

Catholic Bible Answers
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Be ready always with an answer for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

Church Unity

Did Christ found one Church? “There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism; one God.”(Eph.34:4-6, Jn.17:21).

Is it against Christ's will for there to be division in His Church? “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing; and that there be no dissension among you, but that you be perfectly united in one mind and in one judgment.” (1 Cor. 1:10.)

How can we heal the division in Christ's Church? By emphasizing what we have in common, learning why we have different beliefs, and by having love for one another. “By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”(Jn. 13:35.)

Bible Only Theory

Why does the Catholic Church reject the Bible only theory? The word “Catholic”, meaning universal, was first written in 110 A.D. by a Bishop named St. Ignatius of Antioch. He wrote, “where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church”. The Catholic Church is 2000 years old. It is the first and oldest Christian church. All Protestant churches can trace their origins to the 1500's when a Catholic monk named Martin Luther proposed the Bible only theory. He was warned that it is a logical fallacy because the Bible cannot interpret itself, (Acts8:27-31, 2Pt.1:20,21,3:16) it must have an interpreter. The many divisions among Protestant churches bear witness to that fact. The scripture itself does not say it is the sole source of revelation. He was successful only because of the recent invention of the printing press. Before then, it was a physical impossibility to put a Bible in every hand. None of the apostles ever had a copy of the New Testament, and its books were disputed for 400 years.

Tradition

Tradition is inescapable. Many Protestant churches claim to have no tradition, but this is not so. Each church has a particular group of interpretations of scripture, which form their tradition and is passed on. An example is, “Accept Christ as your personal Lord and savior”, which is nowhere in Scripture. Scripture does not use this expression. It is part of their tradition. (Note it is not against Catholic beliefs.) Also, most accept the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, yet neither word is used in scripture. It is part of a Tradition, which Catholics also believe in. Protestants accept the New Testament, a group of books chosen by Catholic Bishops at the Council of Carthage in 396. The Apostles did not decide what books would be in the New Testament, but the Church Christ founded did.

Scripture teaches tradition is important (1 Cor.11:2, Gal. 1:8-9, 2 Thess.2:15, 3:6, 2 Tim.1:13, 2:2, 3:14)

The Pope

Revelation is made up of Sacred Scripture (written word of God) and Sacred Tradition (spoken word of God). It needs a reliable and authoritative interpreter, one free from error (infallible). The Pope is the infallible interpreter of revelation. The Pope is only infallible in matters of faith and morals when he clearly defines something as Chief shepherd of the Catholic Church. He does not make new revelation, but clarifies the original revelation of Christ and the Apostles. The Pope is not impeccable or incapable of sinning. Belief in infallibility is inescapable, it is not an option. We either believe the Pope, ourselves, or someone else to be the infallible (reliable) guide to scripture. We must trust in someone's interpretation of scripture. Catholics trust the Pope because he was appointed by Christ. "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Mt.16:17-19) "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." (Lk. 22:31,32). Christ named him Peter "Cephas", which in Hebrew means "foundation stone". The Greek rendition does not convey its full Hebrew meaning. "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." (Mt.16:19) The "keys" symbolize authority (Is. 22:15-25, Rv.1:18). Thus, the Pope has authority. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn.10:14) and to Peter "Feed my sheep" (Jn.21:15-17) which means "teach my Church." He appoints Peter as chief shepherd of His church. Christ is the invisible head of the Church, the Pope is the visible head. Christ appointed St. Peter to lead in His place, which is clear from scripture. Through His mystical body, the Church, Christ continues to appoint the leader of His Church, the successors of St. Peter. Scripture shows the first dispute over doctrine was settled by a Church council (Acts 15) presided over by the first Pope, Peter, who spoke first (Acts 15:7). This is the scriptural model for settling disputes over doctrine. Peter is listed first in every list of Apostles (Mt. 10:1-4, Mk. 3:16-19, Lk. 6:12-16, Acts 1:13), first to work a miracle in His name (Acts 3:6-7), and first to proclaim the gospel (Acts 2:14-40).

Mary

Christ is the new Adam. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live" (1 Cor. 15:22). Mary is the new Eve (Gen. 3:15). As through Eve all died, so through Mary all will live. A fallen angel deceived Eve, a virgin (Gen.3:4), she disobeyed God and brought death to the world. A good angel gave truth to a "virgin named Mary" (Lk. 1:27), she obeyed God and brought Life to the world. Catholics worship only God, but they honor Mary as their spiritual Mother (Rev. 12:1-17, Jn.19:26,27.). Mary is the Mother of God (Lk.1:43, Jn.20:28). Therefore, she is greater than others who were taken bodily to Heaven (Gen. 5:24, 2 Kings 2, Heb. 11:5-6). At the end of her life, she was assumed into heaven. The Hail Mary prayer gives Mary the same honor the Bible does in Lk.1:28,42 and fulfills Mary's prophesy (Lk. 1:48.) Christ kept the commandment of "Honor your Father and Mother." He honored Mary. When we honor Mary our adopted Mother (Rv.12:17, Jn.19:26), we imitate Christ our adopted brother (Jn. 1:12). Christ is our only intercessor with the Father, but Mary can intercede (pray for us) with her Son Jesus. He

worked His first miracle at her request (Jn. 2:1-12). We can ask others to pray for us, especially if they are a saint in Heaven. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them." (Mt. 7:17-20). Catholics, and some Protestant denominations, find devotion to Mary bears the good fruits of increased faith in Christ, fidelity to God's commandments, grace, and love of God. As a builder is honored when someone admires his work, so too is God honored when we honor Mary. God loves us to honor Mary as a Father is pleased when his daughter is honored. All the honor we give to Mary is reflected back to God since we honor her for what He has done for her, with her, and through her. When we honor her, we honor Him.

Salvation

Are there different degrees of sin? "Therefore, whoever breaks the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called great." (Mt. 5:19) Jesus said to Pilate "You would have no power over Me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason, the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin." (Jn. 19:11).

Can we be certain we are saved, or must we hope? Jesus said to the Apostles as He commissioned them "You will be hated by all because of My name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved." (Mt. 10:22). Jesus said to His disciples about the end "...the one who perseveres to the end will be saved." (Mt. 24:13. See also 1 Cor. 9:26-27, 10:12, Phil. 3:10-16.)

Does God want works to accompany faith? "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 good works, is dead..." (Jam. 2:14-26). Jesus said "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not drive out demons in Your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in Your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me you evildoers.'" (Mt. 7:21-23) Jesus said to His disciples "For the Son of Man will come with angels in His father's glory, and he will repay everyone in accordance with his conduct." (Mt. 16:27). Jesus answered the rich young man, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt. 19:16-19) (Mt. 25:31-46, Dan. 4:24, Rev. 14:13, 20:13).

Seven Sacraments

Baptism: Jesus said to the eleven "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." (Mt. 28:19).

Confession: “He who conceals his sins prospers not, but he who confesses them and forsakes them obtains mercy.” (Prv. 28:13) Jesus said to the Apostles after His resurrection “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (Jn.20:23).

Eucharist: “While the disciples were eating, Jesus took the 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 for you in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt.26:26-28, Jn.6).

Confirmation: 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 He 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. (Acts 8, 14-17)

Marriage: Jesus said to the Pharisees, “God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become as one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no man must separate...” (Mk. 10:2-12).

Holy Orders: “Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abraham with these words...” (Gen. 14:18) “In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified Himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to Him: ‘You are My Son; this day I have begotten you’ just as He says in another place ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Heb. 5:5-10, Lk. 22:19, Acts 14:22).

Anointing of Sick: “Is any among you sick? He should summon the priests of the Church and they should pray over him and anoint 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 they will be forgiven.” (Jam. 5:14-15).

Why call Priests Father? St Paul wrote “I am writing this not to shame you, but to admonish you as my 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.” (1 Cor. 4:14-15). St Paul also wrote “You recall brothers our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order to not burden any of you we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. You are witness and so is God, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. 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 of glory.” (1 Thes. 2:9-12).

Why are Priests celibate? When the disciples questioned Jesus about not marrying, He said “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.” (Mt. 19:12) Jesus said to the Apostles “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive an overabundant return...” (Lk. 18:29-30)

Morality

Abortion: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” (Jer. 1:5) The angel said to Zechariah before the birth of John the Baptist “...for he will be great in the sight of Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.” (Lk. 1:15) “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Lk. 1:41) “For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.” (Lk. 1:44) “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb.” (Ps. 139:13)

Fornication (pre-marital sex): Jesus said to His “For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, and blasphemy.” (Mt. 15:19) “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.” (Eph. 5:5,6).

Contraception (Artificial birth control): “God blessed male and female, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...’”(Gen. 1:28) Children too are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children born in one’s youth. Blessed are they whose quivers are full.” (Ps. 127:3-5) Then Judah said to Onan, “Unite with your brother’s widow, in fulfillment of your duty as brother-in-law, and thus preserve your brother’s line.” Onan however, knew that the descendants would not be counted as his; so whenever he had relations with his brother’s widow, he wasted his seed on the ground, to avoid contributing offspring for his brother. What he did greatly offended the Lord, and the Lord took his life too.” (Gen. 38:8-10).