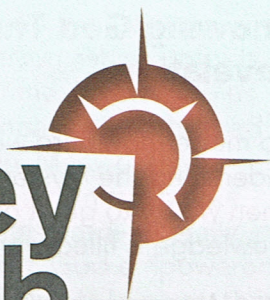


# Journey of Faith



## In Short:

- Revelation teaches us about God and salvation.
- Human nature teaches us about God.
- Divine revelation comes from many sources.



## Divine Revelation

### Getting to Know God

There are two true and certain ways we can come to know God<sup>a</sup> as a person: creation (which includes the cosmos and our human experience) and divine revelation.

When we think about creation, three questions come to mind:

1. What/Who created the universe and when?
2. What controls creation as it continues to develop?
3. What's the meaning of life, the universe, and everything, anyway? As we try to find answers to these questions, we begin to learn more about God. As God reveals more to us, he relies on our ability to think about what we can observe to discern his truth.

## Knowing God Through Human Nature

Humans are, by nature, religious beings (see CCC 27–28). Put another way, God created all humans—not just Catholics or Christians—to know God. It's in our spiritual DNA. Saint Paul says God “wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Saint Augustine famously wrote, “Our heart is restless until it rests in [God]” (*Confessions* 1,1,1:PL 32, 659–661).

God created us out of love, put love inside us, and wants us to live in love with him for eternity. To satisfy our thirst for love and God, we seek out truth and joy and long to fill our lives with them. When we're searching for truth but don't know God, it's like feeling around in the dark for a light. When we know God, he illuminates the truth for us.

- Give an example of when you “knew” something was real or fake. It could be a promise, a story someone told you, a friendship, or other example. How did you know?

- Describe a time when you felt completely at peace. What truths might be hidden there?



The spiritual life is foundational to a person's happiness. That life of the soul begins when we first realize that God is deeply connected to our personal, daily lives. There are a lot of things about ourselves we didn't choose: our gender, race, genetics, gifts, and talents. But God knew us before we were born.

*"You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb....My very self you know. My bones [were] not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret...."*

Psalm 139:13–15

- What does Psalm 139 teach me about my relationship with God?



## Knowing God Through Our Conscience

*"With his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man...discerns signs of his spiritual soul."*

CCC 33

We also come to know God and his love through our "inner voice of conscience." As the Lord says to Jeremiah, "I will place my law within [my people], and write it upon their hearts" (31:33). Morality, the true difference between right and wrong, is universal across history and cultures. That means civil laws and rules of behavior may vary, but a judgment between good and bad remains. Only God can give this gift.

## Knowing God Through Divine Revelation

No matter how hard we try to know God and understand the mysteries of faith and the universe, when we try to get it on our own, our human knowledge is filled with missing pieces (see CCC 37).

- We may know God exists, that he's kind and merciful, and that he desires our salvation, but what does that really mean for me?
- Being human is complicated. Issues of morality, circumstances, and living well make doing the right thing a challenge. So how do I do what's right?
- Even when we try as hard as we can, sometimes we get it wrong. Does that mean there's something wrong with me?

**Divine revelation** is a public and historical act, distinct from private revelation. In his goodness, God gives us revelation to help us know those truths that reason can reach but not fully understand or hold onto. Everyone, including ordinary people and those under the negative impact of sin, can know God with ease and certainty, without the threat of error (CCC 38).

## Sacred Scripture

*"God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words."*

CCC 69

In Scripture, the word *revelation* means "the unveiling or uncovering of two basic realities":

1. Who God is.
2. Who the human person is.

When we talk about revelation, we are learning about God and his plan of salvation, which unfolds gradually over long periods of time. It comes to us through the events of history and is communicated in the words of men and women. Many of these events and figures are recorded within the books of the Bible. The Scriptures are inspired—literally “in-breathed”—by the Holy Spirit. God empowered each biblical author to speak and write in a way that would convey the truth to every generation.

Have you ever heard that the Bible doesn’t apply to our century or culture? That it’s impossible to live by? On a literal level, that’s true. A lot of things people did in the Bible aren’t done now, or they are done so differently it’s hard to recognize. But this view takes the Bible only as a cultural artifact from long ago, not as the word of God to us right here and right now.

Scripture is more than just religious literature. It’s the telling of God’s inner life, an authentic witness to God’s heart, mind, and will for us. When you read Scripture, you are hearing the voice of God. While we may not live in the same kinds of societies the Bible writers did, the truth of God’s inner life and the truth of these Scriptures has stayed the same.

Sometimes we don’t know or aren’t sure when we’ve encountered the Lord. Ask God to help you discover his presence in your heart as you read the words of the Bible. This prayer may help:

Lord Jesus, you are the face of God. As I journey through your word and reflect on your covenants, help me to see your hand leading me to this moment just as you lead the people of Israel and the apostles after you. Guide me to the truth, and show me your plan for my salvation. Send me your Spirit, who inspired all of Scripture. Amen.

## Knowing God Through the Magisterium and Sacred Tradition

**Magisterium** is a Latin word meaning “an authoritative voice.” It refers to the Church’s official and authentic teaching office, held by the pope and the bishops in union with him. Magisterial teaching is found in ecumenical councils (such as Vatican II, also known as the Second Vatican Council) and special papal pronouncements (such as encyclicals). The Magisterium hands down the truths about Jesus in a divine and prophetic way. When questions of faith and morality emerge or need clarification, the Spirit guides the Church to discern Christ’s will and unfold its meaning in new and deeper ways. This is how revelation is handed on intact.

**Sacred tradition** starts with the New Testament. John 21:25 states that the Bible does not contain all that Jesus said and did. So where’s the rest? It’s in sacred tradition, which is the lived witness of the whole Church, formed under the leadership and teachings of the apostles and their successors, the bishops. To make sure that Jesus’ words and deeds were handed on intact, the Holy Spirit assisted the apostles in choosing successors who would continue teaching them until Christ returns. This line of authentic, Spirit-filled transmission began with Jesus, proceeded through the apostles, formed the New Testament, and continues to our bishops today. Sacred tradition also includes all of our liturgies and creeds as well as the lives and teachings of the saints and doctors of the Church.

Mark 2:1–12: Jesus heals the paralytic as a proof that he has the authority and power to forgive sins.



- *Have you witnessed or experienced Christ’s forgiveness? What effect did it have on you?*

Luke 6:27–36: How do Jesus’ words about love, hate, and attitudes still apply to our lives today?

- *Think about a time when you acted out of anger or hate instead of with love. If your sorrow (contrition) or conscience leads you to ask for forgiveness, then do it! The Church offers reconciliation to those who approach Jesus in faith.*

What do the following Scripture verses say about truth?

**Psalm 85:11–12:**

“Love and truth will meet...  
Truth will spring from the earth.”

**John 8:32:**


“The truth will set you free.”

**John 18:38:**

“What is truth?”

**1 John 2:4:**

“Whoever...does not keep God’s  
commandments is a liar...the truth is  
not in him.”



Are there any truths of the Church that you struggle to accept or understand? Why?

If you feel comfortable, share this question with a faith mentor, someone you trust who can help faithfully guide you in this question.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you answer these questions simply and honestly:

1. If I am made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27), how does that make me:
  - a. Good?
  - b. Unique?
  - c. Powerful?
2. What are my best qualities and unique gifts?
3. How do I bring goodness to my...
  - a. Family
  - b. Friends
  - c. School
  - d. Community/Parish
4. What goodness do these people and communities give to me and what do they teach me about God? Give at least three examples.

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