

printing the first Catechism separately the notes should be omitted, since they are meant for teachers only.

Pope Pius X in his Decree *Quam singulari* of August 8th, 1910, published by the Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments,<sup>6</sup> definitely fixed the time when children begin to be bound by the law of sacramental Confession and Communion; he also made it clear how far they must be instructed in Christian doctrine before they can and ought to be admitted to their First Communion.<sup>7</sup> In harmony, then, with this Decree we present a brief scheme of catechetical instruction for children.<sup>8</sup> The Bishop of the Diocese, at his discretion, and the teacher with the advice of his bishop or parish priest, can add a few other points, provided he does not burden their minds or keep them long from their First Communion, when it is a question of children. Nor is it necessary that a child should know the answers to the questions by heart; it is enough if he understands the meaning of the words.<sup>9</sup> The teacher should of course explain when necessary the doctrine contained in the questions, using simple and easy words and illustrations which will help a child to grasp what is said. Before a person is admitted to his First Communion he should promise his parish priest that he will continue to study his Catechism; and, if it is a question of children, his parents or those responsible should satisfy that promise.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See *Appendix II*.

<sup>7</sup> See the *Third Catechism* (for adults), qq. 262, 264 (p. 136 below).

<sup>8</sup> We have taken this Catechism, save for a few modifications, from *Il Decreto "Quam singulari," pubblicato di ordine del Sommo Pontefice Pio PP. X, dalla S. Congregazione dei Sacramenti, il dì 8 agosto 1910*, edited by the Rev. Domenico Iorio, Secretary of the above Congregation. In compiling it the author had before him a Commentary (*Sulla età della prima Comunione dei fanciulli—Breve commento del Decreto "Quam singulari,"*) by Cardinal Gennari, who had a great deal to do with the framing of the Decree and therefore had a clear grasp of its meaning.

<sup>9</sup> So Cardinal Gennari, *l.c.*

<sup>10</sup> The parish priest can, if we mistake not, after consultation with his Bishop, defer the admission of a child to his First Communion for a short time, provided he is convinced of these two points: (a) that after making

THE CATECHISM FOR LITTLE CHILDREN WHO  
ARE TO BE ADMITTED TO FIRST COMMUNION  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DECREE *QUAM*  
*SINGULARI* OF POPE PIUS X

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

THE "OUR FATHER."

THE "HAIL MARY."

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

THE SACRAMENTS.<sup>21</sup>

(1) *Who made you?*

God made me.

(2) *What do you mean by the word "God"?*

By the word "God" I mean a most pure spirit, infinite in all perfections, who created all things in heaven and earth.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The teacher should take pains to see that the children pronounce distinctly and devoutly the words of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Sign of the Cross; also that they make the Sign of the Cross correctly. Teachers should also briefly explain to the children the meaning of the words of the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary and should tell them who they were who first said them. They must explain to them that the Blessed Virgin Mary, though indeed the Mother of God, is also the Mother of us all, and that she has a very tender motherly love for us. Children should therefore be taught to love her with a childlike love, and to say often, especially at their morning and evening prayers, the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, and to make the sign of the Cross. It is not necessary that a child should, previous to his First Communion, learn by heart the Apostles' Creed and the Act of Contrition. But he must study them and understand them. Then after his First Communion he must continue to study them and learn them thoroughly, so as to be able to prepare himself properly for subsequent Confessions and Communions.

<sup>22</sup> The teacher should tell the children in simple fashion the story of the creation of all things out of nothing and explain to them that God is the last End of all created things, including man. He will tell them of the

(3) *Why did God create you?*

God created me to know Him, love Him, and keep His commandments in this world, that so I may be happy with Him in Paradise after I die.<sup>23</sup>

(4) *How does God punish those who do not keep His Commandments?*

God punishes in Hell those who do not keep His Commandments.<sup>24</sup>

(5) *Where is God?*

God is in Heaven, on earth, and everywhere.

(6) *Has God any beginning or end?*

God has neither beginning nor end, for He is eternal.

(7) *Does God see all things?*

God sees all things, even those which will come to pass by the free action of creatures, their heart's affections and secret thoughts.

(8) *Is God one?*

God is One by unity of nature in three distinct Persons,

fall of the Angels and try at the same time to give them some idea of what an Angel is, especially of their Guardian Angels and of the evil spirits. He should speak of the happiness of man in Paradise or Eden before original sin; should explain to them in what the sin of our first parents consisted and how it was transmitted to us all except to the Blessed Virgin; how too, it is remitted in Baptism. Finally, he should tell them how in the earthly Paradise God promised to Adam and Eve that some one would come to redeem them from their sin, namely Jesus Christ.

<sup>23</sup> We know God both by reason and by revelation; we love and serve Him by faithfully keeping His commandments and by doing other good works, namely, things which are not actually commanded. The teacher must be careful to explain these points.

<sup>24</sup> Children should be simply told what is the state of the soul in heaven and what in hell: in heaven the soul sees God as He is, and is filled with perfect and never-ending happiness with Jesus Christ our Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the other inhabitants of Heaven; in Hell the soul, deprived of the vision of God which alone can make it happy, for ever endures fire and other torments in the company of the evil spirits and the damned.

called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; these form the most Holy Trinity.

(9) *Which of the divine Persons was made man?*

The Second Person, that is the Son of God, was made man.

(10) *What is the name of the Son of God made man?*

The name of the Son of God made man is Jesus Christ.

(11) *How was the Son of God made man?*

The Son of God was made man by the power of the Holy Ghost, taking a body and a soul in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>25</sup>

(12) *Why was the Son of God made man?*

The Son of God was made man that He might free us from sin and so lead us to Paradise.

(13) *How did Jesus Christ free us from sin and so lead us to Paradise?*

To free us from sin and so lead us to Paradise Jesus Christ suffered and died on the Cross, then rose and ascended into Heaven, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.<sup>26</sup>

(14) *What are Sacraments?*

Sacraments are means instituted by Christ to give us grace.

(15) *What Sacrament have you already received?*

The Sacrament I have already received is Baptism, by

<sup>25</sup> The teacher will here tell the children how the Angel Gabriel was sent to the Blessed Virgin, how Jesus Christ was born in the stable at Bethlehem, how the Magi came and adored Him, how He spent thirty years in hidden life at Nazareth and gave children an example of work and of obedience to their parents.

<sup>26</sup> The children should learn something of the mystery of man's redemption, of the Passion and Death of Christ on the Cross, of His Resurrection and His Ascension into Heaven, whence He is to come again at the end of the world to judge all mankind. These things all serve to show His love for us men, a love that He has never ceased to show and that calls for a return of love on our part.

which I was made a Christian and able to receive the other Sacraments.

(16) *What Sacraments do you now wish to receive?*

I now wish to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation, Penance, and the Holy Eucharist.

(17) *What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?*

Confirmation is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ to confer special grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost by which we are made strong to profess our faith in word and deed.<sup>27</sup>

(18) *What is the Sacrament of Penance?*

Penance is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ by which sins committed after Baptism are remitted.

(19) *What is needed if we are to receive the Sacrament of Penance rightly?*

To receive the Sacrament of Penance rightly, we need:

- i. To examine our conscience;
- ii. To be sorry for our sins;
- iii. To have a firm purpose not to sin again;
- iv. To confess our sins;
- v. To do the penance given us by our confessor.<sup>28</sup>

(20) *What sins must we confess in the Sacrament of Penance?*

In the Sacrament of Penance we must confess all mortal sins committed after Baptism, and it is useful also to confess venial sins, also mortal sins which have been already directly remitted.

(21) *What is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?*

<sup>27</sup> If a child has been confirmed before making his First Communion, then questions 15 and 16 are to be corrected in accordance with this, and question 17 omitted.

<sup>28</sup> The teacher should be careful to show children how to examine their consciences, how to make their confession, to say the penance given them, and to be careful to make a resolution not to sin again. An Act of Contrition will be found in the note to question 25 (p. 8 below).

The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup>

(22) *Where is Jesus Christ?*

Jesus Christ, as God, is everywhere; as God made man He is in heaven and in the Holy Eucharist.

(23) *What then is Holy Communion?*

Holy Communion is to receive Jesus Christ Himself, really and truly present in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

(24) *Why do you wish to go to Holy Communion?*

I wish to go to Holy Communion because Jesus Christ loves me and therefore desires to come to me; and I love Jesus Christ and so I earnestly desire to receive Him.

(25) *What do we need if we are to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist rightly?*

For us to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist rightly we need:

- i. To be in a state of grace, that is of friendship with God;

<sup>29</sup> This supreme Mystery of our faith may be thus briefly stated: at Mass, before the words of Consecration, pronounced by the celebrating priest, the host is simply bread; but after the words of Consecration it is no longer bread but Jesus Christ Himself, together with His Soul and His Godhead, under the appearance of bread; the same should be explained of the wine. This Mystery we must accept because Christ our Lord openly declared it and Holy Mother Church has always taught it and continues to teach it. Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper in order that in the Mass the Sacrifice of the Cross might be renewed and presented again, also that He might be able to dwell with us men in the Tabernacle, though still sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and might be united to us in Holy Communion. We ought never to forget this pledge of His love which He has left us; consequently we ought to make a point of assisting at Mass at least on the great Holy Days; we ought too, to try and assist at it with the same feelings of devotion as we should have experienced had we stood on Calvary while He was dying on the Cross. In the same way, we ought to pay devout visits to the Blessed Sacrament preserved in the Tabernacle, and to go to Holy Communion frequently and devoutly.

- ii. To be fasting from midnight until the moment of Communion;
- iii. To make a careful preparation before Holy Communion and a good thanksgiving after it.<sup>30</sup>

(26) *What will you promise in the presence of Jesus Christ on the day of your first Holy Communion?*

On the day of my first Holy Communion I will promise in the presence of Jesus Christ to hear Mass every Holy Day, often to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, to go to the Catechism class, to be obedient to my parents, and carefully to avoid bad companions.

<sup>30</sup> After he has explained the first and second conditions the teacher should show the children how to make acts of preparation for and thanksgiving after Holy Communion; he should read the Acts to them slowly and get them to repeat them after him. Cardinal Gennari in his Commentary on the Decree of Pope Pius X on First Communion (see p. xiii above) suggests the following acts:

#### BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION.

*An Act of Faith:* O good Jesus, I firmly believe all that Thou hast said to me through Thy Church, especially that Thou art really and truly present in the Consecrated Host.

*An Act of Hope:* O good Jesus, trusting in Thy goodness and Thy promises, I hope to receive from Thee grace, all good things needful, and eternal life.

*An Act of Charity:* Because Thou art infinitely good I love Thee, Jesus, with all my heart and soul and strength.

*An Act of Contrition:* O my God, I repent of all my sins because they have deserved Thy punishments, but especially because they have offended Thy infinite goodness.

*An Act of Humility:* O good Jesus, I am Thy creature, full of misery and sin and unworthy to receive Thee.

*An Act of Desire:* O good Jesus, I earnestly desire to receive Thee into my heart; come to me quickly and do not delay.

#### AFTER HOLY COMMUNION.

*An Act of Adoration:* I adore Thee, O good Jesus present in my soul; I humble myself before Thee, I am astonished at Thy wonderful goodness.

*An Act of Gratitude:* O good Jesus, how can I thank Thee properly? I offer Thee all the thanksgivings of Thy saints, especially of the Blessed Virgin and of all who love Thee.