Catholics, no less than other citizens absorb from the culture ways of thinking and seeing the world. Our secularised culture often rejects ideas like ultimate truth, a sense of sacramental mystery, hierarchical authority, acceptance of things not verified by the immediate senses (metaphysical reality), objective criteria for right and wrong and ideas of membership not based on free association of individuals. Catholicism accepts all of these things that secularism rejects. To the extent that Catholics absorb the secularised ways of seeing the world their witness to Catholic faith is diminished.

Two subjects are key to understanding Catholic faith: the preambles of faith and the motivation of faith. The preambles of faith include those rational steps through which the believer reaches the conclusion that belief in God is reasonable. The freedom of faith is respected by affirming that such a conclusion is as far as the preambles can take one. That is, the preambles show that there is good evidence for the existence of God and that belief in God is reasonable, but they cannot establish God’s existence with absolute certainty or beyond rational doubt. Revelation builds on what rationality can demonstrate.
In his book *New Proofs for the Existence of God*, Robert Spitzer demonstrates that belief in the existence of a creator God, who is loving and sustains all things in existence is the most reasonable and consistent belief to hold about the nature of the universe when we take into account developments in physics, chemistry and biology which pertain to the origin and workings of the universe. He is not alone among theologians, scientists and philosophers in reaching this conclusion. Belief in God is the most reasonable and rational stance a human being can adopt in the face of all of the evidence.

Belief in God and the possibility of revelation has implications for the meaning and purpose of human life and the universe itself. Faith affirms the existence and necessity of the transcendentals: truth, beauty, goodness and love. Christian faith believes that because God became one with us in the incarnation human dignity is raised up and that through baptism is incorporated into the life of the Trinity.

The preambles of faith today must be related to new scientific and philosophical insights just as the early Church drew on elements from the philosophy Aristotle, Plato and other sources. “The conviction that there is a Creator God is what gave rise to the idea of human rights, the idea of the equality of all people before the law, the recognition of the inviolability of human dignity in every single person and the awareness of people’s responsibility for their actions. Our cultural memory is shaped by these rational insights. To ignore it or dismiss it as a thing of the past would be to dismember our culture totally and to rob it of its completeness. The culture of Europe arose from the encounter between Jerusalem, Athens and Rome – from the encounter between Israel’s monotheism, the philosophical reason of the Greeks and Roman law. This three-way encounter has shaped the inner identity of Europe. In the awareness of man’s (sic) responsibility before God and in the acknowledgment of the inviolable dignity of every single human person, it has established criteria of law: it is these criteria that we are called to defend at this moment in our history.” Benedict XVI. Bundestag (Germany) 2010

Questions for prayer and reflection

How can Catholics engage in dialogue with the social, political and economic questions and cultural discourse in our nation?

Christian faith has helped to shape many of the positive features of our society but how do we engage our fellow Australians in reflection on those values and shared vision?

How do we present the Christian religion as reasonable and rational and incorporate insights from science and philosophy?

Key ideas

- Christian faith is of service to society by proposing and defending human values.
- Belief in God is the most reasonable and rational response to the evidence about the origins of the universe.