

KEY CONCEPTS

POPE	The Bishop of Rome, head of the Catholic Church.	ICTHUS	The Greek word for fish, ICTHUS, made an acronym for Christ. Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour.
INFALLIBLE	Without error. The belief that, under strict conditions, the teaching of the Pope on behalf of the Church is protected from error.	CHI RHO	A Christian symbol consisting of the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P), which are the first two letters of 'Christ' in Greek.
VENERATION	Regarding something with utmost respect and reverence; honouring, but not worshipping, a saint or a very holy person.	RETREATS	Taking time out of ordinary daily life to focus on God, religion and spirituality; taking time to communicate with God through prayer and reflection.
RELIGIOUS VOWS	Sacred promises of poverty, chastity and obedience, made by monks and nuns.	APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION	The line of Catholic bishops, going back to Jesus' apostles.
A RELIGIOUS	A person who has taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	The belief that God preserved the Virgin Mary from Original Sin from the moment of her conception.
THEOTOKOS	'God-bearer'; the title given to the Virgin Mary, bearer of Christ.	CRUCIFIX	A representation of the cross with a figure of the crucified Jesus on it.

EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

The **Evangelical Counsels** are the **vows (promises)** a person makes when they become religious. The person makes these promises in order to avoid the things in the world that may distract them from God, namely riches, sexual pleasure and power or authority. These things are not sinful in themselves, but if a person has a vocation to become religious, these things could stop that person fully completing God's will for their lives. Therefore, the three vows are **Poverty, Chastity and Obedience**. All Catholics are called to live by the evangelical counsels. However, a religious person will make a public statement that they intend to live a life that abides by them.

POVERTY, CHASTITY, OBEDIENCE

The vow of **POVERTY** means that the person is promising to abandon personal worldly possessions and share anything they have with their community. They will place little importance to material belongings, and instead will focus their attention on God as the source of all wealth – spiritual and emotional.

The vow of **CHASTITY** means that the person is promising to give up the right to marriage, and will refrain from any sexual acts. This vow is taken so that the person can fully focus on serving God and the community without the distraction of a spouse or family. This is based on a verse in Mathew's Gospel where Jesus says, '*...others have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who can embrace that call should do so.*' (Mt 19:12)

The vow of **OBEDIENCE** means that the person is promising to prayerfully discern the will of God for them and to freely respond to that. Even Jesus was fully obedient to God, and therefore anyone taking this vow should ensure that they are too.

These religious vows are not easy to keep, but a person will make them after a long time of discernment and study. They will ensure they fully understand the meaning of each vow and how it relates to their life. The vows are taken freely, and are way to live a life dedicated to God.

The work of religious orders; contemplative or apostolic

CONTEMPLATIVE

- This comes from the Latin word '*contemplatio*' which means 'the act of looking at something attentively'.
- Contemplative orders usually live away from the rest of the world, often enclosed together in monasteries or convents.
- Their day is centred around the Eucharist (Mass) and the Liturgy of the Hours (the official public prayer of the Church) prayed in community at regular intervals during the day and night.
- There is also daily personal prayer, meditation, spiritual reading and study.
- Contemplative orders focus on the needs of the world through prayer.
- Some take a vow of silence. This means that the majority of their time is spent in silence. This allows them to reflect more effectively, and to only speak when absolutely necessary rather than be distracted through mindless chatter.

APOSTOLIC

- This comes from the Latin word '*apostolus*' which means 'a person sent forth'.
- Apostolic orders usually live out in the world, often living and working in the poorest communities.
- Their day is centred around working with those who need it most, offering help and support and living out the Gospel message of love for others.
- Apostolic orders focus on the needs of the world through service and love of others.
- Apostolic orders use their gifts and talents to witness God's love to others. They often serve as priests, teachers, nurses or carers. Some work with at-risk youth, those with mental health issues, the homeless, or the terminally ill. Others are lawyers fighting for human rights. They will respond to any issues in the world with compassion and love, thereby bringing God's love to all.