



Anecdotes and Examples Illustrating the Catholic Catechism

Rev. Francis Spirago

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The book *Anecdotes and Examples Explaining the Catholic Catechism* is tailored to go with the Baltimore Catechism. For many of the questions it has one or more stories to illustrate the point. The first story is quite good: "The world did not come into existence spontaneously. The celebrated astronomer Athanasius Kirchner had a friend who did not believe in the existence of God, and frequently asserted that the orbs of heaven were self-existent. One day, when this friend visited the astronomer, he noticed in one corner of the room a globe which displayed the hand of a skillful workman. "Who made that globe?" he inquired. "No one made it," Kirchner answered, "it is self-made." And when his friend seemed angry at this answer being given him, he added: "If the immense orbs of heaven are self-existent, why not this insignificant little globe?" The unbeliever looked thoughtful, and presently acknowledged that he now saw that his principles were false." Let us consider also the fish out of water: "Without the knowledge of God the heart has no true peace. A certain fisherman one day caught a great number of fish. As he was a good sort of man, he picked out the largest fish to take as a present to his parish priest. The fish was still alive when he brought it to the presbytery and laid it on the ground. All at once it began to flap with its tail, to flounder and twist itself about incessantly. The priest made use of the occasion to draw a lesson for the bystanders. "See," he said, "how that unfortunate creature wriggles and flounders about; it wants to return to its element, which is water. It cannot be happy unless it is in the water. So it is with us men. We are made for God, and as soon as we depart from God we are unhappy and ill at ease." St. Augustine says truly: "Our heart cannot rest until it rests in Thee, O God." Let us consider the story of Baptism by Children: "A sea-captain, a Protestant, lived with his three motherless children in a Catholic family. The children of the family attended the Parochial School, and after an instruction on the necessity and manner of giving Baptism at which the captain's children also were present, the eldest of the latter said to the eldest of the former: "Are you baptized!" "Yes," replied the other, "I was baptized in my infancy." "Then," rejoined the first, "baptize me, for I might die tonight, and I want to go to heaven." This was done accordingly, and he in turn baptized his two younger sisters. When their father returned, they related what had been done, and to please them he also submitted to be baptized. Three days later he, his children, his ship, all aboard were lost at sea." And then there is the story of the three children, which illustrates the levels of contrition: "A father had three children to whom he intrusted the care of three little lambs. One day, as they were asleep, wolves bore off the lambs. The children were inconsolable, but their grief differed in its motives. "I weep," said the eldest, "because father will punish me." "And I," said the second, "because besides punishing me he will be deeply grieved." "I weep," said the youngest, "because father will be deeply afflicted, and I would rather be punished all my life than cause him pain." The children illustrate the grades of sorrow from servile fear to perfect Contrition." Jesus used parables to illustrate His points and teach us doctrine. These wonderful stories will bring the catechism to life for you and your family. This is a good companion to 'The Catechist'.

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