

GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Route B

EDUQAS GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES - ROUTE B
COMPONENT 2: APPLIED CATHOLIC THEOLOGY.

THEME 4 - SIN AND FORGIVENESS

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BIG QUESTIONS

Is 'sin' just a religious word for 'crime'?

Can or should people always forgive?

Is the death penalty sometimes the right type of punishment?

How can Jesus save?

Would a loving God send someone to hell?

What is the Body of Christ? Can everyone be part of it?

How can church buildings reflect Catholic belief?

What are the sacraments? Why do we need them?

Does the bread and wine really become Jesus' body and blood?

Should missionary work be allowed in a secular and multi-faith society?

AREA OF STUDY: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- The difference between crime and sin
- The different rationales for punishment and their strengths and weaknesses
- Christian teaching on forgiveness
- Catholic teaching on capital punishment
- Arguments for and against capital punishment

KEY CONCEPTS

Sin - acting against the will or laws of God.

Absolutism - the belief that there are certain actions that are always right or always wrong. The belief that moral laws exist eternally and are not just human inventions.

Relativism - the belief that there is no moral law and that rules that govern what is right and wrong are human inventions and change from place to place and from age to age.

Forgiveness - the act of pardoning someone for the offences they have caused you. Overlooking a person's faults.

Punishment - the consequences of a wrong decision and a penalty imposed by a person in authority on the person who has committed wrongdoing.

CRIME AND SIN

What is a crime?

Crime can be defined as any offence which goes against the law. Laws are made by the government of a country. As such they can be very different in different countries and what is lawful can change over time. Laws are there to protect the weak, give guidance on acceptable behaviour and so allow people to live safely and without fear. The role of the police is to detect and prevent crime, the role of the justice system is to enforce the laws and punish them.

Sin

A sin is an action which goes against the will of God. Some sins are crimes, for example, murder. Other sins such as adultery are not against the law.

Making Moral Decisions

Making decisions on how we behave is complex, but put very simply there are two common forms of morality:

Absolute Morality

This is when a person holds a principle such as “stealing is wrong” and never alters it. This applies to all situations, no matter what the context or circumstance. So even if someone was starving it would not be right for them to steal a loaf of bread. Stealing is always wrong. Another example would be the belief that it is wrong to kill. This would apply in all situations such as war, abortion and euthanasia.

Relative Morality

This is idea that a moral principle can be adapted or adjusted in certain situations. So stealing in principle is wrong, but if someone has no other way to get food, then stealing is justifiable. Killing is usually wrong, but if someone kills in self-defence, than it may be acceptable.

AIMS OF PUNISHMENT

When a criminal is found guilty of a crime, there are a number of punishment options available to a judge, such as fines, community service and prison. A judge will consider several different purposes when sentencing a person for the crime they have committed.

Deterrence means to discourage, or put off, someone from committing a crime. Punishment may put someone off doing that action again. It also makes an example of the criminal and protects society from the danger they pose. Seeing the punishment given might put someone else off doing the same thing. This is often one of the main arguments for the death penalty. Execution for murder should put others off doing it themselves. However, many argue that deterrence does not work and that people are not really put off by the example of others receiving punishment.

Deterrence also has to be just. Punishments should be no harsher than they need to be to put potential criminals off. The threat of hanging would probably deter someone from speeding but it would not be fair.

Retribution is the idea that punishment should make criminals pay for what they have done wrong. To put it simply, this means getting even or taking revenge. It makes the victim of a crime feel a sense of justice that the offender got what they deserved. This goes with the Old Testament idea of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”, but it does not reflect Jesus' teaching that we should 'turn the other cheek' and not seek revenge.

Sometimes victims feel that criminals do not get severe enough punishment, or there is a fear that the punishment could be too harsh. For Christians, the punishment has to be connected to justice and not revenge.

Rehabilitation. Punishment should help the offender to see what they have done wrong and to change their behaviour so they do not repeat the offence. It is the idea that criminals can somehow be 'fixed' if we understand why they commit crimes and help them to change. This may mean providing criminals with education, counselling, skills or training so they can become productive members of society and avoid breaking the law again. This is also known as reform. It is really the only type of punishment that works in the long term because if criminals are not reformed, they will continue to commit crime when they are released from prison. Rehabilitation is the aim of punishment which is most in line with Christian ideas on forgiveness . However, some see it as being soft on criminals and not really a punishment at all.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus' example and teaching shows Christians that they should treat others with compassion, love, mercy and forgiveness.

- In Matthew 18:21-22 The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'. By saying this, Jesus made it clear that there was no limit to forgiveness.
- The importance of forgiveness is emphasised in the Lord's Prayer. Christians ask God to 'forgive their sins, as they forgive those who have sinned against them'. This means Christians can only expect to receive forgiveness from God if they are forgiving towards others. Matthew 6: 14-15 'For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins'.
- There are many other **examples** from Jesus' life for Christians to follow. For example, Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) telling her to “go and sin no more.”
- The parable of the Prodigal son is one of Jesus' best known stories where the father forgives his son and welcomes him back even though he had done wrong.
- Jesus showed forgiveness in the last moments of his life as he was being put to death. While he was on the cross he says, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

As well as teaching about forgiveness Jesus also spoke about justice. He also spoke about God's punishment for wrong-doers in the next life. On Judgement Day, God will judge all humans according to how they have behaved. If they have behaved justly they will be rewarded in heaven.

It is up to God to judge people and he will forgive those who are truly sorry for what they have done and want to change.

Many Christians believe that punishment and forgiveness can go together. Many Christians would see the main role of punishment as being to help the person involved to reform. Christians also need lay great stress on trying to look at the motives and reasons for crime. Christians should be actively involved in trying to create a better and fairer society where people don't feel the need to, or don't have to turn to crime.

CATHOLIC TEACHING ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Capital punishment, or the death penalty, is punishment that takes the life of the criminal. Some people think it is a good form of punishment because it deters people from murdering others and takes a life for a life. Other people disagree with capital punishment because evidence shows it does not deter, and innocent people can be killed for crimes they did not commit.

The Catholic position on capital punishment has developed over many years. Traditionally the Catholic Church has allowed, but not encouraged capital punishment. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

“Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty (CCC 2267).

- In two famous letters, St. Augustine emphasizes the need to seek other punishments if at all possible. *Letter 153 to Macedonius, 3 ...we pity the person, but hate the offence or transgression. In fact, the more we dislike the vice in question, the less do we want the offender to die without correcting his vices...There is no space to reform character except in this life. After that, each person will have whatever he has won for himself here [in this life]. That is why we are forced to intercede for the guilty, out of love for the human race. For otherwise [capital] punishment will end this life for them, and once it is ended, they will not be able to bring their punishment to an end*
- Letter 134 to Apringius, 4...we would prefer to have them set free than to have the sufferings of our brothers avenged by shedding their blood.
- Pope John Paul II in his *Evangelium Vitae* 56, suggested that capital punishment should be avoided unless it is the only way to defend society from the offender. In any event, the principle set forth in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* remains valid: *"If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority must limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person"*.
- In recent years Pope Francis has stated that he is against the death penalty, saying that it is no longer justifiable and there is also the possibility that the wrong person could be killed.

ARGUMENTS FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Some Christians believe the death penalty is acceptable. They believe this because:

- Jesus never taught the death penalty was wrong.
- The Old Testament teaches that the death penalty should be used for some crimes: 'He who sheds a person's blood, shall have his blood shed, for in the image of God humans were made' (Genesis 9:6). 'Life for life, eye for eye' (Exodus 21:24)
- Some Christians would argue that the death penalty upholds the commandment "thou shalt not kill" by showing the seriousness of murder as a crime.
- St. Paul teaches that Christians should accept and obey the laws of their country, which might include the death penalty.
- The Catholic Church has not cancelled their statements that capital punishment can be used by the state.
- Religious and non-religious people might argue that some crimes are so dreadful that the most extreme form of punishment is justified. They might also argue that it is wrong to spend money on keeping someone in prison long term, when that money is needed by others in society.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Many Christians believe that capital punishment is un-Christian. They believe this because:

- Jesus came to save (reform) sinners, but you cannot reform a dead person.
- The commandment says, "Do not kill."
- Jesus said that revenge is wrong. Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."
- Christianity teaches that all life is sacred and that humans are made in God's image. If abortion and euthanasia are wrong, then so is capital punishment. Only God has the right to give and take away life.
- The overall message of Christianity is love and forgiveness so capital punishment goes against this.
- Religious and non-religious people might say that there is always a risk that the wrong person might be executed and that killing a murderer is still killing and 'two wrongs don't make a right'.

SUMMARY

- A crime is an offence against the law and a sin is an offence against God.
- There are several aims of punishment such as retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation.
- At the heart of the Christian message is forgiveness. Christians should follow Jesus' teaching and example.
- The Catholic Church has allowed, but not encouraged capital punishment.
- Some Christians are against the death penalty for such reasons as it goes against the commandment "Do not kill", and there is a risk the wrong person is killed.
- Some Christians are for the death penalty because, the Church allows it and the Old Testament argues for it.

AREA OF STUDY: REDEMPTION

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- The meaning and significance of salvation and the role of grace and free will
- How Jesus saves
- Free will and the unconditional love of God

KEY CONCEPT

Salvation - the belief that through Jesus' death and resurrection humanity has achieved the possibility of life forever with God.

Salvation

Christians believe that humans had rejected God by their sins. Humans are so important to God that God took on human nature in God the Son (Jesus) to free humans from the effects of sinfulness.

In Christianity, 'salvation' means being freed from sin and its consequences. Christianity teaches that Christians can only achieve this by repenting of their sins, asking God for forgiveness, and accepting Jesus Christ as the Son of God and saviour of humankind.

Christians believe that their relationship with God depends on Jesus' death and resurrection. Without it, they cannot be close to God or obtain forgiveness of their sins. Christians must accept the benefits of Jesus' death and respond to the love of God.

Christian tradition uses a range of images to describe how Jesus' death reconciled God and humans. The most common is the image of sacrifice. For example, John the Baptist describes Jesus as 'the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:29). The New Testament uses the Old Testament image of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:5) and applies it to Jesus. In the biblical tradition, animal sacrifice was a common practice. In making an offering to God, the person making the sacrifice hopes to make or mend a relationship with God. The animal was seen as taking the blame for something it did not do (a 'scape-goat') and the sacrifice was believed to free human beings from the sins they had committed.

Christians believe that Jesus' total obedience to God, resulting in his suffering and death, was so powerful that it made amends for the sins of human beings in a way that other sacrifices could not. This restored God's original relationship with humankind. Human beings could not do this for themselves, as they were sinners. Only the death of Jesus, who was divine, perfect and without sin, could offer redemption. Jesus achieved this by sacrificing his life, which meant he 'paid the price' for human sin. He earned salvation by suffering this punishment on behalf of all human beings. Christians believe that, in turn, Jesus extends the salvation he earned to all those who believe in him. Christians believe Jesus came to earth in order for Christians to receive salvation. His death was the sacrifice needed to bring salvation to the world, so Jesus is the saviour of the world.

Grace

For Christians, grace is the love and mercy shown by God because God wants them to have it, not because they have done anything to deserve or earn it. It is a free, generous and undeserved gift from God.

If Christians repent of their sins, they are truly sorry for them. Catholics believe that this makes them children of God and gives them the desire to change and do good.

Grace comes about in a special way in the sacraments, which Catholics believe are an encounter with God. Salvation brought by Jesus comes to the world today through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, reconciliation and the eucharist. As a result of receiving these sacraments, Catholics should try harder to live a Christian life. All Christians are called to a life of holiness, so they should try to live up to the teachings of Jesus.

The importance of grace and salvation for Catholics

Salvation from sin is important because without it, a person's sin will stop them from having a relationship with God and ultimately might mean hell or purgatory after death. The salvation of humankind was the purpose of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Jesus is the saviour of the world for Christians. Christians believe they do not deserve this but are given it freely by God. They must accept this freely in faith.

Salvation is important for Catholics because it explains why the sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, confirmation, healing and the eucharist are at the heart of Catholic life.

The Paschal Mystery

The Paschal Mystery is one of the central concepts of Christian faith. It relates to the history of salvation. It relates to the last few days of Jesus' life and his death and the events after his death. Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected and that he was then taken from earth to be with God in an event known as the ascension. They believe this is the work God the Father sent his Son to do on earth. They believe this is how Jesus offers salvation to all.

The last few days of Jesus' life are remembered during Holy Week, the week running up to Easter Sunday. The suffering that Jesus went through at this time is traditionally called the Passion (from a Latin word meaning 'suffering').

The Last Supper

The Last Supper was the meal that Jesus had with his disciples on the evening before he was arrested. He reassured his disciples that, after he had left the earth, the Holy Spirit would be sent to them to help keep his message and teaching alive. Jesus gave his disciples two symbols, in the form of bread and wine, to be used in remembrance of him. The bread represented Jesus' body, which was to be sacrificed on behalf of all human beings, and the wine his blood. The events of the Last Supper are also remembered on Maundy Thursday, which takes place on the Thursday of Holy Week.

Today, the symbols of bread and wine are an important part of Christian worship in a ceremony known as the Eucharist (or Mass, as Catholics call it).

Good Friday and Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion

The gospels record that after the Last Supper, Jesus went with his disciples to a garden called Gethsemane, where he prayed. This was a time of great sorrow and torment for him. Christians refer to the hours Jesus spent at Gethsemane as the 'agony in the garden'. He was arrested there after one of his disciples, Judas, told the authorities where to find him.

Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious leaders and authorities). He was found guilty of blasphemy, the crime of either insulting God or pretending to be God. In ancient Jewish society, the punishment for blasphemy was death. Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect who was then in charge of the city of Jerusalem, sentenced Jesus to be whipped and crucified. Roman soldiers then mocked and beat Jesus before leading him away to be crucified.

Christians commemorate Jesus' crucifixion and death on Good Friday, the Friday of Holy Week, and treat it as a day of mourning for his death. Christians believe that Jesus' death, ultimately had good consequences for human beings. Christians believe that Jesus' suffering and death were part of God's plan, which can only be understood within the context of Jesus' resurrection after his death.

The resurrection and its significance for Christians

The gospels record that after Jesus died on the cross, his body was buried, but he rose from the dead three days later. This event is known as the resurrection. It is the central belief of Christianity and lies at the heart of the Christian faith.

The reason for its importance is that Catholics believe Jesus' ability to overcome death proved he was the Son of God and had a divine nature. It confirms their belief in the Trinity and an omnipotent (all powerful) God who holds ultimate power over the universe he created, because only the creator of life could resurrect life after death.

Catholics also think the resurrection demonstrates that Jesus is their saviour. They believe he has the power to help anyone who believes in him to overcome death. By forgiving their sins, Jesus can grant them the gift of eternal life with God.

The ascension and the promise of the Holy Spirit

The gospels' account of Jesus' ascension tells how he was taken up into heaven 40 days after his resurrection, as witnessed by his disciples. The significance of the ascension for Christians is that it is the end of Jesus' time on earth. Catholics believe this means his mission, or reason for being on the earth, was successful. He had completed everything God the Father had intended him to do and could therefore return to heaven to prepare a place for his followers. Catholics also believe that Jesus' ascension prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to come to earth, as Jesus had promised at the Last Supper.

Hell and the concept of a loving God

Some people might ask the question 'surely a loving God would want to save everyone. He would not want to condemn anyone to hell'. God does not send anyone to hell. Humans have free will and must choose how to spend their life. If a person chooses to do evil then they will be far from God no

matter how much God wants them to come to him. God's love is unconditional but he cannot force it upon us, we have to accept it. Hell is not a punishment, but a consequence of choosing to go against God. We choose our eternal destination by our choices through life. The concept of free will means that God can only offer salvation; it is up to the individual to accept that offer.

SUMMARY

- Humans have rejected God by their sinfulness, but Jesus offers salvation and redemption
- Christians believe that their relationship with God and their salvation, depends on Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension
- This is a freely given gift offered through God's grace and cannot be earned
- God is all loving and merciful but it is human free will that chooses to reject God which leads to hell

AREA OF STUDY -CHURCH

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- The nature of the Church and Mary as a model of the Church
- The meaning and significance of the Church as Body of Christ and People of God
- The meaning of the claim that 'outside the Church there is no salvation'.

The Nature of the Church

At the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the 4th century CE, Church leaders agreed upon a single statement of faith called the Nicene Creed. It identifies four marks, or distinguishing qualities, of the Church. The 'four marks' of the Church are that it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

One

The Church is one. The Catechism notes that the Church is one for three reasons:

- because of its source, which is the Holy Trinity, a perfect unity of three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- because of its founder, Jesus Christ, who came to reconcile and unite *all humankind* through his death on the cross, taking away their sins
- because of its 'soul', the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the souls of the faithful, who unites all of the faithful into one communion of believers, and who guides the Church.

The 'oneness' of the Church is also visible. Catholics are united in the Creed, the prayer which sums up what Catholics believe, the other teachings and the celebration of the sacraments. For example, wherever you go to Mass in the world, the Mass is always the same.

'One' doesn't mean that everything should be exactly the same everywhere you go. In the Church's oneness, there is diversity: there is room for many different types of people with many different gifts, but who work together to continue the mission of Jesus. The Catholic Church teaches that these various cultures and traditions enrich the Church in their expressions of one faith.

Holy

The Church is also holy. Catholics believe Jesus is the source of all holiness. Jesus makes the Church holy and uses it to make people holy. The Church does this through its teaching, prayer and worship and good works, making the Church a visible sign of holiness.

'Holy' doesn't mean that there are no sinners in the Church. It is fully accepted that members of the Church are human and so make mistakes and have weaknesses. However, Catholics believe that each member of the Church has been called to holiness. Through baptism, a Catholic has been freed from original sin, filled with God's sanctifying grace, and incorporated into the holy People of God. Therefore, all Catholics should aim to live out their life as best they can.

Catholics recognise that they are weak human beings, and at times they sin and fall short of what God wants them to be. They are taught to ask for God's forgiveness and try again. In a sense, the

Church considers itself to be a Church of sinners, rather than of the self-righteous. One of the prayers of the Mass before the Sign of Peace asks: "Lord, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church."

Catholic

The Church is also Catholic. Saint Ignatius of Antioch used this word, meaning "universal" or "whole", to describe the Church. The Church is Catholic in that Christ is universally present (present everywhere) in the Church, and because He has commissioned the Church to evangelize. The Church is Catholic because Jesus gives the Church everything they need for people to be saved, and the Church has the task of reaching out to the whole world with the message of Jesus.

Apostolic

Finally, the Church is apostolic. Catholics believe that Jesus Christ founded the Church and gave His authority to His apostles. He entrusted a special authority to St. Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, to act as His representative on earth. The Church is also apostolic in that the faith found in both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition was preserved, taught, and handed on by the apostles.

The Church as The People of God

In Greek, 'ecclesia' is the word for Church. It means assembly, or gathering together, the Assembly of God's People. The Church *is* the People of God gathered together. The word *church* with a small c is used to refer to the building where Christians come to pray. When it is written with a capital C, Catholics mean everyone who is a member of the Church, all believers together. The Church is an important idea to Catholics.

Mary as model of the Church

Mary is a model of the Church. Her life embodies what it means to be Catholic:

Discipleship

Catholics look to Mary as the greatest example of true discipleship. She spent her whole life dedicated to Jesus. When Mary was told by the angel that she was to be the mother of the Christ, she accepted willingly and joyfully. This makes her a role model and a guide to the way Christians should serve God.

Faith

Mary had total faith in God and in her son. She did not question God when she was told that she would have a child, even though she was a virgin. At the very end she did not desert her son, but was one of his few followers to follow him right up to the foot of the cross.

Charity

Mary is also a model of charity. Her life is an example of total self-giving. She did not hold back but gave her whole life to God. This is how Christians should be too. At the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-11) she asks her son to help, knowing that he would do what was needed. The celebration had run out of wine, but Mary knew that Jesus had the power to help. As a result of Mary's request Jesus performed his first miracle and turned water into wine. This is also an example of how Jesus listens to his Mother and fulfils her request. This is one of the reasons why Catholics pray to Mary knowing that she will pray for us to Jesus.

Why Mary is special to Catholics today

Catholics hold Mary in great honour. She was chosen to be the human mother of God the Son, Jesus Christ, and you will often hear her described as Mary, Mother of God. So Mary is really important in the work of salvation. Without Mary, there would be no Jesus, no incarnation and therefore no salvation.

Mary is often called “Our Lady” by Catholics. This is a special title given to no one else showing how special she is. All Catholic churches will have a statue of Mary and there is a special devotion to her.

As Mary has such a special relationship with God, Catholics believe that she acts as a mediator between them and God. Catholics pray through Mary. She pleads to God for people. Catholics do not pray to Mary in the same way that they pray to God. They do not believe that she can answer prayer. They believe that she then prays for them. This is known as interceding. Catholics might light a special candle called a votive candle and place it on a special stand by her statue in church as a symbol of their prayer.

The Body of Christ

The Church is described as the Body of Christ in both the New Testament and the Catechism. According to the Bible, when Jesus entered the world, He took on a physical body that was 'prepared' for Him (Hebrews 10:5; Philippians 2:7). This is known as the incarnation; God became a human being. Whilst on earth Jesus showed God's love in the things he said and did. He taught people how God wanted them to live and he cared for the sick and the infirm by curing them. Ultimately, he gave his life as a sacrifice so that all could have a closer relationship with God. Through His physical body, Jesus demonstrated the love of God by his teaching and his actions and especially through His sacrificial death on the cross (Romans 5:8). After he rose from the dead, Christians believe that he ascended (went up) into heaven, bodily. This is known as the Ascension.

The teaching that *the Church is the body of Christ* means that Catholics believe that the work of Christ on earth did not end with the Ascension. According to this teaching, Jesus lives on through his followers, and in the Church, which is his 'body' on Earth. In this way, it is believed that Christ continues His work in the world through those He has redeemed, or saved by dying on the Cross. The Church made up of all those who are redeemed, now demonstrates the love of God through the work of its people. In this way, the Church functions as “the Body of Christ.” The Church is not a club or association to belong to, it isn't just a gathering of like-minded people. It continues the work that Jesus started of making the world holy. The Church offers a way to God continuing what Jesus started.

So, according to Catholic teaching, all Christians continue the work of Jesus on Earth. Christian people are now the physical body of Jesus as he is no longer physically present in the world.

Through Baptism, Catholics believe that the individual is united with other Christians and with Christ and become part of this 'body'.

Why the Church as the Body of Christ is important for Catholics

In the New Testament, the Church is described as ‘the body of Christ’ especially by Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:27). As Catholics consider themselves to be the physical form of Jesus on Earth (the Body of Christ), they must continue with his physical work, ministering help and teaching. For Catholics, this also shows that Jesus is still active in the world. His work didn't end with his death, but it continues in those that follow and believe in him.

Following this teaching, individual Catholics can perform different tasks and yet be united. Each person within the Church has a different talent that they can use for the good of the Church in the same way that each part of a body has a different function and is used for the good of the whole body. The Church remains a unity because its entire people are working together as the body of Christ.

It is for this reason that the Mass is so important for Catholics. At the Eucharist, Catholics believe that they receive the Body of Christ. By sharing the consecrated host at communion, Catholics believe that they share in the body of Christ. They are fed by Christ and are strengthened. Coming together to share the Eucharist reaffirms their unity.

Roman Catholics believe that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist. This is known as the Real Presence. At Mass the bread and wine, while keeping the appearance of bread and wine, actually become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.

Outside the Church there is no salvation

The phrase “outside the Church there is no salvation” is a very old one and comes from the writings of early Christian thinkers; for example, it occurs in one of the letters of St Cyprian, a Catholic bishop in Africa in the third century. For St Cyprian, and many others since, this phrase has expressed the belief that only Catholics will go to heaven. This is the most straightforward reading of the meaning of this phrase which can still be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church today (CCC 845). But does the Church teach that anyone who is not a Catholic is going to Hell?

The Church does not teach this; but what it does teach needs to be looked at carefully.

Firstly, the Church teaches that everyone is saved through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection – whether they know it or not. And the surest way to receive this gift of Christ’s salvation is to be a baptised and practising member of the Catholic Church. Jesus *'explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door'*, therefore *'they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it'* (CCC 846, citing LG 16).

However, they also teach that the Church of Christ is wider than the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is where the Church of Christ exists in all its fullness but there are elements of “sanctification and truth” (Lumen Gentium 8) outside of the Catholic Church and so other Christians, as well as Catholics, can be saved.

Secondly, they also teach that those people who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus but have lived good lives can be saved because it is not their fault that they are not Christians. They are sometimes referred to as “anonymous Christians”. This is because Catholics believe that if anyone is saved, it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus. So these people are living good lives because of Jesus, even though they do not know this is the reason. So the Church also believes that people who are not Christians can also be saved. *'Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.'* (LG 16 cited in CCC 847)

The Catholic Church still believes that the surest route to salvation is to be a baptised and practising member of the Catholic Church, but it does believe that other good people outside of the Church can be saved.

SUMMARY

- The Church is the people of God
- The Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic
- Mary is a model of the Church as an example of discipleship, faith and charity
- The Church is known as the Body of Christ and People of God
- The multiple meanings of the phrase 'Outside the Church there is no salvation'

AREA OF STUDY - BUILDINGS

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- The architectural features of a Catholic church and how they reflect Catholic belief and facilitate Catholic worship
- The sacred objects within a church and how they reflect Catholic beliefs.

A place of Worship

A Catholic church is the place of worship where Catholics gather as a community to celebrate their faith. Most Catholics will attend a local parish church. A parish is the local Christian community gathered around a church building. They are usually looked after by a priest, who leads the community and celebrates the sacraments. Christians speak of their church as the house of God. Many Christians believe that the community of believers is more important than the place where that community meets. The church building is simply a meeting place for the Church.

Exterior features of Christian places of worship

Of all buildings in any town or village, churches are among the most recognisable. Some churches have towers, others have steeples. The tower or steeple can be seen from long distances away. These features help the church to stand out from other buildings as something special that can be recognised even by non-believers. Towers and steeples represent prayer and worship rising up to heaven, a physical representation of what takes place inside the building. Many towers have bells that are rung to call people to worship.

It is also common for churches to be cruciform in shape. This means that they are in the shape of a cross. This is to signify the importance of the death of Jesus.

Modern church buildings tend to be simpler than those that were built a long time ago. As a result of Vatican II and the changes it made to worship, some churches built since the 1960s are radically different. For example, some churches are circular in design with the altar in the middle. This signifies the oneness of the worshippers and that they are all sharing in the sacrificial meal at the altar. It can also stand for the eternity of God.

Traditionally, churches face towards the East. Another word for East is Orient. This is where we get the word 'orientating' from. The Jewish custom of fixing the direction of prayer and orienting synagogues influenced Christianity during its early years. For the first Christians, it was customary to pray facing toward the Holy Land, where Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again. Also the sun rises in the east and is a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus bringing new life. The tradition continues to this day.

Churches are often very tall with domes or vaulted ceilings. This creates a space which is pointing up showing a connection with God and heaven.

Very often stained glass is used in churches. They usually display stories from the Bible or lives of the saints.

Many also have crosses or other Christian symbols to mark them out as Christian places of worship. It is not unusual for Catholic churches to have a recreation of the Grotto at Lourdes, showing how important Mary is.

Inside a Catholic Church

The interior of Roman Catholic churches can vary from being very plain and simple, to fancy and ornate, but whatever the design, the whole church will be focused on the sanctuary. Sanctuary means 'holy place'. This is where the altar, lectern and tabernacle are. The sanctuary is where the public worship is centred. These are features you would expect to find in a Catholic church:

The altar

A table structure, usually made out of stone. The main action of the Mass, the liturgy of the Eucharist, takes place at the altar. The priest consecrates (blesses) bread and wine here. The altar reminds Christians of the sacrifice and death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus offers salvation and redemption from sin. The altar is also a table, reminding Catholics that they are sharing in a fellowship meal, as they recall the meal Jesus shared with his disciples at the Last Supper. For Catholics, the Sacrament of the Eucharist or Mass is one of the most important sacraments. On or near the altar are candles, representing the Christian belief that Jesus is the light of the world.

The Baptismal Font

This is a big stone basin filled with holy water where baptism is performed. Baptism is the sacrament by which a person becomes a Christian; it is the first to be received. It used to be by the main door to the church to show that people entered the Christian life through baptism. Now the font tends to be at the front so that all those present can easily see a baptism when it takes place. Jesus himself was baptised by John the Baptist and baptism was one of the very earliest Christian practices, following Jesus' final command to 'Go and make disciples of all nations...baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (Matt 28: 19). Like the altar, the font is linked to the idea of salvation because it is a sign of cleansing original sin (which all humans inherit through the first sin of Adam and Eve) and promising to live a life that is faithful to Jesus and his teachings. Such a life will lead to salvation.

Lectern

Near the altar is the lectern, or it is sometimes called an ambo, used for the Liturgy of the Word. This is a book stand where the priest, deacon or reader stands to read to the congregation. The Word of God is proclaimed from here. Catholics believe that at Mass they are spiritually nourished and fed by listening to the word of God. At services they will read from a lectionary. A lectionary is a book containing a collection of scripture readings appointed for use on a given day.

The tabernacle

A tabernacle is a safe-like place in which the consecrated (blessed) hosts are kept. The sacrament is reserved here so that it can be taken to the sick and those who are unable to come to church. It is also a focus for private prayer and devotion. Catholics will genuflect; go down on one knee, towards the tabernacle in honour of the presence of Jesus reserved in the Blessed Sacrament. The tabernacle is often behind the altar, but in some modern churches it is sometimes placed in a side chapel so that people can pray in private. A sanctuary lamp is found nearby, which reminds Catholics of the presence of God in the tabernacle.

The Crucifix

In Catholic churches there is always a crucifix, a cross with an image of the crucified Christ on it. It is usually on or near the altar. It serves as a reminder of the suffering and death of Jesus. Catholics

believe that the death of Jesus was the price he paid for their salvation. Catholics, like all Christians, believe that Jesus died for them to forgive their sins and give them eternal life.

The Confessional

This is a small room or box like structure in which the Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place. The fact there is a room dedicated to it shows how important the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to Catholics. Inside there is a screen so that the person confessing their sins (the penitent) can make their confession anonymously. The priest sits on one side while the penitent kneels in the other. When the penitent has confessed their sins, the priest gives them a penance, such as a prayer and then absolves them; tells them their sins are forgiven by God. By penance and absolution they are reconciled to God, which means that their relationship with God is restored.

Other features

As people come into the church they pass a holy water container or stoup. They sign themselves with water, making the sign of the cross to remind themselves of the Trinity, the death of Jesus and their own baptism. It also helps to focus their mind into a reverent attitude as they enter the church.

Other important features of a Roman Catholic Church are Stations of the Cross. They are especially used in Lent to focus worship on the death of Jesus. They are usually pictures or carvings of each of the fourteen stages of Christ's Passion (trials, death and resurrection).

Statues are usually found around the church to help people pray. One of them will usually be of Our Lady. In front of the statues there will probably be votive candles. In Catholic churches, Christians place a lighted candle symbolizing their prayer. The statues are not worshipped in any way, they are just used to focus the mind and as aids to prayer.

SUMMARY

- A Catholic church is the place of worship where Catholics gather as a community to celebrate their faith.
- Some churches have towers or steeples which are symbolic of prayer rising up to God.
- Traditionally, churches face towards the East and are built in a cruciform shape.
- The focal point of a Roman Catholic Church building is the sanctuary. You will find the altar and lectern here. The altar is the stone table at which the liturgy of the Eucharist takes place.
- The font is a wooden or stone basin, filled with holy water where baptism takes place.
- Other features of the building are the confessional, the stoup and the tabernacle.
- Stations of the Cross and statues are there as aids to prayer.

AREA OF STUDY - SACRAMENTS

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- The sacramental nature of reality and the meaning and effects of the seven sacraments
- The meaning and significance of the Eucharist for Catholics and its role in salvation

KEY CONCEPT

Eucharist meaning “thanksgiving”. The name Catholics use to describe the rite where the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus and is received by the people. Also the name for the real presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

What is a sacrament?

According to the Catholic Church, a sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by God, by which grace is given to the soul'.

Catholics believe that while Jesus was on earth, everything he said and did was a visible sign of God’s love. People could see him, hear him and touch him. When Jesus returned to heaven, Christians believe that he left the Church to be his body, and the way to 'see', 'hear' and 'touch' him is through the sacraments.

The sacramental nature of reality

Catholics believe that the whole of creation shows the presence of God. This means that God’s presence and love are not distant things but realities all around us every day. This involves seeing every natural and human thing as a way for God to communicate with us. Through the sacraments, Catholics experience God’s nourishing, forgiving, healing, strengthening power in a special way. This helps them to build their relationship with God and become more like Jesus.

The importance of the sacraments to Catholics

Catholics believe that God’s grace is at work in the sacraments. Central to every sacrament is the idea of a ‘sign’ which becomes something through which God acts. Catholics believe that God gives grace to people through ordinary things, like bread and wine in the eucharist, or water in baptism. This is what is meant by ‘outward signs’ of ‘inward grace’.

To Catholics, the sacraments are a meeting point with God. Each one builds up an individual’s relationship with God in a different way.

There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony. These sacraments originated in the life, work and teachings of Jesus.

The seven sacraments

Sacraments of initiation

These lay the foundation of every Christian life.

Baptism

For Catholics, baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey of commitment and discipleship. At the service of baptism, water is sprinkled on a baby's head while the priest says, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' The person being baptised becomes part of the family of God. Baptism takes away original sin (which all humans have inherited through the first sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) and gives a new birth in the Holy Spirit. Its sign is the pouring of water.

Catholic families are encouraged to baptise their children soon after birth, however sometimes people are baptised later, or even as adults.

Confirmation

Confirmation completes the sacrament of baptism. If baptism is the sacrament of re-birth to a new life, confirmation is the sacrament of maturity and coming of age. It gives the strength to follow Jesus and to become involved in the mission he left to the Church. Its signs are the laying-on of hands on a person's head, most often by a bishop, and the anointing with oil.

As most Catholics are baptised as babies, confirmation is done when they are older.

Eucharist

At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and wine and asked his followers to re-enact the meal when they come together. Its signs are the bread and wine that Catholics receive at Mass – the body and blood of Christ. Catholics believe the Eucharist, or Communion, is both a sacrifice and a meal. They believe in the real presence of Jesus, who died for humanity's sins. As they receive his body and blood, they are nourished spiritually.

Sacraments of healing

These celebrate the healing power of Jesus.

Penance (confession)

By expressing sorrow for their sins in the sacrament of penance or reconciliation, Catholics experience God's forgiveness and healing through absolution by the priest. Their relationship with God and their unity as a Church is made whole again. The signs of this sacrament are the confession of sins and the priest's words of absolution.

Anointing of the sick

This unites a sick person's suffering with that of Jesus and brings forgiveness of sins. The individual is anointed with oil (a symbol of strength) and receives the laying-on of hands from a priest. In the past, this sacrament was only given to those close to death, but more recently the Church has encouraged its use for illness which is not necessarily life-threatening.

Sacraments at the service of communion

These help individuals to serve the community and bring about the salvation of others.

Matrimony

In matrimony, or marriage, a baptised man and woman are united as a sign of the unity between Jesus and his Church. Matrimony needs the consent of the couple, as expressed in the marriage promises (vows). The couple and their wedding rings are the signs of this sacrament.

Holy orders

In holy orders, men are ordained as priests, deacons, or bishops. Priests serve as spiritual leaders of their communities, and deacons serve to remind us of our baptismal call to help others. Bishops carry on the teachings of the apostles. The signs of this sacrament are the laying on of hands and anointing with oil by a bishop.

The importance of the Eucharist for Catholics

For Catholics, the most regularly celebrated sacrament is the Eucharist or the Mass. The Mass or Eucharist is the liturgical service where Catholics gather to recall the Last Supper, when Jesus took bread and wine and asked his disciples to remember him when they did the same. Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, is the most holy day. To attend Mass on Sunday and certain holy days is obligatory for all Catholics capable of doing so. Mass is celebrated every day except Good Friday and Easter Saturday.

Eucharist is said to be 'the source and summit of the Christian life', because being unified with God is the most important thing to Catholics. It is at the heart of their spiritual life; they become closer to God because they receive Jesus in communion.

- Mass re-enacts the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, so it is the highest form of prayer that a believer can make.
- By receiving the Eucharist in communion, Christ's Body and Blood spiritually sustain the believer. In the eucharistic prayer, said by the priest to give thanks to God, the central part is the prayer of consecration, when the priest repeats Jesus' words at the Last Supper: 'This is my body ... This is my blood.' Catholics believe that the bread and wine are transformed into Jesus' body and blood. The technical word for this is 'transubstantiation'.
- It makes individual Catholics part of the Body of Christ (the Church)

Catholics believe that Christ is present in the Mass:

- in the consecrated bread and wine, which are Jesus' body and blood
- in the readings (especially those from the gospels) since Jesus is the Word of God
- in the believers gathered together because Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'.
- in the person of the priest (Catholics believe that Christ works through the ministry of the priesthood to transform the bread and wine into his body and blood).

SUMMARY

- A sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by God, by which grace is given to the soul'. There are seven sacraments.
- The sacramental nature of reality means that God can speak to us through the world
- The Eucharist/Mass is at the heart of Catholic Worship, it re-enacts the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and unites them into the Body of Christ

AREA OF STUDY - MISSION AND EVANGELISATION

CORE LEARNING

By the end of this area of study you will know and understand:

- Why the Catholic Church is compelled to evangelise
- How the Church evangelises today; locally, nationally and globally
- The benefits and challenges of mission in an increasingly secular and multi-faith society
- The diversity of faith, belief, culture and tradition in Britain, as expressed through laws, festivals and celebrations

KEY CONCEPT

Evangelisation- literally means spreading the “good news” which can be translated as 'Gospel'. The sharing of the Gospel and life of Jesus with others.

'Go out and make disciples of all nations....' (Matt 28:19)

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives his apostles their mission. Mission means the calling to go out into the world and spread the faith. This mission is also the mission of the Church to the world.

The mission of the Church is to go out into the world:

- to go out to the ends of the earth
- to baptise people into the Church
- to teach the teachings of Christ

The Church began in Jerusalem and within a few decades after the resurrection of Jesus it had spread through the Roman Empire. Soon it reached the centre of the empire, Rome itself. St Paul, who wrote the epistles in the New Testament, was one of the first missionaries. From Rome, missionaries went to many parts of the empire. Many were persecuted or even killed for their beliefs. In the last 500 years, the Church has become truly worldwide. Missionaries have gone from Europe and started churches in Africa, South America and in Asia. Going out to preach the gospel is known as evangelisation.

In recent years the Church is no longer evangelising in places that have not heard the Gospel before, but in the largely secular West, where many people have heard of the Gospels but are not particularly interested.

Evangelii Gaudium

In 2013, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the world, called *Evangelii Gaudium*, which, in Latin, means 'The joy of the gospel'. Its theme is the Church's mission of evangelisation in the modern world. Pope Francis says that the heart of the Christian message is love for one another, which must motivate Christians to share the gospel, help the poor and work for social justice. Catholics must care for 'the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others.' Pope Francis says that God, in Jesus, made himself lowly and poor. For this reason, **the pope wants 'a Church which is poor and for the poor'** (EG 198). He wants the Church to have a special love and care for 'above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked' (EG 48).

Pope Francis also says that the parish (the local church community) is important in spreading the Church's message. As well as a church, many parishes have a Catholic primary and secondary school connected to them. These provide Catholic education and help to spread the teachings of Jesus. Parishes should be welcoming places, ready to greet new people and receive them into the community. The Pope says that Catholics should be outward looking, this means they should look for new ways to spread the gospel message.

How and why does the Church engage in evangelisation?

Why? Catholics believe that Jesus brought salvation through his death and resurrection. In doing this, he atoned (made up for) the sins of humankind. However, to be 'saved', individuals have to have faith in Jesus and believe in his atoning death and his resurrection. The Catholic Church believes it has a duty and an obligation to spread this faith as Jesus told his Disciples to do.

How?

- **Locally:**
 - This basic message of God's love is passed on by the Church, most importantly, through the whole life of the parish (celebration of the Mass, sacraments, Bible study, charitable work, social events, parish retreats, outreach events, etc.). Pope Francis talks a lot about the parish and says that the parish '*possesses great flexibility*'.
 - Also the parish can engage with other agencies and partners (other Christian churches, other faith communities, social workers and agencies) to show the Church's work for justice, social cohesion and the common good, which is also part of evangelisation, because it is living out the gospel message of love.
 - There may be local diocesan newspapers that the Church uses to help people learn more about their faith, such as the *Catholic Pictorial* in Liverpool or the *Westminster Record* in Westminster.
- **Nationally:**
 - On a national level, the Bishops' Conference of a country helps Catholics to know and share the gospel. For example, the department for Evangelisation and Catechesis of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has a 'Home Mission Desk'.
 - In 2015 a national evangelisation initiative called *Proclaim '15: building missionary parishes'*, was introduced by the Church through Cardinal Vincent Nichols. It was designed to affirm the good work that is already being done by the Catholic community, and to provide resources to develop new expressions of Catholic missionary outreach.
 - There may be national Catholic publications used by the Church to help evangelise, such as *The Tablet*, *The Catholic Herald*, *The Catholic Times*.

- **Globally:**
 - The Catholic Church is a global presence, it has a worldwide platform and in *the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples* it has a specific department in the Vatican which looks after it. The global reach of Church proclaims the gospel to the whole world through, for example, the global figure of the Pope (e.g. World Youth Days) and through its own Vatican Radio and TV station.
 - The Church lives out the Gospel in the work of international charities like CAFOD.
 - Specific organisations exist, such as Missio, which is concerned with overseas evangelisation

Religious Diversity in Britain: Benefits and Challenges

The UK is a multi-faith society in which people of different religions, and no religion, live alongside each other. According to the 2011 census, the profile of religious belief in Britain has changed considerably since 2001. Half of the people questioned still consider themselves as Christian, but Britain is now a place which has an increasingly diverse pattern of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices.

This diversity brings benefits and challenges. The Catholic Church teaches that people of other faiths should be respected and Catholics should be sensitive to those who have no religious beliefs yet still seek to do good.

Benefits

- Greater tolerance and understanding of the beliefs of others
- Varied and rich cultural life from experiencing the religions and traditions of others
- Better understanding of different viewpoints
- New ways of living and enjoying life

Challenges

- It is not always easy to be open and understanding towards the views of others
- There are examples of religious persecution and hatred
- Tensions can exist between different faith groups
- Beliefs and values of some people may be ignored

Issues

- **Conversion** –there can be issues where one group of religious believers try to convert another to their faith, which could cause conflict
- **Interfaith marriages**- when two members of different religions get married. This could cause conflict between families with different beliefs and values.
- **Raising Children** – within interfaith marriages both parents might want their children raised within their own faith. This could lead to confusion and arguments.

Religious Leaders are often involved in interfaith dialogue. This is led by the following principles:

- Recognise the common features between faiths
- Respect differences
- Listen to each other
- Learn to live and work in unity
- Share common values such as respect, tolerance, charity and non-violence

Christian Traditions, Non-Christian and non-religious Traditions

In the UK, laws, festivals and traditions are rooted in the Christian tradition. Two of the main holiday periods in the UK are Christmas and Easter, although it is much more common now to see celebrations of Eid, Diwali and Chinese New Year to name a few.

In recent times we have also seen the emergence of humanist celebrations of births, weddings and funerals. These occasions have traditionally been linked to a religious celebration but many non-religious people can see the benefit of celebrating these events in an open, honest and sincere way outside of a faith tradition and without the mention of God.

SUMMARY

- The Mission of the Church is to go out into the World and spread the Gospel.
- The 2013 letter by Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, deals with evangelisation. It is all Christians' responsibility to preach the Gospel by loving one another, helping the poor and working for social justice.
- Britain is a multi-faith society which brings benefits and challenges.
- UK law and culture is rooted in Christian tradition. However, the influence of other faiths and no faith, has increased.