

**CATHOLICS  
AND UNITED  
METHODISTS  
TOGETHER:**

**we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.**



## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

What is the purpose of the United Methodist–Catholic dialogue? The scholars, pastors, and bishops of the dialogue are on a pilgrimage of faith, longing for the unity to which the Lord calls us: a full and visible communion as disciples. After fifty years of dialogue between bishops and theologians of the United Methodist Church and bishops and theologians of the Catholic Church, this most recent round of dialogue (2014-2020) focused on reception by Catholic parishes and United Methodist congregations of the fruits of our half-century of theological conversation. For that reason, the members of the dialogue have produced two sets of user-friendly documents in the hope of their adoption by local congregations and by ecumenical gatherings of United Methodists and Catholics in shared prayer, study, and service.

During these years we have searched for practical ways in which we can pray and worship together with fresh appreciation for our shared Christian beliefs. In addition, we identified numerous examples of our shared mission work with those experiencing poverty, natural disasters, incarceration, and disability. Our collaborating has been a sign of God's Spirit working among us to spread the love of Jesus Christ in the world.

The texts we offer for shared prayers, traditions, and liturgies contain materials drawn organically from the lives and churches of Catholics and United Methodists. The writers have discovered the pastoral need for these ecumenical devotions and services through their experiences in local churches and the witnesses of interchurch families. The resources are intended to strengthen the bonds of Christian faith, hope, and charity between us. We hope that readers are pleasantly surprised by our similarities.

The faith materials appear in the time-honored format of baptismal catechesis with commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Love Commandment. We, bishops and theologians, offer these texts as material for study groups, sacramental preparation, religious education programs, and ecumenical gatherings of Methodists and Catholics. The ecumenical movement is entering a new phase. While theological dialogues may and should continue for some time to come, it is now time for the dialogue to take on new life within and between our respective communities. The unity of Christ's church must take root in our hearts and bear fruit in shared learning, prayer, worship, and service within our faith communities.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

*Bishop David P. Talley, Roman Catholic Diocese of Memphis*  
*Bishop Peggy Johnson, Philadelphia Area of The United Methodist Church*

*Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act is a dialogue statement between representatives of the Catholic Church and the United Methodist Church. While it is not a statement of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and it has no authority beyond that of the dialogue commission itself, it has been received as a reference point for scholars and pastors in promoting unity and understanding. This document has been received by Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, chairman of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and authorized for publication by the undersigned.*

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**CATHOLICS AND UNITED METHODISTS TOGETHER:**  
**we believe, we pray, we act**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- BDUMC *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016.
- BRUMC *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016.
- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second ed., 1997
- EG Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), 2013
- GE Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (“Rejoice and Be Glad”; On the Call to Holiness in Today’s World), 2018
- GS *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1965
- LG *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 1964
- LS Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (On Care for our Common Home), 2015
- RCIA *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 1972
- RM *Roman Missal*, Third ed., 2002
- SC *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Liturgy), 1963
- SRS John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (On Social Concern), 1987
- UMBW *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.
- UMH *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.
- UR *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), 1964
- UUS John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (On Commitment to Ecumenism), 1995
- WJW *The Works of John Wesley*, various volumes and editors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-1983; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984—).

**Documents of the Dialogue between the United Methodist Church  
and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

- EC      *Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology—Divergent Practice*, 1981
- HEFG    *Heaven and Earth are Full of Your Glory: A United Methodist and Roman Catholic Statement on the Eucharist and Ecology*, 2012
- HLHD    *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, 1989
- HSOM    *Holiness and Spirituality of the Ordained Ministry*, 1976
- MCD     *Methodist–Catholic Dialogues: Thirty Years of Mission and Witness*. New York: The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns of the United Methodist Church; and Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2001.
- TDL     *Through Divine Love: The Church in Each Place and All Places*, 2005

**Documents of the International Commission for Dialogue  
between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church**

- Brighton    *Speaking the Truth in Love: Teaching Authority among Catholics and Methodists*, 2001
- Denver      *The Denver Report*, 1971
- Dublin      *The Dublin Report*, 1976
- Durban      *Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments*, 2011
- Honolulu    *The Honolulu Report*, 1981
- Houston     *The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory*, 2016
- Nairobi     *Towards a Statement on the Church*, 1986
- Rio          *The Word of Life: A Statement on Revelation and Faith*, 1996
- Seoul        *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*, 2006
- Singapore   *The Apostolic Tradition*, 1991
- Synthesis    *Synthesis: Together to Holiness. 40 Years of Methodist and Roman Catholic Dialogue*, 2010

English translations of Catholic documents may be found at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

All scriptural quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

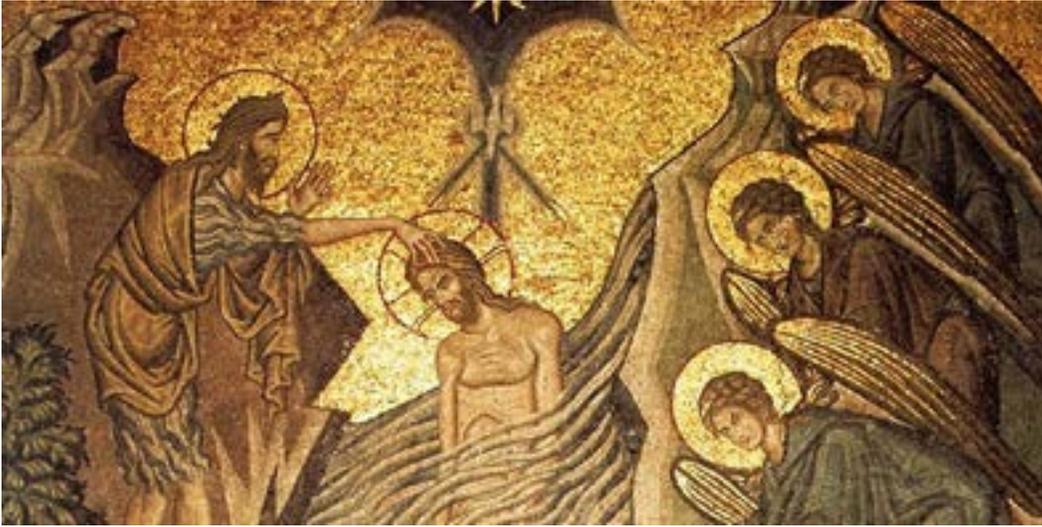
## INTRODUCTION

1. As Christians, baptized into Christ and looking forward to our complete union with him, we often wonder what distinguishes one Christian tradition from another. Many of us have a friend, child, parent, or spouse from another church tradition who has shown us Jesus Christ in our own lives, yet our church practices may be different and, in some cases, we cannot participate together at the same communion table. This set of documents bears witness to how United Methodists and Catholics already experience themselves as united by a common mission and a common witness to Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> and gives resources for local communities (parishes and congregations, families, or schools) who have reason to reflect on aspects of their unity and differences. The commentaries on these foundational and shared articles of faith are the fruit of fifty years of formal ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and United Methodists.

2. Scholars from both traditions prepared this document for United Methodists and Catholics who are seeking to carry out the mandate to live together “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3). These commentaries on common texts are meant to help United Methodists and Catholics believe, pray, and work together, while awaiting the unity that comes from Jesus Christ, who has called us and in whom we are baptized (Jn 10:16).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Seoul §39.



we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.

### Common Baptism and a Longing for Unity

3. For fifty years, United Methodists and Catholics in the United States and internationally have been engaged in formal conversations, learning from one another in order to work towards greater Christian unity to realize Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:20). One of the most important developments over these decades has been recognizing the validity of one another's Baptism and the partial unity that Catholics and United Methodists already share.

4. Both Catholics and Methodists were involved in grassroots ecumenical movements such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (annually January 18-25, starting in 1908). For Catholics, this work was often inspired by reflection on the universal ("catholic") character of Christ's church; for Methodists, it flowed from the "catholic spirit" of John and Charles Wesley and the other founders of the Methodist movement, who emphasized unity in charity with all Christians. John Wesley stated, "I inquire not ... whether, in the administration of Baptism, you agree with me ... my only question at present is this, 'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?'" (2 Kgs 10:15).<sup>2</sup>

5. A Methodist who came to join the Roman Catholic Church 100 years ago would have been "conditionally baptized" using the Latin formula that means, "If you have not already been baptized, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Official Catholic teaching held that Baptism in water in the name of the Trinity was valid, but offered no guidance for an alternate way of receiving already baptized Christians until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

<sup>2</sup> John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit" (Sermon 39), WJW, vol. 2, ed. Albert C. Outler (1985), 87 §11.

### PART I OUR COMMON BAPTISM

6. Vatican II officially affirmed the integrity of Christian Baptism among Eastern and Protestant Christians, mandated the creation of a rite for receiving baptized Christians that would not include conditional Baptism, and committed Catholics to formal and informal interchurch work and conversation.<sup>3</sup> As Christians from different churches have learned to love and trust one another better, they have come to hope in our “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:5-6). Together we have become more aware of the fellowship we share, and increasingly have longed for fuller acceptance, recognition, and unity.

7. Much like marriage and deep friendships, interchurch relationships are best motivated by a desire for the other partner to be more authentically who they are, not a desire to absorb them and eliminate their uniqueness. The ecumenical love received from the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Our full unity cannot yet be seen or imagined with specific detail, but nonetheless Catholics and United Methodists follow the example of Christ by pouring ourselves out for one another, hoping that God will raise up and perfect our efforts for the glory of his name.<sup>4</sup> In learning about and from one another, we become more fully ourselves in Christ.

### **A Common Statement on Baptism**

8. The Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church<sup>5</sup> in 2010 issued a synthesis statement bringing together the fruits of more than forty years of formal dialogue.<sup>6</sup> As is clear from that statement, Methodists/Wesleyans (including United Methodists) and Catholics already share a rich consensus on the character of Baptism. “Catholics and Methodists give full recognition to each other’s celebration of the sacrament of Baptism. Our common Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is our sacramental bond of unity, the visible foundation of the deep communion which already exists between us and which impels us to ever deeper unity with each other and participation in the life and mission of Christ himself.”<sup>7</sup>

9. Bound together by our baptismal unity in Christ, there is more that unites us than divides us. “It is the common scriptural faith of Catholics and Methodists that, in Baptism, we are made sharers in Christ’s paschal mystery. Baptism, properly celebrated, joins the baptized to

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<sup>3</sup> SC §69b; LG §15; and UR, for example, §§5-7, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Col 3:3; 1 Jn 3-4; Phil 2.

<sup>5</sup> Founded in 1881, the World Methodist Council is a consultative body and association of Methodist, Wesleyan, and United/Uniting denominations. The United Methodist Church is one among eighty members.

<sup>6</sup> The United Methodist–Catholic dialogue (between the United Methodist Church in the United States and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) was established in 1966. See <https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/united-states-conference-of-catholic-bishops> (Internet Search: United Methodist ecumenical dialogues) and <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/index.cfm>. The International Joint Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church began meeting in 1967. For more information, see [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index\\_methodist-council.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_methodist-council.htm) (Search: Vatican Methodist Dialogue) and <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/ecumenical-dialogues/> (Search: World Methodist Council ecumenical dialogues).

<sup>7</sup> Synthesis §94. See also the synthesis of several international dialogues made by Cardinal Walter Kasper in *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2009), especially pp. 164-68.

Christ, and therefore to one another, in spite of continued historical divisions among Christians.”<sup>8</sup>

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10. The introduction to the services of the baptismal covenant in the United Methodist *Book of Worship* (1992) reaffirms this faith: “Because Baptism initiates us into Christ’s whole Church and not only into a denomination, United Methodists recognize all Christian Baptisms and look upon Baptism as something that should unite, rather than divide, Christians.”<sup>9</sup> The introduction to the rite for the reception of baptized Christians into the Catholic Church likewise demands “that no greater burden than necessary (see Acts 15:28) is required for the establishment of communion and unity . . . . Any appearance of triumphalism should be carefully avoided.” The rite also includes a prayer for the ongoing witness of the churches from which the candidates come.<sup>10</sup>

11. In addition to recognizing one another’s Baptisms, United Methodists and Catholics have discovered and developed a shared understanding of the meaning of Baptism. By Baptism, received at any age from infancy to adulthood, persons are incorporated into the paschal mystery of Christ, that is, his passion, death, and resurrection. By this participation in the paschal mystery of Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are freed from slavery to sin and death.<sup>11</sup> We “put on Christ” like a robe and become members of his body, the church.<sup>12</sup> We receive new birth as children of God and are filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

12. Through Baptism, by God’s grace, we become children of God, being conformed to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. By our Baptism, Jesus is our Lord and Savior, our brother and friend. Like Jesus, we see the Father in the grandeur of creation, recognize his providence over time and history, and address our prayers to our Father in confident, childlike love. We experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, who calls us to Christian holiness, transforms us more and more into the image of Christ, and impels us to pray in Jesus’ name. In all these things, our common Baptism unites us.

### Shared Practices of Baptism

13. Roman Catholic and United Methodist practices of Baptism today have many common features, primarily because both churches revised their liturgies to emphasize ancient elements that are part of our shared (pre-Reformation) Christian tradition. The principal element of unity between Catholics and United Methodists is the trinitarian faith that shapes both our baptismal rites. We baptize “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy

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<sup>8</sup> Durban §28b.

<sup>9</sup> UMBW, 81.

<sup>10</sup> RCIA §496.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rom 6:3-11.

<sup>12</sup> Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13.

<sup>13</sup> Jn 3:5-6; Acts 2:38; Rom 5:5. See Synthesis §§89-94. A discussion of Baptism that broadly reflects the understanding of many Christian churches, including the Catholic Church and the United Methodist Church, appears in “Baptism,” *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (“Lima Text”) (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 2-7.

Spirit,” not “in the names,” because the three Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in their divine nature, holy action, and infinite love for the world.

14. The ancient Christian understanding of “name” connects power, calling, and relationships. Our baptismal rite begins with our given (sometimes called the “baptismal”) name and connects it to the name of the Trinity. From then on, our baptismal name is also a sign of our being called by the Father, our participation in the mission of Christ, and our reliance on the Holy Spirit. Both United Methodists and Catholics renew their baptismal identity in the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, as well as any time they say the Apostles’ Creed or the Lord’s Prayer (see §21 below). In these practices, we not only acknowledge our common Baptism; we also recognize our “‘real although not yet full’ communion” with one another and hope for a greater communion to come.<sup>14</sup>

15. By recovering ancient Christian practices, United Methodists now have the option of sharing with Roman Catholics in the use of the sign of the cross, the baptismal candle, the paschal candle, and the white garment. “New clothing is sometimes presented to those just baptized, particularly in the case of infants, as a symbol that we ‘have put on Christ.’”<sup>15</sup> Sometimes those being baptized are dressed in their white garments before the Baptism begins, but the image of being “clothed in Christ” (Gal 3:27) is made powerfully visible when the newly baptized are dressed in their baptismal garments during the liturgy.

16. Catholics and United Methodists also acknowledge that the life in Christ begun at Baptism continues to grow throughout the lifetime of a Christian.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, in addition to the practices done in both Catholic and United Methodist Baptisms, Catholics and United Methodists renew and recall Christian Baptism in various ways. Although these practices are distinctive within each communion, by recalling our common Baptism they also renew our bond with one another in Christ.

17. United Methodists formally renew their Baptism in baptismal remembrance services; they recall their Baptism in seasonal baptismal covenant renewal services, in the marriage rite, and at funerals.<sup>17</sup> Catholics formally renew their baptismal promises at the conclusion of the Lenten fast at the Easter liturgies; they recall their Baptism by making the sign of the cross, often with blessed water from a font; at confirmation, sacramental reconciliation (or confession), and in the rites for the sick and the dying, as well as at funerals. Although our ways of recalling and renewing our Baptism vary, we can be inspired by one another’s practices as we ever return to the font of grace.

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<sup>14</sup> UUS §45. For other Catholic witnesses to the real but incomplete unity of the Christian church, see LG §14; and CCC §838.

<sup>15</sup> UMBW, 91.

<sup>16</sup> Houston §§37, 41, 106; see also CCC §1254.

<sup>17</sup> UMBW, 111-14, 117, 139.

## Common Baptism and the Eucharist

18. In United Methodist and Catholic teaching, the Eucharist serves as an ongoing renewal of Baptism as well as its fulfillment and a foretaste of its completion when we will be completely one with Jesus Christ and one another.<sup>18</sup> United Methodists and Catholics have different emphases and theological explanations of Jesus Christ's presence among us in the Eucharist, but we both believe that Christ is truly and mysteriously present in the eucharistic gifts and in the gathered congregation.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, because United Methodists and Catholics do not yet share fully in eucharistic fellowship, celebrating the Eucharist can also be a painful reminder of our division.

19. The way we understand Christ's presence in the Eucharist differs, and these differences can become a source of confusion. "Methodists . . . speak of Christ's real presence in a spiritual sense. Yet Methodists seek not to define the mystery of the transformation of the bread and wine, and trust that the presence of Christ and the gift of his grace are 'sure and real' while the manner remains unknown."<sup>20</sup> The Catholic Church understands the gifts of bread and wine to change fully into the body and blood of Christ, even as all the sensory qualities of bread and wine (their smell, taste, texture, color, etc.) remain. This change occurs through the eucharistic prayer spoken by the priest or bishop, but is ultimately accomplished by the work of Jesus the incarnate Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the meaning of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Both Catholics and United Methodists recognize that Christ is also present in the worshipping community in other ways, including the reading of the scriptures, prayer, and singing.<sup>21</sup>

20. For United Methodists, the Lord's Supper is the Lord's table, and so they practice open communion for all baptized Christians.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, "[United] Methodists do not think it fitting for Christians 'to receive communion in any denomination at random, for communion with Christ is linked with membership of a local church."<sup>23</sup> For Catholics, unity with Jesus Christ and with the whole church of God includes a particular relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and with the other churches in communion with that body. In ordinary, non-emergency cases, Christians whose churches are not in full communion with the bishop of Rome do not receive communion at a Catholic Eucharist, and Catholics do not receive from ministers of other communions. There are exceptional cases in which communion is permitted by Catholic law, especially for Christians in imminent physical or moral danger (Canon 844). The pastors and faithful of the Catholic Church are concerned about how to care pastorally for families and communities who are painfully divided at the eucharistic

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<sup>18</sup> Jn 17:22-24. For the United Methodist position, see BRUMC ¶8031, *By Water and the Spirit*, "Baptism in Relation to Other Rites of the Church": "Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

<sup>19</sup> EC, 6-7; and Durban §§78-85.

<sup>20</sup> Durban §84.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mt 18:20. See also SC §7; and BRUMC ¶8032, *This Holy Mystery*, "Christ is Here: Experiencing the Mystery": "The Presence of Christ."

<sup>22</sup> BRUMC ¶8031, *By Water and the Spirit*, "Baptism in Relation to Other Rites of the Church": "Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

<sup>23</sup> MCD, 19, quoting Dublin §68.

table. By ongoing reflection on one another's church structures, the two churches will reach a greater understanding of how to express honestly a fuller communion. In the meantime, the pain of separation arouses in Christians a greater longing for unity, which is the work of the Holy Spirit among us.<sup>24</sup>

21. The acts of witnessing the Word of God together, of professing our faith, praying and singing together, and of giving thanks together in the eucharistic prayer, while not a substitute for the communion at the table, are things to appreciate deeply in the meantime. Whether fasting together or eating divided, United Methodists and Catholics should do so in the hope of further unity to come.<sup>25</sup> The unity of our Baptism expressed in common work, especially for the poor and marginalized, and in the fellowship of common meals outside of worship, dimly reflects the banquet table in the kingdom we hope to share.

### **Common Baptism and the Common Texts of the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Great Commandment**

22. The texts with commentaries in this document—the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Great Commandment—are among the most widely used and beloved texts in Christianity. Both Catholics and United Methodists have traditions of using them for public worship, private prayer, and reflection. In the early church, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer were formally delivered orally (*traditio*: “handed over”) to those who were preparing for Baptism in public ceremonies. Instructors interpreted the Prayer and the Creed for the candidates. At a later stage in their preparation, candidates “returned” (*reditio*) these texts through their own formal recitation. Candidates recited them publicly with the whole congregation at their Baptism and in common worship thereafter. During the Middle Ages, the Ten Commandments emerged as a third critical text for Christian formation, yet at the same time public recitation of the Creed and Lord's Prayer at Baptism began to disappear as infant Baptism displaced adult Baptism. Instead, Christians were expected to memorize all three texts, and preaching for lay people often included commentaries on these texts.

23. Both Catholic and the Protestant Reformation traditions retained and even expanded the emphasis on memorizing and commenting on the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments. These three texts supplied the essentials of faith, prayer, and moral action to mark every baptized Christian. The Roman Catholic Church's first catechism, produced following the Council of Trent (1566), had a commentary on the Creed, a section on the sacraments, a commentary on the Ten Commandments, and finally a commentary on the Lord's Prayer. Methodists in the United States received these three texts in the worship orders provided by John Wesley,<sup>26</sup> and though the orders eventually changed, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed continued to appear in worship orders, the latter especially in orders for Baptism. Methodist catechisms typically included all three texts.

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<sup>24</sup> Seoul §§66, 164.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Rom 14:8.

<sup>26</sup> John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (1784).

24. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church restored the catechumenate (process for sacramental initiation) for adults, including optional presentations and recitations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.<sup>27</sup> While at the font, the candidate affirms the Creed in question and answer form. For infant Baptism, too, the Creed (recited by parents and godparents) and the Lord's Prayer are important parts. The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is structured largely as commentary on the Creed (§§185-1065), the Ten Commandments (§§2052-2557), and the Lord's Prayer (§§2759-2865). The *Catechism*, similar to traditional treatments throughout history, frame the Ten Commandments in terms of Jesus' dual Great Commandment: to love God and to love your neighbor.

we believe,  
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25. The current services for the baptismal covenant in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* similarly include the Apostles' Creed, as does the congregational baptismal reaffirmation service. Regular worship in the United Methodist Church conducted according to the *Book of Worship* or the *United Methodist Hymnal*, whether Word and Table or a service only for the proclamation and preaching of the Word, also includes both the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.<sup>28</sup>

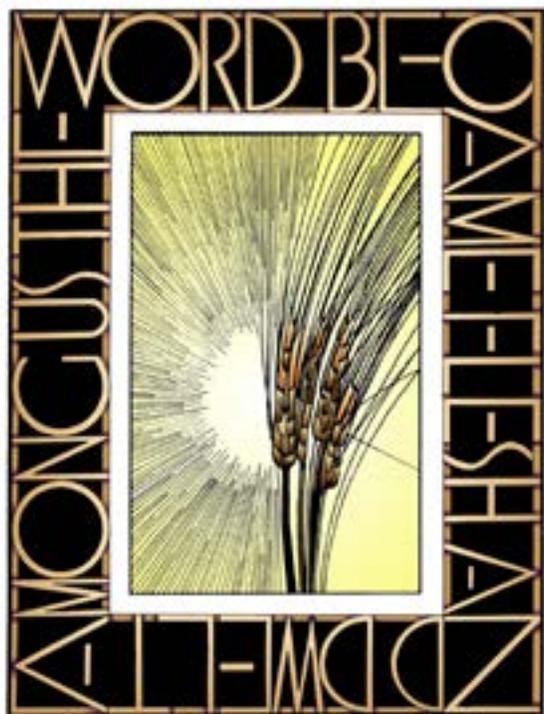
26. In Baptism, we are plunged into the divine life. Filled with the Holy Spirit and walking with Jesus our brother, we bring the love of the Father into the world. Throughout our lives as Christians, we are called to reaffirm our Baptism and turn to the triune God by reflecting on the foundations of our faith. As we grow nearer to God and one another in love, too, Baptism and the texts associated with it can light our way. These commentaries on the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Great Commandments are meant to help Catholics and United Methodists grow in their joy, mutual love, and unity in Jesus Christ.



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<sup>27</sup> RCIA §§157-63, 178-84, 193-96.

<sup>28</sup> The United Methodist Church, "The Services of the Baptismal Covenant of The United Methodist Church as Revised to Align with the 2008 Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions" (Nashville: General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, 2009), §9 and "Baptismal Covenant IV".



## I believe

27. “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief,” exclaimed the father of the epileptic boy (Mk 9:24). The confession “I believe” is a public profession of a living relationship with God, the source of all being, in whom we trust to find our ultimate fulfillment. Even the mysterious yearnings that lead men and women to search for God are a gift of grace. Faith is a gift freely given and freely received. Faith is an attitude of grateful reception of God’s grace and of self-commitment to the living Lord who guides the faithful through the action of the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Faith enables humans to discern God’s plan of salvation as described in the scriptures.<sup>30</sup>

### *An Act of the Whole Person*

28. While faith has an intellectual dimension in which we acknowledge revealed truth, it is above all else a commitment of the entire person, mind, heart, and spirit, to the God to whose goodness we surrender, trusting in divine care and guidance. Like those who sought healing, comfort, and forgiveness from Jesus, we turn to God for all our bodily and spiritual needs; and as we make our way through life, we seek divine counsel in prayer.<sup>31</sup> Faith also gives rise to hope in “things unseen” where our lives are hidden with Christ in God.<sup>32</sup>

### *Faith, Mystery, and Doubt*

29. The centurion trusted the healing of his servant would happen by a word from Jesus.<sup>33</sup> The man born blind directly experienced the healing power of God in Jesus.<sup>34</sup> The disciple whom Jesus loved, after entering the empty-tomb, “saw and believed.”<sup>35</sup> Christians, however, often experience a certain darkness or obscurity in their life with God. As Paul wrote, “we now see through a glass, darkly,” only later will “we see face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). Faith differs from objective, scientific knowledge because its proper content is the great mystery in which “we live and move and have our being” and in which “we feel our way” to God (Acts 17:27-28). In humility, faith admits its ignorance and embraces its dependence on God. Yet, simultaneously, faith is a bold venture into an unknown future with God at our side.<sup>36</sup> Because faith seeks understanding, devout questioning should be intrinsic to maturation in the Christian life.

30. Even strong faith can falter. Jesus chided his disciples for being “of little faith.”<sup>37</sup> Peter rejected Jesus’ prophecy that he would be a suffering servant, and on the night of Jesus’

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 8:14-16, 12:3.

<sup>30</sup> Rio §31; Col 1:26-29.

<sup>31</sup> Mt 6:11-13; Lk 11:13; Jn 14:13-17.

<sup>32</sup> Heb 11:1; Col 3:3. Also see below, “Resurrection of the Body” and “Life Everlasting.”

<sup>33</sup> Mt 8:5-13.

<sup>34</sup> Jn 9:24-38.

<sup>35</sup> Jn 20:8-10.

<sup>36</sup> Ps 23:4.

<sup>37</sup> Mt 8:26; 16:8; 17:20.

## *Witness to Unbelief*

*Our profession of faith also bears witness to the active presence of God in human life and history for an indifferent and unbelieving world (Jn 16:2; Acts 2). To a world that has lost hope, the church testifies to “an imperishable hope” (1 Pt 1:3-4) and to a fuller life in the Spirit. To those wracked with doubt, it offers an affirmation of life grounded in the Author of Life. In this challenging time for faith, the Creed serves as an anchor for Christian existence before God, so that we will not be “tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Peter warns us that our “adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour” (1 Pt 5:8). The Creed steadies our faith so that we can resist the evil powers of this world.*

*To an increasingly secularized culture, ignorant, skeptical, or even hostile to religion, the witness of Christian lives is very often more fruitful than our words. Our service with the poor, the disabled, migrants, the sick, and the imprisoned gives the strongest possible witness to Jesus’ Gospel teaching. “By this all men will know you are my disciples, that you love one another” (Jn 13:35; Acts 4:32). The church’s advocacy for justice and the defense of human rights everywhere demonstrates how God’s love for humanity exceeds that of human leaders and the securities of human societies.*

*(continues on sidebar, next page)*

trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter denied Jesus three times.<sup>38</sup> Famously, “Doubting Thomas” refused to believe Jesus had risen from the dead until he had first-hand proof.<sup>39</sup> When doubt undercuts our confidence for leading a Christian life and begins to eat away at our relationship to God, then we should pray earnestly for an increase in faith.<sup>40</sup> When our anxious drive for security, including intellectual certainty, threatens our trust in God, we can be confident that God will supply the faith we need, for, as Jesus promised, “the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26).<sup>41</sup>

## *The Church’s Faith*

31. The term “creed” derives from the Latin word *credo* or “I believe.” This is the answer candidates for Baptism give to the church’s point-by-point examination of their faith in God’s revelation. With our declaration “I believe” at our Baptism, we are joined to the whole company of saints united in its faith in Jesus.

32. Our profession of faith, especially in liturgical contexts, reaffirms our baptismal covenant.<sup>42</sup> Each person’s “I believe” participates fully in the communal “we believe” of Christ’s church. We share in the living faith of a community of those who, similar to Mary at the Annunciation, consent to God’s design for their lives;<sup>43</sup> who, like Peter, confess Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Mt 16:16); and who believe him to be “the Christ, the Son of God, the One who is to come into this world” (Jn 11: 27), as did Martha. Thus, we draw on the church’s great Tradition, which supplies what is lacking in our own faith and nourishes its growth. We also unite ourselves with “a great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) of Christians everywhere and across the ages.<sup>44</sup> Whenever we say, “we believe,” the life of the church is deepened and renewed.<sup>45</sup>

33. Traditionally, the church has expressed its faith in creedal form. The Apostles’ Creed is a gift handed on to the baptized as a symbol or mark of their active participation in the believing community.<sup>46</sup> Because the Spirit provides the church such abundant gifts of communion and understanding, the recitation of the Creed engenders in every age both unity of faith and diverse reflections upon that faith.<sup>47</sup> This Creed gathers together God’s gift of self-revelation and the church’s response.<sup>48</sup> It names the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as God,

<sup>38</sup> Mk 8:31-33; 14:66-72.

<sup>39</sup> Jn 20:24-29.

<sup>40</sup> Lk 12:32; 17:5; Mt 21:20-22; Jude v. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Lk 11:13; 12:22-31.

<sup>42</sup> In the Catholic tradition, the Easter Vigil and the Masses of Easter Day include a renewal of baptismal promises in question-and-answer format rather than in a recitation of the Creed.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Lk 1:38.

<sup>44</sup> See the section on “The Communion of Saints” below.

<sup>45</sup> Singapore §37.

<sup>46</sup> The Apostles’ Creed is canonical by virtue of its inclusion in baptismal rituals and catechesis. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, used in solemn liturgical settings, includes christological and trinitarian doctrines authorized by the two ecumenical councils that give the Creed its name. In the Roman Missal, the Nicene Creed is the preferred text with the Apostles’ Creed an option for celebrations on Sundays and important feasts.

<sup>47</sup> On the diversity in the church and reconciliation in the Spirit, see EG, esp. §131.

<sup>48</sup> Rio §34.

and it places the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus at the center of the faith that we believe.<sup>49</sup>

## Do you believe in God the Father Almighty? I believe...

### God the Father Almighty

34. Together, we believe in God. At the heart of our common faith is the self-disclosure of the triune God. We neither believe in the revelation of three gods, nor in one God revealed in three different ways. We believe in one God who is from eternity Father, Son, Holy Spirit<sup>50</sup> and who has revealed God's self to us.<sup>51</sup> We address this God when in the eucharistic celebration we sing "Holy, holy, holy" (Is 6:3; Rv 4:8). Our shared hymns also tell of the wonderful mystery of the triune God's oneness of being and communion of persons.

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!*

35. We call God Father because Jesus prayed and taught his disciples to pray "Abba, Father,"<sup>52</sup> and revealed his own mission as from his Father.<sup>53</sup> The solemn prologue to the Gospel of John uses the language of the Word to express the same reality: "In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). Ignatius of Antioch, a successor of Saint Peter at Antioch, wrote with a sense of the unutterable transcendence of God as the great Silence out of which the Word is spoken.<sup>54</sup> We believe that from eternity God is the Father of the Son.

36. When we call God "Father Almighty," we express our belief in God as the source of all being, the governor of the created order,<sup>55</sup> and the sovereign Lord of history,<sup>56</sup> who guarantees that evil and sin will not have the final word.<sup>57</sup> We believe that God's power is not that of a despot but of a loving parent.<sup>58</sup> In God, power and mercy, justice and love are united.<sup>59</sup> "He never treats us, never punishes us as our guilt and our sins deserve" (Ps 103:10).<sup>60</sup> The scriptural affirmation of God's paradoxical nature—both powerful and compassionate, at

*At the same time, Catholics and United Methodists should be keen to admit and correct the faults of our churches, from the legacy of slavery to cover-ups of sexual abuse, which undermine the credibility of the church's Gospel witness. Confession, repentance, and reform are effective antidotes to the fading of faith that often comes in the wake of scandal.*

*Finally, Catholics and United Methodists should continue to witness to the Gospel in public life, especially in culture-shaping fields such as journalism, science, the arts, education, and entertainment. These disciplines form the narratives that guide the ways people lead their lives. Communities of faith must be present in these arenas helping to bridge their narratives with Christ's Gospel, challenging and correcting them when necessary, and exploring new ways for embedding the Gospel in cultural life.*

<sup>49</sup> Brighton §11.

<sup>50</sup> "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19) is the baptismal formula dating from the earliest days of the church.

<sup>51</sup> Ex 3:13-15; Jn 8:24; Mt 3:15-17; Lk 9:34-35.

<sup>52</sup> Mt 6:9; Lk 10:21; Jn 17: 5, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Mt 16:17; Jn 5:36-38; 10:25-30.

<sup>54</sup> Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians* §19.

<sup>55</sup> Gn 1:1; Ps 148; Jb 38-39; Jer 32:16-18.

<sup>56</sup> Prv 16:9; Ws 7:15-20; 10:1-12:32; Ps 115:30; Is 46:8-13; Dn 3:34; Mt 24:36; Eph 1:11.

<sup>57</sup> Rom 8:31-39; 1 Jn 4:4.

<sup>58</sup> Ps 103:1-14; Mi 7:18-19; Lk 15:11-32.

<sup>59</sup> Ps 145; 103, esp. vv. 8-12.

<sup>60</sup> Ps 103:10 (Jerusalem Bible). Cf. Is 55:8-9; Lk 5:22; 15:11-32.

once just and merciful—should be a reminder to us not to judge rashly, confusing our own standards with God’s judgments and purposes.<sup>61</sup> Finally, God, out of creative goodness, provides for the needs of all creation. Divine providence extends to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field.<sup>62</sup> Jesus points out that if flawed human beings know how to feed their children, “how much more will [our] Father in heaven give things to those who ask him” (Mt 7:11; cf. 1 Jn 5:14-15).

### **Creator of heaven and earth**

37. Catholics and United Methodists believe that God freely created all things visible and invisible and lovingly sustains their existence.<sup>63</sup> Christians affirm that God made all things *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing,” thereby asserting God as the sole source of all that is.<sup>64</sup> All creation owes its being, as well as its ordering, to God, and not to any pre-existing matter as the ancient Greeks believed.

38. Because God the creator is all good, everything God has created is essentially good.<sup>65</sup> God shows care to all creatures.<sup>66</sup> Creatures are wholly dependent on God. When they fail, God revives them and brings them to fulfillment.<sup>67</sup> In particular, God loves humanity so much that he sent the Son to save us from our sins.<sup>68</sup> The powers of heaven and earth do his will,<sup>69</sup> but to humans he gives freedom, and it is with that human freedom that evil enters the world.<sup>70</sup>

### *Knowledge of God from Creation*

39. Creation is God’s *first* gift; it is the first sign of God’s glory and God’s love.<sup>71</sup> In this universe, all creatures relate to their creator and to each other: heavenly ones such as angels, and earthly ones like humans, animals, plants, and rocks. The praise of the triune God is more than a human affair. When we join Saint Francis of Assisi in singing God’s praise, we are joined in chorus by brother sun, sister moon, and mother earth.<sup>72</sup>

40. In the hidden heights and depths of creation, people have sensed God’s presence. Throughout history and in every religious tradition, poets, artists, philosophers, and mystics have given expression to that awe and wonder.<sup>73</sup> To Christian eyes, the world is an intro-

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<sup>61</sup> Mt 7:1-5; Rom 2:1-4; 1 Cor 4:5.

<sup>62</sup> Mt 6:26-29; 5:44-45.

<sup>63</sup> Gn 1:1; 2:1; Pss 148:5-6; 33:8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Eccl 42:14.

<sup>65</sup> Gn 1:10, 12, 19, etc.; Mark 10:8.

<sup>66</sup> Ps 104; Jas 1:17.

<sup>67</sup> Ps 104; Jn 15:11; 1 Jn 1:4.

<sup>68</sup> Jn 3:16-17; Rom 8:32.

<sup>69</sup> Ps 103:20-22; Is 44:28-45:6; 55:10-11; Heb 1:14; 2 Cor 9:10-12.

<sup>70</sup> Gn 3; Eccl 15:11-21; Rom 5:18-19.

<sup>71</sup> Gn 2:15-17; 9:1-17.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Ps 148; Dn 3:57-90; Saint Francis of Assisi, “The Canticle of the Sun.” The “Song of the Three Young Men” in Daniel (3:57-90) is not included in most Protestant Bibles.

<sup>73</sup> HEFG §13; also Eccl 42:25-43:27; Jb 26:14; Acts 17:24, 27-28; Rom 1:19-20.

ductory guidebook to the holy mysteries, an itinerary leading into the beauty of the creating God.<sup>74</sup> Christ shows us fully what it means to live in the constant awareness of the gift of existence, to realize that we have received all that we are from the Father.<sup>75</sup>

**we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.**

### *Creation and Redemption*

41. Creation, condemned to frustration because of sin, is made new in Christ. For, in him, God's eternal purpose for human beings to become "children of God" has been achieved,<sup>76</sup> and with it all creation is renewed.<sup>77</sup> Opened to the gracious presence of God and in communion with him, the divine image in humanity is restored and elevated for we are one with God in Christ, so that our action is of lasting significance.<sup>78</sup> For in our sufferings and in our service, we build up the body of Christ until God will be all in all.<sup>79</sup>

42. Humanity's vocation to be stewards of the mysteries of salvation does not diminish our original call to be stewards of creation, but makes it still more binding.<sup>80</sup> In particular, the extinction of species deprives God of receiving glory and praise from the very fact of their existence.<sup>81</sup> All of us have something to contribute to the care of creation.<sup>82</sup> All of us must contribute to the protection of the earth, God's garden and our common home.

### **Do you believe in Jesus Christ? I believe...**

#### **Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord**

43. We, together, believe in Jesus Christ. Believing in Christ is first and foremost loving him and putting our trust in him as Savior, brother, and guide. The word "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah" and means "anointed one." It is not originally a name, but a role and also a Jewish hope. To be anointed means to be set apart for a particular mission on behalf of the entire people of God. In Israel, priests, kings, and prophets were anointed.<sup>83</sup> In Luke's Gospel, Jesus declares himself the anointed one when, after reading a passage from the Prophet Isaiah (Is 61:1-2), he states, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your midst" (Lk 4:14-21). On the eve of his passion, he sees himself as the last of God's rejected prophets.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ps 8:5-6; HEFG §13.

<sup>75</sup> HEFG §10.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Jn 1:11, 3:16; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:6-7; Eph 1:11.

<sup>77</sup> Rom 8:22-23; Eph 1:9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Jn 14:23; Eph 3:16-19; 1 Cor 15:49; 1 Jn 3:2; cf. GS §39.

<sup>79</sup> Col 1:24; Eph 4:11, 16; 1 Cor 15: 24-28.

<sup>80</sup> 1 Cor 4:1-2; Lk 12:42-44; Gn 1:28-31.

<sup>81</sup> LS §33.

<sup>82</sup> LS §14.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Ex 28:41; 1 Sm 15:1; Is 61:1.

<sup>84</sup> Lk 13:33-35; Mt 23:36-37.

44. Peter professed Jesus to be “the Christ, the son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). At the graveside of Lazarus his sister Martha made the same declaration, specifically naming Jesus as “the one who is to come” (Jn 11:23-27). At Pentecost, moreover, Peter proclaims to the crowds, “Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know that God had made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). These professions point to Jesus himself as the object of the church’s faith and the heart of Gospel preaching.<sup>85</sup>

45. We believe the Son of the Father is the Eternal Word who is God from all eternity.<sup>86</sup> In the Gospel of John (8:58), Jesus declares, “before Abraham was, I AM,” placing himself on a par with the Father. The only begotten Son of God is also our Lord. The term “Lord” is closely identified with the revelation of God’s most hallowed name to Moses.<sup>87</sup> By calling him Lord, we profess his divinity and his power over evil.<sup>88</sup> More than that, by confessing him as our Lord, we denounce all the false lords and gods that may take control over our lives.<sup>89</sup> God’s only Son is our Lord; he alone is our Alpha and Omega, our beginning and end.<sup>90</sup> Our affirmation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is God’s gift, because “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

### **Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary**

46. To save us and to reconcile us to himself, God sent his own Son, so that those who believe in him may have eternal life.<sup>91</sup> He, being eternally begotten of the Father, is truly divine.<sup>92</sup> Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary, he was truly human.<sup>93</sup> As a “descendant of David,” he was the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes and of divine promise.<sup>94</sup> He was “in every respect tested as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).<sup>95</sup>

47. In Christ, the true vocation of every human being is revealed. Since “all things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1:16), everything finds in him its direction and destiny. Born of God, he gave to all who believe in him “the power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12).<sup>96</sup> By the Holy Spirit, the vocation of every human being can be realized.<sup>97</sup> The Holy Spirit will bring to completion the final conformity of Christians to Christ in the resurrection of the dead on the final day.<sup>98</sup> Even now Christians share in the glory of the risen Lord.<sup>99</sup> In time and in history, the end is near, even though not fully here.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Acts 2:20; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3.

<sup>86</sup> Jn 1:1-3.

<sup>87</sup> Ex 3:14.

<sup>88</sup> Mt 12:25-29; Eph 6:10-12.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 8:5-6.

<sup>90</sup> Rev 1:8.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:18; Jn 3:16-17; 1 Jn 3:9-10.

<sup>92</sup> Mt 1:18; Lk 1:34-36; Jn 1:11-14.

<sup>93</sup> Mt 1:24-25.

<sup>94</sup> Durban §10; also Mt 1:1-17, 20-21; Lk 2:29-32, 36-38.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. 1 Jn 3:15.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Jn 1:22-23; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Rom 8:14-17; Eph 1:5.

<sup>97</sup> Rom 8:1-4, 10-11.

<sup>98</sup> Rom 8:18-30; Gal 5:22-26; Phil 3:20-21.

<sup>99</sup> 1 Cor 2:10-15.

<sup>100</sup> Mk 13:33; see §56 below. Also Houston §38.

48. Within the history of salvation which culminates in Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary plays a unique role.<sup>101</sup> Her virginal conception of Jesus highlights the grace and wonder of God's new creation in Christ.<sup>102</sup> She is Jesus' mother, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), holy exemplar of contemplation, advocate for the poor and lowly, and first among the disciples.<sup>103</sup> Every aspect of her life plays an important part in our salvation.<sup>104</sup> By God's grace, she was enabled freely and courageously to say her "Let it be" (*Fiat*; Lk 1:38), to God's invitation to bear the incarnate Word in her womb. Her exemplary discipleship invites others to heed God's call to them.<sup>105</sup>

49. By becoming incarnate, the Word made flesh is the ultimate norm of all the church's life and doctrine.<sup>106</sup> Jesus Christ orients all that is done and taught in the church towards the praise and worship of God the Father, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. He is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2), a forerunner for all who would receive eternal life by participation in his death and resurrection.<sup>107</sup> At the last day, those who live in Christ will be raised into the fullness of his everlasting kingdom.<sup>108</sup>

50. Jesus' mission was both to proclaim and to be God's salvation. He was sent to announce that God was coming to release the people from captivity to the powers of evil, sin, and death, and to heal their suffering and wounds.<sup>109</sup> What Jesus preached, he did. He set free those possessed by evil spirits and released those who suffered from guilt and alienation. He blessed the poor and gave them the assurance that God was with them and that his kingdom would belong to them.<sup>110</sup>

**Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead**

51. The naming of Pontius Pilate in the Creed may startle us. He is one of the three people named in the Creed along with Jesus and Mary. This naming is no accident, for it locates the saving events of our faith in history. The passion of Christ does not happen in a mythical time and place but in Jerusalem when Pilate was governor of Judea. Jesus died on a Roman cross accused of a political crime.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Lk 1:46-55.

<sup>102</sup> Methodist Church of Great Britain/Roman Catholic Committee, *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Sign of Grace, Faith, and Holiness. Towards a Shared Understanding* (London: CTS Publications; and Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1995), 13 §28.

<sup>103</sup> Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-29, 46-55; 2:19, 51; Acts 1:12-14.

<sup>104</sup> Houston §127.

<sup>105</sup> Houston §§57, 163. Also, see the sidebar on "Cloud of Witnesses" in Part IV below.

<sup>106</sup> Phil 2:1-8.

<sup>107</sup> Durban §136.

<sup>108</sup> Synthesis §8; also Rom 6:2-4; Phil 3:9-10; Col 3: 2-4.

<sup>109</sup> Lk 4:14-22.

<sup>110</sup> Lk 7:20-22; Rio §77.

<sup>111</sup> Mt 27:37.

52. At the heart of our common faith lies the conviction that Jesus gave his life upon the cross for our salvation and that the Father raised him from death to a new and glorious life that he seeks to share with all humankind.<sup>112</sup> Jesus' earthly ministry culminated in the paschal mystery of his saving death and resurrection that completely fulfills his threefold office as priest, prophet, and king.<sup>113</sup> Every aspect of his earlier ministry points towards this event. The anointing that Jesus received at his Baptism in the Jordan River when the Spirit of the Lord descended upon him finds completion at Calvary when he commends his Spirit back to the Father.<sup>114</sup>

53. Jesus suffered and died on the cross, enduring the full extent of human alienation in order to redeem it. Jesus' relation to the one he called Father comes into sharpest focus around his death.<sup>115</sup> This focus helps us see that salvation has inseparable individual and social dimensions. Salvation involves relationship to God and to our fellow human beings, and the transformation in Christ of both the human person and human society. Christ did not die alone. He was crucified with two criminals and dies in solidarity with all who suffer—the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the excluded, and the discarded. God's saving work in Christ is not restricted in scope, but reaches towards the entire created order.<sup>116</sup> The divine love that enables us to live in partnership with each other also calls us to a common mission to witness to and proclaim this love in the world.<sup>117</sup>

### **On the third day he rose again**

54. "Christ is risen!"—this is the very core of the good news. Through Christ's death and resurrection we are freed from our bondage in order to live in the fullness of life for which God made us.<sup>118</sup> The resurrection confirms the identity of Jesus as the revelation of the triune God. He is the Son of God. Raised from the dead by the Father in the Spirit, Jesus is victorious over death.<sup>119</sup> The assurance of Christ's triumph over evil and sin gives new hope to the Christian who desires to see God face to face and whose life in Christ anticipates the final resurrection.<sup>120</sup> The joy of the resurrection moves our hearts to praise together using the words of Charles Wesley:

*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!*

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<sup>112</sup> Jn 3:17; 18:37; Synthesis §8.

<sup>113</sup> Jn 12:12-16; 18:37.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. §43 above.

<sup>115</sup> Rio §22.

<sup>116</sup> Synthesis §14.

<sup>117</sup> TDL §30.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Jn 10:10; Durban §10.

<sup>119</sup> Rio §26.

<sup>120</sup> Houston §144.

*Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!*<sup>121</sup>

**we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.**

55. The risen Christ continues to abide with his disciples. As on the road to Emmaus, we encounter Christ in the reading of scripture, in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread.<sup>122</sup> This encounter has the power to transform our bewilderment, anxiety, and doubt into understanding, encouragement, and sure faith.<sup>123</sup>

### **He ascended into heaven; he is seated at the right hand of the Father**

56. Christ ascends to the presence of the Father in heaven.<sup>124</sup> In his ascension, the glory of the resurrection is made complete in his communion with the Father.<sup>125</sup> At the Father's side, he sends the Holy Spirit and gifts to his people.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, even as he ascends, Christ remains intimately close to us.<sup>127</sup> The risen Christ is present at the heart of the life of his church, working in and through the church, which he unites with himself as a communal sign and instrument of his saving presence.<sup>128</sup> Christ declared that he would be present in the midst of two or three gathered in his name, and he promised to be always with his faithful followers until the end of time.<sup>129</sup> By placing all our hope in these promises of Christ and the guidance of the Spirit, we trust the sacramental presence of Christ that the church celebrates and embodies.<sup>130</sup> The one crucified, risen, and ascended is the host of his supper and is present there in the fullness of his being, both human and divine.<sup>131</sup> He now lives forever, exercising a perpetual priesthood, making intercession for us.<sup>132</sup>

### **He will come again to judge the living and the dead**

57. The fullness of the Gospel challenges us to hold God's mercy and justice together.<sup>133</sup> On the day of judgement, a person will stand before the holiness of God and their life's story will be laid bare.<sup>134</sup> Both holy living and the failures of sin will be revealed before the Lord, who commanded us to love God and neighbor, to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and those in prison.<sup>135</sup> God

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<sup>121</sup> UMH #302.

<sup>122</sup> Lk 24:13-35.

<sup>123</sup> Durban §93.

<sup>124</sup> Mt 24:36; Lk 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-10.

<sup>125</sup> Jn 14:10-11.

<sup>126</sup> Jn 14:16, 26; Eph 4:8.

<sup>127</sup> Jn 14:16-21; 15:7-17.

<sup>128</sup> Seoul §77.

<sup>129</sup> Mt 18:20, 28:20; Durban §78.

<sup>130</sup> Durban §23.

<sup>131</sup> Lk 14-18; Rv 3:20; Durban §78.

<sup>132</sup> Heb 7:24-25; Seoul §131.

<sup>133</sup> Lk 15:11-32; Jn 8:2-11.

<sup>134</sup> Mt 12:35-37.

<sup>135</sup> Mk 12:30-31; Mt 25:31-46.

bestows upon each one of us the gift of freedom so that there is always the possibility of accepting or rejecting God's gracious gift of salvation and the call to holiness.<sup>136</sup>



## Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? I believe...

### The Holy Spirit

58. Together, we believe in the Holy Spirit as God. In the Bible, impersonal images often describe the Spirit: wind, water, fire, a dove. Even so, the Spirit is a person, “another advocate” similar to Jesus.<sup>137</sup> The Holy Spirit is fully and perfectly divine, just as are the Father and the Son, possessing as they do all the divine attributes.

59. The Holy Spirit has always existed, and there will never be a time when the Spirit ceases to be.<sup>138</sup> The Spirit was active at the creation and spoke through the prophets.<sup>139</sup> The divine Spirit was present at the conception of Jesus, at his Baptism,<sup>140</sup> and during his entire public ministry.<sup>141</sup> A new stage in the work of the Spirit began following Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, namely the founding of the church.<sup>142</sup>

60. The Spirit seals the adoption of believers enabling us to call God “Father” and to confess Jesus as Lord.<sup>143</sup> The Holy Spirit makes us holy by uniting us to God through the gifts of faith, hope, and love, and by dwelling within us so that we might bear the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>144</sup>

### The Holy Catholic Church

61. The church is a mystery rooted in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the saving life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Word. Scripture offers a bountiful cornucopia of imagery to elucidate this blessed communion: the people of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the household of God, and others. The church as a gathered community participates in the life of God. The church as a sent community participates in the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the church never creates itself. It is an initiative of the Holy Trinity and belongs to the realm of God’s grace. As members of Christ’s church, and in communion with Christians throughout the

<sup>136</sup> Houston §149.

<sup>137</sup> Jn 14:16.

<sup>138</sup> Honolulu §8.

<sup>139</sup> Gn 1:2; Is 42:1; 61:1-6.

<sup>140</sup> Mk 1:9, 11; Mt 1:18-20, 3:13-17; Lk 1:35, 3:12-13.

<sup>141</sup> Honolulu §13.

<sup>142</sup> Acts 2:1-13; Honolulu §13.

<sup>143</sup> Rom 8:15, 10:30.

<sup>144</sup> 1 Cor 12:1-11.

<sup>145</sup> Seoul §51.

ages, we share in the life and paschal mystery of the incarnate Son, upheld by the Spirit of God.<sup>146</sup>

**we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.**

62. We confess the church as holy and catholic. These two descriptors are marks of God’s continuing and faithful presence in the church. The Nicene Creed adds “one” and “apostolic” to these marks. These marks are both gifts and goals for Christians as a pilgrim people,<sup>147</sup> for they are already present but not fully realized.<sup>148</sup> When we confess the church as holy we do not deny that it is a community of weak and vulnerable human beings who often fail and fall, individually and collectively. Yet, we also believe that God remains faithfully present to the church.<sup>149</sup> Its holiness is a gift derived from and dependent on God.<sup>150</sup> Its holiness offers no grounds for boasting, but imparts on it an obligation to serve God by a life of prayer and surrender to divine grace, and by compassionate attention to the needs of all.<sup>151</sup> In other words, the holiness of the church is not just a gift; it is also a task.

63. The church is also catholic, that is, universal. The fullness and universality of the church is evidenced in the great commission, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19), and in the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost on peoples of many nations.<sup>152</sup> It is evident in the variety of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given the church in order to equip the different members of the body for ministry.<sup>153</sup> This same Spirit leads us into all truth, and enables us to bear witness to salvation in Christ. At the last God will triumph over sin and death and in fulfillment of his pledge of the Spirit bring all who love him to unending glory.<sup>154</sup>

### **The Communion of Saints**

64. The communion of saints includes all the baptized, living and dead. The saints in heaven praise God, while the saints on earth join them in their praise through prayer, song, and worship, especially in the Eucharist. Recognized within this communion is the exemplary presence of divine grace in specific persons whose words and holy living—even to the shedding of their blood for Jesus—testify to the transforming action of the Spirit. This “cloud of witnesses” transcends denominational divisions.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, God’s grace overflows the bounds of the visible church; the communion of saints includes people who never had the opportunity for Baptism but whom God desired to invite into his eternal fellowship. There is a sense of solidarity with the saints above as faithful Christians who have lived the gospel

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<sup>146</sup> Seoul §51.

<sup>147</sup> On the pilgrim nature of the church, see LG, chapter 7: “The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Heavenly Church.”

<sup>148</sup> Seoul §66.

<sup>149</sup> Seoul §50.

<sup>150</sup> HSOM §III.

<sup>151</sup> HSOM §IV.

<sup>152</sup> Acts 2:1-15.

<sup>153</sup> 1 Cor 12:4; Honolulu §20.

<sup>154</sup> Honolulu §21.

<sup>155</sup> Singapore §66.

and become holy during their lives.<sup>156</sup> The living faithful continue to cherish the witness and example of saints from the past who still inspire holy living.<sup>157</sup>

### **The forgiveness of sins**

65. The Holy Spirit brings about the forgiveness of sins because of the Spirit's role to teach us, the disciples of Jesus, all things necessary for our salvation and bring to our remembrance all that Jesus said.<sup>158</sup> Jesus called sinners to repent and offered forgiveness to all who were willing to receive it. Through the blood of the cross, Jesus reconciled all things, whether on earth or in heaven.<sup>159</sup> In these and many ways, Jesus showed himself to be the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, bears witness to Jesus and enables us to be witnesses in our turn.<sup>160</sup> By guiding us into all the truth and declaring the things that are to come, the Spirit so glorifies Jesus.<sup>161</sup> The Holy Spirit shows the wrongness of the fundamental sin: lack of faith in Jesus.<sup>162</sup> When we receive the Spirit in our lives, our hearts fill with the Holy Spirit and we can call God "*Abba*, Father." Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to pray, "Our Father" and "Forgive us our sins," and helps us to pray conscious of weakness but fully confident of God's merciful love for us in Christ.<sup>163</sup> The Holy Spirit is both our helper and our advocate who pleads for us and brings about repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.<sup>164</sup>

### **The resurrection of the body**

66. Death came into the world with sin, but not even death can separate a person from the love of Jesus Christ.<sup>165</sup> The risen Christ enjoys "the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep" and then "all who belong to him" (1 Cor 15:20-23). Our personal identity continues from this world to the next even as there is discontinuity between life on earth and in heaven.<sup>166</sup> We believe, moreover, that God's creative power will reunite body and soul at the general resurrection after the pattern of Jesus Christ.<sup>167</sup> Our life attains its ultimate purpose in union with God in the communion with the risen Christ.<sup>168</sup> Then our bodily and spiritual healing will be complete in perfect wholeness and holiness.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Durban §143.

<sup>157</sup> See the sidebar on "Cloud of Witness" in Part IV below.

<sup>158</sup> Jn 14:26.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Col 1:20.

<sup>160</sup> Jn 15:26-27.

<sup>161</sup> Jn 16:13-14.

<sup>162</sup> Jn 16:8-11; Honolulu §17.

<sup>163</sup> Honolulu §16.

<sup>164</sup> Singapore §30; also Jn 14:16; Rom 8:26-27; 2 Cor 5:11-19.

<sup>165</sup> Rom 5:12; 8:38-39.

<sup>166</sup> 1 Cor 15:45-53.

<sup>167</sup> Durban §146; cf. 1 Cor 15:49-53; Gal 5:22-23.

<sup>168</sup> Jn 17:24-26.

<sup>169</sup> HLHD I.6.

## Life everlasting

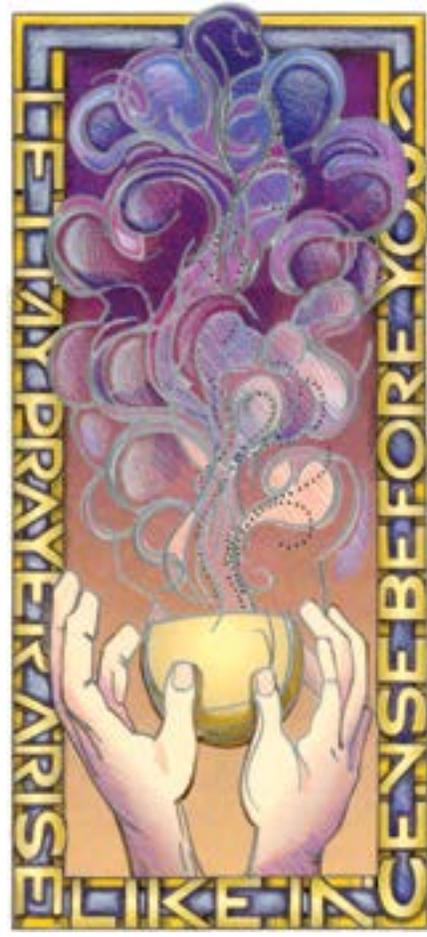
67. The hope of resurrection leads us to look to the time when “death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,” and all things will be made new (Rv 21:4-5). Eternal life is to know the Father and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; it is the ultimate fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme happiness and bliss in union with God.<sup>170</sup> Our Christian hope is that “we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thes 4:7). This common hope keeps the promise of eternal life alive in our hearts and impels us to evangelize the world.<sup>171</sup>

we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.

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<sup>170</sup> Jn 17:3-4; Durban §165.

<sup>171</sup> Durban §189.



### **“Lord, teach us to pray”**

68. A Christian is one who stands before God in prayer. Both United Methodists and Catholics acknowledge that first and foremost we are Christians, whom God has received by grace through faith and whom God invites into an ongoing conversation. God asks us to offer the deepest desires of our hearts in prayer. By thanksgiving and petition, we confess that all we have and all we are come to us as good and gracious gifts “from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (Jas 1:17).

69. By grace, God created the world through the Word, and sustains its vitality through the presence of the Spirit. The grace evident in creation and the ongoing sustaining power of the Spirit acts as an “enduring witness” to the mystery of God’s self-giving, and points all humanity beyond itself to the origin and meaning of its existence.<sup>172</sup> This enduring witness draws persons to seek after God and to pray. In Christ, the Word made flesh, God’s presence to the world is fully revealed, and from Christ’s fullness we truly learn what it is to pray to the Father, whom Christ alone has seen and made known to us.<sup>173</sup> In him the fullness of our need and of God’s response to this need are finally disclosed.

70. Thus, like those first disciples, we must begin with the petition, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk 11:1). The “Our Father,” or Lord’s Prayer, is Christ’s answer to this petition. This prayer, in the version from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 6:9-13), has been the heart of all Christian prayer throughout the centuries, finding a place in a wide variety of the most significant liturgical and devotional practices of the faith, including liturgies for daily prayer and the Eucharist. In the early days of the church, receiving the gift of the Our Father went hand in hand with reception into the church through Baptism (see “Part I: Our Common Baptism”). One’s newly acquired baptismal identity was marked, in part, by standing in the congregation to recite the Lord’s Prayer with all the faithful for the first time. Even today, we affirm the central connection between this prayer and the new identity we receive in our Baptisms. The Lord’s Prayer is a school of prayer; to pray it is to rehearse our identity as children of God by adoption,<sup>174</sup> in fellowship with the church throughout time and space. Together with all Christians whose lives are marked by this prayer, Methodists and Catholics pray in boldness and with confidence:

### **Our Father, who art in heaven**

71. The quintessential Christian prayer given to us by the Lord himself is a corporate prayer. Even when this prayer is offered in a private devotional setting as it often is in both our traditions, it is offered in fellowship with all those who call upon “our Father.” We begin with “our” because we do not approach God as self-sufficient, isolated individuals. God intends that we be knit together as a people, so in this prayer we bind our own lives to the lives of others.

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965) §3.

<sup>173</sup> Jn 1:14-18.

<sup>174</sup> Gal 4:5.

72. First, we bind ourselves to Christ: we are taught to call God “our Father” because “Jesus thereby involves us in his own prayer; he leads us into the interior dialogue of triune love; he draws our human hardships deep into God’s heart, as it were.”<sup>175</sup> Though this prayer is very familiar, it is full of the mysterious depths of our identification with Jesus. By Christ’s incarnation, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and our Baptism, our prayers are taken up into the internal life of the triune God.<sup>176</sup> Through Christ, we receive the Spirit of adoption by which we cry “*Abba*, Father.”<sup>177</sup>

73. Second, this “our” identifies us with all of the baptized who have been joined to the life of Christ and come to drink of the one Spirit through this covenantal sign.<sup>178</sup> Because Catholics and United Methodists each recognize the one true Baptism to be present in the other’s church, we rejoice that in this “our” we joyfully embrace one another.

74. Third, “our” extends the solidarity of the church beyond baptized believers to embrace all humankind. Knowing that Christ who is our Lord loves the entire human race, we offer prayers of intercession for the flourishing of all human beings. In this, the people of God take part in Christ’s priestly office, holding before God the deep desires and needs of the world.<sup>179</sup>

75. Finally, even non-human creatures are embraced in this prayer, since “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now” (Rom 8:22), when Christ, “the firstborn of all creation” and “the firstborn from the dead,” has come to hold all things together in himself.<sup>180</sup>

76. We who are adopted as children of God in Baptism become “joint heirs” (Rom 8:17) with Christ in his sonship, having a unique sharing in the life, power, and love of God through faith. We become by grace what Christ is by nature. Because of this we boldly and confidently address God—Jesus’ Father “*Abba*”—as children who have been met by a loving parent who cares deeply and intimately about the well-being of each child. In the Gospel, Jesus introduces the prayer with a reassurance that our Father knows what we need before we ask.<sup>181</sup> More than any human father, the heavenly Father looks after our needs with perfect wisdom and unfailing love: “how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:11).

77. Though we are confident in God’s closeness to us, we also remember as we pray that our Father is “in heaven.” The one who is intimate and caring, who is closer to us than we are to ourselves, is also the ruler of heaven, God of the cosmos, the transcendent and unsearch-

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<sup>175</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 132.

<sup>176</sup> Rom 8:26, 34.

<sup>177</sup> Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6.

<sup>178</sup> Jn 4:13-14, 7:37-39.

<sup>179</sup> 1 Pt 2:9; cf. LG §§10, 31; and Brighton §36.

<sup>180</sup> Col 1:15, 17-18.

<sup>181</sup> Mt 6:8.

able God. It is because of God's revelation as our Father that we have knowledge of the transcendent God, and it is as the creator and ruler of the universe that God cares for us in deeply personal ways.

**we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.**

78. Because God is the Father in heaven, God's universal saving will extends to every creature. God has loved every being into existence, and even now, in the face of guilt and violence in our fallen world, God stands as the Father of all. In Christ, our Father beckons the entire created order to a reconciled, familial relation of love.<sup>182</sup> Our prayer, therefore, cannot only be for our own needs or for those who are already our friends. In the Lord's Prayer, we learn to be "children of [our] Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45). This prayer converts us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, to share in the heavenly Father's concern for all of creation.

### **Hallowed be Thy Name**

79. The Lord's Prayer proceeds with three petitions related to God's very own being and work: God's name, kingdom, and will. This first petition is born out of the deep reverence for the name of God in ancient Israelite and first-century Jewish tradition. The name of God revealed to Moses in the burning bush was represented by the four Hebrew letters transliterated as YHWH, meaning literally "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be" (Ex 3:14). That is to say, God is the one who simply "is without qualification."<sup>183</sup> Thus, God's name is also a promise that God will always *be*.

80. Jews considered God's name so holy that they used substitutes such as "HaShem" (literally "the name") in speech or when reading aloud. This practice continues among many Jews today. In English-language translations of the Bible, the divine name often appears as the Hebrew "Adonai" or "the LORD." The saying of the Lord's Prayer thus makes a connection with Jesus' prayer as a Jew, and joins our prayer with the praying of God's people throughout the ages.

81. For Christians, the incarnation reveals the name of God in a new way. Jesus takes the mantle of the divine name upon himself in proclaiming, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58).<sup>184</sup> The God who is and who will be is God the Father, whose name is revealed by the Son,<sup>185</sup> in the power of the Spirit.

82. Given that God's name and being are holy in themselves, secured in the eternal life of God, what can it mean to pray for God's name to be hallowed? In recognizing the inherent holiness of God's name, we also acknowledge the imperfect and at times drastically marred

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<sup>182</sup> Col 1:16-20.

<sup>183</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 143. Cf. "The God of Abraham Praise" (from *The Yigdal* of Daniel ben Judah c. 1400; paraphrased in 1760 by Methodist Thomas Olivers), UMH #116.

<sup>184</sup> See also the other "I am" proclamations of Jesus in the Gospel of John: 6:35, 48; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7; 10:11-14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1-5.

<sup>185</sup> Jn 17:6.

ways the created order exhibits this holiness. We recognize the disregard and abuse of God's name. Thus, in praying for God's name to be hallowed, we pray for the holiness of God's name to be evident in the world and known by all persons. In praying for the hallowing of God's name, we immediately involve ourselves in this prayer. We proclaim that God's name is holy, and we pray that our lives would witness to and reflect the holiness of God.<sup>186</sup> In this way, we pray simultaneously for the glorification of God and the sanctification of humankind.<sup>187</sup>

### **Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**

83. These petitions follow closely upon the previous one. God's name truly is hallowed when and where God's will is done, and the created order reflects the beauty of God's kingdom. Again, we recognize the distance between the perfection of God's reign and will "in heaven" and the incomplete, already-but-not-yet character of God's reign "on earth."<sup>188</sup> The kingdom has come near to us in Jesus Christ. Christ in his own life is the walking, talking, breathing embodiment of God's kingdom and will.<sup>189</sup> In the resurrection, God definitively defeats the powers of sin and death forever. We have received the first fruits of this victory and in them God's reign is present to us in the here and now.

84. Yet, the world continues to groan in labor pains awaiting the time when God will be all in all.<sup>190</sup> Human rebellion against the saving will of God continues to unleash violence, hatred, and injustice throughout the earth. Thus, we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." As with the previous petition, we cannot make this prayer without involving ourselves wholeheartedly in it. To pray for God's kingdom to come, on earth as it is in heaven, is at one and the same time to commit ourselves to the work of this kingdom, to seek conformity of our wills to the will of God, and to locate our lives within God's reign and seek to make this a reality for others as well.<sup>191</sup> To pray this prayer with integrity, we must cooperatively participate in the reality of God's reign, both present and future.

85. Here we offer ourselves in service to God's kingdom and will, and at the same time we pray with confidence that God would be the one to see God's saving purposes to completion.<sup>192</sup> The dual emphasis in this petition should inspire in us an active hope. Relying on our own powers of spiritual and social activism leads to burnout and, when the structures of human sin continue to be apparent in our world, to cynical resignation or despair. Through confidence in God's reign and God's saving will, we are free for an active, persistent, and hopeful participation in God's design to redeem and renew the world. John Wesley under-

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<sup>186</sup> See CCC §§2807, 2839; and John Wesley, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI," (Sermon 26), WJW, vol. 1, ed. Albert C. Outler (1984), 581 §III.7. Cf. Mt 5:48.

<sup>187</sup> SC §7.

<sup>188</sup> GS §39; CCC §2816, 2818; BDUMC, 50 ¶102.

<sup>189</sup> Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15; Lk 4:16-21; 17:20-22.

<sup>190</sup> Rom 8:22; 1 Cor 15:28.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Wesley, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI," 583-84 §III.9.

<sup>192</sup> Phil 2:12-13.

stood that because God acts, we *can* act; and because God acts, we *must* act.<sup>193</sup> This parallels a saying often expressed in the Catholic spiritual tradition: “Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you.”<sup>194</sup> Thus, while awaiting the coming of the new heaven and the new earth, God desires that we should be active participants in cultivating this earth.<sup>195</sup>

86. These petitions close with the phrase, “On earth as it is in heaven.” This phrase acts as a hinge in the Lord’s Prayer, marking a shift in the character of its petitions. We begin “in heaven” with the name, work, and will of God in transcendent splendor, and turn next to the most mundane of earthly concerns, bread. Yet again, we go wrong if we oppose these two emphases to one another. The Christian faith is at once contemplative, spiritual, “other-worldly” in its emphasis on God’s eternal life, yet also deeply tied to the goodness of the everyday material world. A thriving human life attends to the full range of spiritual and material goods, the well-being of body and soul. Thus, as we look to the future coming of the kingdom, we also ask for God’s care and provision on this earth in the here and now.

87. When God’s kingdom comes in its fullness, when God’s name is hallowed by every tongue,<sup>196</sup> and God’s will is at last done on earth as it is in heaven, all of the good fruits of our work and action will be visible, taken up, “burnished and transfigured,” freed from our sin, and incorporated into God’s final reign.<sup>197</sup> We offer the Lord’s Prayer in hope, looking toward the final consummation of God’s saving work in glory.

### **Give us this day our daily bread**

88. We turn from grand theological petitions, the bold and magnificent request for God’s kingdom to come, and we ask for bread. We are creatures of earth. We recall that all the things we receive for a flourishing life, both spiritual and material, are gifts from God. While we await the coming of the day of the Lord, we “this day” continue to depend on God for our very life. Even as we long for the kingdom to come, Christians still live and work within the world.

89. The Christian tradition understands “our daily bread” in two ways: we pray for our most basic needs and for our spiritual nourishment. The unique word usually translated “daily” also means “super-essential” or “what is necessary for existence.” First, in asking to receive what we need to exist for “this day,” we also call to mind the physical sustenance provided by God in the desert in the form of manna.<sup>198</sup> We recall how God commanded the Israelites to collect only what they needed for the day, relying wholly on God for sustenance in the

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<sup>193</sup> John Wesley develops this theme in relation to one’s progress along the *via salutis*, or way of salvation. See John Wesley, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation” (Sermon 85), WJW, vol. 3, ed. Albert C. Outler (1986), 206 §III.2.

<sup>194</sup> CCC §2834.

<sup>195</sup> GS §38.

<sup>196</sup> Phil 2:11.

<sup>197</sup> GS §39.

<sup>198</sup> Ex 16.

future. In a world driven by overconsumption and by mounting accumulations of material resources in the hands of a few, this prayer teaches us that what we need for this day is enough. Our security comes from a trust in God's providence, not in our material supply.

90. "Our daily bread" also points to the truly necessary bread we receive in Christ's eucharistic body. Similar to the Israelites who were nourished by heavenly manna, we ask for the true bread that has come down from heaven,<sup>199</sup> imploring God "not only (for) the meat that perisheth, but the sacramental bread, and thy grace, the food which endureth to everlasting life."<sup>200</sup> For we know that humankind does not live by literal bread alone, but relies daily on the sustenance of God's grace, a grace made tangibly present in the sacramental bread.

91. When we ask for daily bread, we participate in God's will that there should be sufficient nourishment for all. The offering of the eucharistic bread and wine—the grown, harvested, and manufactured fruit of the earth<sup>201</sup>—connects deeply with global conditions of labor, production, and distribution. "Because bread and wine are manufactured, the issues of safe and suitable work environments and just wages are at the heart of the church's social justice concerns as derived from our eucharistic practice."<sup>202</sup> The processes that supply the daily bread of the Eucharist are meant to supply the daily bread for the physical sustenance of all people.

92. The "our" here, as in "Our Father," first teaches us solidarity with all the baptized, the new family of God, the body of disciples who join their voices together in this prayer. Christians in positions of economic and material privilege must look upon the hunger and economic insecurity of those within the body of Christ as a deep wound in need of healing. In shaping a new family that subordinates all other human distinctions,<sup>203</sup> those who pray this prayer are also schooled in a disposition of solidarity toward all humankind, and all creation, for God is indeed the God of all. "Give us this day our daily bread," similar to "our Father," converts us from prizing our own personal circumstances—nation, family, race, or class—above all others. We pray that all people everywhere will have the basic sustenance they need to live true, good, and beautiful lives. Any other state of affairs is an affront to God's kingdom, to the will of God that we pray may come to pass on earth as in heaven.

### **Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us**

93. United Methodists and Catholics acknowledge every person's need for divine forgiveness. Having "fallen short of the glory of God," each person's sinfulness stands under God's judgement (Rom 3:23). By our sin, each of us subverts God's gift of human freedom and seeks our own good rather than the good of the human community and all of creation under "our Father." Sin inflicts the distortions that result from our refusal to live in right relationships on other people and on the world order. It instills an unnatural distance between

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<sup>199</sup> Jn 6:22-59.

<sup>200</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, note on Mt 6:11.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. RM, "Order of the Mass," ¶23.

<sup>202</sup> HEFG §26.

<sup>203</sup> Gal 3:28.

human beings and their creator, and creates the conditions that allow for violence, suffering, and death.<sup>204</sup> It is as our loving Father that God condemns this state of affairs and calls us to live within the right relationships of the kingdom of God, already on earth as it is in heaven.

we believe,  
we pray,  
we act.

94. The same Father who pronounces the divine “no” to human sinfulness reaches out toward humanity with saving love “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8). Before we are even mindful of our sin, God’s grace in Jesus Christ calls to each one through the presence of the Spirit. God beckons and prepares each heart to receive reconciliation through faith prior to any initiative on our part. Catholics and Methodists together have referred to this prior initiative of God as “prevenient grace.”<sup>205</sup> Similar to the father in the parable of the prodigal son,<sup>206</sup> God rushes out to meet the child with arms outstretched, offering the promise of forgiveness and embrace before words of repentance can even be uttered.

95. In view of God’s perfect love in Jesus Christ, we come to see how we have fallen short and stand in need of active repentance. Human beings are responsible for cooperating with grace by acknowledging their faults and asking for forgiveness.<sup>207</sup> The recognition that we have failed to live in right relationship is itself a generous gift from God, who loves us as we are but longs for us to become perfect, completely transfigured into the image of Christ the Son. Therefore, with confidence in God’s offer of forgiveness we are empowered to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses.”

96. Having trespassed and become aware of our sinfulness, we need and long for reconciliation with God and with one another. United Methodists and Catholics have differing practices for repentance and understand the relationship between sin and the church in distinct ways.<sup>208</sup> Yet we both affirm that the Christian community “on the way” must continue to grapple with the “sins and failings of its members,”<sup>209</sup> and so utilize concrete practices related to self-examination, repentance, and reconciliation among the faithful.<sup>210</sup>

97. The manner in which the Lord’s Prayer links the truths of our need for both divine and human forgiveness is daunting indeed. In this prayer, the disciples of Jesus invite God to treat our sins in the same manner with which we treat the sins of our neighbors against us. Upon delivering the form of the Our Father, Jesus continues, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6:14-15).<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Houston §27-30.

<sup>205</sup> Houston §54.

<sup>206</sup> Luke 15:11-32.

<sup>207</sup> Houston §55-56.

<sup>208</sup> Houston §97-99.

<sup>209</sup> Houston §96.

<sup>210</sup> Houston §§112-13.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Mt 18:21-35; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13.

## Practices of Reconciliation

*Called to a life of holiness through baptism, Christians nevertheless continue to commit sin. Christian traditions have developed ways to respond to sin, accepting from God the restored gifts of new life and renewed relationships given in Christ. These responses are ways to acknowledge and repent of our sin and seek to grow in holiness. Catholics participate in sacramental reconciliation, also called “penance” or “confession,” at least once a year or whenever they are aware they have committed serious sin. Some Catholics go to reconciliation much more often. Individual reconciliation (whether it follows a group service or not) includes (a) a scriptural reading; (b) the penitent’s confession of sins; (c) assigning a penitential practice (called the “penance,” this is usually prayers for the person to say); (d) a prayer expressing contrition (sorrow for sins) and a resolution to amend; (e) absolution (a declaration of God’s forgiveness); and (f) praise of God.*

*Confessing one’s sins is an act of great vulnerability, but the rite of reconciliation as a whole effectively proclaims God’s will to forgive our sins and to save us. The scriptural reading (or*

*(continues on sidebar, next page)*

98. This petition holds a mirror to our own tendencies to hold grudges, to seek revenge, to cut off and attack those that sin against us. Here we invite God to treat us with the same portion of forgiveness we offer to others: “For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Mt 7:2). If we do not shudder at this thought, and if it does not inspire critical self-reflection and a truly contrite spirit and heart open to others, then we are like those who look at themselves in a mirror and forget what they look like;<sup>212</sup> we have not fully reckoned with the petition’s meaning. Yet we offer this prayer not relying on our own power to forgive, but on the Spirit who empowers us to live lives of reconciliation. In the world of ceaseless mutual trespass and ongoing patterns of sin and indebtedness, to offer forgiveness as God forgives may be the truest sign of holiness. Were this left to our own power we would be lost, as “only the Spirit by whom we live can make ‘ours’ the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.”<sup>213</sup>

99. Many English-speaking Christians traditionally pray “forgive us our trespasses,” while others pray the more literal translation of the biblical text with “forgive us our debts.” Still other translations say rather simply, “forgive us our sins.”<sup>214</sup> Yet it may be useful for us to affirm the enduring presence of each of these renderings in the Christian tradition. By keeping all of these words before us (trespasses, debts, sins) we remember the many forms our transgressions against one another can take, and the various ways we construct barriers to reconciled human community (geographic, economic, and interpersonal). These words remind us that the works of the kingdoms on earth and the kingdom of God do not always align. In saying this prayer, we must acknowledge that here too we are inviting God to treat us with the same measure of mercy with which we respond to these perceived transgressions against our own moral and geo-political order. This is a dangerous prayer.

100. The church is not to be a club for the self-righteous or the “holier-than-thou,” but rather a “field hospital” for the binding of the world’s wounds. For Christians, “holiness is lived through the practices of love despite, and in, our woundedness.” Methodists and Catholics, formed by the Lord’s Prayer, “know themselves to be a people totally dependent on God, the Father, who provides for all the needs of his children, and a forgiven people called to forgive and embody God’s loving plan for a broken world.” The Holy One alone creates the holiness of the church; it is a “free gift of God, which calls for gratitude, humility, and a desire to share this gift with all.”<sup>215</sup>

### **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil**

101. In these final petitions, Christians ask God for reprieve from the inevitable trials faced in a world still fractured by sin and evil. Followers of Christ are mindful of the daily temptations to turn from the love of God and neighbor, and to indulge pride, anger, resentment, and desire for pleasures and wealth. These temptations draw us away from Christ at the expense of our spiritual well-being and the well-being of others.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Jas 1:23-24.

<sup>213</sup> CCC §2842.

<sup>214</sup> All variants derived from Greek word *opheilo*.

<sup>215</sup> Houston §101.

102. United Methodists and Catholics also acknowledge temptations in relationships with one another. There are temptations to claim our own tradition as superior while disparaging the traditions of the other. There are temptations blindly to concede, ignore, or surrender to the difficult issues that separate us. Temptations take different forms in United Methodist–Catholic families, as when partners consider discouraging the other from actively engaging in their tradition. We know these temptations and our own tendencies to yield to them and fall into sin. Here in the Lord’s Prayer we seek the grace of God to “live by the Spirit” even in the midst of our ongoing struggle.<sup>216</sup>

103. There is a distinction to be made between the struggles and trials of the soul necessary for its growth in grace and “temptation, which leads to sin and death.”<sup>217</sup> Christ himself could not avoid trials and temptations in this world, but by the power of the Spirit he did not deviate from the saving will of the Father even in the most extreme of circumstances.<sup>218</sup> Despite the ambiguous phrasing of this petition (“lead us not”), we know that it is not God who tempts us,<sup>219</sup> but rather the ongoing presence of evil or “the evil one” in this world. Thus, like Jesus in the garden, we ask in these petitions for deliverance from that which we know we must face. In effect, we ask God to make good on Jesus’ own prayer that his disciples be protected from the evil one.<sup>220</sup> We ask God to be true to the promise of scripture that in our testing God will provide a way of escape and a strength to endure.<sup>221</sup>

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

104. United Methodists and many other Christians conclude this prayer with the traditional doxology of praise to God. Some Bibles will not contain this phrase of the prayer, since it is absent from some of the earliest manuscripts of Matthew 6 (and it is also not in the version of the Lord’s Prayer found in Luke 11). Catholics use this doxology (in a slightly different translation) in the mass after the priest recites a summative petition: “Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” This priestly prayer collects the assembly’s recital into one, and restates and elaborates the themes of the Lord’s Prayer. In private or family settings, Catholics often do not recite the doxology, but it is still part of the Lord’s Prayer for Catholics. In an ecumenical setting, it makes sense to include the doxology in whichever translation is most familiar to the group. Sometimes these differences in private practice and in translation make praying the Lord’s Prayer ecumenically awkward or uncomfortable, but working through these temporary difficulties is a worthy practice in ecumenical relationships. Acknowledging the awkwardness and continuing to work at praying together, as with other aspects of ecumenism, will pay rich dividends in mutual love.

*prayer service) and praise are particularly important in making sure this good news is received. The priest in the rite acts both as the authoritative representative of God and of the church, because sin damages both our relationship with God and with the church of Christ. In proclaiming the absolution, the priest does not act by his own power but on behalf of Christ who said, “Your sins are forgiven.” Catholics also participate in non-sacramental reconciliation, including in the opening rite of the mass and in the reception of communion. United Methodists similarly participate in forms of reconciliation during eucharistic services: a group prayer of confession, time for silence, and words of pardon spoken by the presiding minister. In addition to confession of sin in a worship setting, United Methodists often engage in mutual conversation and confession of sin in a small group setting. These groups, historically called “classes” or “bands,” and today known as “covenant discipleship” or simply “small groups” are a cornerstone of growth in holiness, offering to participants the opportunity to more closely follow Jesus in everyday life. In these settings there is no formal absolution or words of pardon.*

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<sup>216</sup> Gal 5:16-26.

<sup>217</sup> CCC §2847.

<sup>218</sup> Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-46; Lk 4:1-13; 22:39-46; Mk 1:12-13; 14:32-42; cf. Heb 4:15.

<sup>219</sup> Jas 1:13.

<sup>220</sup> Jn 17:15.

<sup>221</sup> 1 Cor 10:13.

105. To conclude with a doxology and “Amen” returns the focus of this exemplary Christian prayer to the God of love and to the Lamb who is worthy of all our worship.<sup>222</sup> The prayer begins with praise of God and petitions that the glory evident in heaven be visible on earth. The prayer concludes with the offering up of praise and the saying of “Amen,” that is, let it come to pass.



## We Pray, We Believe, We Act

106. Together Catholics and United Methodists pray the Lord's Prayer, profess the faith of the apostles, are reborn by Baptism into the one body of Christ, and lead lives of Christian love. As United Methodists and Catholics share the lessons learned in fifty years of dialogue about our common Christian faith, we look together at the guiding principle of the Christian life: the law of love.

107. "If we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we may love alike," John Wesley wrote in his *Letter to a Roman Catholic*. "For of one point none can doubt a moment, — 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.'"<sup>223</sup> Conversations between Catholics and Methodists affirm that both have "long traditions of witness to the Gospel through active engagement with the world in service to God's reign, and can together speak with a common voice into the places of power and decision-making."<sup>224</sup> This section examines the roots of that common service and public witness in Jesus' command of love.

108. United Methodists and Catholics, with all Christians, know it as the Great Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Jesus was responding to a Pharisee who had asked him to name the greatest commandment of the law of Moses. Jesus went on, "This is the first and great commandment. A second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>225</sup>

109. Jesus' double commandment brings into a single formula two distinct demands.<sup>226</sup> The two loves are intimately connected, and together they form the key to leading a life of good news. On this double command, Jesus told the Pharisee, "hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:40). The double command proposed by the gospel is "simple, profound, radiant,"<sup>227</sup> and carries the expectation of action.<sup>228</sup> By following that command, United Methodists and Catholics imitate the loving mercy of God.<sup>229</sup> Together, similar to the saints of God before us, we experience "the love of God poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

## Love of God

110. The love of God consists of our total personal reliance upon and self-offering to our *Abba* God—"heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Mk 12:30). We express that love of God in worship and prayer in humble awe before the divine presence. At the same time, love motivates us to share ourselves intimately with God, pouring out our souls "as friend to

<sup>223</sup> John Wesley, *Letter to a Roman Catholic* (Jackson ed.), 765, §16.

<sup>224</sup> Houston §121.

<sup>225</sup> Mt 22:34-40; cf. Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-28.

<sup>226</sup> Dt 6:5; Lv 19:18.

<sup>227</sup> *A Big Heart Open to God: A Conversation with Pope Francis* (New York: Harper One, 2013), 34-35.

<sup>228</sup> Jas 1:19-25.

<sup>229</sup> Mt 5:45, 48.

friend.”<sup>230</sup> Love of God is our deepest and highest love ordering all our other loves, so that we love God above all things and all things in God.<sup>231</sup>

111. Accordingly, the love of God relativizes all other attachments and desires. We discover that God is ever greater than our partial human loyalties, the “false gods” which vie for our devotion, and so we are able to reject the secular idolatries to which we are tempted.<sup>232</sup> John Wesley wrote that God “is continually saying to every child of man, ‘My son, give me thy heart!’ And to give our heart to any other is plain idolatry.”<sup>233</sup> Our true happiness, meaning our true fulfillment, can only be found in God, and anything that distracts us is in fact an idol and serves to undermine our happiness. God is constantly reaching out to us in the longings of our hearts. “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you,” wrote Saint Augustine.<sup>234</sup> For in union with God we will find our ultimate fulfillment.<sup>235</sup> In addition to prayer, we love God when we respond in obedience to the Spirit of God working in history, so that we spend ourselves in God’s service, preparing the way for the advent of the divine kingdom, “a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.”<sup>236</sup>

### **The Royal Law of Love**

112. Love is God’s excellent gift, and love of neighbor is “the Royal Law.”<sup>237</sup> Saint Paul saw the Great Commandment as one law: “The entire law is fulfilled in this one decree, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14). The First Letter of John agrees in a vigorous way: “If anyone says, ‘I love God’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

### **Love of God in Others**

113. In the New Testament, the measure of love toward God is the love of the neighbor. The exemplar of love of neighbor is Matthew’s parable of the Last Judgment, where kindness to a neighbor in need turns out to be, unwittingly, service to the king. “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me . . . Truly I tell you, whatever you

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<sup>230</sup> Ps 43:4; Lam 2:19; 1 Sm 1:14. See Ignatius Loyola, “Spiritual Exercises” in *Ignatius Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 1991), no. 54. “A colloquy [i.e., conversational prayer] is made, properly speaking in a way that one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority—now begging a favor, now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one’s concerns and ask counsel about them.” Cf. the biblical warrants in Jn 14 and 15, e.g., 14:20-21.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, III.6.

<sup>232</sup> Dt 5:7.

<sup>233</sup> John Wesley, “Spiritual Idolatry” (Sermon 78), WJW, vol. 3,104 §3.

<sup>234</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I.1.

<sup>235</sup> GS §21.

<sup>236</sup> RM, Preface for the Feast of Christ the King.

<sup>237</sup> 1 Cor 12:30; Jas 2:8.

did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:35-36, 40).<sup>238</sup>

114. For the Catholic Church, the “least of these” means service of those least able to help themselves. In addition to victims of injustice and oppression, it includes the unborn, people with disabilities, the infirm, the elderly, and the terminally ill.<sup>239</sup> While care of the poor has always been a concern of the church, in recent decades the Catholic Church has made explicit “a preferential option for the poor.”<sup>240</sup> Within the ambit of universal love, therefore, there is a special place for advancing the cause of the poor, marginalized, and powerless.<sup>241</sup>

115. Since the Church’s redemptive work in the world entails “the liberation of the human race from every oppressive condition,”<sup>242</sup> the option for the poor requires social activism and political advocacy.<sup>243</sup> The U.S. Catholic bishops in their 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* wrote, “The way society responds to the needs of the poor through its public policies is the litmus test of its justice or injustice.”<sup>244</sup> Saint John Paul II was quite explicit on this matter: “The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion; production to meet social needs over production for military purposes.”<sup>245</sup> In addition, he counseled, “[A] leadership role among nations can only be justified by the possibility and the willingness to contribute widely and generously to the common good.”<sup>246</sup> Speaking also on the aspects of activism and advocacy, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “the institutional path—we might also call it the political path—of charity, [is] no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly.”<sup>247</sup>

116. Likewise within Methodism, there has been since the beginning of the movement an emphasis on attending to the needs of the poor and those on the margins. Early Methodists’ efforts to establish medical dispensaries, to care for widows, orphans, and those in prison, as well as to challenge policies that undermined the poor or made their lives more difficult, were distinctly connected to the call to holiness and works of mercy. John Wesley had a par-

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. GE §61.

<sup>239</sup> For the Catholic theology of life, see John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (“The Gospel of Life,” 1995); and Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, *The Seamless Garment: Writings on the Consistent Ethic of Life*, ed. Thomas A. Nairn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008).

<sup>240</sup> Cf. SRS §42.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. GE §101.

<sup>242</sup> World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), §6.

<sup>243</sup> See SRS §42-45.

<sup>244</sup> USCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, §123.

<sup>245</sup> John Paul II, Address on Christian Unity in a Technological Age (Toronto, September 14, 1984), printed in *Origins* 14:16 (October 4, 1984): 248.

<sup>246</sup> SRS §23.

<sup>247</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, §7.

ticular affection for the poor because he saw Christ in them. He once wrote, “I bear the rich, and I love the poor.”<sup>248</sup> This commitment received lyrical expression in one of Charles Wesley’s hymns:

*The poor I to the rich prefer,  
If with thine eyes I see;  
To bear thy Spirit’s character  
The poor are chose by Thee:  
The poor in every age and place  
Thou dost, O God, approve  
To mark with thy distinguish’d grace,  
T’intrich with faith and love.*<sup>249</sup>

Charles Wesley’s words, “my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee,”<sup>250</sup> also describe this relational reality. They speak of freedom from the power of sin, but also describe the work of sanctified persons to alleviate the struggles of the oppressed, even those in literal chains.

117. United Methodists preserve this heritage by the practical cultivation of “works of mercy” alongside “works of piety,” and in their doctrinal and theological standards, their Social Principles, and through official legislation.<sup>251</sup> Although Methodism has not officially adopted language of a “preferential option” for the poor, the emphasis on God’s specific care finds prominent expression: “God brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind, and sets the oppressed free. And so shall we.”<sup>252</sup> Ministry belongs to all the faithful, and the “heart of Christian ministry is Christ’s ministry of outreaching love.”<sup>253</sup>

### Love of Neighbor

118. “Who is my neighbor?” the lawyer asks Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). We are neighbors when we care for others, and so everyone is potentially our neighbor. The Second Vatican Council taught that today “a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person and of actively helping him when he comes across our path.”<sup>254</sup> For that reason, the option for the poor entails “an international outlook,” where we exercise our concern for the poor and oppressed in other countries, defend the victims of human rights abuses, and offer welcome to refugees and the victims of war.<sup>255</sup>

<sup>248</sup> John Wesley, Letter to Ann Foard, September 29, 1764, in *The Letters of John Wesley*, vol. 4, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 266. See also John Wesley, “On Visiting the Sick” (Sermon 98), WJW, vol. 3, 384-97; and his Journal entry for November 24, 1760 in WJW, vol. 21, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (1992), 290.

<sup>249</sup> Hymn based on Lk 4:26 in *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, vol. 2, ed. S T Kimbrough Jr. and Oliver A Beckerlegge (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1990), 90.

<sup>250</sup> “And Can It Be,” UMH, 363.

<sup>251</sup> See the various statements in the BDUMC and the BRUMC.

<sup>252</sup> BDUMC, 146 §166.

<sup>253</sup> BDUMC, 97 §126.

<sup>254</sup> GS §27.

<sup>255</sup> SRS §42.

119. United Methodists and Catholics agree that an essential aspect of the church's mission is to "serve the poor and oppressed of our time" and to "understand the church as an instrument in bringing God's peace and justice to all people."<sup>256</sup> Thus, "holiness is practical as well as spiritual. Holy living is expressed socially in the pursuit of justice and in acts of mercy." To engage in holy living requires "personal and corporate divestment of status and privilege in solidarity with those being served, so as to be a 'church that is poor and for the poor,' thereby embodying God's compassion and love for the world."<sup>257</sup>

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Scandal of Indifference**

120. However, those who enjoy the benefits of a globalized economy and live in a throw-away culture often turn their backs on the neighbor in need.<sup>258</sup> Our spiritual condition is like the rich man in the story of the rich man and Lazarus.<sup>259</sup> In his day, John Wesley wrote of the indifference he observed in the rich of that time: "Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorances an excuse for their hardness of heart."<sup>260</sup> Pope Paul VI envisaged overturning the aggravated inequalities established by a culture of indifference. He called on Catholics and all people of goodwill "to build a human community . . . where the needy Lazarus can sit down with the rich man at the same banquet table," intended by the Lord for all.<sup>261</sup> For Catholics and United Methodists, Luke's story continues to be a challenge for probing self-examination.

### **Servant Love in the Church Community**

121. Both Catholics and United Methodists agree that the church, especially the local church, is the school of Christian love.<sup>262</sup> It is there we learn to minister to one another. Catholics can affirm with the United Methodist *Discipline* that not only does the local church exist "in and for the world," but that, "the local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God."<sup>263</sup>

122. Jesus presented himself as a servant,<sup>264</sup> thereby showing that we should serve one another just as he served us.<sup>265</sup> Catholics and United Methodists practice the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday as a symbol of the service we owe one another as Christ's disciples.

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<sup>256</sup> Synthesis §178.

<sup>257</sup> Houston §121.

<sup>258</sup> EG §53.

<sup>259</sup> Lk 16:19-31.

<sup>260</sup> Wesley, "On Visiting the Sick," 387-88 §3.

<sup>261</sup> See *Populorum progressio* ("The Development of Peoples"), §§45-55, esp. §47.

<sup>262</sup> Seoul §54. Also, see Houston §14.

<sup>263</sup> BDUMC, 147 §202.

<sup>264</sup> Lk 22:27; Jn 13:13-17.

<sup>265</sup> See especially the Gospel of John, chapters 13 and 15.

## The Cloud of Witnesses

*Jesus is “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:1) He himself is “the Way” to holiness. Our Lord and teacher calls us as disciples to imitate his way of life; and in the communion of saints, we find ourselves “surrounded by a cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) who in their lives walked the way Jesus did. For United Methodists and Catholics, the company of saints offers encouragement to join Jesus on the way. They provide for us models of holiness and of varieties of holy lives to inspire us to enter more fully into the life of holiness.*

*Mary is esteemed by Christians because God chose her to bear Christ. Mary models for us the readiness to do God’s will, the obedience to the voice of God that lies at the very heart of discipleship. At the foot of the cross, she witnessed the sufferings and death of her Son, and taught us to be one with Christ in suffering. After Jesus’ ascension, while she was in a room with the disciples, she showed us how to pray and welcome the Spirit’s gifts with which to nourish the church.*

*We honor the saints before us who have built up the church and have inspired us to grow in Christ in our own ways. After the founders, the first saints were martyrs, evangelists, teachers, and spiritual mothers and fathers. The church through history honored those who have shown us how to follow Jesus, as Julian Norwich and John Wesley did,*

*(continues on sidebar, next page)*

“By this,” Jesus said, “all shall know that you are my disciples, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, you love one another” (Jn 13:35). Loving service among Christians builds up the life of grace within the community.<sup>266</sup> Conversely, refusal to express servant love denies and puts at jeopardy the unity found in relationship with the triune God.<sup>267</sup> Mutual service, deference, and humility are among the first implications of Saint Paul’s teaching on love.<sup>268</sup>

123. Jesus’ charge for his disciples to love one another serves as a summons, for the unity of our two churches is an essential part of the vocation to which United Methodists and Catholics are called. Ecumenism, when it labors to contribute to the unity of the churches, is a work of love.

124. Strengthening the bonds of love within the church community, moreover, acts as a leaven in the world fostering the unity God intends for the entire human family.<sup>269</sup> The mutual service among Christians also gives witness to the world of the transforming power of love.<sup>270</sup> For that reason, the shared witness and service of United Methodists and Catholics to the world is an occasion of grace for all.

## Love of Enemies

125. Christians are to make their love for all humanity as wide and deep as the love of God for all creation.<sup>271</sup> The Lord urges us to show the depths of divine mercy in today’s world. “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned; grant pardon and you will be pardoned. Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap” (Lk 6:36-38).

126. The most difficult expression and the most radical form of that love may be love of enemies.<sup>272</sup> Christians should avoid vengeance, “live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:14-19), and “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). In recent years, Catholics and United Methodists have become more conscious of the roles forgiveness, nonviolence, and peacebuilding play as works of love in both domestic and international affairs, and are committed to these public expressions of Christian love.

127. Even when we have come to love our enemies and forgiven all who have offended us, the love of God is not done with us. The immensity of God’s love, when we contemplate it, expands our hearts, and the intensity of God’s mercy purifies our spirits. The divine plan is

<sup>266</sup> Jn 14:15-17.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Jn 14:23-24; 17:20-23.

<sup>268</sup> Phil 2:2-5; Rom 3:3, 10; Gal 5:26; 1 Cor 10:24.

<sup>269</sup> See GS §42.

<sup>270</sup> Jn 16:9-10. Cf. Seoul §62; and Houston §43.

<sup>271</sup> Mt 5:48.

<sup>272</sup> Mt 5:44-45; Lk 6:35.

that we will love all that God loves. Because by God's grace we are capable of communion with God, we become capable of loving God's creation.

128. God's grace purifies us of our selfishness so that we may share with others God's infinite mercy. Loving as God loves entails extending our love beyond our enemies to all those to whom we have been indifferent or whom we have ignored, for these are persons loved by God and for whom Jesus gave his life.

129. Loving with God's love also means loving those who have not received God's revelation in Christ and, similar to Saint Paul, hoping for the redemption even of those who have rejected it.<sup>273</sup> Finally, it involves loving the natural world, the entire created universe that God calls "good,"<sup>274</sup> which God sustains in existence and still creates, and which at the end of time united to Christ as his cosmic body he will offer to the Father as a perfect gift for all eternity.<sup>275</sup>

### The Way of Holiness

130. Catholics and United Methodists share a belief, despite our sins, in the potential for growth in the love of God and neighbor.<sup>276</sup> In fact, the beliefs of both Catholics and Wesleyan Christians that Christ-likeness is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit *in this life*, might be the key to our continued path toward unity. Both Catholics and United Methodists give thanks for the lives of saints and exemplary Christians and for their heroic practice of love over long years, in trying conditions and at serious cost to themselves.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, theological reflection on the bonds of love within the communion of saints "may lead to greater convergence between Catholics and [United] Methodists concerning the possibility of an 'exchange' whereby the holiness of one benefits others."<sup>278</sup>

131. The New Testament affirms the possibility of growth in holiness in which the increase in love is the heart. The growth of the church in love was central to Saint Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus: "Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden strength to grow strong, so that Christ may grow in your hearts through faith, and then planted in love and built in love, you will with all the saints have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God" (Eph 3:16-19).

*and Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela in our own day.*

*The church remembers those saints who have modeled the Christ-like life for us. Mirroring their virtues, we embark in the work of God as itinerant preachers, missionaries, or healers. We carry on their work in teaching, in ministering to the poor, in advocating for justice. We try to grow in the virtues they learned from Christ: in poverty and simplicity, in gentleness and charity, in hospitality and forgiveness. In hearing their stories, in learning from them and in handing on their stories, the saints become, like relatives and kin, intimate members of our lives. They are our heroes, our patrons, and our friends. They are not only part of our world, they inhabit our imaginations, and they shape our characters.*



<sup>273</sup> Rom 11:22-37.

<sup>274</sup> Gn 1:4-31.

<sup>275</sup> GS §45; Col 1:1-20; and Eph 1:9-10, 23-26.

<sup>276</sup> See Honolulu §18; and Houston §§73-77 ("Perfection in Love and Holiness").

<sup>277</sup> Houston §76.

<sup>278</sup> Houston §86.

## PART V

### CONCLUSION

132. We give glory to God for the common faith we share and the rich tradition that informs our faith. Together, United Methodists and Catholics believe, pray, and act guided by “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Our common embrace of the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and God’s overwhelming love unite us as followers of Jesus. Despite our divisions, United Methodists and Catholics together share in these living springs, gifts that enrich and nourish our faith. We pray to our common Father, we are baptized into the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit we act in love. Because of this foundational sharing, we can join together in singing praise to God, not only with our lips but with our lives. In words of praise, United Methodists and Catholics join Charles Wesley in singing:

*Glory to God and praise and love  
be ever, ever given  
by saints below and saints above,  
the church in earth and heaven.<sup>279</sup>*

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<sup>279</sup> Acts 1:13-14.