



Should I Read the Catechism?

So you've heard about how amazing The Catechism of the Catholic Church is. But are you ready to use it in real life? Hundreds of pages. Numbers everywhere. And very few pictures. How does this book work, exactly?

Fidei Depositum & Prologue

After the table of contents, some of the first words you'll encounter is the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, written just for you (yes, you) by St. John Paul II. In these pages, St. John Paul II explains that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was published so that we can perceive that "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the sacraments." The prologue explains how this resource exists to help all encounter Christ. "At every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength..." (CCC #1).

The Four Pillars

The Catechism presents the Deposit of Faith in four parts or "pillars": the Creed, the sacraments, the commandments and prayer.

So Many Numbers

Flip to any page of the Catechism and you will see numbers. First, there are the four parts or pillars. However, each of these parts contain numerous sections, chapters and articles that divide and categorize the content. To be a Catechism ninja, you just need to understand that each paragraph is numbered (in bold, to the left). Starting with #1 (in the prologue) all the way to #2865- the last paragraph on prayer.

Cross-References

If you've got a Catechism handy, flip to paragraph #1831- which lists the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they help us live our Life in Christ. If you look to the left of the paragraph number in bold, you'll see two more numbers in italics: #1266 and #1299. Behold: the awesomeness of cross-references. If you flip to #1266, it explains (among other things) how the Sacrament of Baptism gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Almost every paragraph is accompanied by cross-references that we can look up to see how one topic (like the Gifts of the Holy Spirit) can be found throughout the four pillars of our faith.

The “In Brief” Sections

Think of them as Catechism cliff notes, these paragraphs at the end of each article summarize what was just explained. You’ll notice, as you flip through the Catechism, that it references not just Sacred Scripture, but also the best of everything that’s been said on the topic by Councils, Popes, Saints and other holy writers in over 2000 years of Catholic tradition.

Guard The Deposit

The Catechism of the Catholic Church can be intimidating. While reading it cover to cover is certainly an option, the best way to get into it is simply starting with a question or topic you’d like to learn more about. Look it up in the index and then venture into the cross-references. It may feel awkward at first, but treat it like you’d treat your Bible: underline, highlight, dog-ear and bookmark the passages that speak to you. This is our faith. Study it, pray with it and like St. Timothy, “guard what has been entrusted to you” (1 Timothy 6:20).