

## I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14:6)



By Lorraine Vincent  
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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:1-5). Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father, came to earth, took on human flesh and preached the “Truth” to all sinners to show us “The Way” and gave us His Holy Catholic Church. He is the Lamb of God, our Saviour, full of love and mercy for all mankind. He willingly sacrificed Himself on the Cross to make reparation for the sins of the world, reconciling us with the Father. The gates of Heaven were then opened to all souls who did and will do the will of God. We, who belong to the Catholic Church, the Body of Christ, have the responsibility to promote the faith to souls.

### *The Seven Sacraments*

Our Holy Catholic Church has seven sacraments which were instituted by Christ for our sanctification. “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 1131*).

The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation (Confession), Eucharist, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction (Sacrament of the Sick and the Dying). Our Church recommends that we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a month. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction can be repeated. Through these sacraments the faithful receive sanctifying grace from the Holy Spirit given by Christ through the Catholic priests. “From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and His Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them” (*CCC, 1128*).

“Sacramental grace is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive Him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior” (*CCC, 1129*).

To have the “required disposition” to benefit from the sacraments, we must desire to grow in our faith and be in the process of trying to become better Catholics. The sacraments will then strengthen us spiritually, to help draw us closer to Christ in order to better discern His will in our lives. We should try to learn the true teachings of our Church by reading the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal documents and the lives of the saints. We cannot quit trying to improve spiritually daily, because we will slide backwards and lose what we gained. Also, the more we pray and meditate daily, the more we will grow closer to Jesus.

### ***The Holy Eucharist***

The Holy Eucharist is the “*Sacrament of sacraments*” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 1311*), for in this Blessed Sacrament is Christ Himself. The Blessed Sacrament is at the center of life of the Catholic Church. St. John Paul II wrote about the Blessed Sacrament in *Redemptor Hominis*: “It is at one and the same time a Sacrifice-Sacrament, a Communion-Sacrament, and a Presence-Sacrament.”

Certain conditions must be met before a person may participate with the whole community in receiving the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion) in a Catholic Church. Initially, the Sacraments of Christian Baptism, Confirmation in the Catholic Church and the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) are necessary. Also, one must be in total agreement with the whole Catholic Church and its teachings, and believe that Jesus is truly present under the appearance of Bread and Wine consecrated at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by a Catholic priest. One must agree that the Holy Eucharist is not just a sign or a symbol but the real Body and Blood of Christ. Then, “The Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation” (*CCC, 1322*), and a person may participate with the whole community in receiving the Eucharist. That is why we, as Catholics, should not receive Communion in a Protestant Church and why Protestants should not receive Communion in a Catholic Church.

Our *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1381*, teaches “That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and His true Blood is something that ‘cannot be apprehended by the senses,’ says St. Thomas (Aquinas), ‘but only by faith, which relies on divine authority.’ For this reason, in a commentary on Luke 22:19 (‘This is My Body which is given for you.’), St. Cyril says: ‘Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since He is the truth, He cannot lie.’”

Christ wanted to remain present to all people in His Church in this unique way. “[B]y this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body” (*CCC, 1331*).

Therefore, people throughout the universal Catholic Church are united together as the Body of Christ in this Sacrament of Holy Communion until the end of time.

### ***The Sacrament of Reconciliation***

This Sacrament is the act of confession to a Catholic priest (Christ’s representative). It is a means to purify our soul of all sin. Christ is all forgiving in the Sacrament of Reconciliation if we are truly sorry and try to change our behavior. Also, we will receive special heavenly graces and blessings to strengthen us in our good will. There are times when a person might not feel forgiven and focus on the past. Feelings are irrelevant. The past is gone, the future is before us. We must believe in the power of God to forgive sins and go forward.

It is important to note, that Catholics may not receive Holy Eucharist, while in the state of mortal sin, as this would be a sacrilege, a grave sin. “For a *sin* to be *mortal*, three conditions must together be met: Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent. ... *Grave matter* is specified by the Ten Commandments ... St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience: ‘Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord... eats and drinks judgment upon himself.’ Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion” (CCC, 1857, 1858, 1385).

Grave sin, that is, mortal sin, includes occult practices, sex outside of marriage, theft and murder (which includes abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide). When a person takes part in these grave sins, knowing that they are really bad, but freely does it anyway, the person is thereby rejecting Jesus and pushing Him away. However, after the person receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation with determination never to commit the grave sin again, the sin is completely wiped away off the person’s soul, by the power of God working through the Catholic priest.

Then Jesus will welcome the person back to Himself in the Holy Eucharist.

### ***Abortion, Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide***

Abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide are all mortal sins against the Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”. Abortion is the murder of an unborn baby in the womb of a mother, with the mother’s consent. Both the abortionist and the mother are culpable before God. In fact, those who receive the abortion, perform it, or cooperate in it, bring an Automatic Excommunication upon themselves. They are excommunicated because of the sin itself. A bishop does not have to pronounce it. The killing of the innocent is never justified. The purpose of the excommunication is not to reject anyone, but precisely to help people understand how evil abortion is, and help them to turn away from it. The Church promises any woman who has had an abortion, that if she comes repenting of her sin, she will find welcome and forgiveness. God’s mercy is ready to forgive her sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), and to reconcile her to the Church by removing the excommunication.

Euthanasia is the deliberate killing of someone with or without that person’s consent, in order to eliminate all suffering. The individual who commits euthanasia must therefore intend to kill the person and must cause the death, usually by lethal injection. This practice along with assisted suicide remains illegal in most countries, but the trend towards accepting euthanasia is spreading throughout the globe. Abortion has been legal in Canada since 1969 when Parliament passed a law that allowed abortion in certain circumstances. Euthanasia and assisted suicide are now legal in Canada since the year 2015.

We have to remember that God gave us life. He didn’t say it is ours to take away, or permit the government to give us permission to take life away. God decides when we are to be born and when we are to die. The guilty ones that kill the innocent will be judged for rebelling against God.

There are three Euthanasia Deceptions. Deception #1 is that assisted death is compassionate. Societies tend to impose judgment on “quality of life”. There is an unspoken assumption on a person’s right to be alive depends upon how well they function. Pain can be controlled. We need more proper palliative care. Deception #2 is about the individual’s right to choose euthanasia for oneself. Choice includes family and friends. It’s a matter of care. Dependence on others does not diminish our dignity. It is simply our recognition of our need for one another. Deception #3 is that safeguards will protect the vulnerable. However, people always find exceptions. The practice of hastening death has become all too common, even in Canada.

We need to combat the Culture of Death in Canada. The concept of lethally injecting or giving somebody lethal pills to end their life is not compassion. It is not caring for the person. People of faith are called to love one another, to care for a person when they are going through the most difficult time of their life. We can help the needy to find meaning and purpose in their life again. We can take care of the sick and the dying. We are able to control virtually all pain if properly dealt with. We need to improve end-of-life training and pain management care in our medical schools and nursing programs across the country. We can offer complete relief. Our Church promotes the Corporal Works of Mercy. One of them is to visit the sick. We can build a community of care, of fraternal love for others. We can face life's struggles together, hand in hand, until natural death.

### **The Sacrament of Matrimony**

In present day society it is becoming more and more common for couples to live together without getting married. An erroneous mentality is to believe that if everyone does it, then it's okay. Not so. In fact, Catholic parents are becoming more indoctrinated into this secular belief, to the point that they do not insist that their children receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in a Catholic Church. This Sacrament is not valid if the Catholic children get married in a park, for instance. To receive this Sacrament, the man and woman must be married in a Catholic Church by a Catholic priest.

Now-a-days, false compassion often comes into play. Parents often have to make tough decisions. Their love and compassion for their young adult children tempts them to help them to do what is evil—what is forbidden by the Catholic Church. For instance, it is a great temptation to assist their child to live with their partner, while unmarried. The parents don't want to hurt their feelings, and feel sorry for them in their need of a place to live; so they either provide a home for them, or assist them financially. I am well aware of even deeper complications. I have heard that some children threatened to cut off all relations with their parents and to not allow them to see their grandchildren, if they do not assist them to live together out of wedlock. With tremendous grief, the parents gave in. How sad!

But think. What would Jesus do? Jesus did not help anybody to sin. His compassion would not lead Him to help an unmarried couple to live together; because anyone helping a person to commit a mortal sin would be taking the mortal sin upon themselves, too. This sounds rather harsh. To do what is "right" is often tough love. But it is better than assisting people to go to hell and going to hell along with them. Think about it this way: a person can assist a bank robber by driving the get-away car; but both would be prosecuted by the law.

Life on this earth can be so difficult in our journey towards Heaven! We have to pray fervently for souls. St. Peter and St. James wrote, "[L]et those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good (1 Pet 4:19). My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing by joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas 1:2-4).

### **Redemptive Suffering**

Jesus said, "Whoever serves Me must follow Me, and where I am, there will My servant be also. Whoever serves Me, the Father will honour (Jn 12:26). If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for My sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (Mk 8:34-36).

We can make good use of all our trials and pain in redemptive suffering for the good of souls. Jesus often spoke to St. Faustina and told her to write His words in her *Diary, Divine Mercy in My Soul*. He therefore tells us how we can use redemptive suffering. He said, “Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners” (*Diary, 1032*). We can bring this prayer to mind with each agony during the day while we suffer physically or mentally, for a certain soul, or for all souls throughout the world. We can also make a decision to make a loving sacrifice for souls, especially when it is not easy or convenient, and perform a difficult act of charity and mercy for someone in need. Then we can pray to Jesus to join our sacrifice to His Holy Passion for this soul. In this way we can experience with a sense of relief and some joy, knowing that our suffering isn’t for nothing, that it has great spiritual value and is doing some good. With the help of my priest spiritual director, I composed this prayer: Jesus, I offer to You all my sufferings and trials to be joined to Your Holy Passion and offered to our heavenly Father in reparation for my sins, for (names of people) and for all souls, in union with all the Holy Sacrifices of the Mass throughout the world today.

St. Faustina wrote, “During Holy Mass, I saw Jesus stretched out on the Cross, and He said to me, ‘My pupil, have great love for those who cause you suffering. Do good to those who hate you.’ I answered, ‘O my Master, You see very well that I feel no love for them, and that troubles me.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is not always within your power to control your feelings. You will recognize that you have love if, after having experienced annoyance and contradiction, you do not lose your peace, but pray for those who have made you suffer and wish them well’” (*Diary, 1628*).

Towards the end of his life St. Paul wrote: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His Body, which is the Church” (Col 1:24). This is a wonderful mystery of our Church. Christ allows us to share in His redemptive suffering for all mankind, when we join our suffering in loving union to His Holy Passion on the Cross.

St. John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, 1984; Part V- Sharers in the Suffering of Christ, 19, 24: “The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has *his own share in the Redemption*. Each one is also *called to share in that suffering* through which the Redemption was accomplished. ... In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ *has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption*. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. ... The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world’s redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as His Body, Christ has in a sense opened His own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. In so far as man becomes a sharer in Christ’s sufferings—in any part of the world and at any time in history—to that extent *he in his own way completes* the suffering through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world.”