

# Vocabulary for Unit 1

**beatitude:** Our vocation as Christians, the goal of our existence. It is true blessedness or happiness which we experience partially here on earth and perfectly in Heaven.

**canon law:** The name given to the official body of laws which provide good order in the visible body of the Church.

**catechism:** A popular summary, usually in book form, of Catholic doctrine about faith and morals and commonly intended for use within formal programs of catechesis.

**conscience:** The “interior voice” of a person, a God-given sense of the law of God. Moral conscience leads people to understand themselves as responsible for their actions, and prompts them to do good and avoid evil. To make good judgments, one needs to have a well-formed conscience.

**covenant:** A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being in which mutual commitments are made.

**Eternal Law:** The order in creation that reflects God's will and purpose; it is eternal because it is always true and never changes. All other types of law have their basis in Eternal Law and are only true if they reflect the truth of Eternal Law.

**free will:** The gift from God that allows human beings to choose from among various actions, for which we are held accountable. It is the basis for moral responsibility.

**infallibility:** The Gift of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church by which the leaders of the Church—the Pope and the bishops in union with him—are protected from fundamental error when formulating a specific teaching on a matter of faith and morals.

**intellect:** The divine gift that gives us the ability to see and understand the order of things that God places within creation and to know and understand God through the created order.

**justification:** The process by which God frees us from sin and sanctifies us.

**Magisterium:** The Church's living teaching office, which consists of all bishops, in communion with the Pope.

**merit:** God's reward to those who love him and follow Christ's Law of Love. To have merit is to be justified in the sight of God, free from sin and sanctified by his grace. We do not earn merit on our own; it is a free gift from God due to the grace of Christ in us.

**moral law:** The moral law is established by God and is a rational expression of eternal law. Moral law reflects God's wisdom; it is the teaching that leads us to the blessed life he wants for us.

**natural law:** The moral law that can be understood through the use of reason. It is our God-given ability to understand what it means to be in right relationship with God, other people, the world, and ourselves. The basis for natural law is our participation in God's wisdom and goodness because we are created in the divine likeness.

**New Law:** Divine Law revealed in the New Testament through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and through the witness and teaching of the Apostles. The New Law perfects the Old Law and brings it to fulfillment. Also called the Law of Love.



**Old Law:** Divine Law revealed in the Old Testament, summarized in the Ten Commandments. Also called the Law of Moses. It contrasts with the New Law of the Gospels.

**original holiness:** The original state of human beings in their relationship with God, sharing in the divine life in full communion with him.

**original justice:** The state of complete harmony of our first parents with themselves, with each other, and with all of creation.

**Original Sin:** From the Latin *origo*, meaning “beginning” or “birth.” The term has two meanings: (1) the sin of the first human beings, who disobeyed God’s command by choosing to follow their own will and so lost their original holiness and became subject to death, (2) the fallen state of human nature that affects every person born into the world.

**Paschal Mystery:** The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his life, Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

**Precepts of the Church:** Sometimes called the commandments of the Church, these are basic obligations for all Catholics that are dictated by the laws of the Church.

**salvation history:** The pattern of specific salvific events in human history that reveal God’s presence and saving actions.

**sanctify, sanctification:** To make holy; sanctification is the process of becoming closer to God and growing in holiness, taking on the righteousness of Jesus Christ with the gift of sanctifying grace.

**soul:** Our spiritual principle, it is immortal, and it is what makes us most like God. Our soul is created by God, and he unites it with our physical body at the moment of conception. The soul is the seat of human consciousness and freedom.

