

Catholic Biblical Apologetics

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1. Foundations

Apologetics Without Apology

Apologetics (from the Greek *apologeisthai*, meaning to defend) is an orderly defense and justification. The intent of this work is to present what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, and why. We present the Biblical and rational credibility and credentials of Catholic–Christian faith. Our apologetic approach bases the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in Divine Revelation:

- The Biblical (*logos*): origin, foundation, and non–contradictory nature of the truths of the Bible;
- The Constant Tradition of the Church (*paradosis*): the enduring and progressive growth of the truths under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This text grew out of a series of presentations which explained Roman Catholic Church teachings in a manner which was easy to understand, yet soundly rooted in the two streams of the one source of Divine Revelation. The authors each participate in two faith communities, one Roman Catholic, and the other Evangelical Protestant. We realized that much of the friction between these communities results from miscommunication and misunderstanding. Therefore, we set out to explain the basis of foundational Roman Catholic teachings.

We desire to explain rather than convince. Our audiences always come from various faith communities with varying beliefs. Our intent is to explain Roman Catholic teachings in a language that makes sense to all the faith communities. So often, misunderstandings and friction result from mere differences in words.

2 Tim 2:14 Remind people of these things and charge them before God to stop disputing about words. This serves no useful purpose since it harms those who listen.

2 Tim 2:23 Avoid foolish and ignorant debates, for you know that they breed quarrels.

We use the Bible as the foundation for our presentation because we found that Bible based information is the single most important mode of initial understanding and sharing between our communities. Yet we make sure that the constant faith and teachings of the Church are presented as another stream of revelation.

As you read, you may disagree. Of course. We are not debating, just explaining. We seek to set forth the what and why of Catholic teaching. Once there is understanding, then we can be in a relationship based upon shared knowledge rather than misinformation.

An Incomplete Picture

This text is incomplete in many ways. No small text can contain the immense teaching and explanation of the Roman Catholic faith. We have hit only the high spots, the truths and issues which we believe are the most important as foundations of faith. There is much more to cover beyond this.

The authors are incomplete also. We present this text from our experience and our viewpoints. We use the Bible and the Church documents to illustrate our Faith. Yet, we cannot give the topic complete justice because of our limitations. Please excuse our errors, blind spots, and views limited by space considerations.

Finally, this text is information. Yet the process for understanding Roman Catholicism is formation rather than education. In the early history of the Christian Church, the Gnostic heretics tied success in faith to knowledge. The Church knew then, and it knows now, that Christianity is a matter of relationships rather than knowledge. The foundation of Christianity is relationship with Jesus. One key to this relationship is our relationships with each other. We cannot love God and hate people. Changing our lives to love people and love God more is what formation is all about. This text cannot show you the reality of Roman Catholicism. Only participation in an active faith community can give one the understanding of what Catholics are really about.

With these caveats, we present Catholic Biblical Apologetics.

Dearly Beloved Catholic Brothers and Sisters

It is important to us that we address a few words to you who already share the fullness of faith in the Roman Catholic Church with us. We do this because of the fact that we address this text not just to our Catholic brothers and sisters, but also to our brothers and sisters from different faith communities. For that reason we want to verbalize a few thoughts to you.

In many ways this text is primarily for us Catholic Christians. This text began in a Catholic faith community and was initially taught in Catholic churches. This text reflects our experience with other Christians who did not know what we believed or knew only error about our Faith.

Many of us Catholics did not receive the fullness of understanding in our Faith as we might have hoped. This may be true for many reasons:

- There probably was a time when we weren't the least interested in the teachings of the Church. We may have heard them; but they were not important at that time.
- On the other hand, after the reception of Confirmation, we (and sometimes our parents under our urging) felt in some way that we possessed the fullness of knowledge of the Faith. Often we ended our period of studying and learning about Christ, His Word and the Church, as adolescents.
- In some instances, many of us did not receive proper teaching in our Faith because of the weaknesses of priests and religious of the past. In some cases, even they may have been ignorant of the teachings of our Faith. Before we cast stones, we need to remember that Christ said He comes to call sinners and that the healthy do not need a physician.
- These shortcomings may be the liability of a worldwide community. God knew what He was doing when He left the deposit of faith in earthen vessels of men and women. There would be ignorance and abuse ... but He still deigned to leave His Word with men and women.

You may notice a different emphasis in the presentation of the Catholic Faith in this text. Our intentional primary emphasis is on the Biblical basis of the Faith. The Bible is not the sole authority for our Faith. The Word of God is greater than His written Word only. This we trust is made clear in the text. That is an important distinction for us.

Another emphasis in the text is that Catholic Christianity is an authoritative Faith. We live as our forefathers and foremothers did under the teaching authority of the Church, the Body of Christ. This means that we are not a democratic body of believers as are some congregational churches. The meaning of the Word of God is the same for all Catholic believers. Individual believers do not determine what they will believe. The Holy Spirit decides. Consider the words of the first council fathers in Acts 15: "The Holy Spirit and we ..." We are a universal church, worldwide, ecumenical. We are concerned with the local church community. We are concerned with the diocesan church community. We are concerned with the national church community. We are concerned with the worldwide church community with whom we share the same one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord, unchanged from Apostolic times.

One caution in understanding your own Faith and in judging the faith of other Christians is to attempt to understand what we mean by the words we use and what they mean by the words they use. We have tried to indicate throughout the text that what we *call* our Faith content does not determine the content. Words are labels. They change in use and importance. The content does not. It is paramount to ask of your own Faith and the faith of others what is *meant*. Many Christians today are thoroughly taken with the way they express their faith and its practice. For example, "being saved," "having a personal relationship with Christ," etc., become all too handy labels implying a very narrow and one-sided and simple response. The Catholic church has, from Apostolic times, handled all the truths any Christian group today might want to expound, but in most instances, an almost two thousand year history has given us older and well worn labels for the same phenomena. Most of these labels have come to us from the trustworthy men and women—saints—of ages past. We pray we have addressed most of these truths in this text.

It does make a difference what Christian church one belongs to. Ultimately the question of differences is a very serious question of truth. What is true and how is truth determined? For Biblical truth, it is important to realize that the Bible as a defined canon of just so many books and no others came from the Church of Rome and her authority.

The Bible itself says that all truth is not contained therein. As we say in the text, the Bible is the book of the Church; the Church is not a church of the Bible. The same authority who defined what books are included in the Bible also has the authority to interpret those books and it is an exclusive authority. It is not given to everyone as the Bible itself clearly states. Hence, we Catholic Christians hold two authorities for determining truth: the Bible and the Holy Spirit. The nature of truth dictates that the same thing (e.g. a scripture verse) cannot be both true and not true at the same time. In other words, the same scripture verse cannot have two differing and contradictory interpretations. Only one can be true. The question must be asked, if scripture is directed to Christians and if it is the true Word of God, can God leave us to not know how to determine what interpretation is true among many differing interpretations?

Hence, as seen in the text, we are a Church with a living teaching *Magisterium*, teaching authority. In cases of determining truth from error, the Church alone, in those who share the teaching authority—the bishop of Rome and the bishops worldwide—have that authority to decide without any possibility of error. History records the tragedy of losing a teaching authority: the multiplication of Christian fellowship communities and translations of the Bible. But, there is a basis of common truth, the clear truths of the written Word of God: that God is one and three, that God reveals to humankind, that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus founded His Church, that the Word of God can be known among us, that the Holy Spirit is with us, that Jesus will come again.

Because our Church is a worldwide community, differing cultural adaptations exist. These cultural adaptations are not differences in truth but in practice. One example of the way the Church differed culturally is witnessed in the existence of the Uniate Churches, those church communities which worship in cultural styles which differ from the Roman Christian way, e.g. Coptic, Maronite, Greek Byzantine, etc. Some cultural differences may even be wrong, e.g. the apparent mixture of voodoo with Catholicism as practiced in some central and southern American countries. This is not the teaching of the Church. The Church works hard to eliminate such error constantly from those who practice it. But similar to the Nazarenes of Christ's time, let us not miss the divinity (and hence the presence) of Christ by stumbling over His humanity. The Church has a human side as Christ did. The Church is the Body of Christ. But the Church is human: the people Jesus calls to Himself are sinners; they are not healthy. But the divinity of the Church reconciles, heals and embraces sinners. There should never be the alternative to leave the Catholic Faith. In leaving the Faith one becomes a part of the problem, not part of the solution. The Nazarenes picked up stones to stone Jesus to death. The choice we face is a choice similar to Peter and Judas, the classic examples of the failure of the human nature of the church. Choose reconciliation and healing both for ourselves and for all others! Choose, ultimately, life!

Robert Schihl

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2. Being Catholic and Christian: Faith and Salvation

Catholic Christians believe that God loves us, each of us personally. God's love for us and our response to His love unites us. As with all important understanding of how persons relate to their surroundings, believers pass on to those who follow the guideposts which mark the path of belief.

Catholic Christians view the Bible, the written Word of God, as authentic historical literature. This literature is addressed to and has something to say to all people—it transmits an authentic teaching.

This teaching expresses a need to believe something and someone.

Included in this teaching is the promise of saving the believer from death to life ... eternal life.

This written literature or Scripture is a record of the earliest response in faith by believers to this teaching—open confession of detailed statements of faith.

The profession of faith historically—from Apostolic times—led to initiation into a supportive faith community of like believers.

This supportive faith community of believers was known and is known by many labels: the Way, Church, Christian, etc.

The Transmission of Authoritative Doctrine

The historicity and authenticity of the Bible text is not a problem among Christians today. Roman Catholic Christians affirm that the Bible is an historical document and that the text we possess today is authentic.

It is apparent from the content of the Bible as an historical document that matters of importance were transmitted among the early Christians.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Jude 3 | Beloved, although I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation , I now feel a need to write to encourage you to contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones. |
| Jude 20 | But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith ; pray in the holy Spirit. |
| 2 Tim 1:13 | Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. |
| 2 Tim 4:3 | For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers |
| Titus 1:9 | ...holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents. |
| 1 Tim 6:20 | ... guard what has been entrusted to you . |
| 2 Tim 1:14 | Guard this rich trust with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us. |

Chapter 2

- 1 Tim 4:6 If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the **words of the faith and of the sound teaching** you have followed.
- Heb 3:1 Therefore ... reflect on Jesus, the apostle and high priest of **our confession**,
- Heb 4:14 ... let us hold fast to **our confession**.
- Heb 10:23 Let us hold unwaveringly to **our confession** that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy.
- Phil 2:15–16 ...that you may be blameless and innocent ... as you hold on to **the word of life**
- Acts 5:20 Go ... and tell the people **everything about this life**.
- 1 Jn 2:24 Let **what you heard from the beginning** remain in you. If **what you heard from the beginning** remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father.
- 2 Thess 2:15 Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to **the traditions that you were taught**, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.
- Rom 6:17 But thanks be to God that, although you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to **the pattern of teaching** to which you were entrusted.
- 1 Cor 11:23 For I received from the Lord **what I also handed on to you**
- 1 Cor 15:3 For **I handed on to you** as of first importance **what I also received** ...

Paul declares specifically what it is he preaches. It is a “gospel” (the Greek *ευαγγελιον* *euaggelion*, means “good news”).

- Gal 2:2 I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them **the gospel that I preach** to the Gentiles ...
- Rom 2:16 on the day when, according to my **gospel**, God will judge people’s hidden works through Christ.
- Rom 16:25 Now to him who can strengthen you, according to my **gospel and the proclamation** of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** kept secret for long ages
- 1 Cor 15:1 Now I am reminding you, brothers, of **the gospel I preached to you**, which you indeed received and in which you also stand.

For Paul, the content of the preaching is Jesus Christ.

- Rom 16:25 Now to him who can strengthen you, according to my **gospel and the proclamation** of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages
- 1 Cor 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of **the proclamation** to save those who have faith.

Paul also writes of the fruit of the tradition which he preaches ... “faith.”

- Col 2:7 rooted in him and built upon him and established in the **faith** as you were taught ...
- Gal 1:23 They (the people of Syria and Cilicia) only kept hearing that “the one who once was persecuting us is now preaching the **faith** he once tried to destroy.”
- Eph 4:5 There is one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism;

Paul finally writes of the content of the doctrine, the tradition he preaches – the “word of God” or “the word of the Lord.”

- 1 Thess 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, **receiving the word** in great affliction, with joy from the holy Spirit,

- 2 Thess 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, so that **the word of the Lord** may speed forward and be glorified, as it did among you,
- 1 Cor 14:36 Did **the word of God** go forth from you? Or has it come to you alone?
- Gal 6:6 One who is being **instructed in the word** should share all good things with his instructor.
- Phil 1:14 ... the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to **proclaim the word** fearlessly.

Apostolic Confessions of Faith

Following the process of the apostolic preaching and the response of faith, the writers of the New Testament expressed the essential belief elements of that faith in confessions of faith for the early Church.

- 1 Cor 12:3 And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the holy Spirit.
- Rom 10:9 For, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- Phil 2:11 ... every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- Col 2:6 So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him,
- 1 Jn 2:22 Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ.
- Mk 8:29 "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah."
- 1 Jn 4:15 Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.
- 1 Jn 5:5 Who is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- Heb 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

In other New Testament writings, increasingly more detailed confessions of faith are found.

- 1 Cor 15:3–7 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:
that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures;
that he was buried;
that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures;
that he appeared to Kephias,
then to the Twelve.
After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, ...
After that he appeared to James,
then to all the apostles.
- Rom 1:3–5 The gospel about his Son,
descended from David according to the flesh, but
established as Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through
resurrection from the dead,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have received the grace of apostleship
- 1 Pet 3:18–22 For Christ also suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.
Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit.
In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison,
... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God,
with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

1 Tim 3:16 Who was manifested in the flesh,
 vindicated in the spirit,
 seen by angels,
 proclaimed to the Gentiles,
 believed in throughout the world,
 taken up in glory.

Post–Apostolic Confessions of Faith

Ultimately, the Apostolic and post–Apostolic Church developed finished statements of Christian beliefs known as “creeds.”

The Apostles Creed

This creed was not composed by the Apostles as it might be assumed by the title. The creed has a legitimate claim to its title insofar as all articles are found in theological formulas current around 100 AD, between the Apostolic Period and the beginning of the Post–Apostolic Period:

- elements found in the Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus (c. 215);

Do you believe in God the Father All Governing?

Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Who was begotten by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died (and was buried) and rose the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church and in the resurrection of the body?

- elements found in the Creed of Marcellus (340);

I believe in God, All Governing; And in Christ Jesus His only begotten Son, our Lord, Who was begotten of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried, Who rose from the dead on the third day, ascending to the heavens and taking His seat at the Father’s right hand, whence He shall come to judge both the living and the dead;

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting.

- elements found in the Creed of Rufinus (c. 404);

I believe in God the Father almighty, invisible and impassable;

And in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord, Who was born by the Holy Spirit from Mary the Virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried. He descended to hell. On the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended to heaven, where He sits at the Father’s right hand and from whence He will come to judge both living and dead;

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of this flesh.

The present text of the Apostles Creed is dated c. 700.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

 He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
 and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

 was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and life everlasting. Amen

The Nicene Creed

The development of this creed began with the ecumenical Council of Nicea, 325. The creed was principally written in opposition to the heretic, Arius, who taught that Jesus was a creature made by God not wholly equal to the Father. The Creed in its final form was a product of the Council of Constantinople, 381.

I believe in one God,
 the Father almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the Only Begotten Son of God,
 born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
 through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven,
 and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
 and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
 he suffered death and was buried,
 and rose again on the third day
 in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
 to judge the living and the dead
 and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
 who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
 and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
 and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Salvation: A Biblical Portrait

The two words, “salvation” and “being saved” in the New Testament are the words σωτήριον, *soterion*, a noun (denoting deliverance, preservation, salvation), and σώζω, *sozo*, a verb (denoting to save).

Both words have a number of meanings, determined by the varying contexts in which the words are used.

In a first and basic sense, the word “salvation” virtually stands for *Jesus Christ, Savior, by whose act of salvation, we are saved.*

Lk 2:28,30–31 He (Simeon) took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: ... for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples,

Lk 19:9–10 And Jesus said to him (Zacchaeus), “Today salvation has come to this house ...”

Jn 4:21–22 Jesus said to her (the Samaritan woman), “... because salvation is from the Jews.”

Acts 4:11–12 He (Jesus) is “the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.” There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.

In a second sense, the words, “salvation” and “being saved,” are also used of *the present experience*, God’s power to deliver from the bondage of sin.

1 Cor 15:2 Through it (the gospel) you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

Heb 7:25 Therefore, he (Jesus) is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

1 Pet 1:8–9 Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of (your) faith, the salvation of your souls.

2 Tim 3:15 ... and that from infancy you have known (the) sacred scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Heb 2:3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

In a third sense, “salvation” and “being saved” are also used for *the future deliverance* of believers at the Second Coming of Christ. This salvation is the object of the confident hope of the saints.

Rom 5:9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath.

Rom 13:11 And do this because you know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed;

1 Thess 5:8–9 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation. For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Salvation: “Being Saved”

The Evangelist John expressed best the meaning of “being saved.”

Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

All Christian churches teach essentially the same basic truths about salvation. And these truths are taught in much the same manner. Differences arise in the way or in the process churches teach that a person becomes a Christian—the process of Christian initiation. The essential differences are in terminology and ritual. There is no essential difference theologically. All Christian churches agree that God entered into our human affairs to “save” us from the consequences of sin which is eternal death.

1 Tim 2:4 (God) who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.

Jn 11:25–26 Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

In his loving kindness, it was God who took the initiative in the process of our salvation.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God.

God called a people, the Israelites of the Hebrew Scriptures, and from them sent his own Son as the means of our salvation.

1 Thess 5:9 For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The entire goal of Jesus’ life and teaching was our salvation.

Jn 12:47 And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world.

Jesus commissioned his disciples and all those who follow him to the same salvation.

Mk 16:15–16 “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Christian churches still teach the good news of salvation today.

1 Tim 1:15 This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Lk 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.

The Catholic Response to “Are You Saved?”

The Catholic Christian answers this question in three stages or levels corresponding to the three meanings the words “saved” and “salvation” have in the Bible. (These meanings are found in the previous section, “Salvation: A Biblical Portrait.”)

Catholic Christians can respond that *they have been saved*. This acknowledges the first meaning of “saved” and “salvation” in scripture—Jesus Christ, Savior, by whose act of salvation we are objectively saved—He died, rose from the dead, saved them from sin.

2 Cor 5:17 So whoever is in Christ is a new creation

Catholic Christians can also respond that *they are being saved*. This acknowledges the second meaning “saved” and “salvation” have in scripture—the present experience, God’s power delivering constantly from the bondage of sin.

1 Cor 15:2 Through it (the gospel) you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

Catholic Christians also respond that *they will be saved*, that they have hope and confidence that God will give them the grace of perseverance; that they will respond to it; and accept his gift of salvation until their death. This acknowledges the third meaning the words “saved” and “salvation” have in scripture—the future deliverance of believers at the Second Coming of Christ.

Rom 5:9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath.

The Knowledge of Salvation

Some Evangelical Protestant and Pentecostal Christians believe that an individual Christian can have a certain unmistakable knowledge, an assurance from God, that one is saved.

Roman Catholic Christians believe that a Christian can have a firm hope and confidence of salvation, but that no one can know of one's final salvation with absolute certainty. This fact is amply affirmed in the New Testament.

- Mt 10:22 ... but whoever endures to the end will be saved.
- Mt 24:13 But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.
- Mk 13:13 But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.
- Lk 9:62 (To him) Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."
- 1 Cor 10:12 Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.
- Phil 2:12–13 So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.
- 2 Cor 6:3–5 We cause no one to stumble in anything, in order that no fault may be found with our ministry; on the contrary, in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, through much endurance, in afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts;
- 1 Cor 4:3–5 It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal; I do not even pass judgment on myself; I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes, for he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone will receive praise from God.
- Heb 6:11–12 We earnestly desire each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of hope until the end, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.
- 1 Pet 1:13 Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, live soberly, and set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Rom 5:2 ... we boast in hope of the glory of God.
- Rom 8:24–25 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

Faith and Works

There is perhaps no greater confusion among Roman Catholic Christians and Evangelical Protestant and Pentecostal Christians than that held over the controversy of faith versus good works. This controversy best warrants the balance of scriptures necessary in reading the Word of God to understand what God means for us to know.

The Bible is clear that faith holds a first and prominent role in the salvation of every person.

- Heb 10:38 But my just one shall live by faith ...
- Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him (God) ...

The Bible is equally clear on the saving role of good works in the lives of the faithful.

- 1 Pet 2:12 Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation.
- Rev 2:2 I know your works, your labor, and your endurance ...

- Mt 5:16 Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.
- Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.
- Mt 25:34–36 Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

The Bible makes it clear that there must be a balanced relationship between our faith and its expression in good works.

- James 2:14–18 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone might say, "You have faith and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.
- 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
- Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name by having served and continuing to serve the holy ones.
- James 2:20–22 Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.
- Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.
- 1 Cor 3:8 The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor.
- Col 3:23–24 Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance.

The Bible indicates that it is wrong to disturb the balance of works expressing a life of faith. Man is *not saved by faith alone*.

- James 2:24 See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
- James 2:26 For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Nor is man saved by works alone.

- Rom 9:31–32 Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, did not attain to that law ... because they did it not by faith, but as if it could be done by works.
- Gal 3:11 And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for "the one who is righteous by faith will live."

The Bible declares that salvation is a gift of God alone and constantly reaffirms that faith has a primary role in that salvation.

- Eph 2:8–9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.
- Heb 6:1 Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God,

- Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.
- 2 Tim 1:9 He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began,
- Titus 3:4–5 ... the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy.
- Rom 3:27–28 What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out. On what principle, that of works? No, rather on the principle of faith. For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
- Gal 2:16 (We) know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

The constant teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on these Scriptures was clearly restated on January 13, 1547.

- Council of Trent, *On Justification*, Ch. VIII When the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely, these words are to be understood in that sense in which *the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church* has held and expressed them, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, “without which it is impossible to please God” and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, “if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise,” as the Apostle says, “grace is no more grace.”

The Council also reiterated the relationship of good works to man justified by faith.

- Council of Trent, *On Justification*, Ch. XVI Therefore, to men justified in this manner, whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost, are to be pointed out the words of the Apostle: “Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name”; and “Do not lose confidence, which hath a great reward.” Hence, to those who work well “unto the end” and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their good works and merits.

The Process of Christian Initiation

Christians base their approach to Christian initiation, that is, what is to be expected from a new Christian, on several scriptures.

The first set of scriptures which determines Christian initiation is from the Acts of the Apostles and from the Gospels according to Mark and John.

- Acts 16:30–31 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved.”
- Mk 1:15 This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.
- Jn 5:24 Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.

In response to these scriptures, **Protestant and Evangelical Christians** profess belief and acceptance of all that Jesus taught as necessary to meet the requirement of Christian initiation. They exact that the Christian believe Jesus and in Jesus, that he is Lord, that he died, rose again, defeated death and sin, and that through him sins are forgiven.

Catholic Christians express their response to these scriptures by professing belief and acceptance in Jesus as Lord, and all that is contained in the Apostles Creed. Roman Catholic Christians must profess belief in God the Father

Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. They must believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. That he also descended to the dead. On the third day that he rose again. That he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. That he will come again to judge the living and the dead. Catholic Christians must believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

A second set of scriptures also indicates requirements for Christian initiation.

Rom 10:9–10 For, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

The **Protestant and Evangelical Christian** response to this scripture is to exact from the new Christian a confession on the lips.

Catholic Christians respond to the scripture by exacting the same detailed profession of faith as articulated in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. Praying the Nicene Creed is a recurring and key element of Catholic weekly liturgies.

Another scripture in this second set is from Mark's Gospel:

Mk 1:15 Repent, and believe in the gospel.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians respond to this scripture by exacting from the new Christian the repentance of sinfulness.

Catholic Christians elicit a specific acknowledgment of the rejection of Satan, all his works and all his pomps.

A final scripture from the second set is found in the Acts of the Apostles:

Acts 4:12 There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians elicit the confession of Jesus by name.

Catholic Christians elicit the same as is clear from the Apostles Creed.

The third and final scripture set which determines the process of Christian initiation is from John's Gospel.

Jn 3:5 Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."

The **Protestant and Evangelical Christian** response is to put emphasis on a "born-again" experience on the part of the new Christian.

The **Roman Catholic Church** has always taught that with Christian initiation, new divine life enters the Christian and transforms his/her life.

There is one remaining difference in emphasis in Christian initiation among Christians.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians place emphasis on the necessity of faith only, with baptism not rigidly connected to the Christian initiation.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God

Catholic Christian emphasis is on the intimate connection between faith and baptism.

1 Pet 3:20–21 God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.

For **Protestant and Evangelical Christians**, faith is a gift of God, unmerited, and Christian initiation is a *one-time event*.

For **Catholic Christians**, faith is also a gift of God, unmerited, and in baptism, it is Christ who baptizes, and Christian initiation is, as the word implies, *the beginning of a process*.

The Church: A Biblical Portrait - A New Testament Apologetic

Jesus Christ preached a Reign or Kingdom, the Kingdom of God (or of heaven).

Mt 4: 17 From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

“King, βασιλευσ basileus” and “Kingdom, Reign, βασιλεια basileia” must be understood in the sense that Scripture gives them. A “King” is that physical person who rules some public society of people, not by the choice of the people, but his own right. A “Kingdom” is that society of people governed by a king.

The term “Kingdom (or Reign) of God” occurs 50 times in the three synoptic Gospels (14 times in Mark, 32 times in Luke, and 4 times in Matthew).

The term “kingdom of the heaven” occurs 32 times, mostly in Matthew for designating that kingdom beyond the earth which God decreed to build through Christ.

Mt 4:17,23 From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ... He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

Mt 9:35 Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness.

Mt 5:3,10 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Mt 6:10 ... your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Mt 13:24,31, 33,44,45,47 He proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field.” ... He proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field.” ... He spoke to them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast ... The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field ... Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. ... Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind.”

Mt 18:23 “That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants.”

Mt 20:1 “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers ...”

Mt 22:2 “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.”

Mt 25:1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

Mt 6:10 “ ... your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

Mt 10:7 “As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Lk 9:2 He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (the sick).

Lk 10:9 “ ... cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you.’”

Act 1:3 He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Jesus preached an end–times kingdom but one already existing on earth.

Mt 5:12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

Mt 13: 39, 49 “The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ... Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous”

- Mt 25: 31–34 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”
- Mt 24: 29–31 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”
- Mt 25: 34, 46 Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ... And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.
- Mt 12: 22–28 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. All the crowd was astounded, and said, “Could this perhaps be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”
- Lk 17: 20–21 Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he said in reply, “The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, the kingdom of God is among you [ἐντός υμῶν ἐστίν ; *intra vos est*; is within you].”
- Mt 11: 12–15 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Jesus preached that the kingdom was primarily spiritual and internal but also visible and external.

- Lk 15: 1–32 Kingdom of God parables: the one and ninety–nine sheep, the woman losing a silver piece, the prodigal son.
- Lk 17: 20–21 Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he said in reply, “The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, the kingdom of God is among you. [ἐντός υμῶν ἐστίν; *intra vos est*; is within you].”
- Mt 11: 12–15 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear.
- Mt 13:4–9 The parable of the seed.
- Mt 13:18–23 The parable of the sower.
- Mt 13:39, 49 ... and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
- Mt 13:36–43 The parable of the weeds in the field.

- Mt 13:47–50 The parable of the net.
- Mt 10:27 What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.
- Mt 10:32 Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.
- Mt 28:19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations
- Jn 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”
- Mt 16:18 And so I say to you, you are “Rock”, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
- Mt 12: 22–28 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. All the crowd was astounded, and said, “Could this perhaps be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Christ called and founded an exclusive, inner core group of twelve men called the “apostles.”

The “Apostles, ἀποστειλλ” means “those sent.” The term is used for that chosen core group of Christ 170 times in the Gospels.

The lists of apostles occur throughout the New Testament:

Mt 10:1ff	Mk 3:16ff	Lk 6:14ff	Act 1:13ff
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James Alphaeus	James Alphaeus	James Alphaeus	James Alphaeus
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zealot	Simon Zealot
Simon Zealot	Simon Zealot	Jude	Jude
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

The apostles were solely and specially instructed:

- Mt 10:1–11 on the reason for exercising the task of preaching;
- Mt 13:10–36 on the parables of the kingdom which were only explained to the Apostles;
(Mk 4:10)
- Mt 18:1–35 on the manner of ruling and correcting the faithful in the Church;
(Mk 9:35)
- Mt 24–25 on the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the end of the world and judgment, and on the permanency of the kingdom of God in the face of the persecution of its enemies.
- Jn 13–17 on the mysteries of the divine life and on charity;
(Mk 14:17)

Mt 16:21; on the death and resurrection of Jesus;
17:22; 20:17;
26:2

Mt 26:20; on the new covenant founded on the blood of Jesus;
Mk 14:17;
Lk 22:14; 1
Cor 11:23–26

Act 1:3; on the immediacy of exercising the apostolate of theirs.
Lk 24:25

Christ committed His very mission to this twelve man inner core group, his Apostles, alone.

Jn 17:6–8 “I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.”

Jn 14:16–17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.

Jn 20:21 (Jesus) said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Mt 28:18–20 Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Christ gave to the Twelve, the Apostles, the power of ruling, teaching and sanctifying.

The threefold power:

Mt 28:18–20 Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and *make disciples* of all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

The power of teaching:

Mt 10:7, 27 As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ... What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

Mk 3:14 He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach

Mk 16:15 He said to them (the eleven), “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.”

The power of sanctifying:

Jn 3:5 Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”

Jn 6:52–53 The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.”

Lk 22:19 Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.”

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- 1 Cor 11:24 ... and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
- Jn 20:22–23 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

The power of ruling:

- Mt 18:18 Amen, I say to you (the disciples who came up with a question to Jesus in v.1), whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- Mk 9:35 Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

Christ obliges all people to submit to the power of the Apostles.

- Mk 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."
- Mt 10:32 "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father."
- Mt 10:40 "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
- Jn 13:20 "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
- Lk 10:16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

Christ at the same time instituted an obligatory hierarchical society for all people.

This was confirmed by the way the Apostles acted:

- Acts 1 – 12 These chapters narrate the exercise of the threefold powers of the Twelve Apostles as well as the miracles through which God confirmed their apostolic powers.

The Apostles took to themselves and exercised the power of teaching:

- Mk 16:19–20 So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.
- Act 5:12–42 Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. ... (the angel of the Lord) ... said, "Go and take your place in the temple area, and tell the people everything about this life." When they heard this, they went to the temple early in the morning and taught. ... Then someone came in and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are in the temple area and are teaching the people." ... And all day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the Messiah, Jesus.

The Apostles took to themselves and exercised the power of sanctifying:

- Act 2:14, 37–38 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them (the Pentecost crowd), ... Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter (said) to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit."

The Apostles took to themselves and exercised the power of ruling:

making laws

- Act 15:1– 16:5 The Council of Jerusalem

making judgments

Act 5:1–11 Ananias, Sapphira and their deception regarding the sale price of their property

The Apostles understood that their powers were hierarchically conferred:

Act 1:16–26 in designating a successor to Judas

Gal 1:1, 12, 18 in establishing, understanding and confirming the apostolate of Paul and 2:2, 7–9

Act 14:23 in designating priests for the churches

Act 6:1–6 in ordaining deacons

The Apostles also understood that their powers were to be exercised hierarchically:

Act 2:37–43 in uniting and governing the primitive church community

Act 8:2–25 in building and confirming all the churches of Samaria

Act 11:20–26 in building and confirming the church in Antioch

Act 9:31; 15:36 in the vigilance over the newly constituted churches

Act 10:1–48 in admitting gentiles into the church

Act 15: 1–31 in deciding the grave question of judaizing

This society which Christ instituted He called the Church.

The Greek, ἐκκλησία, and the Latin, *ecclesia*, translates the Hebrew, קהילה, meaning principally, assembly.

In the New Testament, the word occurs 114 times, 3 times in Matthew’s Gospel, 23 times in the Acts of the Apostles, 63 times in Paul’s epistles, 20 times in Revelation, and 5 times within the other epistles of the Apostles. The term ἐκκλησία, *ecclesia*, church was used exclusively by the authors of the New testament for the gathering of Christians while the word, συναγωγή, *synagoge*, was reserved to signify the gathering of Jews.

Mt 16:18–19 “And so I say to you, you are ‘Rock’, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Mt 18:17 “If he refuses to listen to them (two or three witnesses), tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.”

This same church Christ willed to endure until the end of the world.

The promise of indefectibility:

Mt 16:18 “... and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it (the church).”

Christ instituted only one church, and that society was both formally and specifically a visible one.

Mt 16:18 “... upon this rock I will build my church” (Both “this rock” and “my church” are clearly singular in the Greek text.)

Jn 10:16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Jn 17:20–21 “I pray not only for them (the Apostles), but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”

- Jn 21:15–17 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (Jesus) said to him, “Feed my sheep.”
- Mt 28: 19 “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit”
- Mk 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.

The Marks of the Church

- Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶ 811 In the Creed we profess the Church to be one holy catholic and apostolic. These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes His Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is He who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

The Church is One

- John 17:11 Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are.
- John 17:21 ... so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.
- Eph 4:4 - 5 There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.
- 1 Cor 10:17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
- John 10:16 (Jesus said) “there shall be one flock, one shepherd.”

The Church is Holy

The Church of the apostles was holy. When we say that the Church is holy, we mean among other things that she had the all-holy God as her author.

- Eph 5:25 - 27 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
- 1 Tim 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

The Church is Catholic

The third great historic mark, or note, of the one true Church is that this Church is Catholic. Catholic means “universal.” It refers as much to the fullness of the faith she possesses as to the undeniable extension in both time and space that has characterized her virtually from the beginning.

- Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.”
- Col 1:5 - 6 The word of the truth ... in the whole world ... is bearing fruit and growing.

The Church is Apostolic

Finally, the Church that issued from the commission of Christ to the apostles was apostolic. Christ founded the Church upon the apostles.

John 6:70 “Did I not choose you, the twelve?” (Jesus) asked them.

Labels Among Christians

Believers in Jesus Christ as Lord are known by a variety of labels, some contradictory among themselves and often divisive. Yet our God is the author of differences. Believers must grow to know and respect differences among themselves. Differences can be of God; division can be of Satan.

Church (Matthew, 70s/80s)	The word church is a translation of the Greek ἐκκλησία and the Hebrew קהילה. The word is used in only two Gospel verses, Mt 6:18 and Mt 18:17. The Greek and the Hebrew mean God’s people, called, convoked, formed by Him as the object of His designs. The word generally means the constitution of the community of those who will be sharers in salvation.
Christian (Luke, 70s/80s)	The term “christian” is used to denote the followers of Jesus Christ. Acts 11:26 records that “it was in Antioch that the disciples were called Christians for the first time.”
catholic (Ignatius, 110)	This term is the same word found in the Apostles Creed (“I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church”). The word comes from the Greek, καθολικα, which means universal. It was used as early as the end of the 1st, early 2nd century by Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110).
Catholic (c. 400)	This word denotes the Roman Catholic Church and its believers. The technical use of the word to denote the Roman Church seems to have been established by the beginning of the 3rd century. The Catholic Church rightly uses the word in that its beliefs and practice have been believed everywhere, always, and by all. This is what is truly and properly catholic.
Greek Byzantine (5/6th cent.)	This label signifies Eastern and Greek speaking Christians and their theology. The term is used today to indicate Greek speaking Christians who are in union with the Bishop of Rome and accept the authority of Rome.
Greek Orthodox (1054)	This label signifies Eastern and Greek speaking Christians and their theology. The term often refers to those Greek speaking Christians who broke with the Bishop of Rome in 1054 and no longer accept the authority of Rome.
Protestant (Luther, 1483–1546)	This label denotes those Christians who trace their origin to the Reformation precipitated by Martin Luther in a move to reform the Catholic Church in the 16th century. Their aim was to restore the Christian faith as it had been at its beginning. In a word they “protested” the abuses in faith and practice found in the Church during the Middle Ages.
Reformed (Zwingli, 1484–1531; Calvin, 1509–1564)	This label is used for those Protestant Christian believers who follow the doctrines and polity of the Protestant Reformers Zwingli and Calvin rather than the Lutheran tradition. A chief distinction is in the belief in the Eucharist: their faith holds a memorial view of the sacrament.
Revival (1700s)	The term “revival” (and “revivalism”) was applied to the reaction against intellectual and formalistic tendencies in Protestantism in the 18th century. Revivalism stresses conversion and a concern for the poor. It denotes the popular movement among Christians that makes a direct appeal to emotional religious experience. Methodism founded by John and Charles Wesley best typifies revivalism. Adventist churches and Holiness churches are examples of revival churches in the United States today.
Evangelical (Spenser, 1666; Wesley, 1738)	This label denotes a movement in modern Anglo–American Protestantism with European roots which emphasizes personal commitment to Christ and the authority of the Bible. The word “evangelical” simply means pertaining to the Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον, <i>euaggelion</i> = good news). The largest U.S. Protestant body, the Southern Baptist Convention, embraces evangelical tenets. Others include Pentecostals, the Charismatic Renewal (including Catholic Christians) and Black Baptist Churches. A major evangelical publication is <i>Christianity Today</i> .
Pentecostal (1906 in USA)	This label denotes both the faith and practice of those who profess belief in the experience of holiness and Christian perfection. This perfection is climaxed by an “infilling of the Holy Spirit” as evidenced by speaking in tongues as experienced by the Apostles on Pentecost in 30 AD.

Pentecostal beliefs are drawn principally from Methodist and Baptist tenets, and are usually fundamentalist. The Church of God of Prophecy is an example of a Pentecostal church.

Fundamental (The Fundamentals, 1920)	The label “fundamental” is a label first used in the 1920s to denote the return to essential (hence fundamental) Bible truths. The fundamental truths professed are: the infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth, the divinity of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as atonement for the sins of all people, the physical resurrection and second coming of Christ, and the bodily resurrection of all believers. Some denominations which are fundamentalists are the Southern Baptists, Church of Christ, Assembly of God, Four Square Gospel, Church of the Nazarene, etc.
Non/Interdenominational (late 20th cent.)	These labels are used to distinguish those professing Christians who follow generally a fundamentalist and/or evangelical lifestyle. While they eschew the labels of historical denominations, their labels have become the new denominational labels. They adhere to a Bible-only rule of faith and morals and dismiss the doctrinal conflicts which spawned the historical Protestant Christian denominations.
Charismatic	This label comes from the Greek word, <i>χρησμοματα charismata</i> , meaning spiritual gifts. The Charismatic Movement is an international, interdenominational Christian revivalist movement. Believers have been filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are then received such as tongues, prophecy, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc. (1 Cor 12:8–10). The movement appears to have found its contemporary manifestation through the Pentecostal Churches in the early 20th century. The Catholic Charismatic Movement traces its roots to university campuses (e.g. Notre Dame) in 1967. Today the Franciscan University of Steubenville is a center of Catholic Charismatic activity. The movement received Papal approval in 1975 from Pope Paul VI.
Traditional	The term “traditional” is often used to denote those believers who look to a long standing belief or practice within the Church as essential to their faith life. Literally, to be traditional means to “hold fast to the truths which have been handed down to you”. In Catholic Christianity today, to be traditional often denotes the period of belief and practice before Vatican II, and to those who hold tenaciously to the unrenewed faith and practice of Church life before Vatican II.
Orthodox	The term “orthodox” is applied increasingly today to those Catholic Christians who are faithful to the biblical, historical and theological foundations of the teaching authority of the Bishop of Rome and the bishops of the world teaching in unity with the Bishop of Rome. Orthodox Catholic Christians are perceived as both conservative and evangelical.
Conservative	The label “conservative” is usually applied to that Christian faith and practice which focuses on a very strict and narrow interpretation of both Biblical and Church teaching.
Liberal	When the term “liberal” is applied to Christian faith and practice what is usually denoted is a loose and broad interpretation of both the Bible and Church teachings. Today, the accent on the so-called “social gospel” is often viewed as a liberal emphasis on faith and practice.

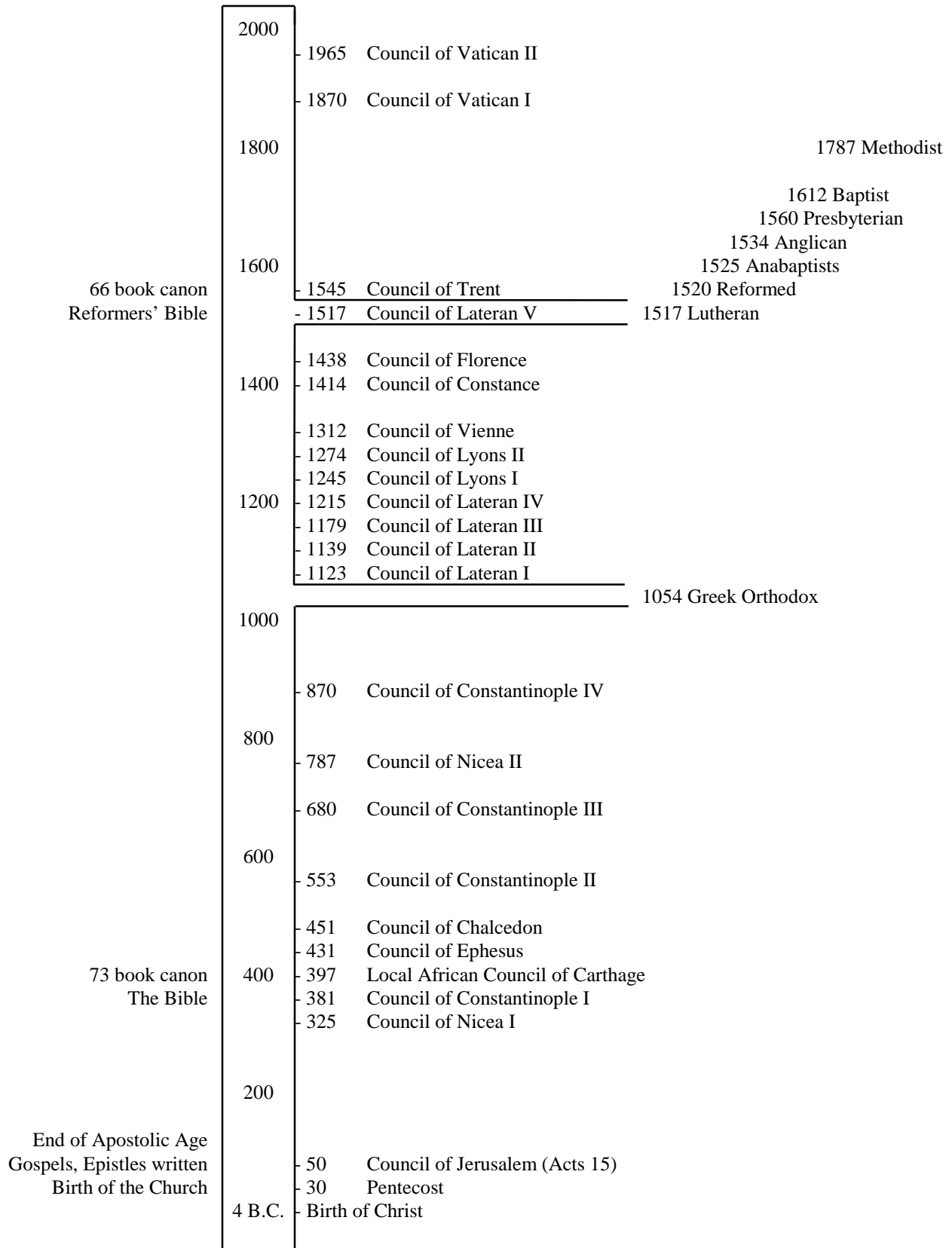
Christians differ by denominational and non-denominational labels also. As individuals and groups disagreed with each other they often broke faith fellowship to begin and continue their own faith fellowship. The study of history presents a story of increasing differences among Christian believers and a proliferation of denominational labels.

Genealogy of Christian Faith Communities

The chart on the following page shows a timeline of the events which lead to the multiplicity of Christian denominations. The chart is constructed to scale, so that each century takes the same amount of vertical space. Note that there were long periods of time during which the interpretation of the Bible and doctrine were discussed and resolved without division into different communities.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

**OTHER CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITIES**



American Christian Branches Among European Founded Churches

The following American Christian branches to European founded churches take their beginning from the history chart of the preceding page. The date before each denomination indicates the beginning of that American branch church fellowship.

LUTHERAN BRANCH

1818 – Ohio Lutheran Synod

1930 – American Lutheran Church

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1820 – General Lutheran Synod

1863 – United Synod South

1867 – General Lutheran Council

1918 – United Lutheran Church in America

1962 – Lutheran Church in America

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1847 – Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

1976 – Association of Evangelical Lutherans

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1854 Iowa Lutheran Synod

1930 – American Lutheran Church

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1860 – Swedish Augustana Synod

1962 – Lutheran Church in America

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1872 – American Evangelical Lutheran Church

1962 – Lutheran Church in America

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1890 – Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church

1962 – Lutheran Church in America

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1896 – United Evangelical Lutheran Church

1960 – American Lutheran Church

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1900 – Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America

1988 – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

1918 – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

1929 – Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

REFORMED BRANCH

- 1628 – Dutch Reformed Church
 - 1857 – Christian Reformed Church
 - 1926 – Protestant Reformed Churches of America
 - 1867 – Reformed Church in America
- 1628 – Puritans/Congregationalists
 - Evangelical Protestant Church of North America
 - 1931 – Congregational Christian Churches
 - 1957 – United Church of Christ
- 1790 – Universalists
 - 1961 – Unitarian Universalist Association
- 1793 – German Reformed Church
 - 1826 – Churches of God in North America
 - 1869 – Reformed Church in the United States
 - 1934 – Evangelical and Reformed Church
 - 1957 – United Church of Christ
- 1801 – Christians/Churches of Christ
 - 1832 – Christian Church/Disciples of Christ
- 1807 – Disciples of Christ
 - 1832 – Christian Church/Disciples of Christ
- 1849 – Evangelical Synod of North America
 - 1934 – Evangelical and Reformed Church
 - 1957 – United Church of Christ

ANGLICAN BRANCH

- 1787 – Protestant Episcopal Church
 - 1861 – North Protestant Episcopal Church
 - 1865 Protestant Episcopal Church
 - 1873 – Reformed Episcopal Church
 - 1861 – South Protestant Episcopal Church
 - 1865 Protestant Episcopal Church
 - 1873 – Reformed Episcopal Church

PRESBYTERIAN BRANCH

- 1706 – Presbyterian Church
 - 1741 – New Side Presbyterian Church
 - 1758 – Presbyterian Church
 - 1741 – Old Side Presbyterian Church
 - 1758 – Presbyterian Church
 - 1810 – Cumberland Presbyterian Church
 - 1837 – New School
 - 1870 – Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
 - 1937 – Orthodox Presbyterian Church
 - Bible Presbyterian Church
 - 1956 – Bible Presbyterian Church
 - 1965 – Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod
 - 1982 – Presbyterian Church of America
 - 1837 – Old School
 - 1861 – Presbyterian Church, Confederate States
 - Presbyterian Church in the United States

- 1973 – Presbyterian Church of America
- 1983 – Presbyterian Church, USA
- 1870 – Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
- 1937 – Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Bible Presbyterian Church
- 1956 – Bible Presbyterian Church
- 1965 – Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod
- 1982 – Presbyterian Church of America
- 1752 – Reformed Presbytery
- 1833 – Reformed Presbyterian Church of No. America (Covenanters)
- Associate Presbyterian Church
- 1858 – United Presbyterian Church of No. America
- 1958 – United Presbyterian Church, USA
- 1983 – Presbyterian Church, USA
- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
- 1822 – Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanters)
- 1958 – United Presbyterian Church, USA
- 1983 – Presbyterian Church, USA
- 1774 – Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America
- 1965 – Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod
- 1982 – Presbyterian Church of America

BAPTIST BRANCH

- 1639 – British Separatists
- 1672 – Seventh-Day Baptists
- 1727 – Free Will Baptists
- 1770 – Old Lights
- 1787 – General Association of Separatists Baptists
- 1814 – Baptist Missionary Convention
- 1827 – Primitive Baptists
- 1845 – Northern Baptist Convention
- 1932 – General Assoc. of Regular Baptist Churches
- 1947 – Conservative Baptist Assoc. of America
- 1950 – America Baptist Convention
- 1770 – New Lights
- 1780 – Free Will Baptists (North)
- 1827 – Primitive Baptists
- 1910 – Northern Baptist Convention
- 1814 – Baptist Missionary Convention
- 1845 – Southern Baptist Convention
- 1895 – National Baptist Convention of America
- 1915 – National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., Inc.
- 1961 – Progressive Baptist Convention
- 1905 – American Baptist Association
- 1895 – Northern Baptist Convention of America
- 1932 – General Assoc. of Regular Baptist Churches
- 1947 – Conservative Baptist Association of America
- 1950 – American Baptist Convention

ANABAPTISTS

- 1840 – North American Baptist General Conference
- 1852 – Baptist General Conference

METHODIST

- 1784 – Methodist Episcopal Church
 - 1816 – African Methodist Episcopal Church
 - 1821 – African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
 - 1830 – Methodist Protestant Church/Bible Protestant Church
 - 1939 – Methodist Church
 - 1946 – Evangelical Methodist Church
 - 1968 – United Methodist Church
 - 1843 – Wesleyan Methodist Church of America
 - 1968 Wesleyan Church
 - 1844 – Methodist Episcopal
 - 1860 – Free Methodist Church
 - 1908 – Church of the Nazarene
 - 1939 – Methodist Church
 - 1946 – Evangelical Methodist Church
 - 1968 – United Methodist Church
 - 1844 – Methodist Episcopal Church (South)
 - 1870 – Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
 - 1897 – Pilgrim Holiness Church
 - 1968 – Wesleyan Church
 - 1800 – Church of the United Brethren in Christ
 - 1946 – Evangelical United Brethren Church
 - 1807 – Evangelical Church
 - 1946 – Evangelical United Brethren Church
 - 1829 – Primitive Methodist Church
 - 1886 – Church of God (Cleveland, TN)
 - 1923 – Tomlinson Church of God
 - 1943 – Church of God (Queens Village, NY)
 - 1953 – Church of God of Prophecy
 - 1957 – Church of God of All Nations
 - 1886 – Church of God
 - 1922 – Original Church of God, Inc.
 - 1886 – United Holy Church of America, Inc.
 - 1898 – Fire–Baptized Holiness Church
 - 1953 – Emanuel Holiness Church
 - 1911 – Pentecostal Holiness Church
 - 1918 – Pentecostal Fire–Baptized Holiness Church
 - 1899 – Pentecostal Holiness Church
 - 1911 – Pentecostal Holiness Church
 - 1901 – Pentecostal Union
 - 1917 – Pillar of Fire
 - 1914 – Assemblies of God, General Council
 - 1914 – Church of God by Faith, Inc.
 - 1914 – Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.
 - 1924 – Pentecostal Church, Inc.
 - 1945 – United Pentecostal Church, Inc.
 - Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, Inc.
 - 1917 – Pentecostal Church of Christ

Chapter 2

1918 – International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

1919 – Pentecostal Church of God of America, Inc.

1919 – International Pentecostal Assemblies

1919 – Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.

1957 – Bible Way Church, World–Wide

1919 – Bible Standard, Inc.

1935 – Open Bible Standard Churches, Inc.

1932 – Open Bible Evangelistic Association

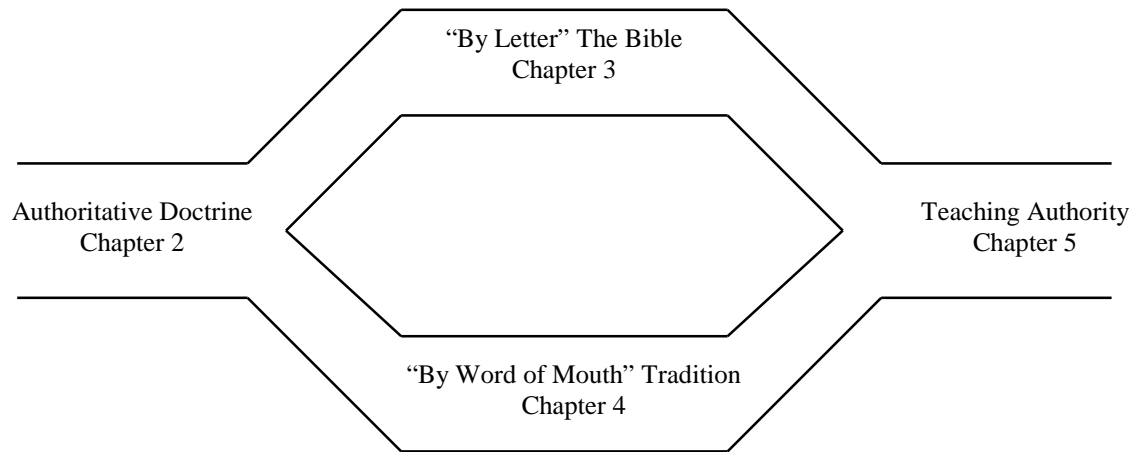
1935 – Open Bible Standard Churches, Inc.

1932 – Calvary Pentecostal Church, Inc.

1947 – Elim Missionary Assemblies

Modes of Transmitting Authoritative Doctrine

One of the major differences which arise among Christian denominations is the method by which authoritative doctrine is revealed. The next three chapters discuss how the Catholic Church views this process. There are two modes for one stream of revelation:



3. Divine Revelation “By Letter” (2 Thess 2:15): The Bible

For Catholic Christians, the Bible—the Old and New Testaments—is more than a document of mere historical interest. The Bible calls itself “the Word of God.” In many ways God spoke to us—He revealed Himself. Yet, Jesus, the Son of God, is the perfect revelation of the Father.

The community of believers, the Church, sought to know what God authoritatively revealed to humankind.

The Bible itself does not define what it includes; nor does it claim to contain all that God revealed. Paul affirms that *some* of what is handed on—the way Jews passed on revelation—was “by letter,” in writing.

What is the standard—the canon—of the written Word of God? The Church recorded the history of the development of the canon of the Bible under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

A primary criterion of canonicity is inspiration, the divine influence on human writers such that God is said to be the author. And God’s revelation, faithfully written, aptly expressed, was expressed with infallible truth.

We discover the meaning of the Bible—hermeneutics—by the literal sense of the words first, then the fuller sense, and then the typical sense of the words of Sacred Scripture.

Divine Revelation

Revelation is defined literally as the uncovering or disclosure of something that is hidden. The Bible itself addresses the meaning of revelation.

- Heb 1:1–2 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,
- 1 Cor 2:9–10 But as it is written: “What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him,” this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.
- Mt 16:17 Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.”
- Mt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.
- 2 Pet 1:21 for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God.
- Rom 1:19 For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them.

The Roman Catholic Church, through her teaching arm, at the Second Vatican Council also defined what is meant by revelation:

Constitution on Divine Revelation, No. 2
In his goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will by which, through Christ the Word made flesh, people have access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and come to share in the divine nature. Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of his love speaks to his people as friends and lives among them, so that he may invite them into fellowship with Himself.

The Bible: Written Revelation

The Word of God revealing Himself to His People through the sacred authors was first of all oral. Periods of *oral transmission* varied. The revelation of Genesis, from prehistory to the time of Moses is an example of oral transmission; the period from the resurrection and ascension of Jesus (about 30 AD) until some of Paul's letters (about 51 AD) or the writing of the first Gospel, Mark's (about 65 AD), is another example of oral transmission of revelation. The Word of God as eventually *written down* is contained in the Bible. The Bible is the collection of sacred books, written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and recognized by the Church as such.

The **title** of this collection of sacred books comes from the Latin *biblia*, which in turn comes from the Greek, *ta biblia*. The Greek word means "The Books." Hence, the Bible is a library of books rather than a single book.

The **two divisions** of the Bible are called Testaments, the Old Testament (or the Hebrew Scriptures) written before the coming of Jesus Christ, and the New Testament, written after the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The **original language** of the Old Testament was predominantly Hebrew, with some later books having been written in Greek and Aramaic. The entire Old Testament was translated into Greek well before the time of Christ. The New Testament was entirely written in Greek. Not a single original manuscript (i.e. autograph) for either Testament exists today.

This library contains among its books, many **kinds and types of literature**. There are law books or literature (e.g. Leviticus), there are books of history (e.g. the books of Kings and Chronicles), poetry (e.g. Song of Songs) and hymn books (e.g. Psalms), parables or stories (e.g. Job), biography (e.g. Gospels), prophetic (e.g. Revelation), collections of sayings (e.g. Proverbs), etc.

Much printed currently within this library is **not a part of the revelation** of the Word of God. The writers of the books of the Bible did not title the books (with the possible exception of Mark's Gospel). Hence the *titles* of the books are not the Word of God. The sacred authors did not write in *paragraphs* or use *punctuation* or *label sections* or *outline* their books. Cardinal Stephen Langton created the *chapters* of both the Old and New Testaments in the Latin version of the Bible in 1228. *Verses* within chapters in the Latin version of the Old Testament were the work of the Dominican friar Santes Pagnini in 1528. The verses for the Greek New Testament were created by the Protestant Robert Estienne in 1555. Some brief books have no chapters but only verses (e.g. Philemon).

The Church has always believed that **the Word of God is not wholly contained** in the library of the Bible. As the opening of the Gospel of John proclaims, the Word of God existed eternally and became flesh in Jesus to dwell among us (John 1:1–14). The Church, birthed by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, existed, grew before, during and after the New Testament was written and the books of the Bible determined. The Church recognizes that the books of the Bible are but **one source of information** about God's revelation, although a very important source. The Word of God and the Spirit of Truth are too dynamic to be limited to the written Word only.

Because the Bible is an important source for God's revelation, we should know:

- where the Bible comes from;
- what books are included in the Bible;
- how God uses the Bible to reveal Himself; and
- how do we interpret the information in the Bible.

The Hebrew Scriptures: Books of the Old Testament

It will serve now to list in comparable columns the canons of the Old Testament as accepted by both Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals. Jews have the same canon as Protestants.

The lists are divided into the groups as taught by the respective faith groups. The books with asterisks are those of the Roman Catholic canon which are considered canonical, but are labeled apocryphal by Protestants and Evangelicals.

<i>The Hebrew Scriptures</i>	<i>The Roman Catholic Old Testament</i>	<i>The Protestant Old Testament</i>
The Palestinian Canon	The Alexandrian Canon or The Septuagint (LXX)	The Palestinian Canon
<u>The Law</u>	<u>The Pentateuch</u>	<u>The Pentateuch</u>
Genesis	Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
<u>The Prophets</u>	<u>The Historical Books</u>	<u>The Historical Books</u>
<i>Earlier Prophets</i>		
Joshua	Joshua	Joshua
Judges	Judges	Judges
	Ruth	Ruth
1 Samuel	1 Samuel	1 Samuel
2 Samuel	2 Samuel	2 Samuel
1 Kings	1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings	2 Kings
<i>Later Prophets</i>	1 Chronicles	1 Chronicles
Isaiah	2 Chronicles	2 Chronicles
Jeremiah	Ezra	Ezra
Ezekiel	Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Hosea	*Tobit	
Joel	*Judith	
Amos	Esther	Esther
Obadiah	*1 Maccabees	
Jonah	*2 Maccabees	
Micah		
Nahum	<u>The Wisdom Books</u>	<u>The Poetical Books</u>
Habakkuk	Job	Job
Zephaniah	Psalms	Psalms
Haggai	Proverbs	Proverbs
Zechariah	Ecclesiastes	Ecclesiastes
Malachi	Song of Songs	Song of Songs
	*Wisdom	
	*Sirach	

The Hebrew Scriptures

*The Roman Catholic
Old Testament*

*The Protestant
Old Testament*

The Writings

The Prophetical Books

The Prophetical Books

Psalms
Proverbs
Job
Song of Songs
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther
Daniel
Ezra
Nehemiah
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
*Baruch
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Historical and Geographical Background for the Development of the Two Old Testament Canons

Note: The numbers in brackets refer to the chart on the following pages.

The development of two Old Testament canons raises questions which are rooted both in history and geography.

[1] The roots of the double Old Testament canon in history center around the beginning of the Diaspora or dispersion of the Jewish communities outside Israel about 600 BC. This occurred at the time of the Babylonian Captivity—the conquering of the Israelites by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar about 605 BC and the Jews being taken to Babylon as captives.

2 Kings 24:12 Then Jehoiachin, king of Judah ... surrendered to the king of Babylon, who, in the eighth year of his reign, took him captive.

2 Kings 25:1–7 In the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon ... advanced against Jerusalem ... The king was therefore arrested ... (Nebuchadnezzar) blinded Zedekiah, bound him with fetters, and had him brought to Babylon.

[2] The Israelites and their king were taken into captivity.

2 Chr 36:20 Those who escaped the sword he carried captive to Babylon, where they became his and his sons’ servants until the kingdom of the Persians came to power.

Jer 52:28–30 This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar led away captive: in his seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three people of Judah; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, eight hundred and thirty-two persons from Jerusalem; in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, exiled seven hundred and forty-five people of Judah: four thousand six hundred persons in all.

[3] A “remnant”, a few, remained in Israel.

2 Kings 25:12 But some of the country’s poor, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, left behind as vinedressers and farmers.

2 Kings 25:22 As for the people whom he had allowed to remain in the land of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed as their governor Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan.

Jer 40:11 ... the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah ...

Eze 33:27 Thus the word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, they who live in the ruins on the land of Israel reason thus: ... Tell them this: Thus says the LORD God: As I live, those who are in the ruins I swear shall fall by the sword; ...

[4] Not all Israelites went into captivity in Babylon. A number of Israelites went to Egypt.

2 Kings 25:26 Then all the people, great and small, left with the army commanders and went to Egypt ...

Jer 42:14 ... we will go to Egypt, where we will see no more war, hear the trumpet alarm no longer, nor hunger for bread; there we will live.

Jer 43:7 Against the LORD's command they went to Egypt and arrived at Tahpanhes ...

[5] While in captivity, Babylon was captured by Cyrus of Persia.

2 Chr 36:20 ... the Persians came to power.

2 Chr 36:23 Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: "All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

With Cyrus' proclamation, the captivity of the Israelites came to an end. The Jews began their return to Israel.

Ezra 1:5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites—everyone, that is, whom God has inspired to do so—prepared to go up to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

[6] Ezra and Nehemiah recorded the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem.

Ezra 7:28 I therefore took courage and, with the hand of the LORD, my God, upon me, I gathered together Israelite family heads to make the return journey with me.

Neh 2:11 When I had arrived in Jerusalem, I first rested there for three days.

[7] Many Israelites went on to Egypt from Babylon instead of returning to Israel. History records a substantial Hebrew population in northern Egypt.

The roots of the double Old Testament canon in geography center around the fact that a great number of Israelites departing Babylon fled to northern Egypt. They became part of the city of Alexandria after Alexander the Great conquered the region and founded the city. There were ultimately more Jews in Alexandria at the time of Christ than lived in Palestine—as there are more Jews in the United States today than in Israel and more Jews in New York City than in Jerusalem..

1 Mc 1:1,4 After Alexander the Macedonian, Philip's son, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, he became king in his place, having first ruled in Greece. ... He collected a very strong army and conquered provinces, and rulers, and they became his tributaries. (Considered to be intertestamental Apocrypha by some Protestants; missing from the NAS and NIV translations)

Alexander founded the city of Alexandria in 332 BC. He wanted to make the city the finest port in the ancient world. The city numbered chiefly Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians. It was the capital of Egypt. Most notable among the boasts of the city was the Library—the greatest collection of books in the ancient world in 3rd century BC.

[8] In Palestine, with the return of Ezra from exile (458 BC) and Nehemiah (445 BC), and the prophecy of Malachi (433 BC) there is established *biblical silence*—no further known divine revelation.

As the first semblance of a Hebrew canon is collected, the language was dying such that it was considered dead by 135 AD. It was dying sufficiently by the time of Christ that Jesus and his contemporaries used Aramaic, a Semitic language which had replaced Hebrew as the common language of the Jewish people.

[9] In Alexandria, Demetrius of Phaleron is the librarian of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BC); he wanted copies of the Jewish Law for the Library of Alexandria. Such is perhaps the beginning of a Greek translation of the Torah. Historians do know that the compilation of a full translation of the Torah was made in the early 3rd century BC.

The term “septuagint”, Latin for the number 70 (LXX), may represent the number of translators. The term stands for not only the Pentateuch in Greek, but the entire body of Hebrew scripture translations and compositions dating from possibly before 300 BC.

There is *no biblical silence* in the Greek Septuagint: the Septuagint conveys the original text of some books (Wisdom, 2 Maccabees) and the basic canonical form of others, either in part (Esther, Daniel, Sirach) or as a whole (Tobit, Judith, Baruch, and 1 Maccabees).

[10] While the Septuagint was a collection of the books of the Old Testament and an attempt at a canon, it was *not a fixed canon* in the first century. It was a popular translation of scripture because Greek was the common language of the entire Mediterranean world by the time of the Apostolic Church.

It is not surprising that this is the translation—and canon—used by Christ and the New Testament writers: 300 of 350 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament are from the Septuagint. The remainder are often paraphrases of either the Hebrew or the Greek only.

A group, perhaps a school, of Jewish rabbis, unsaved by Christian standards, collected a Hebrew canon at Jamnia, in Palestine, by the end of the first century. It is believed they may have been equally pressured to this canon by the demands of the Christian Church of the time. They collected a *still unfixed canon* of between 22 and 24 books.

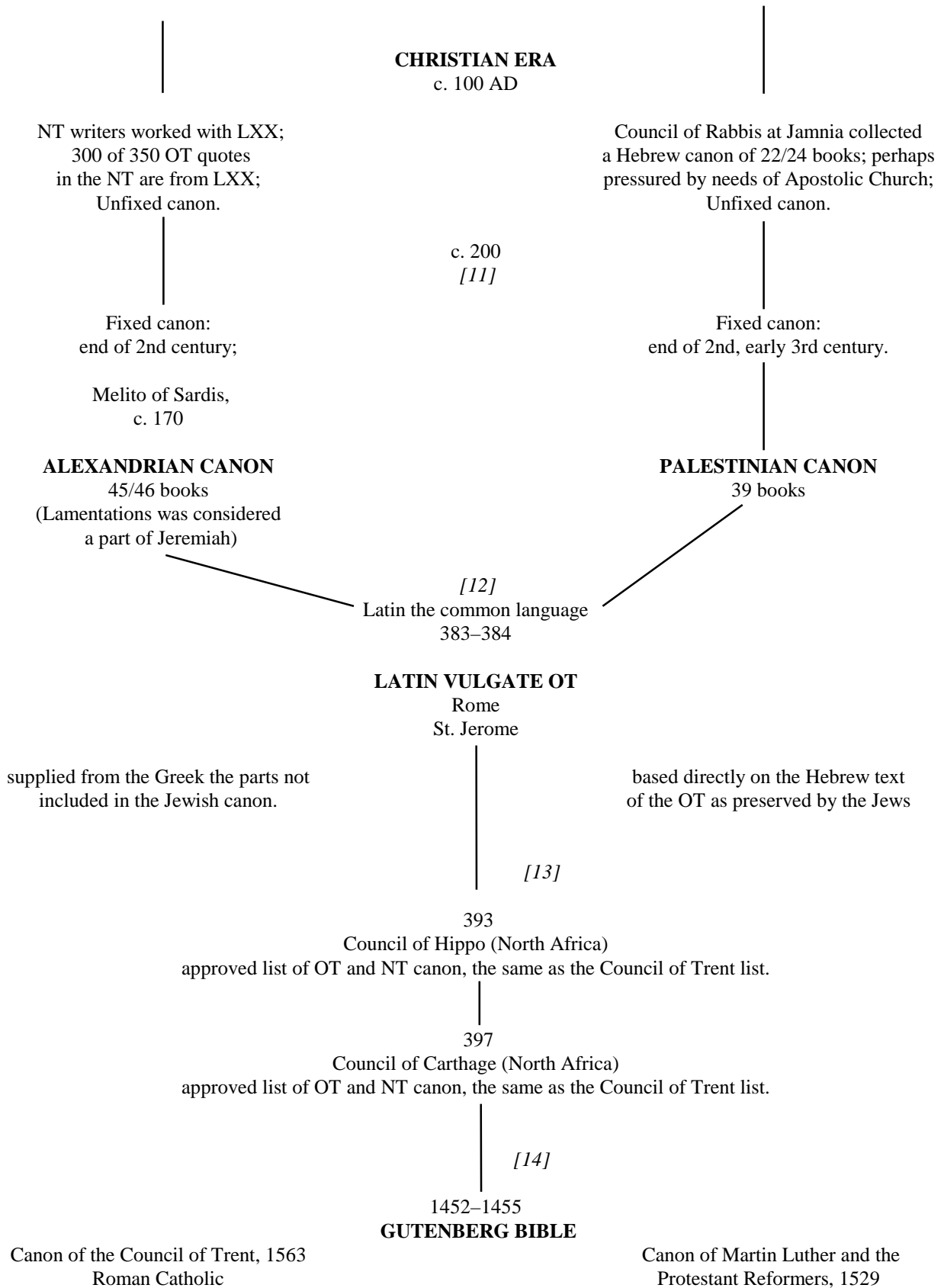
[11] Historians place *the fixed canon* for both the Alexandrian and Palestinian translations at the end of the second century. Bishop Melito of Sardis recorded the first known list of the Septuagint canon in 170 AD. The Septuagint canon contained 45/46 books (Lamentation was once considered a part of Jeremiah); the Palestinian canon contained 39 books.

[12] The first translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin, now the common language (the vulgar or “Vulgate”) of the Mediterranean world, was made by Jerome, in Rome, in 383–383. He based his translation on the Hebrew text of the Palestinian canon, but translated from the Greek Septuagint canon those books not found in the Palestinian canon. Jerome’s Old Testament canon for the Latin Vulgate contained the books of the Alexandrian canon, 46 books.

[13] Two church councils, local and hence not ecumenical or worldwide councils, Hippo (in north Africa), 393, and Carthage (also in north Africa), 397, from which Protestants and Evangelicals take as the authority for their canon of the New Testament, 27 books, approved the Alexandrian canon of the Greek Septuagint, 46 books, as the canon for the Old Testament.

It is interesting to note that the Gutenberg Bible, the first printed Bible, was the Latin Vulgate Bible with the Alexandrian canon, 46 books, of the Greek Septuagint.

[14] Roman Catholics accepted the canon of the Bible—the Alexandrian canon of the Old Testament—as a matter of uncontested faith. Since it was not a matter of controversy for sixteen centuries, there was no need to define the canon as infallible truth. When Martin Luther proposed the Palestinian canon, 39 books, in Hebrew in 1529 as the Old Testament canon, the Catholic Church, following the model of refuting error and defining biblically unrevealed truth set in Acts 15—accepting the Holy Spirit as revealing authority—defined, at the Council of Trent, 1563, the Old Testament canon of 46 books following the Alexandrian Greek Septuagint.



Chronology of the Apostolic Age and the Development of the New Testament Canon

A chronology is now appropriate in order to present a sequence of events both biblical and extra-biblical which affect the canon of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament. It is said that no two scripture scholars will agree on one apostolic chronology. Hence what is presented here is acceptable to some but not universally. It serves to give points of reference for the events that took place and their consequences.

EVENT	DATE	WORK
The Preaching of John the Baptist	27	
The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church	30	
Stephen is stoned to death.	36/37	
The conversion of Paul		
Paul's first missionary journey	45/49	
Council of Jerusalem	50	
Paul's second missionary journey	50/52 51	1 and 2 Thessalonians written
Paul's third missionary journey	53/58 54-57 57 58	Galatians written 1 and 2 Corinthians written Romans written
The voyage to Rome	59/60	
Paul's first Roman imprisonment	61-63 65	Philemon written Colossians written Ephesians written Philippians written James written Mark written 1 Timothy written Titus written
The Apostle James is martyred		
Paul taken to Rome	63/64	
Peter in Rome	64	1 Peter written
Paul's second imprisonment and death	67	2 Timothy written
Peter's death; Linus is Bishop of Rome		Hebrews written
The destruction of Jerusalem	68-70 70s	Matthew written; Luke and Acts written

EVENT	DATE	WORK
Anacletus is Bishop of Rome	78	
	70s/90s	Jude written
	90s	John written 1, 2, and 3 John written Revelation written
Clement is Bishop of Rome	92–101	1 Clement written
John’s death at Ephesus	98	
END OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE		
Council of Rabbis at Jamnia	99–100	Palestinian Canon in Hebrew
First Christian Canon of the Old Testament	c. 100	Alexandrian Canon in Greek
	100–125	2 Peter written Didache written
Melito, Bishop of Sardis	c. 170	Produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list uses the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus Esther.
Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons	185	Developed a New Testament Canon (without 3 John, James or 2 Peter)
	c. 200	Muratorian Fragment contained a canon similar to Trent
Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea	c. 325	<i>History of the Church</i> written; referred to James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John as “disputed, yet similar to most.”
Council of Laodicea	c. 360	List of books similar to Trent’s canon.
Pope Damasus	382	Decree listing the books of Trent’s canon.
Council of Rome	382	Prompted Pope Damasus’ Decree.
Council of Hippo (North Africa)	393	Approved a list of OT and NT Canon (same as later Trent)
Council of Carthage (North Africa)	397	Approved a list of OT and NT Canon (same as later Trent)
Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse	405	Wrote to Pope Innocent I requesting a list of canonical books. Pope Innocent listed the Trent canon.

The Canon of the Bible

All Christians realize that if God has revealed Himself by communicating His will to man, man must be able to know with assurance where that revelation lies. Hence the need for a list (i.e. canon) of books of the Bible. In other words, man needs to know without error (i.e. infallibly) what the books of the Bible are. There must be an authority which will make that decision.

The canon of the Bible refers to the definitive list of the books which are considered to be divine revelation and included therein. A canon distinguishes what is revealed and divine from what is not revealed and human. "Canon" (Greek κανών, *kanon*) means a reed; a straight rod or bar; a measuring stick; something serving to determine, rule, or measure. Because God did not explicitly reveal what books are the inspired books of the Bible, title by title, to anyone, we must look to His guidance in discovering the canon of the Bible.

Jesus has told us that he has not revealed all truths to us.

Jn 16:12–13 I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.

Jesus then told us how he was planning to assist us in knowing other truths.

Jn 14:16–17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.

Jn 15:26 When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

The New Testament writers sensed how they handled truth-bearing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

1 Cor 15:3–4 For I handed on (*paredoka*) to you as of first importance what I also received ...

2 Tim 2:2 And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust (*parathou*) to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

There was a constant history of faithful people from Paul's time through the Apostolic and Post Apostolic Church.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, an ancient city of Asia Minor (see Rev 3), c. 170 produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list maintains the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus the Book of Esther.

The Council of Laodicea, c. 360, produced a list of books similar to today's canon. This was one of the Church's earliest decisions on a canon.

Pope Damasus, 366–384, in his Decree, listed the books of today's canon.

The Council of Rome, 382, was the forum which prompted Pope Damasus' Decree.

Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse wrote to Pope Innocent I in 405 requesting a list of canonical books. Pope Innocent listed the present canon.

The Council of Hippo, a local north Africa council of bishops created the list of the Old and New Testament books in 393 which is the same as the Roman Catholic list today.

The Council of Carthage, a local north Africa council of bishops created the same list of canonical books in 397. This is the council which many Protestant and Evangelical Christians take as the authority for the New Testament canon of books. The Old Testament canon from the same council is identical to Roman Catholic canon today. Another Council of Carthage in 419 offered the same list of canonical books.

Since the Roman Catholic Church does not define truths unless errors abound on the matter, Roman Catholic Christians look to the Council of Florence, an ecumenical council in 1441 for the first definitive list of canonical books.

The final infallible definition of canonical books for Roman Catholic Christians came from the Council of Trent in 1556 in the face of the errors of the Reformers who rejected seven Old Testament books from the canon of scripture to that time.

There was no canon of scripture in the early Church; there was no Bible. The Bible is the book of the Church; she is not the Church of the Bible. It was the Church—her leadership, faithful people—guided by the authority of the Spirit of Truth which discovered the books inspired by God in their writing. The Church did not *create* the canon; she *discerned* the canon. Fixed canons of the Old and New Testaments, hence the Bible, were not known much before the end of the 2nd and early 3rd century.

Catholic Christians together with Protestant and Evangelical Christians hold the same *canon of the New Testament*, 27 books, all having been originally written in the Greek language.

Catholic Christians accept *the longer Old Testament canon*, 46 books, from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Alexandrian Canon.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians, from the Reformers onward, accept *the shorter Old Testament canon*, 39 books, from the Hebrew Palestinian Canon. Jews have the same canon as Protestants.

Canonical books are those books which have been acknowledged as belonging to the list of books the Church considers to be inspired and to contain a rule of faith and morals. Some criteria used to determine canonicity were

- special relation to God, i.e. inspiration;
- apostolic origin;
- used in Church services, i.e. used by the community of believers guided by the Holy Spirit.

Other terms for canonical books should be distinguished: the protocanonical books, deuterocanonical books, and the apocryphal books.

The *protocanonical* (from the Greek *proto* meaning first) books are those books of the Bible that were admitted into the canon of the Bible with little or no debate (e.g. the Pentateuch of the Old Testament and the Gospels)

The *deuterocanonical* (from the Greek *deutero* meaning second) books are those books of the Bible that were under discussion for a while until doubts about their canonicity were resolved (e.g. Sirach and Baruch of the Old Testament, and the Johannine epistles of the New Testament).

The *apocryphal* (from the Greek *apokryphos* meaning hidden) books have multiple meanings:

- complimentary meaning – that the sacred books were too exalted for the general public;
- pejorative meaning – that the orthodoxy of the books were questioned;
- heretical meaning – that the books were forbidden to be read; and lastly
- neutral meaning – simply noncanonical books, the meaning the word has today.

Another word, *pseudepigrapha* (from the Greek meaning false writing) is used for works clearly considered to be false.

Comparison of Terms for Disputed Books

<i>Protestant Christian</i> <i>"apocryphal" books</i>	<i>Catholic Christian</i> <i>"deuterocanonical" books</i>
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Wisdom of Solomon	Wisdom of Solomon
Baruch	Baruch
Tobit	Tobit
Judith	Judith
Greek Esther (Esther 10:4–10)	Greek Esther
Greek Daniel	Greek Daniel
Song of the Three Young Men, Dan 3:24–90;	
Susanna, Dan 13;	
Bel and the Dragon, Dan 14	
1 Maccabees	1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees	2 Maccabees
1 Esdras	
2 Esdras	
Prayer of Manasseh	
<i>Protestant Christian</i> <i>"pseudepigrapha" books</i>	<i>Catholic Christian</i> <i>"apocryphal" books</i>

Old Testament works

Enoch Literature; Esdras Literature (1–2 Esdras); Baruch Literature (2–3 Baruch);
Psalms of Solomon; Testaments of the Twelve Apostles; Sibylline Oracles;
Letter of Aristeus to Philocrates; Assumption of Moses;
Maccabean Literature (3–4 Maccabees); Prayer of Manasseh

New Testament works

Didache; Apocalypses of Peter, Paul, Thomas; 1–2 Clement;
Gospels of Thomas, Philip, Peter, Hebrews; Hermas;
Acts of Pilate; Barnabas; Protoevangelium of James;
To the Laodiceans; Various Papyruses; To Seneca;
Epistola Apostolorum; Acts of John, Paul, Andrew, Thomas.

Inspiration of the Bible

2 Tim 3:16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

A primary criterion for the canonicity of a book of the Bible was the belief that it was a work inspired by God. By definition, to inspire literally means to breathe into, upon, or in. Inspiration means any and all promptings of God's grace in and on the human psyche and specifically of the divine promptings at the origin of the books of the Bible. The divine inspiration of Sacred Scripture denotes the special influence of God upon the human writers of the Bible, an influence of such a nature that God is said to be the author of the biblical books.

The internal testimony of the Bible itself attests to the fact of its divine inspiration.

Ex 17:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this down in a document as something to be remembered."

Ex 34:27 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with them I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

- Is 8:1 The LORD said to me: “Take a large cylinder–seal, and inscribe on it in ordinary letters ... ”
- Is 30:8 Now come, write it on a tablet they can keep, inscribe it in a record; that it may be in future days an eternal witness.
- Is 34:16 Look in the book of the LORD and read: No one of these shall be lacking, for the mouth of the LORD has ordered it ...
- Jer 36:1 In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you ...
- Mt 5:18 Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.
- Lk 24:44 He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.”
- Jn 5:39 You search the scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf.
- Jn 10:35–36 If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?
- Mt 4:4 He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’”
- Acts 15:15–16 The words of the prophets agree with this, as is written: ‘After this I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; from its ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again ...’
- Rom 1:17 For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.”

The Roman Catholic Church officially defined her meaning of inspiration in the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, in 1893.

- Providentissimus Deus* By supernatural power God so moved and impelled the human authors to write – he so assisted them when writing – that the things he ordered and those only they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth.

Hermeneutics: Understanding Revelation

In all human communication, the receiver must create meaning from the symbols (the message) used by the communicator. All Christians must discover the meaning intended by the author(s) of the books of the Bible to understand what God is revealing. The process of discovering meaning from the Bible is called hermeneutics. All Christians recognize that how we approach the Bible determines often what we take from it. Understanding what God would have us know from the Bible is made difficult by many factors:

- The Bible contains some very ancient books;
- Sometimes it is not even known who the author of a book really was;
- Not knowing for certain who an author was is complicated by the period of time in which an author lived;
- Since many authors were ancient Semites, their way of thinking and manner of expressing themselves differ from our own;

- Since we do not possess any original manuscripts of the books of the Bible, we have to contend with copying and editing which occurred over time;
- Then the issue of the multiplicity of human authors and editors complicates our understanding;
- Finally, the fact of both a divine and a human author makes understanding a challenge.

Hermeneutics (from the Greek word *hermeneia* which means speech or interpretation) is used to cover a broad scope in the process of understanding. It refers to

- interpretation by speech itself, as language interprets the mind;
- the process of translation from an unintelligible language to an intelligible one (cf. 1 Cor 12:10);
- interpretation by commentary and explanation.

Roman Catholic Christians have often been accused of not being allowed to read the Bible on their own. This could not be further from the truth. When, in history, Catholics were forbidden to read the Bible it was a particular translation which usually was unauthorized and highly illiterate in its fidelity to original sources. In other words, unauthorized versions were often just simply bad translations.

It is often said Roman Catholics cannot interpret the Bible on their own. The Papal Encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritus*, of Pope Pius XII in 1943 attempted to counteract this error by stating that there are but few texts whose understanding has been determined by the teaching authority of the Church; and Catholics do indeed have freedom to interpret the Scriptures.

The Catholic Church has been solicitous over the way in which the Bible is interpreted. Experience teaches us that it is easy to find even contradictory meanings from the same Scripture with an unbridled approach to reading and interpreting the Bible.

The Catholic Church teaches that the first principle of hermeneutics is the literal meaning of the text.

Spiritus Paraclitus As Jerome insisted, all biblical interpretation rests upon the literal sense ...
(Benedict XV,
September 15, 1920)

Divino Afflante Spiritus ... discern and define that sense of the biblical words which is called literal
(Pius XII, September ... so that the mind of the author may be made clear.
30, 1943) ... the exegete must be principally concerned with the literal sense of the Scriptures.

Literal Sense

The first sense then for understanding the Bible is the *literal sense*.

Definition: the literal sense of Scripture is the meaning which the human author directly intended and the author's words convey.

Criteria to understand the literal sense:

- The literary form that the author used is the first aid in determining what the author meant. If the author wrote poetry instead of history, then the literary form of poetry assists in determining the meaning intended by the author. Some other literary forms of the Bible include history, law, songs, love stories, stories (parables), etc.
- The literary history of the biblical book or of the section of the Bible that contains the book also aids in determining the meaning intended by the author. Literary history of a book includes what is known about the author, his background, his historical period of Israel's history, etc.

An example of the Church using the literal sense of a scripture passage in order to understand what meaning we should get from it is the 6th chapter of the Gospel according to John.

Literary Form of John 6:25–69:

Most scripture scholars today affirm that John’s gospel is historical in nature. Hence we believe that John strove to preserve both the words and actions of Jesus. Unlike the Synoptics, John wrote through the eyes of the faith of the late Apostolic Church in light of the way that faith translated into practice and worship.

Where John is clearly biographical, the literal meaning is emphasized by linguistic psychology: multiple repetition of the message in different words. Where literalness is intended, intended meaning is reinforced by recording the reaction to literal meaning by the hearers without the speaker’s correction.

Literary History of John 6:25–69:

The apostle John was an eyewitness to the life and teachings of Jesus. He was one of the Twelve. He was also the last of the Apostles to write and to die. He refers to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Interpretation of John 6:25–69:

Following the details of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes—biographical, Jesus walking on the sea—biographical, Jesus reacts to the crowds’ need for signs. Jesus takes them from manna, bread from heaven, to “true bread from heaven (v. 32)” ... “I am the bread (v. 35).” “I am the bread that came down from heaven (v. 41).” This is God saying this: “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” If He was not really the bread that came down from heaven, His omnipotent and creative Word would then have made it so.

Five times in different verbal expressions, Jesus confirmed the reality of the meaning he intended.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Jn 6:51 | I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. |
| Jn 6:53 | Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” |
| Jn 6:54 | Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. |
| Jn 6:55 | For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. |
| Jn 6:56 | Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. |

The best way a person can make a clear literal point is repetition of the same message in different ways. Jesus did this. Those around him clearly understood what he was saying—cannibalism and the drinking of blood—both forbidden by Mosaic Law.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Jn 6:60,66 | Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” ... As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. |
|------------|--|

Had these disciples mistaken the meaning of Jesus’ words, Jesus, knowing their thoughts and their error, would surely have known and corrected them. He didn’t. They had clearly understood his meaning—Jesus’ flesh was to be really eaten; his blood to be really drunk.

Fuller Sense

But the Bible has God, a divine author, besides the human author. The Church teaches that there exists a more-than-literal meaning for understanding the Bible: *a fuller sense*.

Definition: The fuller sense is the deeper meaning intended by God as divine author. The fuller sense of Scripture, since it is the meaning intended by God, may not have been clearly known and intended by the human author.

Criteria to establish the fuller sense:

- Because the Catholic Church holds that there are two revealing authorities of Divine Revelation, the Bible and the Holy Spirit, the fuller sense of the Bible can be found in the authoritative interpretation of

those revealing authorities. Some of these authorities are the New Testament itself, the Fathers of the Church, the Church in Council (cf. Acts 15 model), the “faithful people” faithful to what was handed down to them, etc. The Spirit of Truth is entrusted to faithful people as an authority in the Church.

- The fuller sense of any Scripture text has to be in agreement with the literal sense of the words. This fuller sense must be a consequential development of what the human author of the text intended to say.

An example of the fuller sense in the interpretation of Scripture is found by looking at the New Testament.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 1, verse 23, Matthew says that the conception of Jesus by Mary was a virginal conception and took place so that the words of the prophet Isaiah (7:14) might be fulfilled.

Isaiah gives no evidence that the prophet had Jesus’ conception in the womb of Mary in mind. Isaiah does not speak of a virgin in the strict sense—merely an unmarried woman. Isaiah is not clear that he is even speaking to a distant future conception. The whole meaning of Isaiah’s chapter appears to imply that the birth he prophesies will take place about 735 B.C. during the reign of King Ahaz the father of the future King Hezekiah. The words of Isaiah may have literally meant the conception of the future King Hezekiah. At the time of Isaiah’s words in chapter 7, the mother of the future King Hezekiah would have been unmarried.

Matthew, on the other hand, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, creates an interpretation of Isaiah which is definitely not literal. Matthew clearly interprets Isaiah in a fuller sense: the unmarried woman is the virgin Mary, and God-with-us is Jesus.

Typical Sense

Following the lead of Paul himself (cf. Rom 5:14) there is another way for creating meaning in the Bible: *the typical sense*.

Definition: The typical sense of Bible texts is the deeper meaning that some elements (persons, places, things and events) of the Bible have because God, the divine author of the Bible, intended that these elements foreshadow/shadow further things.

Criteria to understanding the typical sense:

- The typical sense of the Bible is created by continuing revelation or growth in the understanding the Word of God. Extra-biblical growth in understanding the Word of God is evidenced in the growth and development of the understanding of the Trinity, the Incarnation, etc. Types—the typical sense—are discovered in the New Testament, or in the agreement among “faithful people” faithful to what was handed down to them—the Fathers of the Church, in worship—the liturgy—and its development through the ages, in the documents of the Church, etc. The Catholic Church believes that the Holy Spirit is a revealing authority in the Church and reveals Himself to “faithful people” in all ages.
- The other criterion for discovering the typical meaning of Scripture is understanding that any type found in the text of the Bible has to be related to the anti-type (e.g. Christ to Adam). This confirms that God planned the relationship of the type to the anti-type.

An example of the typical meaning in the Bible is in Paul’s writings. Paul appears to delight in establishing types between the New Testament and the Old Testament. In 1 Cor 10:6 Paul typifies those events which occurred to the Israelites in the desert of Sinai throughout the Exodus to those things that happen to Christians.

Another example of a type—the typical meaning in the Bible—is the bronze serpent raised by Moses in the desert. The evangelist John presents raising the bronze serpent as a type of Christ crucified (3:14).

Major Church Pronouncements on the Bible

CHURCH EVENT	DATE	CHURCH STATEMENT
Pentecost	30/33	The beginning of the Church; the Church exists before a determination of a canon or a definitive list of books of what was later called the Bible. The NT was not even written yet. The Bible is the book of the Church, we are not a church of the Bible.
Melito, Bishop of Sardis	c. 170	produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list maintains the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus the Book of Esther.
Council of Laodicea (A local council of the church in union with Rome)	c. 360	Produced a list of books of the Bible similar to the Council of Trent's canon. This was one of the Church's earliest decisions on a canon.
Council of Rome (Local church council under the authority of Pope Damasus, 366–384)	382	Pope Damasus gave a complete list of canonical books of the OT and NT which is identical with the list later approved by the Council of Trent.
Council of Hippo (Local North African Church council in union with and under the authority of the Bishop of Rome)	393	Approved a list of OT and NT canon (same as later approved by the Council of Trent)
Council of Carthage (Local No. African Church council in union with and under the authority of the Bishop of Rome)	397	Approved a list of OT and NT canon (same as later approved by the Council of Trent)
Pope Innocent I (Bishop of Rome, 401–417)	405	Responded to a request by Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, with a list of canonical books of Scripture; this list was the same as later approved by the Council of Trent.
Council of Carthage (Local North African Church council in union with the Bishop of Rome)	419	Approved a list of OT and NT canon (same as later approved by the Council of Trent)
Council of Florence (An ecumenical council)	1441	Complete list of OT and NT canon was drawn up; this list later adopted by the Fathers of the Council of Trent

CHURCH EVENT	DATE	CHURCH STATEMENT
Council of Trent (An ecumenical council called to respond to the heresy of the Reformers)	1545–1563	The canon of OT and NT received final definitions: 46 books in the OT; 27 in the NT; “Henceforth the books of the OT and the NT, protocanonical and deutero-canonical alike, in their entirety and with all their parts, comprise the canon and are held to be of equal authority.” The ancient Vulgate edition of the Bible was called the authoritative edition of the Bible.
Vatican I Council	1869–1870	Reaffirmed the decree of Trent; The Church holds the books of Holy Scripture as sacred and canonical, not because she subsequently approved them, nor because they contain revelation without error, but precisely because “having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and, as such, they have been handed down to the Church itself.”
<i>Providentissimus Deus</i> Pope Leo XIII, Bishop of Rome, 1878–1903	1893	Inaugurated a new era in Roman Catholic biblical studies. Presented a plan for biblical study; Defined inspiration: “By supernatural power God so moved and impelled the human authors to write – he so assisted them in writing – that the things he ordered and those only they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth.”
<i>Pascendi Dominica Gregis</i> Pope Pius X, Bishop of Rome, 1903–1914	1907	Refuted the errors of the Modernists; Scored erroneous teaching on the origin and nature of the Sacred Books, on inspiration; on the distinction between the purely human Christ of history and the divine Christ of faith; on the origin and growth of the Scriptures.
<i>Spiritus Paraclitus</i> Pope Benedict XV, Bishop of Rome, 1914–1922	1920	Commends modern critical methods in biblical studies; All biblical interpretation rests upon the literal sense; Goal of biblical studies is to learn spiritual perfection, to arm oneself to defend the faith, to preach the word of God fruitfully.

CHURCH EVENT	DATE	CHURCH STATEMENT
<p><i>Divino Afflante Spiritus</i> Pope Pius XII, Bishop of Rome, 1939–1958</p>	1943	<p>Permitted scholars to use original text of Scriptures; no claim was made that the Vulgate is always an accurate translation, but that it is free from any errors in faith or morals;</p> <p>The scholar must be principally concerned with the literal sense of the Scriptures; search out and expound the spiritual sense; avoid other figurative senses.</p> <p>Literary criticism should be employed;</p> <p>Stated that there are but few texts whose sense was determined by the authority of the Church (only seven biblical passages have been definitively interpreted in defending traditional doctrine and morals—Jn 3:5, Lk 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24, Jn 20:22, Jn 20:23, Rom 5:12, Ja 5: 14); this counteracts the frequent misunderstanding that Catholics have no freedom interpreting the Scriptures.</p>
<p><i>Humani Generis</i> Pope Pius XII, Bishop of Rome, 1939 – 1958</p>	1950	<p>Instructs scholars on evolution, polygenism and OT historical narratives</p>
<p>Vatican II Council</p>	1962–1965	<p>The decree, <i>On Divine Revelation</i>, declares that there is one source of Divine Revelation, Jesus Christ; that there are two modes of handing on revelation: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition : “in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end,” and “it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything that has been revealed.”</p> <p>Inerrancy of Scripture: “The Books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.”</p> <p>Emphasized that “in order to see what God wanted to communicate in Scripture, we must investigate the intention of the sacred author, and one way to do this is by paying attention to the literary form employed by the sacred writer.”</p>

4. Divine Revelation “By Word of Mouth” (2 Thess 2:15): Handing On

Catholic Christians believe the revealed Word of God is handed on as Paul noted “by word of mouth” in the constant faith of the community of believers, the Church.

The Bible repeatedly affirms the process of handing on the revelation—*paradosis*, παράδοσις or tradition.

The Bible, the written Word of God, does not claim that it is the only source of revelation. It does name those faithful people who are chosen to hand on the Word of God by word of mouth: *episcopoi*, *presbyteroi*, *diaconoi*.

The Bible offers a decision-making model for determining and handling truth and refuting error—the Conciliar Model of Acts 15: “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and ours too.”

The Catholic Church has faithfully followed that model from Nicaea to Vatican II.

The faithful people entrusted to hand on the Word of God are found among the Apostolic Fathers (1st and 2nd centuries), the Post-Apostolic Fathers (2nd to 8th centuries), and the Doctors of the Church.

The latest expression of the constant faith of the Church, handed on by faithful people in direct succession from the Apostolic Church is found in the documents of Second Vatican Council.

Paradosis: Handing On Divine Revelation

Catholic Christians believe that in Jesus Christ the Lord is summed up the entire Revelation of the most high God.

On Divine Revelation, 7, Vatican II Therefore [it is] Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up...

2 Cor 1:20 For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him (Jesus Christ).

2 Cor 4:5–6 For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus. For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of (Jesus) Christ.

The Revelation of Yahweh to His chosen People was given to the Israelites and transmitted from generation to generation for centuries.

Peter defined the process of handing down the Revelation of Yahweh from father to son. The Greek word for this process of handing on the Word of God is *paradosis*, παράδοσις.

1 Pet 1:18–19 ... realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on (πατροπαραδοτος, *patroparadotos*) by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless and unblemished lamb

The New Testament authors referred frequently to the process of “handing on” the Word of God to His People.

- Lk 1:1–2 Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down (*paredosan*) to us.
- 1 Cor 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on (*paredoka*) to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread ...
- 1 Cor 15:3–4 For I handed on (*paredoka*) to you as of first importance what I also received ...
- 2 Tim 2:2 And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust (*parathou*) to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

It is Paul who makes the distinction of modes in which the Revelation of God to His People can be handed on. Paul also called the process of handing on the Word of God “tradition.” He then terms two ways in which “traditions” are transmitted, by word, orally, and by letter, written.

- 2 Thess 2:15 Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions (*παράδοσις, paradoseis*) that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

Therefore, Catholic Christians believe that the Bible—written tradition—is not the only source of Revelation. And, as Catholic Christians believe, the Bible does not teach that it is the only source of Revelation.

- John 20:30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book.
- John 21:25 There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.

The official teaching of the Catholic Church reflects Biblical teaching on the whole of Revelation.

- On Divine Revelation*, 9, 10, Vatican II Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other ... Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture make up *a single sacred deposit of the Word of God*, which is entrusted to the Church.

Catholic Christians believe that the Bible affirms that God’s way of revealing himself to His People is to choose certain people for these tasks:

- in the Hebrew Scriptures these people were the patriarchs, prophets, judges, and kings;
- in the New Testament, these people are apostles, prophets, teachers, and faithful people.

Paul defines the New Testament people chosen to hand on the Revelation of the Word of God.

- 2 Tim 2:2 And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

Paul also continues to describe who the “faithful people” are who are to hand on the Revelation of God.

The first category of “faithful people” is *episcopos*, bishop. (ἐπίσκοπος)

- 1 Tim 3:1–2 This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop (*episcopos*) desires a noble task. Therefore, a bishop (*episcopos*) must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach.
- Tit 1:7–9 For a bishop (*episcopos*) as God’s steward must be blameless, ... holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.

The second category of “faithful people” is *presbyteros*, a presbyter, priest, elder. (πρεσβύτερος)

- Tit 1:5–6 Appoint presbyters (*presbyteros*) in every town, as I directed you, on condition that a man be blameless, married only once, with believing children who are not accused of licentiousness or rebellious.

1 Tim 5:17 Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor, especially those who toil in preaching and teaching.

The third category of “faithful people” is *diakonos*, deacon. (διάκονος)

1 Tim 4:6,13,16 If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good minister (*diakonos*) of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed. ... Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. ... Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

1 Tim 3:8–9 Similarly, deacons (*diakonous*) must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

The Bible testifies that the Apostolic Church exercised this teaching authority (“holding fast to the true message ... to refute opponents” (Tit 1:9)) beyond the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.

The Acts of the Apostles records that there were different truths being taught regarding keeping the Mosaic Law. One group represented by Judaizers taught that Gentile Christians must come to the Christian life through keeping the Mosaic Law; the second group represented by Paul taught that Gentile Christians did not need to keep the Mosaic Law. There was also no Scripture regarding the truth of the issue. So they appealed to the authority of the Holy Spirit in council. The Catholic Church has followed this model ever since.

The Biblical Model for Handing On Truth and Refuting Error: Acts 15, The Council of Jerusalem

Error in teaching:

Acts 15:1 Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.”

Dissension and controversy:

Acts 15:2 Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, ...

Appeal to the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem:

Acts 15:2 ... it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question.

Apostles and presbyters convened:

Acts 15:6 The apostles and the presbyters met together to see about this matter.

Discussion:

Acts 15:7–11 Peter

Acts 15:12 Barnabas and Paul

Acts 15:13–21 James

Problem is resolved:

Acts 15:22 Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided ...

Decree is promulgated:

Acts 15:22–23 The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them: “The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings.”

The authority of the Holy Spirit is appealed:

Acts 15:28 It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us ...

Paradosis or tradition falls into two categories. The difference can be seen in Acts 15. Besides the issue of following the Mosaic Law for gentile converts, which meant primarily circumcision, the Council of Jerusalem also decreed that converts had “to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood” (Acts 15:20).

There are clearly distinguished *paradosis* or traditions which are considered irrevocable, unchangeable, even to our day, e.g. circumcision is not a requirement for new Christians. On the other hand, today we would not be concerned with “pollution from idols,” how an animal is killed for meat, or whether blood is in our food. These appear to be different traditions from the former—changeable and not binding in the same way as non-circumcision.

The Roman Catholic Church also follows this biblical model in her approach to *paradosis*/traditions.

Hence, there are *paradosis*/traditions which are unchangeable, capital letter “T”, “Traditions.” These are the defined faith or moral teachings based on the Bible but revealed by the Holy Spirit as an authority in the Church (Acts 15:28). An example from the history of the Roman Catholic Church of Tradition (with a capital letter “T”) is the teaching on purgatory. This teaching of the Church can never change.

There appear to be *paradosis*/traditions which are changeable, small letter “t”, “traditions.” These are the “rules of the organization, rules of the club.” These change as people, culture, faith and understanding develop. An example from the history of the Roman Catholic Church of tradition (with a lower case letter “t”) is the teaching on the prohibition of eating meat on Fridays. This practice of mandatory abstinence as penance in the Church has changed.

Acts 15 Model: General or Ecumenical Councils of the Church Universal

Following the example of the Apostolic Church in the persons of the Apostles in the book of Acts, especially chapter 15, the Roman Catholic Church is motivated by a number of scriptures.

The Roman Catholic Church takes seriously the need to know the truth and to refute error.

- Jn 15:26 When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.
- Jn 16:12–13 I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.
- Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- 2 Pet 2:1 There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.
- Tit 1:7,9–11 For a bishop (*episcopon*) as God’s steward ... holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents. For there are also many rebels, idle talkers and deceivers ... It is imperative to silence them.
- Gal 1:6–9 I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by (the) grace (of Christ) for a different gospel (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

The Catholic Church also understands the need to interpret correctly the truth of all of the Bible. The Bible warns us that there will be incorrect interpretation without authority. All interpretations of a scripture cannot be equally true (it is contrary to the nature of truth); some interpretations of the same scripture are mutually incompatible (e.g. Mt 16:16; Jn 6). Hence there must be an authority to whom truth and error can be appealed.

- 2 Pet 3:16 In them (Paul’s letters) there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

The Catholic Church accepts the authority both of Divine Revelation and of the Holy Spirit. Deviation from the truth must be cursed and condemned.

Rom 13:1–2 Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves.

2 Thess 2:8–12 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord (Jesus) will kill with the breath of his mouth and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming, the one whose coming springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in signs and wonders that lie, and in every wicked deceit for those who are perishing because they have not accepted the love of truth so that they may be saved. Therefore, God is sending them a deceiving power so that they may believe the lie, that all who have not believed the truth but have approved wrongdoing may be condemned.

The Catholic Church has, in all ages, understood both (1) the need for renewal and reformation of Christian faith and living, and general revival in the Church as a whole, and (2) the need to teach the truth when confronted with error.

The Church exercised her teaching authority (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) and called the faithful people entrusted with teaching others together in universal (ecumenical) council for renewal and reformation, and when truths were abandoned and error (heresy) was being taught (Titus 1:9). The truth was expressed and defined; error and false teachers condemned (*anathema sit*, “let them [him, it] be anathema, condemned, damned”).

The history of the ecumenical councils attests to the fidelity of the Roman Catholic Church to the teaching and direction of both the authority of Scripture and the authority of the Holy Spirit.

The following section presents in summary form the history of the ecumenical councils of the Church throughout history from the Council of Jerusalem to Vatican II.

Acts 15 Model: General Councils of the Church

COUNCIL	CRISIS/ CONTROVERSY	DATE	FATHERS	NOTABLES	DECREES / RESOLUTIONS
JERUSALEM Acts 15:2	Gentile converts must follow Mosaic Law; “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.” Acts 15:1	49	“Apostles and presbyters” Acts 15:6	Paul and Barnabas, Peter, James Acts 15:6-22	“It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities.” Acts 15:28
NICEA I (Now Iznik, Turkey, 70 mi from Constantinople, on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus)	Christ was a pure creature; made out of nothing; liable to fall; the Son of God by adoption, not by nature: Arianism.	325	318 bishops	Convened: Constantine I, Emperor; Eusebius of Caesarea, historian; St. Athanasius, theologian; Ratified: Silvester I, Pope.	The Nicene Creed; the Consubstantiality of the Word: <i>homousion</i> with the Father; Solved how the date of Easter should be calculated.
CONSTANTINOPLE I (Now Istanbul, Turkey)	The need to insist on <i>homousion</i> ; Demonstrate to the world that Christians of the East are not Arians; Apollinaris was teaching that Christ was not true man.	381	186 bishops	Convened: Theodosius I, Emperor; St. Basil the Great; St. Gregory of Nyssa; St. Gregory of Naz., theologians; Ratified: Damasus, Pope	Renewed the work of Nicaea; Condemned the heresy of the Macedonians (the Holy Spirit was not really God); Condemned the heresy of Apollinaris (that Christ was not really a man).
EPHESUS	Nestorius was teaching that Mary was not the mother of God; Proponents of Nestorius began claiming that Christ was actually two separate persons, human and divine.	431	250 bishops	Convened: Theodosius II, Emperor; St. Cyril of Alexandria; St. John Chrysostom; Ratified: Celestinus I, Pope.	Condemned Nestorius; Decreed that Mary was also <i>Theotokos</i> , mother of God; Declared that Christ is true God and true man, that he has two natures (human and divine) joined in one person.

COUNCIL	CRISIS/ CONTROVERSY	DATE	FATHERS	NOTABLES	DECREES / RESOLUTIONS
CHALCEDON (Ancient seaport of Bithynia on the sea of Marmara)	Monophysites were teaching that Christ had a single divine nature and no human nature.	451	600 bishops	Convened: Marcianus, Emperor; Ratified: Leo I, Pope.	Condemned Monophysitism; Declared that Christ had two distinct natures and was both true God and true man; Promulgated canons of church discipline.
CONSTANTINOPLE II	Emperor Justinian I wanted the Church to consider the orthodoxy of three Greek theologians: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Ebas of Edessa.	553	150 bishops	Convened: Justinian I, Emperor;	Condemned the writings of theologians as having been infested with Nestorianism.
CONSTANTINOPLE III	Monothelism was teaching that Christ did not possess a human will.	680	174 bishops	Convened: Constantine IV, Emperor; Ratified: Leo II, Pope.	Condemned Monothelism; Declared that Christ has two wills, human and divine.
NICAEA II	Iconoclasts taught that using sacred images was idolatry.	787	390 bishops	Convened: Irene, Empress; Ratified: Adrian I, Pope.	Condemned Iconoclasts; Declared that sacred images may be honored without idolatry. Promulgated canons of church discipline.
CONSTANTINOPLE IV	Needed to decide the right of Patriarch Photius or the restoration of Ignatius.	870	102 bishops	Convened: Basil, Emperor; Ratified: Adrian II, Pope.	Photius was condemned in 27 canons.
LATERAN I (Basilica in Rome, Italy)	Needed to face the social and religious problems of the day; First ecumenical council in the West.	1123	300 bishops	Convened: Callistus II, Pope; Ratified: Callistus	Promulgated canons of mixed matters.

Chapter 4

COUNCIL	CRISIS/ CONTROVERSY	DATE	FATHERS	NOTABLES	DECREES / RESOLUTIONS
LATERAN II	A double papal election and ensuing schism when two rivals claiming to be pope divided the church.	1139	1000 bishops	Convened: Innocent II, Pope; St. Bernard of Clairvaux Ratified: Innocent II.	Took measures against schism of antipope Anacletus II; Promulgated canons of church discipline
LATERAN III	Reorganization had to be faced; there was the ever-needed pressure to reform; restraint of abuses.	1179	300 bishops+	Convened: Alexander III, Pope; Ratified: Alexander III, Pope.	Decreed that papal elections required two-thirds majority of cardinals at the conclave; Promulgated numerous disciplinary canons.
LATERAN IV	Albigensian heresy: two supreme beings, Evil and Good; Christ did not die; all material things must.	1215	412 bishops; 388 priests	Convened: Innocent III, Pope; Ratified: Innocent III, Pope.	Declaration of Canon Law: the law of the Church; Decrees against Albigensians and Waldensians.
LYONS I (City in E. France)	The difficult and heretical behavior of Emperor Frederick II; The persecution of religion.	1245	140 bishops; 300+ in toto	Convened: Innocent IV, Pope; Ratified: Innocent IV, Pope.	Excommunication and deposition of Frederick II.
LYONS II	A marked decline of the detachment of the popes from the things of the world; Chronic restiveness of the Greeks toward Roman primacy.	1274	500 bishops; 570 priests	Convened: Gregory X, Pope; St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure; Ratified: Gregory X, Pope.	General reformation of the morals of clergy and bishops; Dogmatic constitution of <i>filioque</i> ; Profession of faith of Greek Emperor Michael VIII.
VIENNE (City in E. France near Lyons)	Problems with the religious order of Knights Templars.	1312	122 bishops; 300 abbots.	Convened: Clemens V, Pope; Ratified: Clemens V, Pope.	Templars were suppressed; Canon Law enacted; Three definition of dogmas; Disciplinary decrees written.
CONSTANCE (City in Germany on Swiss border)	The Great Western Schism: two sets of popes.	1414 - 1418	32 Cardinals; 183 bishops; 100 abbots; 350 priests.	Convened: Segismund, Emperor; Ratified: Martin V, Pope.	Reformation of the Church; Material organization of religion.

COUNCIL	CRISIS/ CONTROVERSY	DATE	FATHERS	NOTABLES	DECREES / RESOLUTIONS
FLORENCE (City of N. Italy)	East/West reunion; Constantinople was being threatened by Mohammedans.	1438	150+ bishops.	Convened: Eugene IV, Pope; Ratified: Eugene IV, Pope.	Reunion of oriental churches.
LATERAN V	Needed reform in church administration; Rise of atheistic philosophy; Friction between bishops and orders of friars.	1512 - 1517	115 bishops.	Convened: Julius II, Pope; Cajetan; Ratified: Leo X, Pope.	Condemned the Averroes philosophy: the soul of man is not immortal; Promulgated reform decrees; Established principles of book censorship; Rights of bishops defined.
TRENT (in Hapsburg’s Germany; now N. Italy)	Martin Luther; Revolt against the Pope; Widespread heresy.	1545 - 1563	70 - 252 bishops.	Convened: Paul III, Pope; Ratified: Pius IV, Pope.	Doctrinal decrees: restatement of belief in opposition to the new theologies; The Catholic Reformation: the reformation of Catholic life.
VATICAN I (St. Peter’s Basilica)	A return to life of the Catholic Church: needed a revival of religious life General restoration and restatement of the faith was needed; Christian marriages and education needed safeguarding.	1870	747 bishops.	Convened: Pius IX, Pope; Ratified: Pius IX, Pope.	Promulgated decrees on the Catholic Faith and on the Church; Condemned the Rationalists and Semirationalists; Defined the charism of infallibility.
VATICAN II	Constant need for reform and revival; Needed translation of faith into modern era: communication media; Christians and Jews; religious freedom, etc.	1962 – 1965	2908 bishops.	Convened: John XXIII, Pope; Ratified: Paul VI, Pope.	Issued 16 documents: On Divine Revelation; The Pastoral Constitution On The Church in the Modern World; On The Church

Apostolic Fathers of the Church

Catholic Christians believe that the promise of the Spirit of Truth to guide believers in truth is found in the constant faith of the Church preserved in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. The term “Apostolic Fathers” applies to certain disciples and successors of the twelve apostles. In a more restricted sense, the term is applied to a group of Greek–language writers who were among the martyrs and major figures of the 1st and 2nd centuries in the Christian Church.

<p>CLEMENT I, St. CLEMENT OF ROME + 4th Bishop of Rome</p>	<p>r. 92 – 101</p>	<p><i>I Clement or Letter to the Corinthians</i> (c. 96): earliest piece of literature outside the NT historically attested; addressed disputes in the Church at Corinth; <i>II Clement</i> (a sermon)(c. 140): Clementine authorship disputed</p>
<p>IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, St. + martyr for the faith + disciple of John the Evangelist + condemned to die by wild beasts in Rome + brought from Antioch to Rome and wrote seven letters to churches and individuals along the way</p>	<p>d. 110</p>	<p><i>Letter to Ephesians</i> <i>Letter to Magnesians</i> <i>Letter to Tralles</i> <i>Letter to Philadelphians</i> <i>Letter to Smyrnans</i> <i>Letter to Polycarp of Smryna</i> <i>Letter to Romans</i> + contain warnings against heretical doctrines; + contain detailed summaries of doctrines; + picture of Church organization with bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons + first to stress Virgin Birth and to use the term “catholic church”</p>
<p>POLYCARP OF SMYRNA, St. + received a visit and letter from Ignatius + represented the Church of Asia Minor in meetings with Pope Anicetus + dating of Easter + a teacher of Irenaeus + knew John the Evangelist and other apostles + was a disciple of John the Evangelist</p>	<p>69–155</p>	<p><i>Polycarp to the Philipians</i> <i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i> (about him)</p>
<p>(Author Unknown)</p>	<p>(Syria)</p>	<p>70–110?</p>
		<p><i>Didache</i> (“Teaching”): compendium of moral precepts + instructions on organization of church communities + liturgical worship regulation + contains oldest Eucharistic prayer + directions on Baptism, fasting, prayer, treatment of bishops, deacons, prophets</p>

<p>BARNABAS + surname of Joseph, a member of the early Christian church in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36) + companion of Paul + did missionary work with Mark (Acts 15:39)</p>	<p>c. 130</p>	<p><i>Letter of Barnabas</i> + allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament</p>
<p>PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS (Phrygia) + contemporary of Polycarp + knew of a collection of the “sayings of the Lord” to have been written in Aramaic or Hebrew by Matthew</p>	<p>120?</p>	<p><i>Five Books of Exegeses of the Dominical Oracles</i>: quoted by Irenaeus + witness to the existence of Jewish Christianity</p>
<p>HERMAS (Rome)</p>	<p>140?</p>	<p><i>Mandates Similitudes</i> The Shepherd: a vivid description of early Christianity</p>

Post–Apostolic Fathers of the Church

Paradosis or handing on or down of Divine Revelation is affirmed in Sacred Scripture. Hence, it must be found in some contiguous historical form from age to age. Catholic Christians believe that the promise of the Spirit of Truth to guide believers in truth is found in the constant faith of the Church as preserved in the writings of the Post–Apostolic Fathers.

The term “Post–Apostolic Fathers” is the name given by the Christian Church to the writers who established Christian doctrine before the 8th century. The writings of the Fathers or Patristic Literature synthesized Christian doctrine as found in the Bible, especially the gospels, the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, ecclesiastical dictums, and decisions of the Church councils.

<p>JUSTIN (Martyr), St. (Rome) + philosopher, theologian, early apologist, martyr + convert to Christianity</p>	<p>100–165</p>	<p><i>Apologies for the Christians</i>: erudite defense of Christians against charges of atheism and sedition <i>Dialogue with Trypho the Jew</i>: a record of an actual discussion at Ephesus; valuable information about 2nd century Christian Church</p>
<p>IRENÆUS, St. (Asia Minor) + heard the preaching of Polycarp the disciple of John the Evangelist + appointed the bishop of Lyon (177)</p>	<p>140?–202?</p>	<p><i>Against the Heresies</i>: written against the Gnostics; contributed to the knowledge of Gnosticism</p>
<p>CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (Athens) + a Greek theologian + converted from paganism + ordained a presbyter + a teacher of Origen</p>	<p>150?–215?</p>	<p><i>Hortatory Address to the Greeks</i>: a defense of the faith <i>The Tutor</i>: instruction in manners and morals <i>The Miscellanies</i>: a discussion of various points of doctrinal theology designed to guide the mature Christian to perfect knowledge</p>

<p>TERTULLIAN (Rome) 160?–220?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + converted to Christianity between 190 and 195 + became a presbyter of the Church (197) + Zealous champion of Christianity + profoundly influences later Church fathers + embraced and became a leader of the Montanists (207?) a sect later declared heretical 	<p><i>Apologeticus</i> (c. 197): his most famous work; a defense of Christians against pagan charges <i>On the Claims of Heretics</i>: argues that the Church alone has the authority to declare what is and is not orthodox Christianity <i>On Baptism</i> <i>On Prayer</i>: throws light on contemporary religious practices</p>
<p>ORIGEN (Alexandria) 185?–254?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + a student of Clement + ordained a presbyter + the most accomplished biblical scholar of the early Church + father of the allegorical method of scripture interpretation + he developed the idea of Christ as Logos or Incarnate Word 	<p><i>Against Celsus</i>: closely reasoned apologetic work refuting the arguments advanced by the Celsus, the first serious critic of Christianity</p>
<p>CYPRIAN, St. (Carthage) 200–258</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + convert to Christianity c. 245 + bishop of Carthage, 248 + one of the most authoritative Fathers of the Church + involved in controversy over treatment of those who had left the Church, and those who were baptized by heretics: accepted the teaching of Rome. 	<p><i>On Unity of the Catholic Church</i>: exposition of the hierarchical organization of the Church</p>
<p>ATHANASIUS, St. (Alexandria) 293–373</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + played a prominent role in the theological struggle in the Council of Nicea (325) + opposed Arius (256–336) who maintained that the Son was of a different substance from that of the Father, and was merely a creature + formulated the “homousian doctrine” that the Son of God is the same essence of substance of the Father + became bishop of Alexandria (328) 	<p><i>Discourses Against the Arians</i> <i>History of the Arians</i> <i>Apology Against the Arians</i> <i>On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod</i></p>
<p>CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (Jerusalem) 315?–387?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + bishop of Jerusalem in 351 + embroiled in controversy over episcopal duties 	<p><i>23 Treatises</i>: addressed to catechumens and newly baptized; some treatises are doctrinal and present the creed of the Church; some are concerned with ritual and present a detailed account of Baptism, Eucharist and chrism</p>

BASIL, St. (Caesarea Mazaca) + brother of Gregory of Nyssa and a friend of Gregory of Nazianzus + patriarch of Eastern monasticism + wrote a rule of the monastic way of life + founded the Basilian monks (360) + bishop of Caesarea (370).	329?–379	<i>Against Eunomius</i> : written against the Arian leader Eunomius <i>On the Holy Spirit</i> : a doctrinal treatise <i>Moralia</i> : an anthology of New Testament verses <i>Liturgy of St. Basil</i>
GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, St. (Nazianzus in Capadocia, now Turkey) + bishop of Sasima (371) + took charge of the Nicene congregation of Constantinople where he delivered five discourses on the Trinity that earned him fame as “The Theologian”	329?–389	<i>Philokalia</i> (Love of the Beautiful) an anthology of the writings of Origen
GREGORY OF NYSSA, St. (Neocaesarea, now in Turkey) + bishop of Milan (374) + fame is chiefly as a theologian	335?–394	<i>Against Eunomius</i> : a defense of the Nicene Creed <i>Great Catechetical Discourse</i> : a defense of the Christian faith against Jews and pagans <i>On Faith</i> : a treatise against the Arians <i>Ten Syllogisms</i> : directed against the Apollinarists
AMBROSE, St. (Tier, now in Germany) + bishop of Milan (374) + defended the churches of Milan against Arianism + friend of Monica, mother of Augustine, and finally brought Augustine into the Church	340?–397	<i>On Faith</i> : a Christian morals manual <i>On the Sacraments</i> : an exegetical treatise <i>On the Holy Spirit</i> : an exegetical treatise Composed many hymns
JEROME, St. (Stridon, present day Slovenia) + biblical scholar + ordained a priest in 386 + secretary to Pope Damasus I in 382 + confronted many heresies, especially Pelagianism	345?–419	<i>The Vulgate</i> : translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin 383–384 in Rome
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, St. (Antioch, Syria) + ordained a priest in 386 + greatest orator of the early Church + patriarch of Constantinople in 398	349?–407	<i>On the Priesthood</i> <i>Homilies</i> Wrote commentaries, epistles, treatises, and liturgies

<p>AUGUSTINE, St. (Numidia, now Algeria) + son of Monica (332?–387) + born a pagan + converted in 387 and baptized by Ambrose + ordained a priest in 391 + bishop of Hippo (395) + combated Manichean heresy (conflict of Good and Evil) + Martin Luther and John Calvin were close students of the works of Augustine</p>	<p>354–430</p>	<p><i>Confessions</i> (c. 400): his autobiography <i>The City of God</i> (413–426): great Christian apologia; a theological philosophy of history <i>Retractions</i> (428): final verdict of earlier works <i>Epistles</i> (386–429) <i>On Free Will</i> (388–395) <i>On Christian Doctrine</i> (397) <i>On Baptism: Against the Donatists</i> (400) <i>On the Trinity</i> (400–416) <i>On Nature and Grace</i> (415) <i>Homilies</i></p>
<p>CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, St. (Alexandria) + patriarch of Alexandria in 412 + leader of the Council of Ephesus, 431 + instrumental in condemning Nestorianism</p>	<p>376–444</p>	<p><i>Against Nestorius</i> <i>Against Julian the Apostate</i> Prolific writer</p>
<p>GREGORY I, St. (“The Great”) (Rome) + prefect of Rome in 570 + became a monk in 575 + elected pope (r. 590–604) + enhanced prestige of the papacy + upheld Rome’s traditional claims of church primacy over the patriarch of Constantinople + introduced liturgical reforms and Gregorian chant + extensive pastoral activity.</p>	<p>540?–604</p>	<p><i>Moralia</i>: a commentary on the <i>Book of Job</i> <i>Pastoral Care</i>: describes the ideal bishop; instruction on the practice and nature of preaching <i>Dialogues</i>: legends of saints of his own time</p>
<p>JOHN DAMASCENE, St. (Damascus, Syria) + financial officer to Saracen caliph + resigned in 700 + entered a monastery and ordained a priest + opposed the Iconoclasts</p>	<p>675–749</p>	<p><i>Source of Knowledge</i>: three part text of dogmatic theology in the early Greek church; contains a complete theological system based on the early Greek fathers and synods of 4th–7th centuries</p>

Doctors of the Church

Catholic Christians believe that the promise of the Spirit of Truth to guide believers in truth is found in the constant faith of the Church as preserved in the writings of the Doctors of the Church also, equally “faithful people.” The Doctors of the Church are eminent Christian teachers who are proclaimed to be worthy of the title. The Church recognized these faithful people and teachers for their contribution to the belief and understanding of the faith. Doctors of the Church must be canonized a saint, known for their learning, and must be proclaimed such by either the Bishop of Rome or an ecumenical council.

<p>EPHREM THE SYRIAN, St. + deacon, monk + noted for his defense of the Church, the mysteries of Our Lord and the honor of the Virgin Mary. + named in 1920 by Benedict XV</p>	<p>306?–373</p>	<p>Wrote exegetical works and hymns</p>
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<p>ATHANASIUS, St. + Eastern theologian + named in 1568 by Pius V</p>	<p>293–373</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, St. + Eastern theologian + named in 1882 by Leo XIII</p>	<p>315?–387?</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>BASIL, St. (the Great) + Eastern theologian + named in 1568 by Pius V</p>	<p>329?–379</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, St. + Eastern theologian + named in 1568 by Pius V</p>	<p>329?–389</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>AMBROSE, St. + Western theologian + named in 1298 by Boniface VIII</p>	<p>340?–397</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>JEROME, St. + Western theologian + named in 1298 by Boniface VIII</p>	<p>345?–419</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, St. + Eastern theologian + named in 1568 by Pius V</p>	<p>349?–407</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>HILARY OF POITIERS, St. + pagan, convert in 350 + Bishop of Poitiers, 353 + defended the decrees of the Council of Nicaea + named in 1851 by Pius IX</p>	<p>315?–368?</p>	<p><i>De Trinitate</i>: against the Arians <i>De Synodis</i> Commentary of the Psalms Commentary of Matthew’s Gospel</p>
<p>AUGUSTINE, St. + Western theologian + named in 1298 by Boniface VIII</p>	<p>354–430</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, St. + named in 1882 by Leo XIII</p>	<p>376–444</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, St. + called “chrysologus” (golden–mouthed) because of exceptional preaching eloquence + Archbishop of Ravenna, 433–450 + named in 1729 by Benedict XIII</p>	<p>406–450</p>	<p>Many sermons survive</p>
<p>LEO THE GREAT, St. + Pope, 440–461 + confirmed the doctrine of the Incarnation (Council of Chalcedon, 451) + held the doctrinal primacy of Rome + persuaded Attila the Hun not to invade Rome + named in 1754 by Benedict XIV</p>	<p>461</p>	<p>143 surviving letters 96 sermons</p>
<p>GREGORY I, St. (The Great) + Western theologian + named in 1298 by Boniface VIII</p>	<p>540?–604</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>

<p>ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, St. + encyclopedic knowledge + Archbishop of Seville + conversion of Visigoths + organizing the church in Spain + named in 1722 by Innocent XIII</p>	<p>560?–636?</p>	<p><i>De Natura Rerum</i> <i>Etymologies</i>: an encyclopedia <i>Chronica Majora</i>: a compilation from church historians Biographies A summary of Christian doctrine</p>
<p>BEDE THE VENERABLE, St. + English Benedictine monk + prolific writer + named in 1899 by Leo XIII</p>	<p>673?–735</p>	<p><i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> (731) <i>On the Reckoning of Time</i> (725) <i>Historia Abbatum</i> (725)</p>
<p>JOHN DAMASCENE, St. + named in 1890 by Leo XIII</p>	<p>675–749</p>	<p>See Post–Apostolic Fathers’ list</p>
<p>PETER DAMIEN, St. + Benedictine monk + Cardinal and Bishop of Ostia + ecclesiastical statesman and reformer + named in 1828 by Leo XII</p>	<p>1007–1072</p>	<p>Notable poet Wrote reforms for popes, clergy, monks</p>
<p>ANSELM, St. + Benedictine monk + theologian + philosopher; proposed famous argument for existence of God + Archbishop of Canterbury, 1093–1100 + named in 1720 by Clement XI</p>	<p>1033–1109</p>	<p><i>Monologium</i> (1077): God as highest being and His attributes <i>Proslogium</i> (1078): Faith seeking understanding <i>Cur Deus Homo</i> (1093): On the Incarnation and crucifixion</p>
<p>BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, St. + Cistercian monk + preacher of the Second Crusade + founded over 90 monasteries + named in 1830 by Pius VIII</p>	<p>1090–1153</p>	<p><i>The Love of God</i> (1127) <i>Consideration to Eugene III</i> (1148)</p>
<p>ANTHONY OF PADUA, St. + Franciscan monk + theologian + exceptional intellectual and oratorical gifts + named in 1946 by Pius XII</p>	<p>1195–1231</p>	<p>Lector in theology: taught at Bologna, Montpellier, and Toulouse</p>
<p>ALBERT THE GREAT, St. + Bishop of Ratisbon, 1260–1293 + introduced Greek and Arabic science and philosophy into the medieval world + Dominican, Order of Preachers + teacher of Thomas Aquinas + named in 1932 by Pius XI</p>	<p>1206–1280</p>	<p><i>Summa Theologiae</i> (1270): attemp- ted to reconcile Aristotelian- ism and Christianity <i>Sentences</i>: a commentary on Peter the Lombard <i>De Unitate Intellectus</i>: against the Averrhoists</p>
<p>BONAVENTURE, St. + Franciscan friar + philosopher, theologian + cardinal archbishop of Albano + assisted at Council of Lyons + named in 1588 by Sixtus V</p>	<p>1217–1274</p>	<p><i>Breviloquium</i> (1254): Commentary on Sacred Scripture <i>Journey of the Mind to God</i> (1259) <i>Life of St. Francis of Assisi</i> (1263)</p>

<p>THOMAS AQUINAS, St. + theologian + named in 1568 by Pius V + Italian philosopher + educated at Monte Cassino + ordained a priest in 1250 + advisor and lecturer to the papal court, 1259–1268</p>	<p>1225–1274</p>	<p>Eighty works are ascribed to him <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>: “On the Truth of Catholic Faith,” 1261–1264 + one of his greatest works + closely reasoned treatise on the truth of Christianity <i>Summa Theologica</i>: a summary of theology, (1265–1273)</p>
<p>CATHERINE OF SIENA, St. + Western mystic + joined the Dominican Order in 1353 + convinced Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome from Avignon + noted for works of charity and unity in the Church + named in 1970 by Pope Paul VI</p>	<p>1347–1380</p>	<p>Letters on spiritual matters <i>Dialogue</i>: her ideals of reform and repentance</p>
<p>THERESA OF AVILA, St. + Western mystic + foundress of the Order of Discalced Carmelites + entered the convent in 1535 + founded the new order in 1562 + worked with the aid of St. John of the Cross, Spanish mystic and Doctor of the Church + named in 1970 by Pope Paul VI</p>	<p>1515–1582</p>	<p><i>The Way of Perfection</i>: (1565) advice to her nuns <i>The Interior Castle</i>: (1577) an eloquent description of the contemplative life <i>The Foundations</i>: (1573–1582) the origins of the Discalced Carmelites</p>
<p>PETER CANISIUS, St. + Jesuit + second great Apostle of Germany + leader, Counter–Reformation + named in 1925 by Pius XI</p>	<p>1521–1597</p>	<p><i>Catechism</i> (1560): instructed the faithful to defend their Faith</p>
<p>ROBERT BELLARMINE, St. + Jesuit theologian + cardinal archbishop of Capua + revision of the Vulgate (1592) + leader of the Counter Reformation + named in 1931 by Pius XI</p>	<p>1542–1621</p>	<p><i>Disputations on the Controversies of the Christian Faith</i>: (1568–93)</p>
<p>LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, St. + Capuchin + worked for the conversion of the Jews + confronted the rise of Lutheranism + organized Catholic princes against Turkish invasion + named in 1959 by John XXIII</p>	<p>1559–1619</p>	<p>Sermons A commentary on Genesis Writings against Lutheranism</p>
<p>JOHN OF THE CROSS, St. + Western mystic + combined mysticism with the theology and philosophy of Aquinas + became a Carmelite monk in 1563 + ordained a priest in 1567 + organized the Discalced Carmelites in 1568 + imprisoned for monastic reform 1576–1577 + named in 1926 by Benedict XV</p>	<p>1542–1591</p>	<p><i>Spiritual Canticle</i>: a mystical poem <i>Living Flame of Love</i>: a mystical poem <i>Dark Night of the Soul</i>: describes the soul’s progress in union with God</p>

<p>FRANCIS DE SALES, St. + named in 1877 by Pius IX + Bishop of Genova, 1602–1622 + founded the Order of the Visitation + confronted the rise of Calvinism</p>	<p>1567–1622</p>	<p><i>Introduction to the Devout Life:</i> (1609) shows how ordinary life can be sanctified</p>
<p>ALFONSUS LIGUORI, St. + founded the Redemptorist Order in 1732 + Bishop of St. Agatha, 1756–1775 + named in 1871 by Pius IX</p>	<p>1696–1787</p>	<p><i>Moral Theology</i> <i>Glories of Mary:</i> (1750)</p>
<p>THERESA OF LISIEUX, St. + Carmelite Nun: Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus + Also known as "The Little Flower of Jesus" + Canonized: May 17, 1925 + Named in 1997 by Pope John Paul II</p>	<p>1873–1897</p>	<p><i>Autobiography of a Saint:</i> Letter and Spiritual Counsels</p>
<p>JOHN OF ÁVILA, St. + “Apostle of Andalusia”, reformer of clerical life + Influenced Theresa of Ávila and St. John of God + Canonized: May 31, 1970 + Named in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI</p>	<p>1500–1569</p>	<p><i>Audi Fili:</i> Tract on Christian perfection <i>Spiritual Letters</i></p>
<p>HILDEGARD OF BINGEN, St. + Many writings of visions, music, natural sciences, medicine + Canonized (equivalent): May 10, 2012 + Named in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI</p>	<p>1098–1179</p>	<p><i>Ordo Virtutum</i>(music) <i>Scrivas, Liber Divinorum Operum</i> (visions) <i>Physica</i> (natural sciences) <i>Causa et Curae</i> (medicine)</p>

Handing On Divine Revelation: Vatican Council II

Decree On Divine Revelation, Chapter 2

... God has seen to it that what He has revealed ...
would abide perpetually in its full integrity
and be *handed on* to all generations.

... Christ the Lord ... full revelation of ... God ...
commissioned the apostles ...
this commission was faithfully fulfilled ...
by their oral preaching,
by example, and
by ordinances,

... (the apostles)
handed on what they had received
from the lips of Christ,
from living with Him, and
from what He did, or
what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

... in order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive ...
the apostles left bishops as their successors,
handing over their own teaching role to them.

This sacred tradition, therefore, and
sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testament
are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God ...

... the apostolic preaching,
which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books,
was to be preserved by a continuous succession of preachers until the end of time.

... what was *handed on* by the apostles includes
everything that contributes to
the holiness of life, and
the increase in faith of the People of God;

so the Church
in her teaching,
life, and
worship,

perpetuates and *hands on* to all generations
all that she herself is,
all that she believes.

There is a growth in the understanding of
the realities and
the words

which have been *handed down* ...
through the contemplation and study made by believers ...
through the intimate understanding of spiritual things ...
through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.

Chapter 4

Words of the holy Fathers witness to the living presence of this tradition;

Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known;
and the sacred writing themselves are more profoundly understood and increasingly made known in her.

*... there exists a close connection and communication between
sacred tradition, and
sacred Scripture ...
both of them
flowing from the same well spring ...
merge into a unity and
tend toward the same end.*

Sacred Scripture is the word of God
consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Spirit;

sacred tradition *hands on* in its full purity God's word
entrusted to the apostles by Christ.

... it is not from sacred Scripture alone
that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.

Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God.

5. Truth Handling and Teaching Authority

Catholic Christians believe that the Bible reveals an order—a hierarchy—among the faithful people to whom Paul commits the role of truth handling: *episcopoi* (bishops) over *presbyteroi* (priests, elders) and *diaconoi* (deacons).

The Bible reveals that the Apostles took the role of *episcopoi*. Christ and the Evangelists revealed a primary role among the Apostles in the person of Peter or Kephas.

The Catholic Church from Apostolic times believed that Peter (“Rock”) is the foundation for the Church of Christ as revealed in Matthew 16.

The Catholic Church believes that there were successors to Peter at the See of Rome as bishops. Successors to Peter are listed by historians from the third century down to our own day. As Bishops of Rome they share the primacy and authority given to Peter by Christ.

First to Peter and then to the other Apostles—and to their successors—Jesus conferred a charism of handling truth with authority. That authority is known as the charism of infallibility.

A recent example of the exercise of that charism in the Church—its teaching authority—can be found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Peter: A Biblical Portrait

In the 16th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, Christ singled out the Apostle Peter for the central position of founding His Church and gives to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The best spokespersons for an understanding of Matthew would be members of the Apostolic Church, those who heard the words of Christ and writers of the New Testament who recorded the words and deeds of Christ and the early church.

The Evangelists usually make Peter the spokesperson for all the apostles.

Mk 8:29 And he (Jesus) asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said to him in reply, “You are the Messiah.”

Mt 18:21 Then Peter approaching asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

Lk 12:41 Then Peter said, “Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?”

Jn 6:67–68 Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

In especially dramatic scenes in the Gospels, Peter is often the central figure.

- Mt 14:27–28 At once (Jesus) spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” Peter said to him in reply, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
- Lk 5:3–8 Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he (Jesus) asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. ... He said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. ... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”
- Mk 10:28 Peter began to say to him, “We have given up everything and followed you.”
- Mt 17:24–25 ...the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?” “Yes,” he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, “What is your opinion, Simon?”

Peter is always named first when the apostles are listed in the synoptic gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

- Mk 3:16–17 He (Jesus) appointed the twelve: Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John ...
- Mt 10:2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John;
- Lk 6:13–14 When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,
- Acts 1:13 When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip ...

It is not uncommon that the apostles are simply referred to as Peter and “his companions” or “the apostles.”

- Acts 2:37 ... they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?”
- Lk 9:32 Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep ...
- Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men.”

In light of the special calling on his life, the sacred authors refer to Peter as being singled out and being shown signs of respect.

- Jn 20:3–8 So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first, ... but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths ... Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first ...
- Jn 21:15–17 Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs” ... “Tend my sheep.” ... “Feed my sheep.”

In Paul’s letters, Peter is called the first witness to the Resurrection.

- 1 Cor 15:3–5 ... Christ died ... was buried ... was raised on the third day ... that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

Paul repeatedly call Peter “Kephas,” the name given him by Christ.

- Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas and remained with him for fifteen days.

- Gal 2:9 James and Kephass and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership ...
- Gal 2:11 And when Kephass came to Antioch, I opposed him ...
- Gal 2:14 ... I said to Kephass in front of all ...
- 1 Cor 1:12 I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," ... "I belong to Kephass," ...
- 1 Cor 3:22 Paul or Apollos or Kephass, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future: all belong to you ...
- 1 Cor 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a Christian wife, as do the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Kephass?

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, clearly acknowledges Peter's leadership role.

- Acts 2:14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, "You who are Jews ..."
- Acts 3:12 When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why are you amazed at this?"
- Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the holy Spirit, answered them, "Leaders of the people and elders"
- Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart ..."
- Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles said in reply, "We must obey God rather than men."
- Acts 8:20 But Peter said to him, "May your money perish with you ..."
- Acts 10:34 Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality."
- Acts 11:4 Peter began and explained it to them step by step, saying...
- Acts 15:7 After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to them ...
- Acts 3:6 Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk."
- Acts 9:34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed."
- Acts 9:40 Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up."
- Acts 5:15 Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them.
- Acts 10:9–10 The next day, ... Peter went up to the roof terrace to pray at about noontime. ... he fell into a trance.
- Acts 10:46–47 Then Peter responded, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?"

The Gospels make explicit statements about Peter's unique role in the church.

- Lk 22:31–32 "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers."
- Jn 21:15–17 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a

third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (Jesus) said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Mt 16:15–19 He (Jesus) said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew Chapter 16, Verse 18: The Primacy of Peter

Perhaps a most pivotal passage of the Bible which divides Roman Catholic Christians from Protestant and Pentecostal Christians is the scripture where Christ singles out Peter from the rest of the Apostles for special consideration and authority. That Bible passage is in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18.

The Catholic Church teaches that the first principle of hermeneutics, the science of the translation and interpretation of the Bible, is the literal meaning of the text.

Divino Afflante Spiritus (Pius XII, September 30, 1943) ... discern and define that sense of the biblical words which is called literal ... so that the mind of the author may be made clear. ... the exegete must be principally concerned with the literal sense of the Scriptures.

Spiritus Paraclitus (Benedict XV, September 15, 1920) As Jerome insisted, all biblical interpretation rests upon the literal sense ...

The definition of the literal sense: The sense which the human author directly intended and which his words convey.

The question to be asked in seeking to grasp the literal meaning of Matthew in conveying what Christ had in his mind in these words to Peter is what was understood by Peter and the other apostles and what was handed on (*paradosis*) by the Apostolic Church and the constant faith and practice of the Church regarding the meaning of these words of Christ.

Some basic facts about the author, Matthew, are in order to aid the proper search for the meaning of his gospel.

- Matthew is the tax collector called by Christ in 9:9–13;
- Matthew is one of the twelve Apostles, an eye witness;
- Matthew’s gospel is directed to a Jewish audience;
- Matthew’s gospel is a Gospel of the Church, the only evangelist to use the word “church,” and use it twice, 16:18 and 18:17.

The context for interpreting the meaning of the passage is set in the confession of Peter.

Mt 16:13–17 When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.”

Christ then gives Simon son of Jonah a new name and a commission.

Mt 16:18 And so I say to you, you are “Rock”, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

Since the New Testament was written in the Greek language, it is right to begin the consideration of this critical passage in the language in which it was written:

<i>κἀγώ</i>	<i>δέ</i>	<i>σοι</i>	<i>λέγω</i>	<i>ὅτι</i>	<i>σύ</i>	<i>εἶ</i>	<i>Πέτρος</i>	<i>καί</i>
<i>kago</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>soi</i>	<i>lego</i>	<i>oti</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>ei</i>	<i>Petros</i>	<i>kai</i>
I also	And	to you	say	–	You	are	Peter	and
<i>ἐπί</i>	<i>ταύτη</i>	<i>τη</i>	<i>πέτρα</i>	<i>οἰκοδομήσω</i>	<i>ἐγώ</i>	<i>την</i>	<i>ἐκκλησίαν</i>	
<i>epi</i>	<i>taute</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>petra</i>	<i>oikodomeso</i>	<i>mou</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>ekklesian</i> ;	
on	this	–	rock	I will build	of me	the	church;	

As Greek declined in the Mediterranean world and Latin became the common tongue, the first translations of the Bible were in the Latin language. Hence, it is natural for us to consider also the way in which this critical passage was translated into Latin by Jerome (Rome, 383/384).

<i>et</i>	<i>ego</i>	<i>dico</i>	<i>tibi</i>	<i>quia</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>Petrus</i>	<i>et</i>
and	I	say	to you	because	you	are	Peter	and
<i>super</i>	<i>hanc</i>	<i>petram</i>	<i>aedificabo</i>	<i>ecclesiam</i>	<i>meam</i>			
upon	this	rock	I will build	church	my			

Two observations must be made on the Greek and the Latin translations of Matthew 16:18. Note in the Greek that the name of Peter is *Πέτρος*, *Petros*, and the word for rock is *πέτρα*, *petra*. In Latin the name of Peter is *Petrus* and the word for rock is *petra*. This follows from the demands of the respective languages. Nouns in these languages, unlike English, have gender: some are masculine (e.g. –os or –us ending to words); some are feminine (e.g. –a or –am ending to words). The word for a rock in both languages is, of its nature, feminine; Peter, being a male, could not take a feminine ending to his name. It would be like calling him “Rockette” instead of “Rocky.” Quite a difference! Hence it is only the demands of language that the gender of the words is different.

Jesus renamed Simon bar-Jonah for a purpose. The literalness of the play on words—a linguistic pun—is made clear. A pun is a pun because of the literalness of the play on words. This was precisely what Jesus was saying, “You are Rocky and on this rock I will build my church.” His intent becomes clear when we examine the Aramaic in which language Jesus addressed Peter.

<i>'aph</i>	<i>'ena'</i>	<i>'amar-na'</i>	<i>lak</i>	<i>da'(n)t-(h)uw</i>	<i>ke'pha'</i>
and	I	say – I	to thee	that–thou–art	Kephas
<i>we`al</i>	<i>hade'</i>	<i>ke'pha'</i>	<i>'ebneyh</i>	<i>le`i(d)tiy</i>	
and upon	this	rock	I will build her	namely my church	

Note that the word for Peter, *ke'pha'*, is the same word for rock. The words are equated: Peter is the rock.

The core of the meaning appears to rest in the two words for a “rock.” If Matthew recorded that Christ used the same word both for (1) the proper name of Peter and (2) the foundation on which Christ says he will build the church, then an interpretation follows that the foundation of the church *is* Peter.

Because the Word of God as recorded in Matthew had to be intelligible in its literalness for all people including the more simple people of the early centuries of the Church, a more involved interpretation demanding extensive hermeneutics and linguistic acumen would be unwarranted. Ultimately, when there are differing interpretations, the principle question then becomes, “by what authority is the truth appealed.”

The Roman Catholic Church has infallibly defined the interpretation of Matthew 16.

The Council of Ephesus, 431

No one doubts, in fact, it is obvious to all ages that the holy and most Blessed Peter, head and Prince of the Apostles, the pillar of faith, and the foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the savior and redeemer of the human race.

First Vatican Council, 1870

The First Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of Christ, Chapter 2

Therefore if anyone says that the blessed Apostle Peter was not constituted by Christ the Lord as the Prince of all the Apostles and the visible head of the whole Church militant, or that he received immediately and directly from Jesus Christ our Lord only a primacy of honor and not a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction: *anathema sit*.

Christ continues with the conferral of the “keys” which appears to be a clear statement of a position of leadership authority.

Mt 16:19–20 I will give you (singular) the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This biblical commission echoes one other conferral of keys in the Bible. Eliakim receives the keys of the royal palace.

Is 22:22 I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open.

Apart from this passage, there is no background in biblical language for binding and loosening. In Rabbinical Judaism, the words signify rabbinical decisions; to bind is to give a decision that imposes an obligation, and to loose is to give a decision that removes an obligation.

Mt 18:15–18 “If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church (*ekklesia*). If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

In Matthew 18:18, the Apostles share in the power to bind and loose that was given to Peter in 16:19; what was given to Peter alone is now shared by the whole Church in the person of the Apostles.

If Peter held a position of primacy, the other Apostles would have to know that and would have reflected that role thrust on Peter by Christ in their relationships to him. In other words, does the Bible reveal a primary place or role for Peter consciously acknowledged by the New Testament writers? Yes, the biblical portrait of Peter presented earlier in this chapter attests to the preeminent role of Peter among the writers of the New Testament.

Among the Apostolic Fathers, the same recognition can be shown.

Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220)

On Monogamy, Chapter 8

Peter alone do I find ... to have been married. Monogamist I am led to presume him by consideration of the church, which, *built upon him*, was destined to appoint every grade of her Order from monogamists.

Clement (Alexandria, 150 – 215)

Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?, Chapter 21

Therefore, on hearing those words, the blessed Peter, the chosen, the pre-eminent, the first of the disciples, for whom alone and Himself the Savior paid tribute, quickly seized and comprehended the saying. And what does he say? “Lo, we have left all and followed Thee.”

Cyprian (Carthage, 200 – 258)

On the Unity of the Catholic Church,
Chapter 4

Upon him (Peter), being one, He (Christ) built His Church and although after His resurrection He bestows equal power upon all the Apostles, and says: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you. Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive the sins of anyone, they will be forgiven him; if you retain the sins of anyone, they will be retained” (Jn 20:21), that He might display unity, He established by His authority the origin of the same unity as beginning from one.

Cyril (Jerusalem, 315 – 387)

Catecheses, No. 2:19

Peter, the chiefest and foremost of the Apostles, denied the Lord thrice before a little maid: but he repented himself, and wept bitterly.

Augustine (Numidia, now Algeria, 354 – 430)

Letters, No 53

For, if the order of succession of Bishops is to be considered, how much more surely, truly and safely do we number them from Peter, to whom, as representing the whole Church, the Lord said: “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). For, to Peter succeeded Linus, to Linus Clement, to Clement Anacletus, to Anacletus Evaristus ...

The Charism of Truth Handling: Infallibility

Jesus Christ was sent by the Father and was known as an authentic Teacher. Forty times in the New Testament, Christ is called “teacher” (διδάσκαλος, *didaskalos*, also translated as “Master”). Twelve times Christ is called “Rabbi” (master, the address of teachers):

- Mt 23:8, 10 As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah.
- Mt 7:28–29 When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.
- Jn 1:17–18 ... because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him.
- Jn 13:13–15 You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.

The Gospels record Christ handing over to the Apostles his own mission, or divine office which he had as man.

- Jn 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.
- Jn 20:21 (Jesus) said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”
- Mt 10:40 Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.
- Lk 10:16 Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.
- Mt 28:18–20 Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Christ is revealed instituting a perpetually enduring truth-teaching, truth-handling authority in the Apostles.

- Mt 28:20 ... teaching them (all nations) to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.
- Jn 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.
- Jn 15:26 When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.
- Jn 16:12-13 I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.
- Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Roman Catholic Christians believe that Christ's teaching authority and truth charism continues in His Body the Church in the successors both of Peter and then the apostles, and then to their successors: the successor of Peter in the Bishop of Rome, and the successors of the apostles, the *episcopoi* or bishops from apostolic time to the present.

Bishop of Rome

The Roman Catholic Church from Apostolic times has literally followed the Bible in the establishment of good order in the Church. According to Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus there are three orders to the organization and leadership of the Church (sometimes known as ecclesiastical order or hierarchy): *episcopos* or bishops, *presbyteros* or elders, commonly translated priests, and *diaconos* or deacons.

The first in order and the greatest in authority is the *episcopos*, the bishop.

- 1 Tim 3:1-2 This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop (*episcopos*) desires a noble task. Therefore, a bishop (*episcopos*) must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach ...
- Tit 1:7,9 For a bishop (*episcopos*) as God's steward must be blameless, not arrogant, not irritable, not a drunkard, not aggressive, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, distinguishes the shepherding role of the *episcopos*/bishop.

- Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers (*episcopos*), in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood.

The shepherding role of the apostle Peter as *episcopos* was related by John.

- Jn 21:15-17 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep."

The Roman Catholic Church believes that the twelve apostles were the first *episcopos*, receiving at the Last Supper their leadership order to serve when Jesus told them "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Peter, as demonstrated in the biblical portrait of him, exercised a leadership role first among the other apostles and early Christians, and then later in Rome before his martyrdom there in 67/68.

Peter's presence in Rome is indicated in his first letter. The name "Babylon" is used here as a cryptic name for the city of Rome, a characteristic of writings done during times of persecution. During Peter's time (witnessed by his own martyrdom) and most New Testament times (witness the Book of Revelation—classic persecution literature), Rome took on the characteristics of the most outstanding example of a world power hostile to God—ancient Babylon.

1 Peter 5:12– I write you this briefly through Silvanus ... The chosen one at Babylon sends you greeting, as does
13 Mark, my son.

Clement of Rome (*I Clement*) and Irenaeus (*To the Romans*) both attest to Peter's presence and death in Rome.

Paul makes mention of Linus, a Christian at Rome. Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, 3, 3, 3) tells us that the same Linus was Peter's first successor as bishop of Rome.

2 Timothy 4:21 Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers send greetings.

Two great historians of the Church, Eusebius of Caesarea, a bishop and historian of the Council of Nicaea, and Augustine, bishop and theologian, preserve for us the list of successors of the bishop of Rome to their own time. They attest to the sense and realization the Church had to the need for historic succession to the Bishop of Rome.

Eusebius (260–339)

The History of the Church, Book 3, 324 After the martyrdom of Paul and Peter, the first man to be appointed Bishop of Rome was Linus. ... Linus, who is mentioned in the Second Epistle to Timothy as being with Paul in Rome, as stated above was the first after Peter to be appointed Bishop of Rome. Clement again, who became the third Bishop of Rome ... to Miltiades.

Augustine (354–430)

Letters, No. 53, 400 For, to Peter succeeded Linus, to Linus, Clement, to Clement Anacletus, to Anacletus Evaristus, ... to Siricius Anastasius.

On the following pages is a list the bishops of Rome from Peter to Francis. Historians both secular and ecclesiastical concur with a final list published by the Vatican Library.

The only biblical "claim to fame" of these men is that they are *episcopoi*, bishops. There is no greater "order" according to the Bible. The Catholic Church teaches this. Other titles are only honorary and organizational.

The Catholic Church has also taken Paul at his word.

1 Cor 4:14–16 I am writing you this not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.

1 Thess 2:11– As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging
12 you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

The faithful of the Church has always called their ordered leadership "father." In Greek, the language of the early Church, the word for father was *pappas*; in Latin, the language of the later Church, the word for father was *papa*.

By the 300's, bishops were sometimes called "pope" a corruption of the word for father. By the 700's the title for affection and respect for the Bishop of Rome exclusively was Pope.

It is not uncommon for enemies and non-believers of Roman Catholicism to create an argument against the succession and therefore validity of the Bishops of Rome as true successors to Peter by proffering the history of the "bad Popes." That argument arises from a basic misunderstanding of Sacred Scripture.

The first response to be made to the so-called argument from the "bad Popes" is admission that many men who held the position of Bishop of Rome were not holy men. Perhaps Peter was the best model for human failure in such a leadership role. He denied Jesus three times after being told he would do so. Some (e.g. Peter, Judas) who are called stumble and fall.

Some (Peter) repent and are saved. Others (Judas) reject that grace. It behooves us to remember that Jesus does not call saints, but sinners.

Lk 5:31–32 Jesus said to them in reply, “Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

Mt 9:12 He heard this and said, “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.”

The moral miracle of the “bad Popes” is that they were worldly men, public sinners, and never functioned as spiritual leaders nor touched or changed the deposit of faith of Christianity.

We are reminded by the Lord even to the present day that the lifestyle of the messenger does not alter the validity of the message. Recall the American Televangelists’ scandals in 1987 and 1988.

Bishops of Rome: Popes

St. Peter	42 – 67	St. Celestine I	422 – 432	John VI	701 – 705
St. Linus	67 – 79	St. Sixtus III	432 – 440	John VII	705 – 707
St. Anacletus	79 – 92	St. Leo I	440 – 461	Sisinnius	708
St. Clement I	92 – 101	St. Hilary	461 – 468	Constantine	708 – 715
St. Evaristus	101 – 105	St. Simplicius	468 – 483	St. Gregory II	715 – 731
St. Alexander I	105 – 115	St. Felix III/II	483 – 492	St. Gregory III	731 – 741
St. Sixtus I	115 – 125	St. Gelasius I	492 – 496	St. Zachary	741 – 752
St. Telesphorus	125 – 136	Anastasius II	496 – 498	Stephen (II)	752
St. Hyginis	136 – 140	St. Symmachus	498 – 514	Stephen II/III	752 – 757
St. Pius I	140 – 155	St. Hormisdas	514 – 523	St. Paul I	757 – 767
St. Anicetus	155 – 166	St. John I	523 – 526	Stephen III/IV	768 – 772
St. Soter	166 – 175	St. Felix IV/III	526 – 530	Adrian I	772 – 795
St. Eleutherius	175 – 189	Boniface II	530 – 532	St. Leo III	795 – 816
St. Victor I	189 – 199	John II	533 – 535	Stephen IV/V	816 – 817
St. Zephyrinus	199 – 217	St. Agapitus I	535 – 536	St. Paschal I	817 – 824
St. Callistus I	217 – 222	St. Silverius	536 – 537	Eugene II	824 – 827
St. Urban I	222 – 230	Vigilius	537 – 555	Valentine	827
St. Pontian	230 – 235	Pelagius I	556 – 561	Gregory IV	827 – 844
St. Anterius	235 – 236	John III	561 – 574	Serius II	844 – 847
St. Fabian	236 – 250	Benedict I	575 – 579	St. Leo IV	847 – 855
St. Cornelius	251 – 253	Pelagius II	579 – 590	Benedict III	855 – 858
St. Lucius I	253 – 254	St. Gregory I	590 – 604	St. Nicholas I	858 – 867
St. Stephen I	254 – 257	Sabinian	604 – 606	Adrian II	867 – 872
St. Sixtus II	257 – 258	Boniface III	607	John VIII	872 – 882
St. Dionysius	259 – 268	St. Boniface IV	608 – 615	Marinus I	882 – 884
St. Felix I	269 – 274	St. Deusdedit I	615 – 618	St. Adrian III	884 – 885
St. Eutychian	275 – 283	Boniface V	619 – 625	St. Stephen V/VI	885 – 891
St. Gaius/Caius	283 – 296	Honorius I	625 – 638	Formosus	891 – 896
St. Marcellinus	296 – 304	Severinus	640	Boniface VI	896
St. Marcellus I	308 – 309	John IV	640 – 642	Stephen VI/VII	896 – 897
St. Eusebius	309	Theodore I	642 – 649	Romanus	897
St. Miltiades	311 – 314	St. Martin I	649 – 655	Theodore II	897
St. Sylvester I	314 – 335	St. Eugene I	654 – 657	John IX	898 – 900
St. Mark	336	St. Vitalian	657 – 672	Benedict IV	900 – 903
St. Julius I	337 – 352	Deusdedit II	672 – 676	Leo V	903
Liberius	352 – 366	Donus	676 – 678	Sergius III	904 – 911
St. Damasus I	366 – 384	St. Agatho	678 – 681	Anastasius III	911 – 913
St. Siricius	384 – 399	St. Leo II	682 – 683	Lando	913 – 914
St. Anastasius I	399 – 401	St. Benedict II	684 – 685	John X	914 – 928
St. Innocent I	401 – 417	John V	685 – 686	Leo VI	928
St. Zosimus	417 – 418	Conon	686 – 687	Stephen VII/VIII	928 – 931
St. Boniface I	418 – 422	St. Serius I	687 – 701	John XI	931 – 935

Leo VII	936 – 939	Celestine III	1191 – 1198	Pius IV	1559 – 1565
Stephen VIII/IX	939 – 942	Innocent III	1198 – 1216	St. Pius V	1566 – 1572
Marinus II	942 – 946	Honorius III	1216 – 1227	Gregory XIII	1572 – 1585
Agapitus II	946 – 955	Gregory IX	1227 – 1241	Sixtus V	1585 – 1590
John XII	955 – 964	Celestine IV	1241	Urban VII	1590
Leo VIII	963 – 965	Innocent IV	1243 – 1254	Gregory XIV	1590 – 1591
Benedict V	964 – 966	Alexander IV	1254 – 1261	Innocent IX	1591
John XIII	965 – 972	Urban IV	1261 – 1264	Clement VIII	1592 – 1605
Benedict VI	973 – 974	Clement IV	1265 – 1268	Leo XI	1605
Benedict VII	974 – 983	Bl. Gregory X	1271 – 1276	Paul V	1605 – 1621
John XIV	983 – 984	Bl. Innocent V	1276	Gregory XV	1621 – 1623
John XV	984 – 996	Adrian V	1276	Urban VIII	1623 – 1644
Gregory V	996 – 999	John XXI	1276 – 1277	Innocent X	1644 – 1655
Silvester II	999 – 1003	Nicholas III	1277 – 1280	Alexander VII	1655 – 1667
John XVII	1003	Martin IV	1281 – 1285	Clement IX	1667 – 1669
John XVIII	1004 – 1009	Honorius IV	1285 – 1287	Clement X	1670 – 1676
Sergius IV	1009 – 1012	Nicholas IV	1288 – 1292	Bl. Innocent XI	1676 – 1689
Benedict VIII	1012 – 1024	St. Celestine V	1292	Alexander VIII	1689 – 1691
John XIX	1024 – 1032	Boniface VIII	1292 – 1303	Innocent XII	1691 – 1700
Benedict IX (1)	1032 – 1044	Bl. Benedict XI	1303 – 1304	Clement XI	1700 – 1721
Silvester III	1045	Clement V	1305 – 1314	Innocent XIII	1721 – 1724
Benedict IX (2)	1045	John XXII	1316 – 1334	Benedict XIII	1724 – 1730
Gregory VI	1045 – 1046	Benedict XII	1334 – 1342	Clement XII	1730 – 1740
Clement II	1046 – 1047	Clement VI	1342 – 1352	Benedict XIV	1740 – 1758
Benedict IX (3)	1047 – 1048	Innocent VI	1352 – 1362	Clement XIII	1758 – 1769
Damasus II	1048	Bl. Urban V	1362 – 1370	Clement XIV	1769 – 1774
St. Leo IX	1049 – 1054	Gregory XI	1370 – 1378	Pius VI	1775 – 1799
Victor II	1055 – 1057	Urban VI	1378 – 1389	Pius VII	1800 – 1823
Stephen IX/X	1057 – 1058	Boniface XI	1389 – 1404	Leo XII	1823 – 1829
Nicholas II	1059 – 1061	Innocent VII	1404 – 1406	Pius VIII	1829 – 1830
Alexander II	1061 – 1073	Gregory XII	1406 – 1415	Gregory XVI	1831 – 1846
St. Gregory VII	1073 – 1085	Martin V	1417 – 1431	Pius IX	1846 – 1878
Bl. Victor III	1086 – 1087	Eugene IV	1431 – 1447	Leo XIII	1878 – 1903
Bl. Urban II	1088 – 1099	Nicholas V	1447 – 1455	St. Pius X	1903 – 1914
Paschal II	1099 – 1118	Callistus III	1455 – 1458	Benedict XV	1914 – 1922
Gelasius II	1118 – 1119	Pius II	1458 – 1464	Pius XI	1922 – 1939
Callistus II	1119 – 1124	Paul II	1464 – 1471	Pius XII	1939 – 1958
Honorius II	1124 – 1130	Sixtus IV	1471 – 1484	Bl. John XXIII	1958 – 1963
Innocent II	1130 – 1143	Innocent VIII	1484 – 1492	Paul VI	1963 – 1978
Celestine II	1143 – 1144	Alexander VI	1492 – 1503	John Paul I	1978
Lucius II	1144 – 1145	Pius III	1503	Bl. John Paul II	1978 – 2005
Bl. Eugene III	1145 – 1153	Julius II	1503 – 1513	Benedict XVI	2005 – 2013
Anastasius IV	1153 – 1154	Leo X	1513 – 1521	Francis	2013 –
Adrian IV	1154 – 1159	Adrian VI	1522 – 1523		
Alexander III	1159 – 1181	Clement VII	1523 – 1534		
Lucius III	1181 – 1185	Paul III	1534 – 1549		
Urban III	1185 – 1187	Julius III	1550 – 1555		
Gregory VIII	1187	Marcellus II	1555		
Clement III	1187 – 1191	Paul IV	1555 – 1559		

Taken from
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Vatican City, Europe

The Charism of Infallibility: The Magisterium

Vatican Council II, *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, Chapter 25

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff
are to be respected by all
as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth.

In matters of faith and morals,
the bishops speak in the name of Christ, and
the faithful are to accept their teaching and
adhere to it with a religious assent of souls.

This religious submission
of will and
of mind
must be shown in a special way
to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff,
even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra* ...
his supreme magisterium is acknowledged ...
the judgments made by him ... adhered to ...
known chiefly from the character of the documents,
from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine,
from his manner of speaking.

... the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of *infallibility*,
they can ... proclaim Christ's doctrine of *infallibility*...
when they are dispersed around the world ...
maintaining the bond of unity
among themselves and
with Peter's successor,
while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or
morals,
concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held ...

This authority is even more clearly verified when,
gathered together in an ecumenical council,
they are teachers and judges of faith and
morals for the universal church.

Their definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith.

This *infallibility*
with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed
in defining a doctrine of faith and
morals
extends as far as the deposit of divine revelation
which must be religiously guarded and
faithfully expounded.

This is the *infallibility*
which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops
enjoys in virtue of his office, when
as the supreme shepherd and
teacher of all the faithful,
who
confirms his brethren in their faith,
proclaims ... some doctrine of faith or
morals.

Therefore his definitions,
of themselves, and
not from the consent of the Church,
are justly styled irreformable, for they are
pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit,
assistance promised to him
in blessed Peter ...
need no approval of others,
nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment.

... the Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment
as a private person ...
but rather as the supreme teacher of the universal Church,
as one in whom
the *charism of infallibility* of the Church herself is individually present,
he is expounding or
defending a doctrine of Catholic faith.

The *infallibility*
promised to the Church
resides also in the body of bishops
when that body exercises supreme teaching authority
with the successor of Peter ...

When either
the Roman Pontiff, or
the body of bishops together with him
defines a judgment
they pronounce it in accord with Revelation itself ...

Under the guiding light of the Holy Spirit,
Revelation
is thus religiously preserved and
faithfully expounded in the Church.

The Roman Pontiff and
the bishops,
strive painstakingly and
by appropriate means
to inquire properly into that Revelation and
to give apt expression to its contents.
... they
do not allow that there could be any new public revelation
pertaining to the divine deposit of truth.

6. The Sacraments: The Life of The Christian

The Son of God made Himself present to the world in the human nature of Jesus.

Jesus is the sign of His Father to us; the Church is the sign of the presence of Jesus to us.

Jesus used signs—sacraments—of His presence in ministry during His life: water, bread and wine, touching, spittle, mud, etc.

The Church, the Body of Christ, defines the extension of these signs of His presence in ministry from Apostolic times.

The Bible sets the goal for the life of the Christian—“be holy,” “perfect as the Father,” “put on Christ.”

For the Christian, all stages of spiritual growth in holiness are accompanied by incarnational signs wherein the spiritual becomes physically present—Christ in created nature, present to the Christian as he or she grows in Christ.

Sacraments of initiation into the faith community are Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation—Christ present in rebirth, nourishment and empowering.

Sacraments of healing and restoration are Reconciliation and Anointing—Christ present to restore spiritual and physical health.

Sacraments of life for the Church are Matrimony and Orders—Christ present replenishing and building up His Body.

The Sacraments: The Life of the Christian

Roman Catholic Christians believe that the grace—the divine life—of Jesus Christ is present in the sacraments because the Bible, the activity of the Apostles, and the constant faith, the *paradosis*—the tradition—of the early church all testify to this belief.

The first and primary sacrament is Jesus Christ himself.

1 Pet 2:4 Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God,

1 Jn 1:1–2 (We proclaim to you:)
 what was from the beginning,
 what we have heard,
 what we have seen with our eyes,
 what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life—
 for the life was made visible;
 we have seen it and testify to it and
 proclaim to you the eternal life that
 was with the Father and
 was made visible to us

Chapter 6

The Church of Jesus Christ rightly may be called a sacrament. Vatican Council II best described this reality.

On the Church, 1 By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament, an intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and instrument of such union and unity.

On the Church, 48 Christ ... through his Spirit, has established his body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation.

Jesus used specific acts and objects as visible signs of the life and blessings he came to give.

Jesus was baptized with *water* in the Jordan and the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

Mk 1:9–10 It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him.

Jesus' first miracle was to turn *water* into *wine*.

Jn 2:1–11 ... there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee ... Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." ... the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine ... Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee.

Jesus multiplied *bread* and *fish* to feed the crowd.

Mk 6:41–44 Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to (his) disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate (of the loaves) were five thousand men.

Jesus *touch*ed people to heal them.

Mk 1:41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."

Jesus used his *spit* to cure a blind man.

Mk 8:23 Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, "Do you see anything?"

Jesus *breath*ed on his apostles to give them the Holy Spirit.

Jn 20:22 He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit."

Jesus gave his apostles his own body and blood in the form of *bread* and *wine*.

Mk 14:22–23 While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

The Apostles followed the example of Jesus and carried out his teaching.

The apostles anointed the sick for healing.

Mk 6:13 They (the Twelve) drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The apostles laid their hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:17 Then they (Peter and John) laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.

The apostles laid their hands on others to be set apart for special ministry or mission in the church.

Acts 6:6 They presented these men (the seven deacons) to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.

The apostles baptized.

Mt 28:19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,

The apostles forgave sins.

Mt 18:18 Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The apostles understood marriage as a mystery (Greek: μυστήριον, *mysterion*; Latin: sacramentum).

Eph 5:32 This (marriage) is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

The apostles offered bread and wine in thanksgiving (*eucharist*) for Jesus' death.

Lk 22:19 Do this in memory of me.

Vatican Council II expressed the purpose of the sacraments and the relationship between Christ acting and the reception of the sacraments.

Constitution On the Sacred Liturgy, 59 The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to worship God. Because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.

Constitution On the Sacred Liturgy, 7 He (Jesus) is present in the sacraments by his power, in such a way that when someone baptizes, Jesus himself baptizes.

The constant faith of the Church has been consistent in the teaching about the sacraments.

1st – 6th century Church Fathers (from Christian antiquity until Clement of Alexandria (Athens, 150 – 215) and Origen (Alexandria, 185 – 254)) used the words *sacramentum* and *mysterion* to describe these hidden and holy things in the life of the church.

16th century The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) defined sacraments as symbols of holy and invisible graces in visible form. This definition is found in the works of Augustine.

In the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Sacraments are described as follows.

¶ 1084 “Seated at the right hand of the Father” and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the actions of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.

¶ 1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.

¶ 1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.

Note that the Catholic Church does *not* state that the Sacraments are the *only* way that these graces are bestowed upon us.

The sacraments exist for both us individually and as part of the Church community.

¶ 1134 The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.

Baptism: Initiation and Regeneration

All Christians believe in the role of baptism in the life of the Christian. The differences which exist are differences of emphasis—of the necessity of baptism—and not of the call to be baptized. Roman Catholic Christians believe that in the sacrament of baptism the individual is both

- regenerated through water and the Holy Spirit and
- truly incorporated into the Church of Jesus Christ.

- Jn 3:5 Jesus answered (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”
- Mt 28:19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,
- Mt 3:11 I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.
- Gal 3:25–27 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian. For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- 1 Cor 12:12–13 As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.
- Acts 2:37–38 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter (said) to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit.”
- Acts 10:44–47 While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?”
- Acts 8:11–13 They paid attention to him (Simon Magus) because he had astounded them by his magic for a long time, but once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized. Even Simon himself believed and, after being baptized, became devoted to Philip.
- Titus 3:5 ... not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth (baptism) and renewal by the holy Spirit.
- 1 Pet 3:20–21 God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.
- Rom 6:3–4 Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.
- Col 2:12 You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

The teaching authority of the Church, the Magisterium, has clearly stated the role of baptism in the life of the Christian.

Lateran Council IV, 1215 Infallibly defined that baptism was a sacrament of the Church.

Council of Lyons II, 1274 Infallibly redefined that baptism was one of the seven sacraments.

Council of Trent, 1545 – 1563 Again infallibly defined the seven sacraments listing baptism as the opening gateway and foundation of the sacraments.

Infant Baptism

Roman Catholic Christians among other denominational Christians, e.g. Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, etc., believe in the efficacy and practice of baptizing infants.

Acts 2:38–39 Peter (said) to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you *and to your children* and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.”

The New Testament speaks of the baptism of “whole households” which in the normal Greek usage of the time included children.

1 Cor 1:16 I (Paul) baptized the household of Stephanas also ...

Acts 11:13–14 He related to us how he had seen (the) angel standing in his house, saying, ‘Send someone to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, who will speak words to you by which you and all your household will be saved.’

Acts 16:15 After she (Lydia of Thyatira) and her household had been baptized, she offered us an invitation...

Acts 16:30–32 Then he (the jailer) brought them (Paul and Silas) out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved.” So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house.

Acts 18:8 Crispus, the synagogue official, came to believe in the Lord along with his entire household.

To the Colossians, Paul paralleled baptism and circumcision. Circumcision was normally administered to children eight days after birth.

Col 2:11–12 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by hand, by stripping off the carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

To the Corinthians, Paul recalled that just as all the Jews of the Exodus (including children) were baptized into Moses by passing through the Red Sea, they were actually being blessed by Christ.

1 Cor 10:1–4 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ.

In Mark’s Gospel, we have Jesus’ own teaching on children.

Mk 10:13–16 And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” ... Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Chapter 6

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation after the promulgation of the Gospel *for everyone*, both children and adults.

Jn 3:5 Jesus answered (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, *no one* can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”

It is frequently asked by non-believers how an infant is capable of making an act of faith in order to receive baptism. The response of the Catholic Church is to follow the Biblical example of Christ. Jesus accepted the faith of others as an occasion of salvation, forgiveness and healing of another. The Church has always done likewise. In infant baptism, the faith of parents and sponsors is required.

Mk 2:1–5 When Jesus returned to Capernaum ... They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw *their faith*, he said to the paralytic, “Child, *your sins are forgiven.*”

Mt 8:5–13 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.” He said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion said in reply, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.” ... When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found *such faith.*” ... And Jesus said to the centurion, “You may go; *as you have believed*, let it be done for you.” And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

The constant teaching of the Church attests to the baptism of infants.

Pope Zosimus (417 – 418) Approved a teaching of a local council at Carthage which condemned those who denied baptism to newborn infants.

Pope Celestine I (422 – 432) Taught that both children and infants need the sacrament of regeneration.

Pope Innocent II (1130 – 1143) and the Council of Lateran IV Condemned those who denied the baptism of children.

Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216) Condemned those who said that baptism of children was useless.

Pope Clement V (1305 – 1314) in the Council of Vienne Defended the necessity of baptism of children.

Pope Eugene IV (1431 – 1447) in the Council of Florence Defended the necessity of baptism of children.

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) In a number of related canons, defined the absolute necessity of baptism for both children and adults.

Baptism by Water: Immersion, Pouring, Sprinkling

All Christians believe that baptism by water is essential to the administration of the sacrament.

Jn 3:5 Jesus answered (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of *water* and Spirit.”

The Roman Catholic Church believes that a “washing of the body with natural water” is what is required for valid baptism.

Mt 28:19 ... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,

Mk 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

Acts 8:36,38 As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?” ... Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Acts 10:47 “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?”

Tit 3:5 He saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit.

Eph 5:26 ... to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,

1 Cor 10:2 ... all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

1 Pet 3:21 This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.

The Apostolic Fathers attested to the practice in the early church.

The Didache Regarding baptism, baptize thus. After giving the foregoing instructions, “Baptize in the (Syria, 70–110) name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19) in running water. (Ch 7) But, if you have no running water, baptize in any other; and if you cannot in cold water, then in warm. But, if the one is lacking, pour the other three times on the head “in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Justin (Martyr) (Rome, 100–165)

First Apology, Ch. 61 They (those to be baptized) then are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water ... The reason for this we have received from the Apostles.

From the earliest times in the Church, baptism was generally administered by immersion. The word *baptizain* means to immerse. The question of the mode of using water was addressed in the early Church.

Cyprian (Carthage, 200–258)

Letters, No. 69:12 You have asked ... whether they are to be accounted legitimate Christians, for that they are not to be washed, but sprinkled, with the saving water. ... I think that the divine benefits can in no respect be mutilated and weakened; nor can anything less occur in that case where, with full and entire faith both of the giver and receiver, is accepted what is drawn from the divine gifts ... it ought not to trouble any one that sick people seem to be sprinkled or effused, when they obtain the Lord’s grace.

There are examples in the history of the Church of baptism being administered by sprinkling. It was probably the mode of baptizing that the Apostles used on Pentecost in order to baptize three thousand men.

Chapter 6

From the Apostolic period to the 4th century:

baptism was administered through total immersion except in cases of necessity.

From the 4th century to the 8th century:

baptism by partial immersion in a “baptistery” began, used with a pouring of water.

From the 6th century to the 11th century:

baptism of children was effected by totally immersing them in a basin or sink;
for adults, custom and use varied.

From the 11th to the 13th century:

baptism of children horizontally was the custom in the manner of bath-taking.

From the 13th century to the 14th century:

baptism was effected both by total immersion and partial immersion,
and pouring became the custom in some places.

From the 15th and 16th centuries:

baptism was effected more frequently by pouring and immersion became rare.

From the 17th century on:

baptism by immersion was hardly used except in some Uniate churches.

By the 19th century:

pouring almost universally prevailed, even among the Uniate churches.

Today:

as always, the Roman Catholic Church insists on water for baptism,
but the manner of using the water is not a problem:
given circumstances and availability, Catholics can choose the manner of water baptism.

Reconciliation

Roman Catholic Christians believe, as do some other Christians, that Jesus gave to the Apostles and their successors the power to forgive sins, reconciling sinners to God for sins committed after Baptism.

On numerous occasions, Jesus exercised the power to forgive sin.

Mk 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven.”

Lk 7:47 So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.

Jesus scandalized some Jews of his own time by claiming to have the authority to forgive sins.

Mk 2:7 Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?

Jesus clearly stated that he had the authority to forgive sins.

Mk 2:10–12 “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth”— he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone.

Jesus gave the same authority to Peter.

Mt 16:19 I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Jesus later gave the same authority to all the Apostles.

Mt 18:18 Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The Apostle John, an eyewitness, recorded more directly the words of Jesus giving the power to forgive sins to all the Apostles after the testimony of the Resurrection.

Jn 20:23 Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.

Many Christians ask why confession of sin is required for forgiveness. The Church responds that the need for personal confession of sin is required in order for forgiveness because that is the only way a confessor can judge whether to forgive or retain sins. A judgment cannot be made unless the sin in question is known and the disposition of the penitent is also known.

The New Testament speaks of confession of sin.

Ja 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

1 Jn 1:9 If we acknowledge (confess) our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

Other New Testament scriptures bear witness that the Apostolic Church acknowledged the use of the power to forgive sins.

Acts 2:38 Peter (said) to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit.”

1 Jn 1:9 If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

1 Jn 2:12 I am writing to you, children, because your sins have been forgiven for his name’s sake.

Chapter 6

The constant teaching of the Church and the Fathers of the Church in explicit words testify to the existence and use of the power to forgive sins in the Church.

The Didache (70–110)
Ch.4:13 You shall confess your offenses in church, and shall not come forward to your prayer with a bold conscience. This is the way of life.

Tertullian (Rome, 160–220)

On Modesty,
Ch 21, ML 2,
1024 “But,” you say, “the church has the power of forgiving sins.” This I acknowledge and adjudge more [than you; I] who have the Paraclete Himself in the persons of the new prophets, saying, “The church has the power to forgive sins”

Ambrose (Tier, 340–397)

On the Holy Spirit,
Bk. 3, Ch 18, ML 16,
808 See that sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit. But men make use of their ministry for the forgiveness of sins, they do not exercise the right of any power of their own. For they forgive sins not in their own name but in that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They ask, the Godhead gives, the service is of man, the gift is of the Power on high.

Jerome (Stridon, 345–419)

Letters,
No. 14, ML 22,
352 Far be it to censure the successors of the apostles, who with holy words consecrate the body of Christ, and who make us Christians. Having the keys of the kingdom of heaven, they judge men to some extent before the day of judgment, and guard the chastity of the Bride of Christ.

The ecumenical councils of the Church, the official Magisterium, also attest to the truth of this sacrament.

The Council of
Constance (1414 –
1418) A Christian has the obligation, over and above heartfelt contrition, of confessing to a priest.

The Council of Florence
(1438–1445) The fourth sacrament is penance.

The Council of Trent
(1545 – 1563) But our Lord instituted the sacrament of penance notably on the occasion when after his resurrection, he breathed upon his disciples saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained” (John 20:22). The universal agreement of the Father has always understood that by such a striking action and by clear words the power of remitting and of retaining sins, and of reconciling the faithful who have fallen after baptism was communicated to the apostles and to their legitimate successors; ... Therefore this holy council accepts and approves the true meaning of these words of our Lord and condemns the false interpretation of ... those words.

A Biblical Portrait of Sin

To fully understand what God accomplishes in us when He forgives sin, it is important to look to the Bible for the meaning of sin.

Sin in man is, first, an aversion or turning away from God.

- Job 34:27 Because they (humankind) turned away from him (God) and heeded none of his ways ...
- Is 1:2–4 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, for the LORD speaks: Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me! An ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger; But Israel does not know, my people has not understood. Ah! sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race, corrupt children! They have forsaken the LORD, spurned the Holy One of Israel, apostatized.
- Dan 9:9–10 But yours, O LORD, our God, are compassion and forgiveness! Yet we rebelled against you and paid no heed to your command, O LORD, our God, to live by the law you gave us through your servants the prophets.
- Rom 1:19–24 For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes. Therefore, God handed them over ...
- Phil 3:18–19 For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things.
- Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."
- Jn 12:43 For they (the Pharisees) preferred human praise to the glory of God.
- Ja 4:4 Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

The sin of man is also a conversion or turning to created things.

- Rom 1:19–24 For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes. Therefore, God handed them over ...
- Phil 3:18–19 For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things.
- Jn 12:43 For they (the Pharisees) preferred human praise to the glory of God.
- Ja 4:4 Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Chapter 6

Is 22: 12–13 On that day the LORD, the GOD of hosts, called on you To weep and mourn, to shave your head and put on sackcloth. But look! you feast and celebrate, you slaughter oxen and butcher sheep, You eat meat and drink wine: “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

Rev 18:7 To the measure of her boasting and wantonness repay her (Babylon) in torment and grief ...

Aversion from God leads to eternal death.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death ...

Col 2:13 And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh ...

Rom 7:13 Sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin, worked death in me through the good

Turning to created things leads to punishment from God.

Num 14:20–23 The LORD answered (Moses): “I pardon them as you have asked. Yet, by my life and the LORD’s glory that fills the whole earth, of all the men who have seen my glory and the signs I worked in Egypt and in the desert, and who nevertheless have put me to the test ten times already and have failed to heed my voice, not one shall see the land which I promised on oath to their fathers. None of these who have spurned me shall see it.”

2 Sam 12:13–14 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan answered David: “The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the LORD by this deed, the child born to you must surely die.”

1 Cor 11:29–32 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; but since we are judged by (the) Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Rev 18:7 To the measure of her boasting and wantonness repay her (Babylon) in torment and grief ...

The saving power of the blood of Christ saves us from eternal death and washes us free of the guilt of sin.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in our transgressions, (God) brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

Rom 5:9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him.

Col 1:14 ... in whom (Jesus) we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Heb 9:13–14 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

Heb 13:12 Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood.

1 Pet 1:18–20 ... realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb.

1 Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Rev 1:5 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ...

The Word of God provides a way for man to do reparation—to remove the temporal punishment due for sin—for the personal or social values lessened or destroyed when man turned to created things in sin.

- Dan 4:24 Therefore, O king, take my advice; atone for your sins by good deeds, and for your misdeeds by kindness to the poor.
- Joel 1:14 Proclaim a fast, call an assembly; Gather the elders, all who dwell in the land, Into the house of the LORD, your God, and cry to the LORD!
- 1 Kgs 21:26–29 He (Ahab) became completely abominable by following idols, just as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites. When Ahab heard these words, he tore his garments and put on sackcloth over his bare flesh. He fasted, slept in the sackcloth, and went about subdued. Then the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before me? Since he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his time. I will bring the evil upon his house during the reign of his son.”
- Jonah 3:6–10 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles: “Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; every man shall turn from his evil way and from the violence he has in hand. Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withhold his blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish.” When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.
- Prov 16:6 By kindness and piety guilt is expiated, and by the fear of the LORD man avoids evil.
- Mt 6:16–18 When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.
- Mk 9:28–29 When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, “Why could we not drive it (deaf/mute spirit) out?” He said to them, “This kind can only come out through prayer.”
- Act 10:4 Your prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a memorial offering before God.
- 1 Pet 4:8 Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.

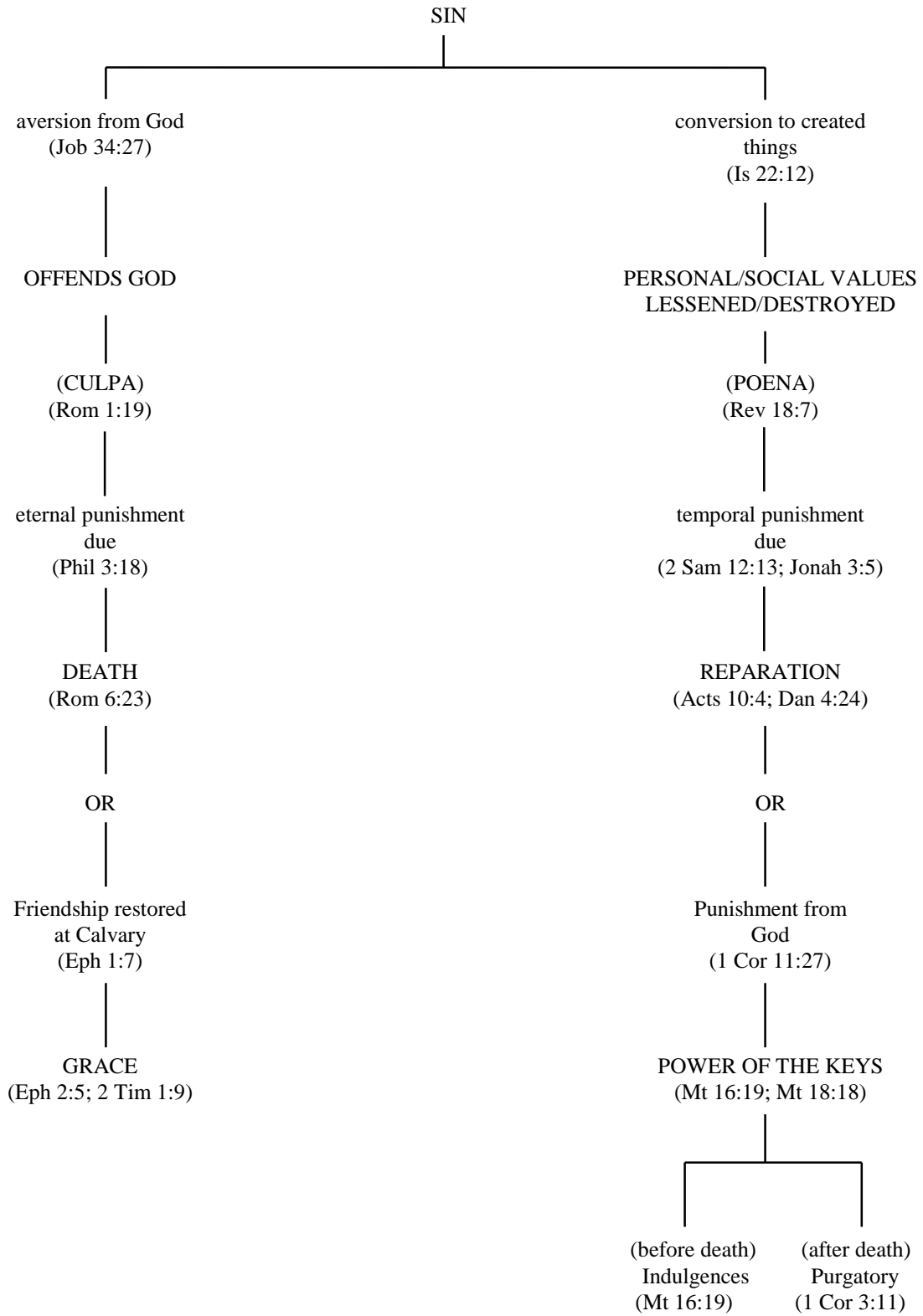
The constant faith, *paradosis*, of the Church attests to the two-fold effects of sin, aversion from God and conversion to created things, the two-fold punishments due to sin, eternal and temporal, and the satisfaction of one by the blood of Christ and the other by reparation.

- Tertullian (Rome, 160 –220), Athanasius (Alexandria, Egypt, 293 – 373), Ambrose (Tier, Germany, 340 – 397), Jerome (Stridon, present day Slovenia, 345 – 419), etc.

The 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes the double aspect of sin as follows:

Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶ 1472 To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.

By way of summary, the following is a chart of the revelation of sin and its consequences.



The Existence of Sin

It is frequently said that what the Catholic Church taught about sin was not always biblical. Catholic Christianity has always used the Bible as its source for what is sinful.

It is important to state that all sin offends God. With even the slightest sin in our eyes, we alienate God and are unholy in his sight.

Mt 6:24 No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Ja 4:4–10 Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that the scripture speaks without meaning when it says, “The spirit that he has made to dwell in us tends toward jealousy”? But he bestows a greater grace; therefore, it says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the LORD and he will exalt you.

It has been objected that the long standing teaching of the Church of a distinction between “mortal” and “venial” sin was an artificial distinction. But it was the Apostle John, Evangelist and author of three epistles as well as the Book of Revelation, from whom the church took that distinction among sins.

1 Jn 5:16–17 If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly (*venial*), he should pray to God and he will give him life. This is only for those whose sin is not deadly. There is such a thing as deadly sin (*mortal*), about which I do not say that you should pray. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.

The Church is also criticized for teaching sin by lists. But again it is from the Bible itself that the Church takes the lead in teaching the word of God about those behaviors which are sin.

Mk 7:20–23 (Jesus said) “But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Gal 5:19–21 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph 4:25–31 ... putting away falsehood ... Be angry but do not sin ... The thief must no longer steal ... No foul language should come out of your mouths ... All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice.

Eph 5:3–7 Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones, no obscenity or silly or suggestive talk, which is out of place, but instead, thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. So do not be associated with them.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery

- Mt 5:28 But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- Mt 5:32 But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
- Mt 5:34 But I say to you, do not swear at all
- Rev 21:8 But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death.
- 1 Cor 6:9–10 Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Indulgences

By definition, an indulgence is the remission in whole or in part of the temporal punishment due to personal sin, provided that the sin has already been forgiven. The power invested in the Church and her bishops and priests to grant indulgences is found in several scriptures.

To Peter alone Jesus granted the first power to bind and loose anything.

- Mt 16:19 I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

To all the disciples Jesus later granted the same power to bind and loose.

- Mt 18:18 Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

To all the disciples Jesus gave the power to forgive sins.

- Jn 20:21–23 (Jesus) said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

As can be seen from the nature of personal sin, as man turns from God and towards created things, man incurs both guilt and punishment. Through the blood of Jesus, all guilt of sin—turning from God—is remitted through confession of sin. Punishment, limited temporal punishment due to sin—preferring created things to God—still remains.

- Num 14:20–23 The LORD answered (Moses): “I pardon them as you have asked. Yet, by my life and the LORD’s glory that fills the whole earth, of all the men who have seen my glory and the signs I worked in Egypt and in the desert, and who nevertheless have put me to the test ten times already and have failed to heed my voice, not one shall see the land which I promised on oath to their fathers. None of these who have spurned me shall see it.”

- 2 Sam 12:13–14 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan answered David: “The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the LORD by this deed, the child born to you must surely die.”

- 1 Cor 11:29–32 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; but since we are judged by (the) Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The three classic actions leading to indulgences are prayer, good deeds and almsgiving.

- Prov 16:6 By kindness and piety guilt is expiated, and by the fear of the LORD man avoids evil.
- Dan 4:24 Therefore, O king, take my advice; atone for your sins by good deeds, and for your misdeeds by kindness to the poor; then your prosperity will be long.
- Luke 19:8–9 But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.”
- Act 10:4 Your prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a memorial offering before God.

The teaching Magisterium of the Church in ecumenical council also affirms indulgences.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563)

Decree on Indulgences,
Sess. 25 Christ gave the power of granting indulgences to the Church, and since the Church has, even in ancient times, made use of this divinely given power (Mt. 16:19; 18:18), the holy council teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences—a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the holy councils—should be kept up in the Church; and it anathematizes those who say that indulgences are useless, or that the Church does not have the power of granting them.

Vatican Council II (1962–1965)

*Constitution of the
Revision of Indulgences*,
No. 1 The doctrine of indulgences and their practice have been in force for many centuries in the Catholic Church. They would appear to be solidly founded on Divine Revelation, handed down “from the apostles.”

From the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- ¶ 1471 An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.
- ¶ 1473 The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the “old man” and to put on the “new man.”
- ¶ 1478–1479 An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity.
- Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.

Confirmation

2 Cor 1:21–22 But the one who gives us security (Vulgate, *confirmat*, confirms) with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

In these words, the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church and believers from Apostolic times have seen that sacrament so designated by which the Holy Spirit is confirmed. From this scripture the sacrament was variously known as “confirmation,” “signing,” “anointing.”

Acts 8:14–18 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles’ hands ...

Acts 19:1–6 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the holy Spirit when you became believers?” They answered him, “We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit.” He said, “How were you baptized?” They replied, “With the baptism of John.” Paul then said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid (his) hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

The constant faith of the Church attests to the existence and practice of the conferring the Holy Spirit to believers.

Pope Clement of Rome (92 – 101) in his Letter to the Corinthians listed among the graces given to the people of Corinth “the fullness of the Holy Spirit.”

The Apostolic Father of the Church, Hermas (Rome, 140?), in his writing, *The Shepherd*, also elaborated this.

Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220) spoke of confirmation at least seven times and most often listed confirmation between baptism and the eucharist.

Cyprian (Carthage, 200 – 258) wrote of the necessity of the sacrament and distinguished it from baptism and spoke of it as a complement to baptism.

A local church Council (at Illiberitanum, 300) stated the rite of administration of confirmation.

Pope Innocent I (401 – 417) taught the same rite of confirmation.

Jerome (Stridon, 345 – 419) asserted the custom of the Church that priests and deacons baptize; that bishops confer the Holy Spirit.

Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216) taught that through the imposition of hands on the head of the person being confirmed the Holy Spirit is conferred in abundance and strength.

The Council of Lyons II (1274) defined the seven sacraments ... and confirmation which is conferred through the hands of the bishop ...

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) condemned the errors of the Reformers about this sacrament. The council fathers defined that confirmation is a true and proper sacrament of the Church.

It is often objected that with the sacrament of Baptism the Christian already has the Holy Spirit. The Christian certainly receives the Holy Spirit in Baptism. But that presence of the Spirit is not in that perfect state or total

empowering which Christ promised. The very practice of Christ Himself distinguishes the degrees with which the Holy Spirit is conferred.

On the evening of Resurrection Sunday, Jesus conferred the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles.

Jn 20:22 He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit."

Fifty days later, on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the Apostles received the presence of the Holy Spirit and a greater empowering as promised by Christ (Jn 15:26 and 16:7).

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the holy Spirit ...

Baptism and Confirmation and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Roman Catholic Christians look to the teaching authority of the Church as the sure guide to belief on matters of faith and morals. The latest teaching Council of the Church was Vatican Council II.

On the Church, 4 When the work which the Father had given the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might forever sanctify the Church. All believers have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit (Eph 2:18). He is the Spirit of life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal (Jn 4:14; 7:38–39). Through him the Father gives life to men who are dead from sin, till at last he revives in Christ even their mortal bodies (Rom 8:10–11).

The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). In them he prays and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15–16, 26). The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (Jn 16:13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic, and adorns her with the fruits of his grace (Eph 4:11–12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the gospel, he makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her, and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to the Lord Jesus, "Come!" (Rev 22:17). Thus the Church shines forth as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

The Church emphasizes that a person becomes a Christian and first receives the Holy Spirit through faith and Baptism.

Paul's teaching implies that the Holy Spirit is normally first given or conferred to individuals through belief and water baptism.

Eph 1:13 In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit

1 Cor 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...

Titus 3:5 He saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit

Rom 8:9 Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

The Apostles in the Acts of the Apostles appear to have understood the difference between the presence of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and in a later empowering. If a person were only baptized and did not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles would pray and lay their hands on them, begging God to send his Holy Spirit in greater measure.

Acts 8:14–18 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands ...

The Catholic Christian sacrament of Confirmation originates with this practice.

Water Baptism is not the only time or way that the Holy Spirit comes to live in a person; but the New Testament indicates the importance of being baptized into Christ and thus being sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Rom 6:3 Or are you unaware that we who were *baptized into Christ Jesus* were baptized into his death?

Eph 1:13 In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were *sealed with the promised holy Spirit*

Jn 3:5 Jesus answered (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of *water and Spirit*.”

Roman Catholic Christians believe that they are first born again of water and the Holy Spirit when they receive the sacrament of Baptism. Catholic Christians also believe that Baptism only begins the work of mission of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

The person who is truly “born again” and “Spirit-filled” is not necessarily the one who has had an extraordinary experience of the Holy Spirit at some point (though this is a blessing), but the person who lives and “walks” with the Holy Spirit; who has put to death the “works of the flesh” and manifests the “fruits of the Spirit.” This is what it means to be a “new creation” in Christ Jesus – “the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17)

Much today is heard of being “baptized in the Spirit.” The expression comes from Sacred Scripture.

Mt 3:11 He (Jesus) will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.

Mk 1:8 I (John) have baptized you with water; he (Jesus) will baptize you with the holy Spirit.

Lk 3:16 He (Jesus) will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.

Jn 1:33 On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic Church has never claimed that the work of the Holy Spirit is limited exclusively to Baptism.

Confirmation is the Catholic Church’s official prayer for the Holy Spirit to empower a person to spread the gospel, to live a fervent Christian life, and share more fully in the mission and ministry of the Church.

Receiving the Holy Spirit in a new way, usually as the result of earnest, expectant prayer, is what many Christians today call being “baptized in the Holy Spirit.”

Being “baptized in the Holy Spirit” is actually a “release” or a “coming to consciousness” of the power of the Holy Spirit who already has been given to the believer through the sacraments of the Church.

The Eucharist: The Lord's Supper

Roman Catholic Christians share with most Christians the faith that Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, ate a final or last supper with his Apostles. This final meal was also the celebration of the Jewish Passover or Feast of the Unleavened Bread which commemorated the passing over of the Jews from the death in slavery to the Egyptians to life in the Promised Land.

Christians differ in the meaning this Last Supper has to them and the Church today. Catholic Christians together with other historical Christian Churches (e.g. Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Christians, Lutherans, Anglicans and some Episcopalians, etc.) believe the literal words of Jesus – that the bread and wine are truly his body and blood. Other later Christian Churches profess a mere symbolic meaning to the words of Jesus.

The faith of the Catholic Church is based on both a fundamental principle of hermeneutics and the constant faith of the Church from Apostolic times.

The Catholic Church teaches that the first principle of hermeneutics—the science of the translation and interpretation of the Bible—is the literal meaning of the text.

Spiritus Paraclitus As Jerome insisted, all biblical interpretation rests upon the literal sense ...
Benedict XV,
September 15, 1920

Divino Afflante ... discern and define that sense of the biblical words which is called literal ... so that the
Spiritus, Pius XII, mind of the author may be made clear. ... the exegete must be principally concerned with
September 30, 1943 the literal sense of the Scriptures.

The definition of the literal sense:

The sense which the human author directly intended and which his words convey.

The first writer of the New Testament was the apostle Paul. His Letter to the Corinthians was written as early as 56 AD, earlier than the first Gospel, Mark's, written about 64 AD. Paul was also not an eyewitness to what he wrote but testifies to his source.

1 Cor 11:23–
29 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

The next New Testament text in chronological order would have been Mark's Gospel. Written about 64, in Rome, Mark, not an eyewitness, probably heard the account of the Last Supper he recorded from the Apostle Peter.

Mk 14:22–24 While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.”

The third account of the Last Supper could be Matthew's. Matthew, the tax collector Levi, was an eyewitness to the meal. He was one of the twelve Apostles. Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in the 70's.

Mt 26:26–28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Luke's account of the Last Supper, written from the standpoint of a Gentile convert and a non-eyewitness, probably heard the details of the Last Supper from Paul. Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. Luke also wrote in the 70's.

Lk 22:15–20 He (Jesus) said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it (again) until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

The beloved disciple, John, the last of the New Testament writers, wrote his Gospel in the 90's. John was an eyewitness to the events of the Last Supper (Jn 6:30-68).

Jn 6:53–56 Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."

Hence Catholic Christian belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist rests upon the literal meaning of the words of the Last Supper as recorded by the Evangelists and Paul.

The uniformity of expression across the first four authors affirms the literalness. Belief in the real presence demands faith—the basis of new life as called for by Christ throughout scripture. But faith in signs conferring what they signify is the basis also for the Incarnation—appearances belying true meaning. The true significance of the real presence is sealed in John's gospel. Five times in different expressions, Jesus confirmed the reality of what he means.

Jn 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

Jn 6:53 Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.

Jn 6:54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

Jn 6:55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Jn 6:56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.

The best way a person can make a clear literal point is repetition of the same message in different ways. Jesus did this. Those around him clearly understood what he was saying—cannibalism and the drinking of blood—both forbidden by Mosaic Law.

Jn 6:60,66 Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" ... As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Had these disciples mistaken the meaning of Jesus' words, Jesus would surely have known and corrected them. He didn't. They had clearly understood his meaning—Jesus' flesh was to be really eaten; his blood to be really drunk.

Non believers often respond that even at the Last Supper, the apostles did not sense that they had flesh in their hands and blood in their cup. But Jesus is God. The creative literalness of the words: "This is my body; this is my blood" must be believed. God cannot lie. And God can turn bread into flesh and wine into blood without the appearances of bread and wine changing.

Medieval philosophers and theologians called this expression of Divine Truth and Creative Power "transubstantiation". Yes, God can change the substance of any created matter while the appearances remain unchanged. And this demands faith.

Paul confirms elsewhere in his letters the reality of the real presence.

1 Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

The persuasion of the Church from Apostolic times about the objective reality of these words of Christ is clear from many documents.

Irenaeus (Asia Minor, 140 – 202), Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220), Cyprian (Carthage, 200 – 258) are just a few of the earliest who attest to the objective reality of the words of Christ.

In the Church in Alexandria, Athanasius (293 – 373) and Cyril (376 – 444) equally attest to the literal meaning of the words of Christ at the Last Supper.

In the Church in Palestine, Cyril (Jerusalem, 315 – 387) and Epiphanius (Salamis, 367 – 403) also affirm in their teaching the same reality.

Unanimity is found across the universal church until the 11th century. Berengar (Tours, France, 1000 – 1088) was one of the first to deny the real presence by arguing that Christ is not physically present, but only symbolically.

The Council of Rome (a local council), 1079, taught against Berengar that the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ.

By the 16th century, some Reformers (excluding Luther) also taught that Christ's presence in the Eucharist was only figurative or metaphorical. Since there were other opinions being taught as truth (figurative presence and metaphorical presence) a teaching authority (see Chapter 5) had to be appealed to discern error from the truth. The way of the Church was to follow the model of Acts 15.

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) defined the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist as both the continuing sacrifice of Christ and a real sacrament. The institution of the Eucharist as sacrament was contained in the words "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Mass: Synagogue Service and Last Supper

Roman Catholic Christians celebrate the Eucharist in the liturgical act called the Mass. The word Mass comes from the Latin *missa* ("sent"). It was taken from the formula for dismissing the congregation: *Ite missa est* ("Go, the Eucharist has been sent forth") referring to the ancient custom of sending consecrated bread from the bishop's Mass to the sick and to the other churches.

The Mass contains two parts: the liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word is a copy of the Jewish synagogue service of the first century: readings from Scripture followed by responses from the congregation often from the Book of Psalms. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a reenactment of the Last Supper. A celebrant does what Christ did: take bread and wine and say the same words Christ said and then share the now consecrated bread and wine with the congregation.

Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and remain such until the elements are entirely consumed. The Body and Blood not consumed at one Eucharist are reserved for the next celebration of the Eucharist and venerated as the Body and Blood of Jesus.

Remembrance: One Sacrifice—Calvary—Continued

Roman Catholic Christians take the word of God seriously and seek to remember Christ in the Last Supper “as often as” possible. And in doing this proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

1 Cor 11:24–26 “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Lk 22:19 “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.”

Catholic Christians also believe that there is only one sacrifice, Jesus’, but following the command “as often as” to proclaim the death of the Lord, the sacrifice of Christ is made physically present to every Christian in all places in every age. The Eucharist makes the atemporal aphysical actions of Christ’s redeeming action truly present to us always and everywhere. This is incarnational.

Following the word of God, Catholics also know that Christ is not and cannot be resacrificed. This has never been the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Heb 10:12 But this one (Jesus) offered one sacrifice for sins ...

Heb 7:27 He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself.

Heb 9:25–28 Not that he might offer himself repeatedly ... But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice. ... Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many ...

The constant faith of the Church from the Apostolic Fathers attests to the fact that the Mass was the one Sacrifice of Calvary made present to the faithful.

Cyprian (Carthage, 200–258)

Letters, No 63:9 (To Caecilian) In which portion we find that the cup which the Lord offered was mixed, and that that was wine He called His Blood. Whence it appears that the blood of Christ is not offered if there be no wine in the cup, nor the Lord’s sacrifice celebrated with a legitimate consecration unless our oblation and sacrifice respond to His passion.

The 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes this statement explicitly.

¶ 1085 In the Liturgy of the Church, it is principally his own Paschal mystery that Christ signifies and makes present. During his earthly life Jesus announced his Paschal mystery by his teachings and anticipated it by his actions. When his Hour comes, he lives out the unique event of history which does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father “once for all.” His Paschal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Paschal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is — all that he did and suffered for all people — participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection abides and draws everything toward life.

¶ 1104 Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.

Transubstantiation

The Roman Catholic Church through history approached her faith life with the clarification of language. That is, she translated the essentials of revealed faith into the vocabulary of living language.

- To the revealed Word that there is “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” the Church labeled the belief “Trinity.”
- To the revealed Word that the “Son of God became man” the Church labeled the belief “Incarnation.”
- To the revealed Word that the “blood of Christ spilled on Calvary saved us” the Church labeled the belief “Redemption.”
- To the revealed Word that “my flesh is true food, my blood is true drink” the Church labeled the belief “Transubstantiation.”

Transubstantiation reflects Roman Catholic faith in the literalness of the words of the Bible.

Jesus (omnipotent God) said: “This *is* my body; this *is* my blood.” And again Jesus said: “I am the bread of life;” “My flesh is true food; my blood is true drink;” “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood ...;” etc.

Roman Catholics take Jesus at His word: the bread *is* his body; the wine *is* his blood.

From the Apostles at the Last Supper until today, the bread and wine of Eucharist looks and feels and tastes like bread and wine in the eating and drinking.

Similar to all of God’s Word, faith is essential. Faith in what? In the words of Jesus even though the bread does not look, feel, taste like flesh; even though the wine does not look, feel, taste like blood.

Medieval philosophers and theologians sought simply to label this simple biblical faith: Jesus said that bread is his body and wine is his blood even though it did not appear to change into visible flesh and blood.

Transubstantiation means the substance part of the bread and wine elements changes; but the accidental parts—sight, taste, smell, touch—do not. Catholics believe that since Jesus said it and He is God, he can do it. They believe! “Transubstantiation” merely labels it.

In everyday life, it is not at all uncommon to believe in things man cannot perceive by the senses: wind, electricity, love, peace, etc. All the more when Jesus says it.

Healing/Anointing of the Sick

Roman Catholic Christians have always believed in and practiced the anointing/healing of the sick. Before Vatican Council II the rite was called “extreme unction” or last anointing and referred principally to the anointing which took place when a believer was close to death. The sacrament has been restored to the role it had in the Apostolic Church.

Jesus healed people according to the Gospels.

Mk 1:41 Moved with pity, he (Jesus) stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.”

Mk 8:23 Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, “Do you see anything?”

The Apostles followed the example of Jesus and carried out his teaching. They anointed the sick for healing.

Mk 6:13 They (the Twelve) drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Ja 5:14–15 Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

Ja 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

The constant faith of the Church and the teaching Magisterium attest to the existence of the sacrament from the early Church.

In the first two centuries, there are no commentaries extant on the Epistle of James. Indeed, the canon of the New Testament to include the Epistle was not firm until the local Councils of Hippo and Carthage (393 and 397).

The early Fathers of the Church did not systematically comment on all aspects of the life of the Church. It must be noted that in the early Church, emphasis was not given to the need of anointing/healing. It was a practice of Christians to be baptized at the end of life.

Many allusions are found in later Fathers of the Church both in the use of the rite of anointing for the sick, and for obtaining healing of both soul and body:

- Origen (Alexandria, 185 – 254),
- Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220),
- Athanasius (Alexandria, 293 – 373),
- Gregory (Nazianzus, 329 – 389),
- John Chrysostom (Antioch, 349 – 407),
- Ambrose (Tier, 340 – 397),
- Augustine (Numidia, 354 – 430),
- etc.

The Council of Trent defined that the sacrament of extreme unction/anointing of the sick was listed among the seven sacraments.

Matrimony

Roman Catholic Christians believe that marriage was instituted by God in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Gen 1:27–28 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.”

In the simplicity of his words, the author of Genesis described the institution of human society.

Gen 2:18–24 The LORD God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.” ... So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.

In the New Testament, Jesus reestablished the indissolubility and unity of marriage.

Mt 19:3–9 Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?” He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” They said to him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.”

Jesus extolled the sanctity of marriage by his presence at the wedding feast at Cana and the occasion of his first public miracle.

Jn 2:1–11 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” (And) Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Finally, it is Paul who writes of marriage as a true sacrament the sign of the conjugal union of Christ and his Bride, the Church.

Eph 5:21–32 Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave (his) father and (his) mother and be joined to his wife, and the

two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

The Fathers of the Church, from the evangelist John and Paul attest to the reinstitution and sanctification of matrimony by Christ and its elevation to a mystical signification.

Ignatius (Antioch, d. 110)

Letter to Polycarp,
MG 5,
724

Tell my sisters to love the Lord and to be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and spirit. In the same way tell my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord does the Church. If anyone is able to persevere in chastity to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him do so in all humility. If he is boastful about it, he is lost; if he should marry, the union should be made with the consent of the bishop, so that marriages may be according to the Lord and not merely out of lust. Let all be done to the glory of God.

Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220)

To His Wife,
Bk. 2:7, ML 1,
1299

If, then, a marriage of this kind (faithful with unfaithful) is approved by God, why will it not also be a successful marriage, in spite of difficulties and anxieties and obstacles and defilements, since it already enjoys the patronage of Divine grace, at least in part?

The teaching Magisterium of the Church in Ecumenical Councils also affirms the sacramental state of matrimony.

Lateran Council II (1139)

First defined as infallibly true that matrimony is as true a sacrament as eucharist and baptism.

The Council of Lyons II (1274)

Also infallibly included matrimony among the list of seven sacraments.

The Council of Florence (1438 – 1445)

The seventh is the sacrament of matrimony which is a sign of the close union of Christ and the Church according to the words of the Apostle: “This is a great mystery – I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church” (Eph 5:32).

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563)

Session 24

Therefore, since matrimony under the law of the gospel is, because of the grace given through Christ, superior to the marriage unions of earlier times, our holy Fathers, the councils, and the tradition of the universal Church have always rightly taught that matrimony should be included among the sacraments of the New Law.

Annulment: There Never Was A Marriage

The Roman Catholic Church professes the absolute indissolubility of marriage based on the Bible. The Church has also taken on herself to decide if and when marriage occurs. This process is called annulment.

There are, as human experience teaches, many obstacles to a valid marriage. For instance, if a young woman were forced into marriage under fear of death, she would be incapable of entering into a valid marriage. Or, someone may attempt marriage while still married to a third party. These reasons and others, if proven to have existed, invalidate marriage.

The Church in her wisdom, her history and the presence of the Holy Spirit takes it upon herself to judge the validity of marriages presented to her for judgment. If the presence of some obstacle—called an impediment—is judged to have been there at the time of a wedding ceremony, the Church issues an annulment. She judges that while there may have been a wedding ceremony there was no marriage in the eyes of God.

The parties are then free to contract a valid marriage.

Orders

Roman Catholic Christians, and some other Christians, believe that the New Testament reveals an order or hierarchy to the organization of the Church. Catholic Christians also believe that these orders within the Church constitute a sacrament.

Paul defines the New Testament people chosen to constitute the order of the leadership of the Church.

2 Tim 2:2 And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

Paul describes the “faithful people” who are to hand on God’s Revelation and carry on principal Church functions.

The first category of “faithful people” is *episcopoi*, bishops.

1 Tim 3:1–2 This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop (*episcopos*) desires a noble task. Therefore, a bishop (*episcopos*) must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach

Tit 1:7,9 For a bishop (*episcopos*) as God’s steward must be blameless, ... holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.

The second category of “faithful people” is *presbyteroi*, the presbyters, priests, elders.

Tit 1:5–6 Appoint presbyters (*presbyterois*) in every town, as I directed you, on condition that a man be blameless, married only once, with believing children who are not accused of licentiousness or rebellious.

1 Tim 5:17 Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor, especially those who toil in preaching and teaching.

The third category of “faithful people” is *diaconoi*, deacons.

1 Tim 4:6,13,16 If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good minister (*diakonos*) of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed. ... Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. Attend to yourself and to your teaching.

1 Tim 3:8–9 Similarly, deacons (*diaconos*) must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

It is clear from Paul’s writings that he and the Apostolic Church were aware that order in the Church was conferred by the imposition of hands.

2 Tim 1:6 For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.

1 Tim 4:14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.

Paul reminds Timothy that the imposition of hands on another is not to be taken lightly.

1 Tim 5:22 Do not lay hands too readily on anyone, and do not share in another’s sins.

Paul himself was ordered or ordained by the leaders of the Church at Antioch.

Acts 13:2–3 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

The Acts of the Apostles testifies to the belief and practice of creating orders in the early Church.

Acts 14:23 They appointed presbyters for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith.

Acts 6:6 They presented these men (seven *diaconoi*) to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.

Acts 8:17 Then they (Peter and John) laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.

The constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church affirm the role of Orders or Ordination in the sacramental system and in the life of the Church.

Didache, Ch 5, Syria, 70–110 Elect therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, humble men and not covetous, and faithful and well tested; for they also serve you in the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Do not therefore despise them, for they are the honored men among you along with the prophets and teachers.

Clement (Rome, 92–101)

Letter to the Corinthians, Ch 47, MG 1, 308 It is disgraceful, beloved, very disgraceful, and unworthy of your training in Christ, to hear that the stable and ancient Church of the Corinthians ... should revolt against its presbyters.

Ignatius (Antioch, d. 110)

Letter to the Trallians, Ch 7; MG 5, 680 Anyone who is within the sanctuary is pure and anyone who is outside is impure, that is to say, no one who acts apart from the bishop and the priests and the deacons has a clear conscience.

The Magisterium of the Church in Ecumenical Councils has always affirmed the role of Orders.

Lateran Council II (1139).

Listed “priesthood and the other ecclesiastical orders” along with baptism, eucharist and matrimony.

Council of Lyons II (1274).

Taught that there were seven sacraments, including baptism along with orders.

Council of Florence (1438–1445)

The sixth sacrament is holy orders.

Council of Trent (1545–1563)

Session 23 In conformity with God’s decree, sacrifice and priesthood are so related that both exist in every law. Therefore, in the New Testament, since the Catholic Church has received the holy and visible sacrifice of the Eucharist according to the institution of the Lord, it is likewise necessary to acknowledge that there is in the Church a new, visible, and external priesthood, into which the old priesthood was changed. Moreover, Sacred Scripture makes it clear that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Savior, and that the power of consecrating, offering, and administering his body and blood, and likewise the power of remitting and of retaining sins, was given to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood.

Clerical Celibacy

The Roman Catholic Church demands celibacy—no voluntary sexual pleasure, hence, no marriage—as a prerequisite to the order of presbyter.

The primary basis for the requirement of celibacy is clearly the lifestyle example of Jesus himself.

The Church notes that the practice is sanctioned by the New Testament.

Mt 19:12 Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.

1 Cor 7:6–7 This I say by way of concession, however, not as a command. Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am (single? widowed?), but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

1 Cor 7:25–26 Now in regard to virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. So this is what I think best because of the present distress: that it is a good thing for a person to remain as he is.

1 Cor 7:32–34 I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

The law of celibacy has no doctrinal bearing in the Catholic Church—it is a mere disciplinary law. Even today, there are married Catholic priests in the United States. Each is a former Episcopalian priest who joined the Catholic Church. There are Uniate Churches, churches in union with Rome, e.g. the Greek Byzantine Church, who have a married clergy.

Priestly celibacy became law in the Roman Church in the 6th century.

Priests as “Father”

Roman Catholic Christians have a long custom—tradition—to address their priests as “father.” Many Christians feel that this practice is in disagreement with the word of God.

Mt 23:8–10 As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah.

If this passage was meant to be taken literally, then we all offend the Scripture. We all have used “father” to designate our birth father; and “teacher,” our instructors at school. On the other hand, the meaning of the scripture is that no person should be given the respect and honor due ultimately to God the Father.

Catholic Christians call the priests “father” with the sense understood by Paul.

1 Cor 4:14–16 I am writing you this not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.

1 Thess 2:11–12 As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

7. The Communion of Saints

Paul's letters clarify how the Apostolic Church under the influence of the Holy Spirit spoke of believers as "saints," whether living or dead.

Paul asked the saints to pray for him and to imitate him.

Faithful people in the Post-Apostolic Church in the Apostles Creed defined the confessional response to faith in their creed: "We believe in the communion of saints."

Through Baptism we pass "from death to life; death no longer has dominion over us." Christians must believe that there is no real distinction between the believer in human life and after human life. Saints, living or dead, are indistinguishable before God.

If we can pray for and with saints in this life, we can pray for and with those saints after human life.

And as Paul asked saints to imitate him as he imitates Christ, the Church encourages Catholic Christians to imitate the holiness of the saints as they imitated the holiness of Christ and the Father.

As a hem of a garment, the shadows of saints, and clothes of the saints were used devotionally in the Apostolic Church, so relics and images of the saints are devotionally encouraged by the Church today.

First among saints by the fullness of grace which was hers is the Mother of Jesus, Mary.

A Biblical Portrait of Saint

The word in the Bible for "saint" or "saints" is the word ἅγιος (*hagios*) also translated "sanctified" or "holy ones." The root word *hazo*, means "to venerate." *Hagios* means to be separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God.

Hagios is used of God (Lk 1:49; Acts 3:14; Mt 1:18, etc.). It is a word used of men and things (1 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 2:5,9, etc.)

When Paul uses the word "saint" in the singular, he refers to a state into which God calls men with His grace.

Phil 4:21 Give my greetings to every holy one (*hagion*) in Christ Jesus.

In its plural form, Paul uses the word to refer to all believers. For Paul, the word is not applied only to persons of exceptional holiness, nor to those having died characterized by an exceptional life of saintliness.

Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones (*hagios*) and members of the household of God,

Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.

Rom 16:15 Greet Philologus, ... and all the holy ones who are with them.

1 Cor 16:1 Now in regard to the collection for the holy ones, you also should do as I ordered the churches of Galatia.

1 Cor 16:15 I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas is the first fruits of Achaia and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the holy ones—

It is Paul who calls *all his fellow believers* “saints,” and not just the notably holy ones. Paul also uses the term for both those who are living and for those who are dead.

2 Thess 1:9–10 These (who do not acknowledge God nor heed the good news) will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes to be glorified among his holy ones (*hagiois*) and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, for our testimony to you was believed.

Jude 14–15 Enoch, of the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied also about them when he said, “Behold, the Lord has come with his countless holy ones (*hagiais*) to execute judgment on all and to convict everyone for all the godless deeds that they committed ...”

This practice of Paul corresponds to one of the earliest creedal statements of Christian faith: The Apostles Creed: “I believe in the communion of saints.” Communion of saints refers to the bond of unity among all believers, both *living and dead*, who are or have been committed followers of Jesus Christ. In the eyes of God, in eternity, the distinction between His People who are “living” or who are “dead” is *not* at all important.

Mk 9:4 Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus.

Mk 12:26–27 “As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, (the) God of Isaac, and (the) God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled.”

Lk 23:43 He replied to him (crucified thief) “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Rom 12:5 ... so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.

On the Church,
No. 49, Vatican II At the present time some of (Jesus’) disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory beholding “clearly God himself, three in one, as He is.”

*Catechism of the
Catholic Church*,
¶ 1474 The life of each of God's children is joined in Christ and through Christ in a wonderful way to the life of all the other Christian brethren in the supernatural unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, as in a single mystical person.

The Canon of Holiness

Our words “holy” and “holiness” come from the Hebrew (*qadosh* and *qodesh*) from the Greek (*hagios*, *hagiosyne*) and the Latin (*sanctitas*, *sacer*, *sanctus*). Essentially holy means what is divine and pertains to God. It is His most intimate essence in which He radically transcends all that is created; totally Other. Holiness extends to whatever is in relationship with the divine; it includes the idea of separation and opposition to what is profane and common; it expresses the idea of belonging to or being possessed by God.

Lev 11:44 For I, the LORD, am your God; and you shall make and **keep yourselves holy, because I am holy**. ... Since I, the LORD, brought you up from the land of Egypt that I might be your God, **you shall be holy, because I am holy**.

Lev 19:2 Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: **Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy**.

Hosea 11:9 For I am God and not man, **the Holy One** present among you.

1 Peter 1:15 As he who called you is holy, **be holy yourselves** in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I (am) holy.”

Heb 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for that **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord.

1 Thes 4:3 This is the will of God, **your holiness** . . .

Matt 5:48 So **be perfect**, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

As Paul writes, in each individual, sanctification takes place through faith and baptism.

Rom 15:16 ... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in performing the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the holy Spirit.

1 Cor 6:11 That is what some of you used to be; but now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Paul continues ... sanctification through faith and baptism makes one belong to God.

Rom 6:19,22 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to **righteousness for sanctification**. ... But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, **the benefit that you have leads to sanctification**, and its end is eternal life.

The Role of the Saints

The saints are presented to believers as *role models* whose lives are worthy *to be imitated*.

Heb 6:12 ... so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us

1 Cor 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Phil 3:17 Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us.

On the Church,
No. 50,
Vatican II

For when we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the city which is to come (Heb 13:14; 11:10). At the same time we are shown a most safe path by which ... we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is holiness. In the lives of those who shared in our humanity and yet were transformed into especially successfully images of Christ (2 Cor 3:18), God vividly manifests to men his presence and his face. He speaks to us in them, and gives us a sign of his kingdom, to which we are powerfully drawn, surrounded as we are by so many witnesses (Heb 12:1), and having such an argument for the truth of the gospel.

The Intercession of the Saints

As part of their belief in the role of the saints as professed in the Apostles Creed, Roman Catholic Christians petition the intercession of the saints.

The apostle Paul frequently asked other fellow believers in Jesus to pray for him.

Col 4:3 At the same time, pray for us, too, that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak of the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison.

Rom 15:30 ... join me in the struggle by your prayers to God on my behalf,

James asks presbyter believers to pray over other believers.

Jam 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord

Prayer appears to be the normal way for believers (saints) on earth to support one another. Probably all of us have asked another Christian, as Paul did—another saint in the Body of Christ—to pray for us when we had a need.

Catholic Christians believe that as we can ask a fellow Christian –a saint– to pray for us, we should be able to ask prayers from the saints already united to the Lord in heaven. If the prayers of certain Christians here on earth seem to possess special power because of their great faith witness or holiness, how much more powerful and effective might not the prayers of those of the communion of saints in heaven who are fully united to God.

How Do Saints Hear Us?

It is frequently asked, and reasonably so, how can the Saints know and hear so many countless intercessory prayers from so many Christians worldwide petitioning them. The question is really **one of knowing, not hearing**. It is important for us to remember the fullness of revelation regarding our state of being after our human life is completed. Principle among scriptures revealing our future life is the revelation of the essential nature of God Himself. Jesus often spoke of His Father (Abba) and of His Holy Spirit.

Matt 28:19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit**.

John 10:38 ... but if I (Jesus) perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize (and understand) that **the Father is in me and I am in the Father**.

The New Testament speaks often of the unity of the Godhead.

John 14:10-11 Do you not believe that **I (Jesus) am in the Father and the Father is in me**? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing His works. Believe me that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**, or else, believe because of the works themselves.

John also speaks of our union with the Father and Jesus as a fellowship a word from the Greek *koinonia* which is translated “community” meaning “in-union-with.”

John 1:3 What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; for our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is most specific about our final relationship with Him. He calls it a one-ness.

John 17:11 And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that **they may be one** just as we are.

John 17:21-22 ... so that they may **all be one**, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that **they may be one, as we are one**.

The Trinity is a foreshadowing of our eternal life--a oneness with the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We will share the life of the Godhead; as He knows so shall we know. The Saints already in union, at-one-ness with God share his life and his knowledge.

Paul put it succinctly.

1 Cor 13:12 At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; **then I shall know fully**, as I am fully known.

John also had an insight that reflected our destiny.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is.

The Canonization of Saints

The word “canon” comes from the Greek word *κανών* (*kanon*) meaning a standard or measuring rod.

The custom of canonization began in the early church by popular acclamation. Hence the custom of calling all the apostles “Saint.”

The Roman Catholic Church since the 10th century has officially applied the standard of holiness of life to certain individuals who lived exemplary Christian lives and through a lengthy process of prayer and study have declared that the individual is in heaven.

Contrary to the belief of some, the Church does not “create” saints, but simply applies the standard of gospel holiness to those God permits the Church to know are in heaven with Him. One principle way for God to affirm the presence of an individual in heaven with Him is through the performance of miracles through the intercession of that person.

Current Canonization Process

On September 12, 1997, through the Vatican Information Service, the Holy See Press Office in Vatican City made public the following note on canonical procedure for causes of beatification and canonization:

1. Canon norms regarding the procedure to be followed for causes of saints are contained in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, promulgated by John Paul II on January 25, 1983.
2. To begin a cause it is necessary for **at least 5 years to have passed since the death of the candidate**. This is to allow greater balance and objectivity in evaluating the case and to let the emotions of the moment dissipate.
3. The **bishop of the diocese** in which the person whose beatification is being requested died **is responsible for beginning the investigation**. The promoter group: diocese, parish, religious congregation, association, asks the bishop through the postulator for the opening of the investigation. The bishop, once the *nulla osta* (no impediment) of the Holy See is obtained, **forms a diocesan tribunal for this purpose**. **Witnesses are called before the tribunal** to recount concrete facts on the exercise of Christian virtues considered heroic, that is, the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity, and the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, and others specific to his/her state in life. In addition, all documents regarding the candidate must be gathered. At this point he/she is entitled to the **title of Servant of God**.
4. Once the diocesan investigation is finished, **the acts and documentation are passed on to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints**. The public copy used for further work is put together here. The postulator, resident in Rome, follows the preparation of the summary of the documentation that proves the heroic exercise of virtue, under the direction of a relator of the Congregation. The *Positio* undergoes **an examination (theological) by nine theologians** who give their vote. If the majority of the theologians are in favor, the cause is passed on for **examination by cardinals and bishops** who are members of the congregation. They hold meetings twice a month. If their judgment is favorable, the prefect of the congregation **presents the results of the entire course of the cause to the Holy Father**, who gives his approval and authorizes the congregation to draft the relative decree. The **public reading and promulgation of the decree** follows.
5. For the **beatification** of a confessor **a miracle** attributed to the Servant of God, verified after his/her death, is necessary. The required miracle must be **proven through the appropriate canonical investigation**, following a procedure analogous to that for heroic virtues. This one too is concluded with the relative decree. Once the two decrees are promulgated (regarding the heroic virtues and the miracle) **the Holy Father decides on beatification**, which is the concession of public honor, limited to a particular sphere. With beatification the candidate receives **the title of Blessed**.
6. For **canonization another miracle** is needed, attributed to the intercession of the Blessed and having occurred after his/her beatification. The methods for ascertainment of the affirmed miracle are the same as those followed for beatification. Canonization is understood as the concession of public worship in the

Universal Church. Pontifical infallibility is involved. With canonization, **the Blessed acquires the title of Saint.**

Biblical Description of Miracles

Three Greek words are used for the word miracle:

Semeion: a “sign” (used 78 times). *Semeion* was an event with divine significance. Jesus speaks of His resurrection as a “sign”.

Matt 12:39 He said to them in reply, “An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a **sign**, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.”

Teras: a “wonder” (used 16 times). It is also used in combination with *semeion*. *Teras* means something very unusual, out of the ordinary, amazing, or astonishing.

John 4:48 Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see **signs** and **wonders**, you will not believe.”

Dunamis: a “power” It is sometimes used of ordinary power, but is often translated “miracle”. It is often used in combination with *semeion* and *teras*. *Dunamis* emphasizes the source of the event.

A biblical definition can be drawn from a systematic study of the aforementioned words. A miracle is an unusual event (“wonder”) that conveys and confirms an unusual (divine) message (“sign”) by means of unusual power (“power”).

A miracle is called supernatural because the effect is beyond the productive power of nature and implies supernatural agency. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: “Those effects are rightly to be termed miracles which are **wrought by Divine power apart from the order usually observed in nature**” (*Contra Gentiles*, III, cii) ... “and they are apart from the natural order because they are **beyond the order or laws of the whole created nature**” (*Sacra Theologica* I:102:4)

In ordinary language: that which is beyond the present knowledge and power of the medical or physical sciences.

Images and Relics of the Saints

Catholic Christians operate from an Incarnational Principle: they sometimes make use of statues, images, medals, relics, and other objects to call to mind their relationship with the communion of saints of the past. These “religious objects” are used to simply recall to mind the example of a particular saint and to remind us of their nearness to God and their power to intercede for us on earth.

Mk 5:27–29 She (the woman with a hemorrhage) had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.” Immediately her flow of blood dried up.

Acts 5:15 Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them.

Acts 19:11–12 So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

The Incorruptibles

As an affirmation to our faith, and not the reason we believe, we recognize miraculous events concerning the bodies of some saints whose souls have gone to be with the Lord. The physical remains of some saints have been preserved in physical states not in the common natural order. Some saints whose bodies have been preserved without artificial means include: St. Bernadette Soubirous, St. Catherine Laboure, St. John Vianney, Sr. Theresa Margaret, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Francis Xavier, St. Louise de Marillac, and Blessed John XXIII.

Praying to the Saints / Praying for the Dead

Christians from the earliest centuries of the Church have expressed their communion with those who have died by praying for the dead.

Inscriptions in the Roman catacombs indicate that the early Christians honored and prayed for their deceased relatives and friends.

Tertullian (211) wrote that Christians offered prayer and the Eucharist for the deceased on the anniversaries of their death.

St. Augustine (354 – 430) Neither are the souls of the pious dead separated from the Church, which even now is the Kingdom of Christ. Otherwise there would be no remembrance of them at the altar of God in the communication of the Body of Christ.

It is not uncommon that non-believers see the Roman Catholic devotion to the Saints and the dead in general as falling under the prohibition of necrology as found in the Hebrew Scriptures. These people are not aware of the New Life of the Christian who has been called out of this life. They are not dead, but alive!

Rom 6:3–4 Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

Col 2:12 You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

The early Christians, in praying for their dead were expressing their belief that departed brothers and sisters underwent a purification after death (“purgatory”). Their prayers were prayers that God would have mercy on them during this time of healing and purification.

Many people who do not share the Catholic Christian faith life have difficulty with the appearance that in their prayers, Catholics appear to pray to the Saints, to Mary, as one prays to God. This “praying to” appears to them to indicate a worship of the Saint as if giving to the Saint or Mary what is due to God alone.

However, earliest Christianity has always defined prayer as conversation, as in conversation with God. Conversation, as any other act of communication (e.g. talking, conversation, yelling, etc.), requires *a sign of the direction of the communication*: one talks *to* someone, communicates *with* someone, prays *to* someone, converses *with* someone, yells *at* someone, etc. Hence, praying to God, a Saint, the Virgin Mary indicates simply the direction of prayer communication. It is more a matter of grammar and understanding communication than acknowledging the worship of the receiver.

From the earliest of Church Councils (the Council of Rome, 993; defined by the Council of Trent) the distinction was made between worship and honor. Catholics believe that worship is due to God alone. Catholics honor those saints who have gone before us as a sign of faith and victory in living the Christian life.

8. Mary the Mother of Jesus: Saint

Catholic Christians look to the development over time of Biblical faith. This follows from Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to reveal more things than He would tell His Apostles. This deepening of understanding God's Truth is evidenced in the definitions of the truth about the Trinity and the natures of Christ in the early Church councils.

Catholics also believe that the Bible does not record *all* the revealed Word of God. The Word of God in *paradosis* or tradition under the guidance of the Holy Spirit cannot contradict anything in the Bible, nor be absent from the constant faith of the believing Church.

Some understanding of the truth of God passed on by the believing Church (*paradosis*, tradition) later defined as revealed truth concerns Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Catholics believe, as did the Protestant Reformers, that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus. Catholics believe the truth of the Bible that the Redemption of Jesus freed all believers from the original sin of Adam and its consequence, death.

On the basis of Bible truths from Genesis to Revelation, Catholics believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the first to believe, and the first to reap both benefits from her Son's Redemption.

Mary's freedom from original sin is called her Immaculate Conception; her immediate entrance into Heaven at the completion of her life is called her Assumption.

Mary: An Introduction

The teachings of Roman Catholic Christianity about the role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are some of the most misunderstood and exaggerated beliefs dividing the Body of Christ. Before presenting the teaching of the Church about Mary, there are some important givens or assumptions to be stated about the Church, Mary and the Bible.

The official teaching of the Church has never considered beliefs about Mary to be in any way equal in importance to truths about God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. Vatican Council II expressed it best when the Council Fathers wrote:

On Ecumenism, No. 11 ... in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.

The truths about Mary are important because they are still truth, since they are based in the Bible. But they are not central to the primary gospel message of our salvation through Jesus Christ. As an example of the basic gospel message without Mary, we have only to look at the writings of Paul. In Pauline theology, Mary is mentioned only once, and not even by name.

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
...

Roman Catholics believe that the understanding of the Church about Mary, as about all Christian truth (e.g. the understanding of the Trinity) deepens and becomes more accurate over the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jn 15:26 “When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.”

Jn 16:12–13 “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.”

When the Catholic Church appears to teach “new doctrines” about Mary, it is often a statement of truth against some current errors or a clarification of truths that have always been taught and believed by Christians through the centuries. The Church believes that handing on these truths participates in the admonition of Paul.

2 Thess 2:15 Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement (*our word*) or by a letter (*written tradition*) of ours.

On the Church,
No. 67,
Vatican Council II The sacred synod ... strongly urges theologians and preachers of the word of God to *be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration* as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God. Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church’s Magisterium, let them *rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin* which always refer to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity, and devotion.

Consequently, two fundamental criteria guide the teaching authority of the Catholic Church as it seeks to discern what are the authentic beliefs about Mary which Jesus through His Holy Spirit would have us know:

- No belief can contradict anything faithfully handed down from the Apostles either in the written tradition, the Bible, or in the oral tradition of the Church;
- Any truth which develops under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and reflection upon the deposit of revelation must be demonstrated to have been accepted over a long period of time by the People of God.

A Biblical Portrait of Mary

Mary is prefigured immediately after the Fall of Man; her divine motherhood is prophesied.

Gen 3:14–15 Then the LORD God said to the serpent: “... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”

Mary and her role in the history of our salvation is foretold by the prophet Isaiah; her virginity and divine motherhood is confirmed.

Is 7:14 Therefore the LORD himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham and ends with Mary.

Mt 1:16 Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Luke narrates the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that she is to conceive a son and remain a virgin.

Lk 1: 26–38 ...(The angel Gabriel said) “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you ... The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” ... Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

Luke also narrates Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth (pregnant with John the Baptist). It is Elizabeth who first calls Mary "the mother of God (Lord)".

Lk 1:39–45 ... When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ... Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Lk 1:46–49 And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Matthew records Mary's engagement to Joseph.

Mt. 1:18–25 ... When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. ... the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." He (Joseph) had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Luke narrates the birth events of Jesus.

Lk 2:1–19 ... Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger ... (Shepherds) went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant ... Mary kept all these things (that the shepherds told her), reflecting on them in her heart.

Luke includes the circumcision and presentation of Jesus.

Lk 2:33–35 The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Luke narrates the loss and finding of Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph.

Lk 2:48–51 When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

John records the wedding feast at Cana where Mary prompts Jesus' first miracle.

Jn 2:1–12 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." (And) Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." ... Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. After this, he and his mother, (his) brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

Matthew writes of Jesus' own words that compare his relationship with his followers to his relationship with his mother.

Mt 12:46–50 While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. ... And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

It is John (an eye witness) who recalls his personal experience at the foot of the cross on Calvary.

Jn 19:25–27 Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Luke, in his Acts of the Apostles, records the presence of Mary with the Apostles in the community in Jerusalem between the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost.

Acts 1:12–14 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying. ... All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

A final reference to Mary is found in John's Book of Revelation.

Rev 12:1–5 A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. ... She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.

Mary: Virgin and Ever Virgin

All Christians believe that Mary was a virgin before and at the time of the birth of her son Jesus.

Is 7:14 The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Mt 1:18–25 Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Lk 1:26–27 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

Nicene Creed (325), ... Who for us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven and was
Constantinopolitan incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human.
Creed (381)

Roman Catholic Christians and many other Christians also believe that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life.

Constant faith of the Church

Great teachers of the Church from at least the fourth century spoke of Mary as having remained a virgin throughout her life:

- Athanasius (Alexandria, 293 – 373)
- Epiphanius (Palestine, 315? – 403)
- Jerome (Stridon, present day Slovenia, 345? – 419)
- Augustine (Numidia, now Algeria, 354 – 430)
- Cyril (Alexandria, 376 – 444)
- and others.

Magisterium of the Church

Council of Constantinople II (553 – 554) twice referred to Mary as “ever-virgin.”

Protestant Reformers

The great protestant reformers affirmed their belief in Mary’s perpetual virginity:

German reformer Martin Luther’s (1483–1546) writings often address the subject of Mary: On the Divine Motherhood of Mary, he wrote

In this work whereby she was made the Mother of God, so many and such great good things were given her that no one can grasp them. ... Not only was Mary the mother of him who is born [in Bethlehem], but of him who, before the world, was eternally born of the Father, from a Mother in time and at the same time man and God. (Weimer’s *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 7, p. 572.)

Luther, true to Catholic tradition, wrote on the Virginity of Mary:

It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin. ... Christ, we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact. (Weimer’s *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v.11, pp. 319–320; v. 6. p. 510.)

The French reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) also held that Mary was the Mother of God.

It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honor. ... Elizabeth called Mary Mother of the Lord, because the unity of the person in the two natures of Christ was such that she could have said that the mortal man engendered in the womb of Mary was at the same time the eternal God. (*Calvini Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Braunschweig–Berlin, 1863–1900, v. 45, p. 348, 35.)

On the perpetual virginity of Mary, “Calvin routinely brushes aside the difficulties sometimes raised from “first born” and “brothers of the Lord.” ” (O’Carroll, M., 1983, *Theotokos*, M Glazier, Inc.: Wilmington, DE, p. 94.)

The Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), wrote, on the divine motherhood of Mary,

It was given to her what belongs to no creature, that in the flesh she should bring forth the Son of God. (*Zwingli Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 6, I, p. 639.)

On the perpetual virginity of Mary, Zwingli wrote,

I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin. (*Zwingli Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.)

In another place Zwingli professed,

I esteem immensely the Mother of God, the ever chaste, immaculate Virgin Mary ...; Christ ... was born of a most undefiled Virgin. (Stakemeier, E. in *De Mariologia et Oecumenismo*, Balic, K., ed., Rome, 1962, p. 456.)

And again,

The more the honor and love for Christ grows among men, the more esteem and honor for Mary grows, for she brought forth for us so great, but so compassionate a Lord and Redeemer. (*Zwingli Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, pp. 427–428.)

Objections to Continued Virginity

There are some very common objections to the belief that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus. The first considers the “brothers” of Jesus from the Gospels.

Mt 12:46–50; While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers (*adelphoi*) appeared
Mk 3:31; outside, wishing to speak with him. (Someone told him, “Your mother and your brothers
Lk 8:19 (*adelphoi*) are standing outside, asking to speak with you.”) But he said in reply to the one who
told him, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers (*adelphoi*)?” And stretching out his hand
toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers (*adelphoi*). For whoever does
the will of my heavenly Father is my brother (*adelphos*), and sister (*adelpa*), and mother.”

Mk 6:3 Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother (*adelphos*) of James and Joses and Judas
and Simon? And are not his sisters (*adelpai*) here with us?

First it is important to note that the Bible does *not* say that these “brothers and sisters” of Jesus were children of Mary.

Second, the word for brother (or sister), ἀδελφός *adelphos* (*adelpa*) in Greek, denotes a brother or sister, or near kinsman. Aramaic and other Semitic languages could not distinguish between a blood brother or sister and a cousin, for example. Hence, John the Baptist, a cousin of Jesus (the son of Elizabeth, cousin of Mary) would be called “a brother (*adelphos*) of Jesus.” In the plural, the word means a community based on identity of origin or life. Additionally, the word *adelphos* is used for (1) male children of the same parents (Mt 1:2); (2) male descendants of the same parents (Acts 7:23); (3) male children of the same mother (Gal 1:19); (4) people of the same nationality (Acts 3:17); (5) any man, a neighbor (Lk 10:29); (6) persons united by a common interest (Mt 5:47); (7) persons united by a common calling (Rev 22:9); (8) mankind (Mt 25:40); (9) the disciples (Mt 23:8); and (10) believers (Mt 23:8). (From Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson, Publisher.)

A second objection to Mary’s virginity arises from the use of the word ἕως, *heos*, in Matthew’s gospel.

Mt 1:25 He (Joseph) had no relations with her until (*heos*) she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Greek and the Semitic use of the word *heos* (until or before) does not imply anything about what happens after the time indicated. In this case, there is no necessary implication that Joseph and Mary had sexual contact or other children after Jesus.

A third objection to the perpetual virginity of Mary arises from the use of the word πρωτότοκος, *prototokos*, translated “first-born” in Luke’s gospel.

Lk 2:7 (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn son (*prototokos*). She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger ...

The Greek word *prototokos* is used of Christ as born of Mary and of Christ’s relationship to His Father (Col 1:25). As the word does not imply other children of God the Father, neither does it imply other children of Mary. The term “first-born” was a legal term under the Mosaic Law (Ex 6:14) referring to the first male child born to Jewish parents regardless of any other children following or not. Hence when Jesus is called the “first-born” of Mary it does not mean that there were second or third-born children.

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

The Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the belief that God preserved Mary from any inclination to sin, the inheritance of original sin passed on to all mankind from our first parents, Adam and Eve. The belief of the Immaculate Conception of Mary says nothing about Mary and personal sin (Rom 3:23).

Christian belief holds that every human being through faith and through baptism is freed from sin – original sin and personal sin – through the grace of Jesus Christ. Roman Catholic Christians simply claim that Mary was the first one to whom this was done.

The basis for the belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary can be found in the Biblical revelation of holiness and the opposite of that state, sinfulness.

God is revealed as perfect interior holiness.

Is 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!” they (the Seraphim) cried one to the other.

No sin or anything tainted with sin can stand in the face of the holiness of God. “Enmity” is that mutual hatred between Mary and sin, between Christ and sin.

Gen 3:15 I will put enmity between you (the serpent, Satan) and the woman (Mary), and between your offspring (minions of Satan) and hers (Jesus); He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.

For the birth of God as a human being, God was interested in the condition of the mother’s womb. For even a great, but imperfect, judge of Israel, Samson, God was directive about the state of the mother during the pregnancy. The request for the mother to be pure is repeated for emphasis.

Judges 13:3f An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Though you are barren and have had no children, yet you will conceive and bear a son. Now, then, be careful to take no wine or strong drink and to eat nothing unclean.”

Judges 13:7 “But he (the angel) said to me, ‘You will be with child and will bear a son. So take neither wine nor strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb, until the day of his death.’ ”

Judges 13:13f The angel of the LORD answered Manoah, “Your wife is to abstain from all the things of which I spoke to her. She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor take wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean. Let her observe all that I have commanded her.”

How much more would God be interested in the state of His own mother’s womb!

The salutation of the Angel Gabriel is different from the usual angelic greeting. It indicates that Mary was exceptionally “highly favored with grace” (Greek: χαριτόω, *charitoo*, used twice in the New Testament, in Lk 1:28 for Mary – before Christ’s redemption; and Eph 1:6 for Christ’s grace to us – after Christ’s redemption).

Lk 1:28 And coming to her (Mary), he (the angel Gabriel) said, “Hail, favored one (*kecharitome*)”

Eph 1:4–6 (God) chose us in him (Jesus), before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace (*echaritosen*) that he granted us in the beloved.

Note that the angel’s salutation *preceded* Mary’s acquiescence. Mary was *already* highly favored. God’s grace was not given in time after Mary accepted the angel’s word. The Church believes that this grace was given from the very beginning of Mary’s life. It is clearly *grace* because at the time of Mary’s conception she could have done nothing to earn it.

The constant faith (*paradosis*) of the Church attests to the belief in the special preparation of the holiness of the person of Mary to bear in her body the most holy person of the Son of God.

- Post-Apostolic: Implicitly found in the Fathers of the Church in the parallelism between Eve and Mary (Irenaeus, Lyons, 140? – 202?); Found in the more general terms about Mary: “holy”, “innocent”, “most pure”, “intact”, “immaculate” (Irenaeus, Lyons, 140?–202?; Ephraem, Syria, 306–373; Ambrose, Milan, 373–397); Explicit language: Mary – free from original sin (Augustine, Hippo, 395–430 to Anselm, Normandy, 1033–1109).
- Celebrations: Eastern Church: celebrated a Feast of the Conception of Mary in the 8th to the 9th Century;
- Western Church: celebrated a Feast of the Conception of Mary in the 12th Century;
- A record of the feast in the 11th Century in Great Britain; in the 12th Century in Normandy;
- Record in many churches of a Feast of the Conception of Mary in France, Germany, Italy and Spain in the 12th Century (Bernard, Clairvaux, 1090–1153).
- 14th Century: Was noted for the opposition to the Immaculate Conception from some of the great doctors of scholasticism. The celebration of the feast was not denied though. The difficulty arose from the meaning of the universal redemption through Christ.
- 15th Century: Franciscan theologians solved the difficulty. Christ, the most perfect mediator, preserved Mary from original sin by an equally perfect act of healing. Duns Scotus (Scotland, 1266–1308) explained that the Immaculate Conception came through God’s application of the grace of Christ beforehand.
- From 15th Century: The Feast was universally celebrated; and christian piety introduced an oath to defend the belief in the Immaculate Conception to be taken not only by Religious, but also by non-Religious and at the Universities (e.g. Paris, 1497; Cologne, 1499; Vienna, 1501)
- From the 17th Century: The clause “to the shedding of blood” was added to the oath taken to defend the belief in the Immaculate Conception.
- 1854 Pope Pius IX, infallibly defined, *ex cathedra*: “The Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.”

Nonbelievers and enemies of Roman Catholic Christianity often accuse the Church of creating the belief in Mary’s freedom from original sin “the Immaculate Conception” in 1854 (as the Church named the belief of Mary’s freedom from the wages of sin, death, “the Assumption” in 1950) when the truths were defined. Such an error is equivalent to saying that before Adam named the animals and birds of creation in Gen 2:19–20 they did not exist. Or that before the early Church in her Ecumenical Councils named the belief of three persons in one God “the Trinity” and the belief that there are two natures, human and divine in the person of Jesus Christ “the Incarnation,” the truths did not exist.

In naming the content of Divine Revelation after God has revealed it to us, the Church reflects a long Biblical tradition and practice.

The Assumption of Mary

For Roman Catholic Christians, the belief in the Assumption of Mary flows immediately from the belief in her Immaculate Conception. Catholic Christians believe that if Mary was preserved from sin by the free gift of God, she would not be bound to experience the consequences of sin—death—in the same way we do. Mary’s assumption shows the result of this freedom from sin—the immediate union of her whole being with her Son Jesus Christ with God at the end of her life.

Catholic Christians believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the end of her earthly life, was assumed both body and soul into heavenly glory.

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned ...

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Cor 15:21–26 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Since sin and death are the fruits of Satan, the freedom of Mary from the original sin of Adam also frees her from the consequences of sin also. Then Mary best fulfills the scripture of Genesis.

Gen 3:15 I will put enmity between you (the serpent, Satan) and the woman (Mary), and between your offspring (the minions of Satan) and hers (Christ); He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.

The constant faith (*paradosis*) of the Church affirms the belief in the Assumption of Mary.

From the 5th Century: The Feast of the Assumption of Mary was celebrated in Syria.

5th and 6th Century: The Apocryphal Books were testimony of a certain christian sense of the abhorrence felt that the body of the Mother of God should lie in a sepulcher.

6th Century: The Feast of the Assumption was celebrated in Jerusalem (and perhaps even in Alexandria).

From the 7th Century: Clear and explicit testimony was given on the Assumption of Mary in the Eastern Church;
The same testimony is clear also in the Western Church (Gregory, Tours, 538–594).

9th Century: The Feast of the Assumption was celebrated in Spain.

From the 10th – 12th Century: No dispute whatsoever in the Western Church; there was dispute over the false epistles of Jerome on the subject.

12th Century: The Feast of the Assumption was celebrated in the city of Rome, and in France.

13th Century to the present: Certain and undisputed faith in the Assumption of Mary in the universal Church.

1950 Pope Pius XII, declared infallibly, *ex cathedra*: “Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.” (The Magisterium has stayed conspicuously silent regarding whether this process entailed Mary's physical death. The teaching merely states that Mary's body and soul were assumed at the completion of the course of Mary's life.)

Private Devotions to Mary: The Rosary

There is among Roman Catholic Christians the need and the practice of private spiritual devotions. This private prayer life is found among other Christians also. For example, some Christians pray the Psalms daily; others prefer a form of meditation, etc. The Bible requires neither of everyone.

The Catholic Church has not and does not officially teach or proclaim a private devotion as doctrine or dogma, required by faith or the practice of all believers. As any individual Christian has private devotions, so also has even the Bishop of Rome. Should even these private devotions be performed in public no universal teaching is intended.

Development of the Rosary

A very popular devotion among Roman Catholics is the rosary. The rosary enjoys a very rich and interesting history.

Ireland 800–900	Historians trace the origin of the Rosary back to ninth century Ireland. Today, as then, the 150 Psalms of the Bible, The Book of Psalms of King David, were an important form of monastic prayer. Monks and clergy recited or chanted the Psalms as a major source of hourly worship. People living near the monasteries realized the beauty of this devotion. But unable to read or memorize the lengthy Psalms, the people were unable to adapt this form of prayer for their use.
First stage	An Irish monk suggested to the people around the monastery that they might pray a series of 150 Our Fathers in place of the 150 Psalms. At first, pebbles were carried in a pouch to count the 150 Our Fathers; later ropes with 150 or 50 (1/3 of 150) knots were used. Eventually string with 50 pieces of wood was used.
Second stage	Next the Angelic Salutation (Lk 1:28) was added. St. Peter Damian (d. 1072) was the first to mention this form of prayer. Soon the Angelic Salutation replaced the 50 Our Fathers.
Third stage	Some medieval theologians considered the 150 Psalms to be veiled mysteries about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They began to compose “Psalms of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” – 150 praises in honor of Jesus. Soon psalms devoted to 150 praises of Mary were composed. When a psalter of 150 praises in Mary’s honor numbered 50 instead of 150, it was called a <i>rosarium</i> , or bouquet.
c. 1365	The salutations were grouped into decades and an Our Father was put before each decade. This combined the Our Father and the Angelic Salutation for the first time.
1409	Special thoughts – meditations – were attached for each Hail Mary bead.
1470	The Dominican Order spread the form of the “new rosary” throughout Western Christendom.
1400 – 1500	The thoughts or meditations on the 150 Hail Mary beads took the form of woodcuts (graphic pictures). This exhausted the practice easily because of the volume of pictures. Picture rosaries were shortened to one picture/thought for each Our Father as it is today.
1700’s	St. Louis de Montfort wrote the most common set of meditations for the rosary used today.
Early 1900’s	A movement was begun attempting to return to a form of the medieval rosary – one thought for each Hail Mary.
2000’s	The present devotion, differing from the medieval version, is composed almost entirely of direct quotations from the Bible. It is appropriately called “the Scriptural Rosary.” An explanation of this devotion can be obtained from <i>The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries</i> , by Edward P. Sri, published by Charis Books.
2002	In his Apostolic Letter, <i>Rosarium Virginis Mariae</i> (Rosary of the Virgin Mary), Pope John Paul II encouraged the use of the Rosary in prayer to Jesus. He proposed adding five Luminous Mysteries to the traditional pattern.

Prayers of the Rosary

The prayer of the rosary is in reality a variety of prayers, many totally scriptural.

The Apostles Creed c. 700	I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell, and on the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen
Mt 6:9–13	Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.
Christian doxology (cf. Rev 4:8)	Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Lk 1:28	Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.
Lk 1:42	Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
Lk 1:43; (see also the Council of Ephesus, 431)	“the mother of my Lord” (Holy Mary, Mother of God.)
Prayer of petition; confession of sinfulness	Pray for us sinners;
Petitioning Mary dates to 3rd century	now and at the hour of our death. Amen
The sign of the cross; invoking the Holy Trinity	In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

It is difficult to see how some Christians can criticize the private prayer life of other Christians. One such criticism centers on the element of repetition of the prayer, “Hail Mary.” But to even the casual reader of the word of God it must be apparent that the writers of the Bible—and God Himself—used the repetition of words and expressions in prayer.

The Bible uses repetition to indicate emphasis and the highest degree of something.

Is 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts!” they (the Seraphim) cried one to another.

The Psalms are a good example of repetition in prayer. Psalm 150 records a twelve-fold repetition in one psalm.

One wonders if the prayerful repetitions found in all prayer services, especially “Halleluia” are modeled after the Psalms?

Apparitions of Mary

Roman Catholic Christians are also attracted to the reported appearance of Mary, throughout history, but especially in the past century or more. One often hears of the appearance of Mary at Lourdes, France (in 1858), in Fatima, Portugal (in 1917), in Guadalupe, Mexico (in 1530), in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina (today).

It must first be recalled that the Catholic Church does not teach that these visits of Mary are a matter of either faith or morals for Catholics. These fall in the class of private devotion. The Church does permit these devotions when it is sure nothing said or believed about the visits of Mary is contrary to Divine Revelation—the Bible or the constant faith of the Church.

The Catholic Church also teaches that there is no new public revelation possible after the death of the Evangelist John. Any thing else approximating new messages would be private revelation only.

The Catholic Church applies the teaching of the Bible to her judgment of such private devotions.

1 Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Mt 7:17–18, 20 Every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. ... So by their fruits you will know them.

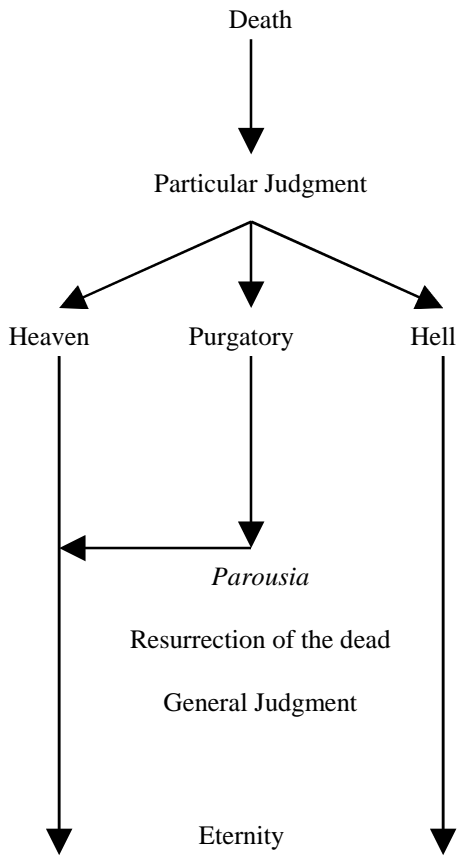
Ja 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a grapevine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh.

The tests of such apparitions of Mary have shown that nothing in her messages and consequent devotion contradicts the word of God and the constant teaching of the Church.

The fruit of the shrines of Mary speak for themselves: repentance, revival, healings, renewed faith, return to the church, Bible reading, fruits of the Spirit, etc. The Church has made and continues to follow the Biblical tests of the spirits and approves some such apparitions as of the Spirit.

It remains for all Christians of a renewed mind and of the Spirit of the Lord to follow the Biblical mandates of testing spirits and the fruit of the tree as the Catholic Church has done.

9. Eschatology: The Last Things



Catholic Christians believe that all men and women will experience the end of this human life. The Word of God teaches us that each person will be judged immediately after death.

Catholics believe that the souls of the saved who are in need of further purification before facing God will be purged in purgatory.

Heaven awaits those souls found to be in the state of grace or perfection.

Hell or eternal damnation awaits those souls who die without repentance for their sins.

At the end of the world, Jesus will come again in power and glory—the *Parousia*.

At this time the bodies of all the dead will be resurrected.

Those still living will be taken up into the air to meet Jesus.

General judgment of all people will then be made.

The blessed will possess heaven for all eternity; the damned will suffer hell for all eternity.

Catholic Christians are so aware of the Biblical theme of the last things of this life that they devote four weeks every year to a special time—Advent—a season for the faithful to listen again to the Word of God on the end of this life and the Second Coming of Jesus in glory and judgment.

All professed Christians look to the Bible for their acceptance and understanding of the end of human life and what follows human death. The study of last things is called eschatology from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning “the last or extreme.”

The stages of eschatology include individual human death, particular judgment, the choices of heaven, purgatory or hell, the end of the world, the living being “taken up,” the resurrection of the body, the Second Coming of Christ, general judgment, and the New Creation.

Christians accept that the first of the “last things” of human life is physical death. Natural death is the separation of the immortal soul from the physical body. Divine Revelation tells us the origin of human death—the sin of Adam and Eve. The punishment for the original sin is found in Genesis.

Gen 3:19 By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.

Death

Christians believe that human death closes the state of human life or the time of probation.

Scripture speaks of death in many ways:

- as a return to dirt (Gen 3:19);
- as a departure (2 Tim 4:6; Phil 1:23);
- to be at home (2 Cor 5:8–9);
- a discarding of a tent (2 Pet 1: 13–14);
- a sleeping (Mt 9:24, Jn 11:11–13);
- a rest (Rev 14:13);
- a return to God (Eccl 12:7);
- to be with Christ (Phil 1:23); and
- to live with Christ (2 Tim 2:11).

Eccl 12:5–7 Because man goes to his lasting home, and mourners go about the streets; Before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken, And the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the broken pulley falls into the well, And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the life breath returns to God who gave it.

2 Cor 5:1 For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

2 Cor 5:4 For while we are in this tent we groan and are weighed down, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

2 Cor 5:8 Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord.

2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Phil 1:21–23 For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, (for) that is far better.

2 Pet 1:13–14 I think it right, as long as I am in this “tent,” to stir you up by a reminder, since I know that I will soon have to put it aside, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me.

Immediately after Death: Particular Judgment

Catholic Christians and many other Christians believe that **immediately** after death the souls of men and women go either to heaven (or prior to that, purgatory), or to hell definitively.

Lk 16: 19–36 (Jesus said to them [the Pharisees]:...) “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise

received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

- Lk 23: 43 He (Jesus) replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”
- 2 Cor 5: 6–8 So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord.
- 1 Thess 5:10 (Jesus) died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him.
- Phil 1:21–23 For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, (for) that is far better.

The constant faith of the Church attests to the faith in the permanency of human death. That faith is best described in the writings of the Father of the Church.

Irenaeus (of Lyons, circa 130–200), set forth the idea of death as the separation of the soul from the body. The identical idea is found in Tertullian in the third century; Gregory (of Nyssa, circa 330–395) in the fourth.

That death as a separation of the soul from the body is graphically described by Augustine (of Hippo, 354–439) in his book, *The City of God*.

Clement (of Rome, d. circa 100) affirmed the permanency of death as separation and the impossibility of meriting or losing meriting after death.

Cyprian (of Carthage, cir 200–258) mentions the same fact several times in his writings.

Later Gregory (of Nazianzus, 329–389) and John Chrysostom (of Constantinople, 347–407) mention the fact several times.

It also occurs in Gregory the Great (in Rome, 540–604).

The Magisterium of the Church has confirmed throughout centuries the eternal lot of all souls, either in heaven, purgatory or hell is decided once for all at the moment of death.

Benedict XII,
Benedictus Deus,
January 29, 1336,
Denzinger 530

We define that the souls of all the saints who have left this life soon after individual death are or will be in heaven and have eternal life; in addition we define that the souls of those dying in actual mortal sin soon after individual death descend into hell.

Council of Lyons II,
1274

We believe...that those truly penitent die in charity before they have done sufficient penance for their sins of omission and commission, their souls are cleansed after death in purgatorial or cleansing punishments; ... the souls of those who have not committed any sin at all after they received holy baptism, and the souls of those who have committed sin, but have been cleansed, either while they were in the body or afterwards ... are promptly taken up into heaven. The souls of those who die in mortal sin or with only original sin soon go down into hell, but there they will receive different punishments. (Denzinger 464)

Reincarnation

It is not uncommon that people under the influence of the New Age Movement and Hollywood movies ask about the possibility of another or previous life or other lives for the soul. Catholic Christianity and all orthodox Christian faith communities have always found in the Word of God clear revelation of the unique nature of this life, of individual death and a definitive judgment for the soul.

- Mt 25: 31–41 (Then Jesus told the crowds and his disciples: ...)“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”
- 2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.
- Lk 16: 19–36 (Jesus said to them [the Pharisees]:...) “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores ...”
- Heb 9:27–28 Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment, so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Being Taken Up Into Heaven

The question of those still alive at the time of the end of the world has always concerned believers. Some evangelical Christians have developed a teaching on the so-called “rapture.” It is based on a passage from Matthew’s Gospel. Some believe in a rapture before Jesus’ second coming. These teachings began in 1830 in the Plymouth Church in England from a man named John Nelson Darby. Catholic Christians simply accept Christ’s explanation of those still alive at the end of the world.

- Mt 24:36–42 (In reply, Jesus said to them:) “But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In (those) days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be (also) at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will **be taken**, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will **be taken**, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.”

Paul says that (1) the resurrection of the dead will precede the second coming. According to Paul, the Lord will command those who have suffered human death to rise. Only then (2) will those still living at the end of time join the resurrected dead. Both groups together (3) will be witnesses to Christ’s coming.

- 1 Thess 4:16–18 For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

Heaven

Catholic Christians and all other Christians believe in the blessedness of heaven realized in the possession of God.

Scripture speaks of heaven in many ways:

- as life (Mt 18:8);
- as eternal life (Mt 25:46);
- as the crown of life (Jam 1:12);
- as the tree of life (Rev 2:7);
- as glory (Rom 8:18);
- as eternal glory (2 Tim 2:10);
- as the eternal glory of God (1 Pet 5:10);
- as rest (Heb 4:3, 11);
- as the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8);
- as the Kingdom (Mt 25: 34);
- as a dwelling in the heavens (2 Cor 5:1);
- as paradise (Lk 23:43).

Those who are in heaven will have:

- great rewards (Lk 6:23);
- treasures (Mt 6:20);
- an imperishable inheritance incapable of fading or defilement (1 Pet 1:4).

In heaven the blessed:

- will be with God (Rev 21:3);
- will be with Christ (Mk 16:19);
- will be with the angels (Mt 22:30);
- will be in the house of the Father where there are many dwelling places (Jn 14:2);
- are heirs of God, heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17);
- will see God face to face (1 Cor 13:9–12);
- will see God as he is (1 Jn 3:2).

They will reign forever and ever:

- illuminated by God (Rev 22:3–5);
- immortal and physically incorruptible (Rev 21:4);
- with an irreproachable conscience (1 Pet 3:21).

The Magisterium of the Church speaks of heaven in many ways:

- as eternal life (Denzinger, 640);
- as the eternal fatherland (Denzinger 457);
- as heaven (Denzinger 464);
- as the kingdom of heaven and celestial paradise (Denzinger 530);
- as the vision and fruition of God (Denzinger 530);
- as true beatitude (Denzinger 530);
- as eternal rest (Denzinger 530);
- as eternal beatitude (Denzinger 570);
- as the vision of God one and three (Denzinger 693);
- as glory (Denzinger 842);
- as eternal retribution (Denzinger 836);
- as the supernatural end (Denzinger 1669, 1786).

Mt 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Rom 2:6–7, 10 ... who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, ... But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good.

Jn 17:3 Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.

Mt 25:21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’

Jn 14:2–3 In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.

Ps 73:23–25 Yet I am always with you; you take hold of my right hand. With your counsel you guide me, and at the end receive me with honor. Whom else have I in the heavens? None beside you delights me on earth.

Ps 16:11 You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

Ps 17:15 I am just—let me see your face; when I awake, let me be filled with your presence.

1 Jn 3:2 Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Lk 22:29–30 I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

1 Pet 1:3–5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.

1 Pet 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- Rev 21:27 ... but nothing unclean will enter it (New Jerusalem, heaven), nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.
- Wis 5:16 Therefore shall they receive the splendid crown, the beautiful diadem, from the hand of the LORD- For he shall shelter them with his right hand, and protect them with his arm.
- 2 Cor 4:17 For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

The teachings of the Fathers of the Church affirms the constant understanding of heaven in the history of faith.

Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 1, Ch. 1 And man, being a part of your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in you.

Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 11, Ch. 13 From all this, it will readily occur to any one that the blessedness which an intelligent being desires as its legitimate object results from a combination of two things, namely, that it interruptedly enjoy the unchangeable good which is God; and that it be delivered from all doubt, and know certainly that it shall eternally abide in the same enjoyment.

Clement of Alexandria *Stromata*, Book 7, Ch. 10 For it is said, "To him that has shall be given" (Mt 25:29; Lk 19:26): to faith, knowledge; and to knowledge, love; and to love the inheritance. ... Whence at last ... it is that knowledge is committed to those fit and selected for it. It leads us to the endless and perfect end, teaching us beforehand the future life that we shall lead, according to God, and with gods; after we are freed from all punishment and penalty which we undergo, in consequence of our sins, for salutary purposes. After which redemption the reward and the honors are assigned to those who have become perfect; ... they have become pure in heart, and near to the Lord, there awaits them restoration to everlasting contemplation; and they are called by the appellation of gods, being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Savior.

Hell: Reprobation

Christians believe because the Bible is clear that hell exists.

Scripture speaks of hell in many ways:

- as a place of torment (Lk 16:28),
- as the netherworld (Lk 16:22),
- as the abyss (Lk 8:31; Rev 9:1–2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3),
- as a fiery furnace (Mt 13:42, 50),
- as a pool of fire (Rev 20:10, 14),
- as a fiery pool of burning sulfur (Rev 19:20),
- as a pool of fire and sulfur (Rev 20:10; 21:8),
- as Tartarus (Greek mythological place of punishment)(2 Pet 2:4),
- as Gehenna or as the fire of Gehenna (Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33).

As a **state**, Scripture speaks of hell with many words:

- as death (Rom 6:21; 8:6; 8:13; 2 Cor 2:14–16),
- as the second death (Rev 2:11; 20:6; 21:8),

- as eternal ruin (2 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 6:9),
- as outside darkness (Mt 8:12; 22:11–13; 25:30),
- as eternal fire (Mt 18:8, 25:41; Jude 7),
- as eternal punishment (Mt 25:46),
- as destruction (Mt 7:13; Phil 1:28; 2 Pet 3:7),
- as damnation (Mk 16:16; Jn 12:25),
- as perishing (Jn 3:16; 10:27; Rom 2:12),
- as unquenchable fire (Mk 9:42–47; Lk 3:17),
- as fire and sulfur (Rev 14:9–14),
- as thick gloom of darkness (2 Pet 2:17; Jude 13),
- as corruption (Gal 6:8),
- as Babylon (Rev 18; 19:1–3)

Mt 25: 31–46 (Then Jesus told the crowds and his disciples: ...) “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ... And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Lk 16: 19–26 (Jesus said to them [the Pharisees]:...) “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ ”

Mk 9:42–47 (Jesus said in reply ...) “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe (in me) to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna ...”

2 Thess 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, ...

Mt 13:40–42 Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

- Jn 15:6 Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.
- Rom 2:6–9 ... (he) will repay everyone according to his works: ... wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and distress will come upon every human being who does evil, ...
- 1 Cor 6:9–10 Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.
- Jn 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.
- Jn 5:29 (This was Jesus' answer ...) those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.
- Rev 21:27 But nothing unclean will enter it (the new Jerusalem, heaven), nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies.
- Rev 22:15 Outside (the new Jerusalem, heaven) are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit.
- Mt 10:28 And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.
- Rev 21:8 But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

The Fathers of the Church reflect the constant faith of the Church on the existence and nature of hell.

- Ignatius of Antioch,
Letter to the Ephesians,
Ch. 16:1 Make no mistake, brethren; the corrupter of families will not inherit the kingdom of God. If, then, those are dead who do these things according to the flesh, how much worse if, with bad doctrine, one should corrupt the faith of God for which Jesus Christ was crucified. Such a man, for becoming contaminated, will depart into unquenchable fire; and will any one who listens to him.
- Gregory of Nyssa,
The Great Catechism,
Ch. 40 Indeed, the sinner's life of torment presents no equivalent to anything that pains the sense here. Even if some one of the punishments in that other world be named in terms that are well known here, the distinction is still not small. When you hear the word fire, you have been taught to think of a fire other than the fire we see, owing to something being added to that fire which in this there is not; for that fire is never quenched, whereas experience has discovered many ways of quenching this; and there is a great difference between a fire which can be extinguished, and one that does not admit of extinction.

The teaching Magisterium of the Church has also affirmed the existence and nature of hell.

The Lateran Council IV, ... the wicked (receive), a perpetual punishment with the devil ...
1215

Pope Innocent IV
(1243–1254) But if anyone dies unrepentant in the state of mortal sin, he will undoubtedly be tormented forever in the fires of an everlasting hell. (Letter to the Bishop of Tusculum, Section 24)

Vatican Council I,
1869–70 Therefore, all who die in actual mortal sin are excluded from the kingdom of God and will suffer forever the torments of hell from which there is no redemption.

If anyone says that a man can be justified even after death; or if he says that the punishments of the damned in hell will not last forever; let him be anathema.

Purgatory

Sacred Scripture and the constant faith of the Church affirm that heaven and hell, as places, exist. Roman Catholic Christians and other Christians also profess belief in a *state of being*, not a place, called “purgatory.” The term “purgatory” is not found in the Bible; but neither are other such important Christian beliefs such as “Trinity” and “Incarnation.”

Purgatory is defined as a state of being, the continuing process of purgation or purification of the soul after human death. It is a state of perfection—begun in baptism and faith—consummated after death, *entered into only by those who are saved*. In other words, our transformation in Christ (Rom 13:14, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”), our perfection in the holiness of the Father (1 Pet 1:16, “Be holy, because I (am) holy”) is not ended at our physical death. Purgatory is a sign of God’s mercy on those who have honestly sought to know God and to do His will in this life and yet die in some degree of bondage to sin or the effects of sin.

The Church has only two official teachings concerning purgatory:

- it exists, and
- our prayers help the souls in purgatory.

God is revealed as perfect interior holiness.

Is 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!” they (the Seraphim) cried one to the other.

We are called to that same holiness.

Lv 19:2 “Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.”

1 Pet 1:15–16 As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I (am) holy.”

Who can stand in the face of the holiness of God?

Ps 15:1 LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy mountain?

Ps 66:18 Had I cherished evil in my heart, the LORD would not have heard.

Heb 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Eph 5:3 Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones.

Ex 33:18–20 Then Moses said, “Do let me see your glory!” He (Yahweh) answered, “I will make all my beauty pass before you, and in your presence I will pronounce my name, ‘LORD’; I who show favors to whom I will, I who grant mercy to whom I will. But my face you cannot see, for no man sees me and still lives.”

Rev 21:27 ... but nothing unclean will enter it (the City of God), nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Eph 5:25–27 Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her (the Church) to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

We are deprived of the vision of God because of our sinfulness. But there is a divine purging fire which can heal us.

Heb 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Heb 12:6,10 For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges. ... but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness.

Is 6:5–7 Then I (Isaiah) said, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. “See,” he said, “now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.”

1 Cor 3:11–15 For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one’s work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone’s work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire.

1 Pet 1:7 The genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus implies that our sins can be forgiven in the next world.

Mt 12:32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Scripture from the Greek Septuagint, the Old Testament of Christ, the Evangelists and Paul, and of the councils of Hippo and Carthage, affirm purgatory.

2 Mc 12:42–46 Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.

Experience teaches us that there are people who die so suddenly, they have not had the opportunity to confess their sins, but are not guilty of serious “death dealing” sin and separation from God.

The constant faith of the Church affirms the belief in purgatory.

From the earliest of times, the Fathers of the Church taught the existence of purgatory: Tertullian (Rome, 160 – 220?), Origen (Alexandria, 185 – 254?), Cyprian (Carthage, 200 – 258), Ambrose (Tier, 340 – 397), Augustine (Numidia, 354 – 430), Basil (Caesarea, 329 – 379), Gregory of Nazianzus (in Cappadocia, 329 – 389), John Chrysostom (Antioch, 349 – 407), Gregory the Great (Rome, 540 – 604), and many others.

The teaching Magisterium of the Church also affirms the belief in purgatory.

Council of Lyons II (1274) We believe ... that the souls, by the purifying compensation are purged after death.

Council of Florence Repeated the Council of Lyons II.

Council of Trent (1545–1563) We constantly hold that purgatory exists, and that the souls of the faithful there detained are helped by the prayers of the faithful.

Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶ 1031 The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of cleansing fire.

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.

Catechism of the
Catholic Church
¶ 1472

To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.

Limbo

The word limbo comes from the Latin word *limbus* which means a border, a hem, or fringe around the edge of a garment.

The term is associated in common parlance to mean some in-between state of being. It is often associated, in a religious context, with some state of being in neither heaven nor hell, therefore on the fringe of either. It has been used to refer to the abode for the dead who were neither capable of committing deadly sin (1 Jn 5:16) which excluded the soul from hell nor were baptized in water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5) which excluded the soul from heaven.

There *never has been nor is there any* official Roman Catholic doctrinal position or teaching on the existence of or state of limbo.

It must be stated that the term limbo receives a lot of attention in pastoral practice when pastors had to explain the mind of God to distraught parents whose newborn infant has died without being baptized.

Catechism of
the Catholic
Church
¶ 1261

As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,” allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church’s call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.

The Parousia: Christ’s Second Coming

Catholic Christians have always believed that Jesus Christ would come back to close the current period of human history in earth. The time when Jesus will return is given many names: the Day of the Lord, the *Parousia*, the end time, and the Second Coming of Christ.

The Bible describes the events of Jesus’ return in apocalyptic images.

Mk 13:26–27 And then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather (his) elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.

Acts 1:11 They (two men dressed in white) said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

1 Thess 4:16–18 For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

The parousia will be unmistakable because it will be accompanied by unprecedented signs.

Mt 24:27 For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Some signs are general events concerning the evangelization of the world.

Mt 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

Other signs are more proximate. Mark (Chapter 13), Matthew (Chapter 24), and Luke (Chapter 21) all describe the unmistakable signs with apocalyptic images.

2 Tim 4:1–2 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word ...

2 Tim 3:1–5 But understand this: there will be terrifying times in the last days. People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, callous, implacable, slanderous, licentious, brutal, hating what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, as they make a pretense of religion but deny its power. Reject them.

No one knows exactly when this will occur.

Mk 13:32 (Jesus began his discourse ...) “But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

1 Thess 5:2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night.

2 Pet 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

The Catholic Church teaches that we should avoid pointless speculations about the time, the details of the signs, the nature of the difficulties, etc. The Church focuses instead on the need for living the Gospel so as to be prepared for the parousia whenever it happens.

Mk 13:33,35–37 (Jesus began his discourse ...) “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ... Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’ ”

1 Pet 1:13–16 Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, live soberly, and set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Like obedient children, do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance but, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I (am) holy.”

Millennialism: A Thousand Year Reign

There exists among many Evangelical Protestants a dogma based on some passages in the Bible called *millennialism* which means a “thousand year reign.” The basis for millennialism is found in the Book of Revelation.

Rev 20:1–15 Then I saw an angel come down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a heavy chain. He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for **a thousand years** and threw it into the abyss, which he locked over it and sealed, so that it could no longer lead the nations astray until **the thousand years** are completed. After this, it is to be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for **a thousand years**. The rest of the dead did not come to life until **the thousand years** were over. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for (the) **thousand years**. When **the thousand years** are completed, Satan will be released from his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. They invaded the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.

The Magisterium of the Church has never commented on a thousand year reign of Christ. Rather, as is already clear from what is covered in these notes, the Church does not see the Second Coming of Christ at any other time than at the general judgment of all men and women which is the same as the resurrection of the dead followed by definitive reward or punishment for souls.

The Church interprets the expression “a thousand years” not literally but according to the prophetic and apocalyptic literature in which it appears. In apocalyptic literature, a thousand years would simply indicate a long period of time, in this case, the time period before the Second Coming of Christ. Apocalyptic literature is not to be taken literally.

Resurrection of the Dead

All Christians hold firmly to the belief expressed in the Bible and mirrored in the resurrection from the dead of Jesus of the resurrection of all men and women.

By “resurrection” Christians do not mean only the return to life in the body of a dead human being; it means taking on a completely new existence. We believe that the souls of all those who have died will be reunited to their bodies; but those bodies will have different characteristics.

We Catholic Christians profess this belief often when we pray the Apostles Creed: I believe in ... the resurrection of the body. In the Nicene Creed, we profess: We look for the resurrection of the dead.

Mt 22:29–32 Jesus said to them in reply, “You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

- Mt 5:29–30 (He [Jesus] began to teach them ...) If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.
- Jn 11:22–26 Jesus said to her (Martha), “Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”
- Jn 6:40 (Jesus explained to them (the disciples):) For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him (on) the last day.
- Jn 6:51 (Jesus told them:) I am the living bread ... whoever eats this bread will live forever
- Jn 6:54 (Jesus told them:) Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.

Catholic Christians believe that the dead will rise with bodies similar to those they had on earth. Some important evidence for our resurrected bodies is to read the qualities of the resurrected body of Jesus:

- appeared suddenly then disappeared;
- passed through walls;
- his body seemed to be the same as it was before death; but it was also very different;
- he even changed his appearance so that his disciples didn’t recognize him (Lk 24).

The Church believes we will resurrect the same bodies as we had on earth by the language of the Bible. The resurrection will change these bodies into a glorified form. The word “reawakening” is used in reference to the resurrection.

Catholic scholars have distinguished certain qualities of our resurrected bodies:

- *impassability*: freedom from physical ills of any kind (sickness, death, etc.);
- *subtility*: the spiritualization of the body—dominated by the soul;
- *agility*: the ability of the soul to move the body with ease and speed;
- *clarity*: freedom from defects—having great beauty and radiance.

Paul also speaks in language of reawakening instead of replacement:

- 1 Cor 15:53 For that which is corruptible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and that which is mortal must clothe itself with immortality.
- 1 Cor 15:42–44 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.

Scripture speaks of the resurrection of both the blessed and the damned:

- Jn 5:28–29 (Jesus’ answer:) “Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.”

- Mt 22:23–32; Mk 12:18–27; Lk 20:27–40 On that day Sadducees approached him (Jesus), saying that there is no resurrection. They put this question to him, saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies without children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up descendants for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died and, having no descendants, left his wife to his brother. The same happened with the second and the third, through all seven. Finally the woman died. Now at the resurrection, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had been married to her.” Jesus said to them in reply, “You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”
- Jn 11:22–26 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”
- Acts 23:6 Paul was aware that some were Sadducees and some Pharisees, so he called out before the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees; (I) am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead.”

The Magisterium constantly proclaims the truth of the resurrection of the body.

- Council of Toledo XI, 675 Thus, according to the model of our Head, we profess that there is a true bodily resurrection of all the dead... we shall rise in this very body in which we now live and are and move. (Denzinger 287)
- Lateran Council IV, 1215 ... He (Christ) will come at the end of the world; he will judge the living and the dead; and he will reward all, both the lost and elect, according to their works. And all these will rise with their own bodies which they now have so that they may receive according to their works, whether good or bad; the wicked, a perpetual punishment with the devil; the good, eternal glory with Christ. (Denzinger 429)

General Judgment

As we began the study of eschatology, we saw that each individual person is judged by God immediately after his or her death. That prompt sentence is called the particular judgment. The Bible is very emphatic in asserting that there is also a general judgment of all mankind at the end of the world.

The particular judgment addresses each of us as individual and personal; the general judgment will address all of us as social, members of society. Also, after the resurrection, the body must also share the judgment of the soul. The general judgment addresses both the whole human person, resurrected body reunited with the soul, and the whole of human society.

Christians pray and affirm their belief in a general judgment in the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed: “Jesus Christ ... sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.”

Scripture is abundantly clear on the point of general judgment for all people.

- Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.
- Jn 5:22–29 Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. ... And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.

- Mt 25: 31–46 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”
- Acts 10:42 (Peter addressed them in these words) ... He (Jesus) commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.
- Rom 2:15–16 They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people’s hidden works through Christ Jesus.
- Rev 20:11–15 Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.

The New Creation

The Bible tells all Christians what life after general judgment will be like. The Evangelist John wrote of his visions of the New Creation in his book of Revelation.

- Rev 21:1–8 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them (as their God). He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, (for) the old order has passed away.” The one who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then he said, “Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true.” He said to me, “They are accomplished. I (am) the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water. The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son. But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”
- Rev 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: “To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.”

Our Hope and Promise

Rev 22:20-21 The One who gives this testimony says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Appendix: A Personal Relationship With Christ

In light of the emphasis of contemporary evangelicalism on the role or place of a personal relationship with Christ, it behooves the authors to put this emphasis in an historical perspective, in this appendix.

Some Catholic Christians and some non-believers are often heard to say that the Church never taught that a “personal relationship with Christ” was necessary for salvation.

The term “personal relationship” is, first of all, not biblical. Neither word nor the compound phrase is found in the Bible. But then, neither are such terms as “Trinity”, “Incarnation”, “Eucharist”, “Lord’s Supper”, etc., found in the Bible. The expression “personal relationship” comes neither from the language of the Bible nor from the history of Christian faith. The expression comes from the humanist psychology of the last hundred years, principally that of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and Eric Fromm. It also has its roots in over emphasis on the attitude of rugged individualism of the early development of America.

In using the expression “personal relationship” there is a danger in attempting to harmonize the formulas of the Bible with the formulas of psychology, psychiatry, and/or American nationalism. The language of the Bible and the languages of psychology, psychiatry, and nationalism reflect divergent perceptions and conceptualizations. Attempting to treat them as identical can only be artificial.

How did the Catholic Church of the past and how does the Church of the present teach the relationship each Christian must have with his or her Lord and Savior?

Many see the foundation for a personal relationship with Jesus implicit in John chapter three.

Jn 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him (Nicodemus), “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus, as Christians to follow for all ages, asked Jesus in return what was it that will allow a man to be “begotten from above.” Jesus answered him repeating Himself:

Jn 3:5 Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

Again Nicodemus presses Jesus for a further explanation. Jesus answers only that belief and action – deeds, works done in God – will accomplish what is required.

Jn 3:12–21 ... whoever believes in him ... whoever lives the truth ... his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

But Jesus seems not to be entirely clear on the requirements. But as the Church has taught through all ages, all of the Bible does present clear requirements for the Christian’s relationship to Jesus.

The Catholic Church, using *explicit* Scriptures, has always found that the basis of a personal relationship with Jesus begins at the origin of the Christian life. The Church, from Pentecost onward, examines the language of Christ and Sacred Scriptures and the content of that language for God’s desire for the Christian’s relationship to Him. The Church begins at the beginning of life as a Christian.

The origin of the life of a Christian and of Christian perfection to which the Bible constantly calls us, is the Heavenly Father, Who communicates His life through the Son, and through the Son, the Holy Spirit.

1 Jn 4:7–10 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

The initiative for the life of a Christian is a movement descending from the Father to men: the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit sanctifies man.

- 1 Jn 4:10 In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us ...
- 2 Cor 13:13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.
- 1 Pet 1:2 ... in the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification by the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ: ...

The movement descending from the Father to man touches man first in baptism.

- Rom 6:3–5 Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.
- Col 2:12–13 You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him ...
- Eph 2:4–6 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus,

Through this participation the Christian is a new creature living in an atmosphere clearly new.

- 2 Cor 5:17 So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

This new life of the Christian is directly a participation in the life of Christ, is the life of a member, joined with the Head, in the Body of Christ which is the Church.

- Eph 4:15–16 Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

The movement through Christ in the Father, founded in participation in the divine life – the movement of life in its origin involves union with Christ and – through Christ – with the Father.

- Jn 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."
- Jn 14:20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.
- Col 3:3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

The new life of the Christian is an assimilation of God through Christ. This life begins in baptism.

- Gal 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
- Rom 8:14–17 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

The new life of the Christian is a personal gift of the Father.

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

The response to this personal communication in the Christian is the gift or the donation of self to God through Christ.

2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

1 Cor 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

1 Cor 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Corresponding to this ontological state, the Christian life is not to be lived for itself, but for Christ and – through Christ – for God.

Rom 14:7–8 None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Rom 6:11 Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

How is this gift of self of the Christian to be made manifest? It is first manifested in service to God because service to God involves conformity to the divine will and also praise to God.

Christ is the model for the Christian of service in the divine will.

Heb 10:5–7 For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: "... a body you prepared for me ... 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.'"

Jn 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work."

Jesus teaches us that obedience to the will of the Father is our calling.

Mt 6:9–10 This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Mt 12:50 For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.

The total earthly servitude of Christ consummated on the cross was praise and glory to God.

Jn 17:4 I glorified you (Father) on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do.

Just as with Christ, the servitude of the Christian is simultaneously praise to God.

1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Eph 1:11–12 In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

The gift of the self for the Christian is the denial of self.

Mk 8:34–35 He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."

Mt 19:21 Jesus said to him (the young man), “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

In the life of the Father through Christ, charity/love holds first place.

Mt 22:36–40 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

1 Cor 12:31–13:13 Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ... So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gal 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Rom 13: 8–10 Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, (namely) “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Bibliography

For one to come to know and understand the faith of Catholic Christianity, the availability of primary documents of the Church is important.

In this bibliography we present those published works for which we owe a debt of inestimable gratitude. As the Bible would put it, there is nothing new under the sun. Hence we drew heavily from these faithful people of yesterday and today in reformulating in Biblical terms the faith of Catholic Christians. We are indebted to many authors for their scholarship. This bibliography also serves as an excellent source for primary documents on Roman Catholic faith and practice.

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