCC 847). However, for those who knowingly and deliberately (that is, not out of innocent ignorance) commit the sins of heresy (rejecting divinely revealed doctrine) or schism (separating from the Catholic Church and/or joining a schismatic church), no salvation would be possible until they repented and returned to live in Catholic unity.

Pius IX (*Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863) taught: "God... in His supreme goodness and clemency, by no means allows anyone to be punished with eternal punishments who does not have the guilt of voluntary fault." Vatican II (*Lumen gentium* # 16) taught the same: "They who without their own fault do not know of the Gospel of Christ and His Church, but yet seek God with sincere heart, and try, under the influence of grace, to carry out His will in practice, known to them through the dictate of conscience, can attain eternal salvation." Pius XII had said (*Mystici Corporis Christi*) that one can "be related to the Church by a certain desire and wish of which he is not aware", i.e., by the desire to do what God wills in general. Clearly, it is this Divine Word, or the Spirit of Christ, the Divine Word, that writes the law on their hearts, i.e., makes known to them what they should do. If they follow that, although they do not know that that is what they are following, yet objectively, they do follow the Logos, the divine Word. "All salvation comes from Christ the Head"—is quite easy for all Christians, even non-Catholics, to understand and embrace. It echoes Jesus' own words recorded by John: "I am the way,

and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). When speaking of salvation, Jesus offered more details than just his words quoted above. For example, consider these three verses: He who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Mk 16:16); [U]nless you repent you will all likewise perish. (Lk 13:3); [H]e who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (Jn 6:54). Since the sacraments are the ordinary means through which Christ offers the grace necessary for salvation, and the Catholic Church that Christ established is the ordinary minister of those sacraments, it is appropriate to state that salvation comes through the Church. Since Jesus established the Catholic Church as necessary for salvation, those who knowingly and willingly reject him or his Church cannot be saved. We see this in Jesus' teaching: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Mt 12:30). Also: "[I]f he [a sinning brother] refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Mt 18:17). Paul warned similarly: "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned" (Ti 3:10-11). God introduced salvation to the world through his chosen people, the Jews. God's revelation to the Jews found its fulfillment in Christ, the Messiah, who established the Catholic Church. The grace necessary for salvation continues to come from Christ, through his Church. Those who innocently do not know and embrace this might still attain salvation but those who knowingly and willingly choose to reject it, reject salvation on God's terms.

Part 3: Important Ukrainian Catholic Feast Days from April to August:

April 3, 2015: Great and Holy Friday: On Great and Holy Friday the Church commemorates the death of Christ on the Cross. This is the culmination of the observance of His Passion by which our Lord suffered and died for our sins. This commemoration begins on Thursday evening with the Matins of Holy Friday and concludes with a Vespers on Friday afternoon that observes the unnauling of Christ from the Cross and the placement of His body in the tomb. On this day we commemorate the sufferings of Christ: the mockery, the crown of thorns, the scourging, the nails, the thirst, the vinegar and gall, the cry of desolation, and all the Savior endured on the Cross. He accepted death because He assumed the whole tragedy of our life. He chose to pour His life into death, in order to destroy it; and in order to break the hold of evil. His death is the final and ultimate revelation of His perfect obedience and love. He suffered for us the excruciating pain of absolute solitude and alienation - "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" (Mark 15:34). Then, He accepted the ultimate horror of death with the agonizing cry, "It is finished" (John 19:30). His cry was at one and the same time an indication that He was in control of His death and that His work of redemption was accomplished, finished, fulfilled. How strange! While our death is radical unfulfillment, His is total fulfillment. The divine services of Great Friday with the richness of their ample Scripture lessons, superb hymnography and vivid liturgical actions bring the passion of Christ and its cosmic significance into sharp focus. The hymns of the services on this day help us to see how the Church understands and celebrates the awesome mystery of Christ's passion and death.

Tropar from Good Friday Vespers: Noble and pious Joseph took you most pure body down from the cross, and then he wrapped it in a clean linen shroud. And with aromatic spices, carefully laid it in a new tomb.

April 5, 2015: Easter Sunday (Holy Feast of Pascha): On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is

the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling and unique teaching; His extraordinary works; and His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity. The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order." The profound experience of and the unshakable belief in the risen Lord enabled the Apostles to evangelize the world and empowered the Church to overcome paganism. The Resurrection discloses the indestructible power and inscrutable wisdom of God. It disposes of the illusory myths and belief systems by which people, bereft of divine knowledge, strain to affirm the meaning and purpose of their existence. Christ, risen and glorified, releases humanity from the delusions of idolatry. In Him grave-bound humanity discovers and is filled with incomparable hope. The Resurrection bestows illumination, energizes souls, brings forgiveness, transfigures lives, creates saints, and gives joy. The Resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. But it has revealed its powerlessness (Hebrews 2:14-15). We continue to die as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. "God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin." Thus, physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life - from this fallen world to God's reign. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity captive" (Psalm 67:19). All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:21-22). Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day. The Resurrection constitutes the most radical and decisive deliverance of humankind.

Troparion of Easter: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.

May 14, 2015: Ascension of our Lord-Always 40 days after Easter Sunday The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter). Since the date of Pascha changes each year, the date of the Feast of the Ascension changes. The Feast is always celebrated on a Thursday. The story of the Ascension of our Lord, celebrated as one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church, is found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 1:3-11. It is also mentioned in the Gospels of Mark (16:19) and Luke (24:50-53). The moment of the Ascension is told in one sentence: "He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). Christ made His last appearance on earth, forty days after His Resurrection from the dead. The Acts of the Apostles states that the disciples were in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared before them and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the "Promise of the Father". He stated, "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now"

(Acts 1:5). After Jesus gave these instructions, He led the disciples to the Mount of Olives. Here, He commissioned them to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is also at this time that the disciples were directed by Christ to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus also told them that He would be with them always, "even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). As the disciples watched, Jesus lifted up His hands, blessed them, and then was taken up out of their sight (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into heaven. Then one of the angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Tropar of the Ascension (Tone 4): You ascended in glory, O Christ our God; You delighted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through this blessing they were assured that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

May 24, 2015: Pentecost Sunday-Always 50 days after Easter Sunday: The Feast of Holy Pentecost is celebrated each year on the fiftieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter) and ten days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. The Feast is always celebrated on a Sunday. The Feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jewish tradition. It also celebrates the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the Apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day believed in the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Feast is also seen as the culmination of the revelation of the Holy Trinity. The story of Pentecost is found in the book of The Acts of the Apostles. In Chapter two we are told that the Apostles of our Lord were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound came from heaven like a rushing wind, filling the entire house where they were sitting. Then, tongues of fire appeared, and one sat upon each one of Apostles. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as directed by the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). This miraculous event occurred on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, celebrated by the Jews on the fiftieth day after the Passover as the culmination of the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10). The Feast of Weeks began on the third day after the Passover with the presentation of the first harvest sheaves to God, and it concluded on Pentecost with the offering of two loaves of unleavened bread, representing the first products of the harvest (Leviticus 23:17-20; Deuteronomy 16:9-10). Since the Jewish Feast of Pentecost was a great pilgrimage feast, many people from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem on this day. When the people in Jerusalem heard the sound, they came together and heard their own languages being spoken by the Apostles (Acts 2:5-6). The people were amazed, knowing that some of those speaking were Galileans, and not men who would normally speak many different languages. They wondered what this meant, and some even thought the Apostles were drunk (Acts 2:7-13). Peter, hearing these remarks, stood up and addressed the crowd. He preached to the people regarding the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He spoke about Jesus Christ and His death and glorious Resurrection. Great conviction fell upon the people, and they asked the Apostles, "What shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38-39). The Bible records that on that day about three thousand were baptized. Following, the book of Acts states that the newly baptized continued daily to hear the teaching of the Apostles, as the early Christians met together for

fellowship, the breaking of bread, and for prayer. Many wonderful signs and miracles were done through the Apostles, and the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Special Hymn for Pentecost Sunday: Heavenly King, Advocate, Spirit of Truth, who are everywhere present and fill all things. Treasury of Blessings, Bestower of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all that defiles us, and O Good One, save our souls.

June 29: Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul: The divinely-blessed Peter was from Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the son of Jonas and the brother of Andrew the First-called. He was a fisherman by trade, unlearned and poor, and was called Simon; later he was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who looked at him and said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)" (John 1:42). On being raised by the Lord to the dignity of an Apostle and becoming inseparable from Him as His zealous disciple, he followed Him from the beginning of His preaching of salvation up until the very Passion, when, in the court of Caiaphas the high priest, he denied Him thrice because of his fear of the Jews and of the danger at hand. But again, after many bitter tears, he received complete forgiveness of his transgression. After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he preached in Judea, Antioch, and certain parts of Asia, and finally came to Rome, where he was crucified upside down by Nero, and thus he ascended to the eternal habitations about the year 66 or 68, leaving two Catholic (General) Epistles to the Church of Christ.

Paul, the chosen vessel of Christ, the glory of the Church, the Apostle of the Nations and teacher of the whole world, was a Jew by race, of the tribe of Benjamin, having Tarsus as his homeland. He was a Roman citizen, fluent in the Greek language, an expert in knowledge of the Law, a Pharisee, born of a Pharisee, and a disciple of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and notable teacher of the Law in Jerusalem. For this cause, from the beginning, Paul was a most fervent zealot for the traditions of the Jews and a great persecutor of the Church of Christ; at that time, his name was Saul (Acts 22:3-4). In his great passion of rage and fury against the disciples of the Lord, he went to Damascus bearing letters of introduction from the high priest. His intention was to bring the disciples of Christ back to Jerusalem in bonds. As he was approaching Damascus, about midday there suddenly shone upon him a light from Heaven. Falling on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutes." And that heavenly voice and brilliance made him tremble, and he was blinded for a time. He was led by the hand into the city, and on account of a divine revelation to the Apostle Ananias (see Oct. 1), he was baptized by him, and both his bodily and spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness. In all these things his teaching proved to be a spiritual trumpet, and his speech was seen to be more radiant than the sun, and by these means he clearly sounded forth the word of truth and illumined the ends of the world.

Having completed the work of his ministry, he likewise ended his life in martyrdom when he was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Nero, at the same time, some say, when Peter was crucified.

Kondak, Tone 2: O Lord, you have received the steadfast preachers of the Good News, the leaders of your apostles, into the enjoyment of your goodness and repose. You have accepted their labours and death before any other sacrifice, for only you know the secrets of our hearts.

August 6: Transfiguration of our Lord: The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on August 6. The feast commemorates the transfiguration or

metamorphosis of Christ on Mount Tabor, when our Lord appeared in His divine glory before the Apostles Peter, James, and John. The event of the Transfiguration is recorded in three of the four Gospels: Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James, and John with Him up upon a mountain, and while they were on the mountain Jesus was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and His garments became glistening white. Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ, talking to Him. Peter declared how good it was for them to be there and expressed the desire to build three booths for Moses, Elijah, and Christ. This reference to the booths could imply that this occurred during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when the Jews would be camping out in the fields for the grape harvest; for this Feast had acquired other associations in the course of its history, including the memory of the wanderings in the wilderness recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus. While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them. A voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." When the disciples heard this they fell on their faces filled with awe. Jesus came to them and told them to not be afraid. When the three looked up they saw only Jesus. As Jesus and His disciples came down the mountain, He told them not to speak of what they had seen until He had risen from the dead.

TROPAR (TONE 7): You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, revealing as much of Your glory to your disciples as they could behold. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, let Your everlasting light also shine upon us sinners. O Giver of Light, glory be to You!

August 15: Dormition of the Mother of God: The Feast of the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15 each year. The Feast commemorates the repose (dormition and in the Greek *kimisis*) or "falling-asleep" of the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Feast also commemorates the translation or assumption into heaven of the body of the Theotokos. The Holy Scriptures tell us that when our Lord was dying on the Cross, He saw His mother and His disciple John and said to the Virgin Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" and to John, "Behold your mother!" (John 19:25-27). From that hour, the Apostle took care of the Theotokos in his own home. Along with the biblical reference in Acts 1:14 that confirms that the Virgin Mary was with the Holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the tradition of the Church holds that she remained in the home of the Apostle John in Jerusalem, continuing a ministry in word and deed. At the time of her death, the disciples of our Lord who were preaching throughout the world returned to Jerusalem to see the Theotokos. Except for the Apostle Thomas, all of them including the Apostle Paul were gathered together at her bedside. At the moment of her death, Jesus Christ himself descended and carried her soul into heaven. Following her repose, the body of the Theotokos was taken in procession and laid in a tomb near the Garden of Gethsemane. When the Apostle Thomas arrived three days after her repose and desired to see her body, the tomb was found to be empty. The bodily assumption of the Theotokos was confirmed by the message of an angel and by her appearance to the Apostles.

Tropar (Tone 1): O Mother of God, in giving birth you still preserved virginity; and in your falling asleep you did not forsake the world. You are the Mother of Life and have been transferred to life, and through your prayers have delivered our souls from death.