

SHARING JESUS WITH...

CATHOLICS

WHAT ARE THEIR FOUNDATIONS

Roman Catholicism is a worldwide religious organization that is headquartered in Vatican City in Italy. Their leader is called the Pope. When he takes office he becomes the **bishop of Rome** and chief pastor of the church. They claim that their church was founded by Jesus Christ and that Peter was their first Pope. They are led by the current Pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio).

CATHOLIC CHURCH BELIEFS

Are Catholics true Christians?

They are if they have trusted in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of their sins. However if they believe that they are saved by God's grace and their works they are essentially denying the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and that calls into question their understanding of the gospel and are not saved. Being in the body of Christ makes someone a Christian, not Catholicism. We must remember people have individual personal beliefs while the Catholic church has their official teaching and doctrines which we will see below.

What do Catholics believe about God?

Catholics and Protestants do share same view of God that He exists as the triune God. They believe God is the eternal creator and sustainer of the universe. They believe Jesus was born of a virgin, died for the sins of mankind, was buried and physically raised to life. They believe the Holy Spirit is God, sent from the Father and the Son.

What do Catholics believe about mankind and sin?

Catholics do believe similarly that mankind was born with original sin but they hold some exceptions. Mary the mother of Jesus was born without original sin, this is known as the **Immaculate Conception**. Mary is elevated to very high level in Catholicism. She sits at the right hand of Jesus in heaven, is second to Eve, called the "all holy one" (CCC 2677), brings eternal life through her intercession to Christ (CCC 963), and is someone we should pray to (CCC 2679).

A person can receive **sainthood** by having an exceptional degree of holiness. This is often achieved by various practices of piety. The process is called **veneration**.

Sins are categorized by different levels and called **Mortal** or **Venial**. Mortal sins are related to breaking the Ten Commandments and can cause someone to lose their state of grace unless absolved by forgiveness.

There are 70 million Catholics in America which is 22% of the United States population.

There are 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide.

Why the emphasis on Mary?

Catholics believe Mary is essential to Salvation
"And, no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother"
—Pope Leo 13th
Octobri Mense, (1903-1914)

A practicing Catholic is someone who lives by their beliefs and a Catholic in good standing is one who has a regular prayer life, participates in mass, and sacraments regularly.

Who are the Saints?

The NIV Bible uses the word "saint" 69 times to refer to all the Christians who follow Christ.

Assurance of Salvation?

Many Catholics find it prideful and assuming when protestants bring up their assurance of salvation. This is based on having to work for salvation.

From the Council of Trent

“The bishops, successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord . . . the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments” (CCC 2068)

The Seven Sacraments

1. Baptism (infant)
2. Confirmation
3. Eucharist
4. Penance (Confession)
5. Anointing of the Sick
6. Marriage
7. Holy Orders (Devotions)

The Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of education and medical services in the world.

Defining Terms

The “Word of God” in the Catholic Church is not only the Bible but includes tradition and when the church speaks from the seat of authority.

Catholics believe in two types of punishment for sin, **temporary** and **eternal**. Those who do not finish absolving a venial sin on earth will finish in purgatory. Those who die without forgiveness for a mortal sin will go to Hell. Catholic priests are key in forgiveness of sin.

What do Catholics believe about Salvation?

The main different between Catholics and protestants in the essential beliefs is over their doctrine of Salvation. The doctrine of **justification** is the key to knowing the difference. The Greek *dikaioō* “to justify” is understood as a position in protestant churches and in Catholic churches it is more like **sanctification** which is a process. The official Catholic church doctrine of salvation is that grace is infused into a baby at baptism making them justified before God. This justification can be lost through sin and must be regained by repeated participation in the sacraments found in the church (See CCC 1821, 2010, 2020, 2068).

What do Catholics believe about life after death?

Catholics believe in eternal life after death in Heaven and Hell, but they also believe many people will enter **purgatory**, an after death state of purification which is described as “a cleansing fire.” Everyone who enters purgatory will enter Heaven. Catholics are urged to pray for those in purgatory on their behalf.

What are some Catholic practices?

There is no provision for divorce, only marriage can be annulled if marriage vows were not fulfilled in the first place.

Praying specific prayers like the rosary, hail Mary, to achieve penance.

Use of contraceptives and any other type of birth control is not permitted.

Only men may serve as priests but woman can serve the church as nuns.

There church services are liturgical in nature and follow a prescribed set of teachings for the entire Catholic church weekly in mass.

What are the Catholics sources of authority?

Catholics have three sources of authority. The **Scriptures, tradition, and the Magisterium** (the Catholic Churches authentic interpretation including Papal infallibility) . The Catholic Bible has all sixty-six books of our Bible but also includes the apocrypha which was added in 1546 AD. The church holds a high view of church tradition and the practices done in history.

In 1870 at the first Vatican Council Papal infallibility was affirmed although it had been practiced for hundred of years prior. **Papal infallibility** is the teaching that since Jesus promised to Peter that when the Pope speaks “ex cathedra” (from the chair) he is incapable of speaking in error.

What is the governing structure of the Catholic church?

The Catholic church is governed by a presbyterian “top down” style of authority. Baptist churches are antonymous and govern themselves, but the Catholic church leadership comes from the pope and other leaders through various regions, dioceses, and parishes. Catholic schools and hospitals fall under the leadership of the church. A Catholic service called a mass.

EXTRA RESOURCES

BOOKS

Evangelicals, Catholics, and
Unity, Michael Horton

Holy Ground: Walking with
Jesus as a former Catholic,
Chris Castaldo

Talking with Catholics about the
Gospel,
Chris Castaldo

Roman But Not Catholic,
Kenneth Collins, Jerry Walls

Reasoning from the Scriptures
with Catholics,
Ron Rhodes

YOUTUBE

Roman Catholicism:
Contending for the Faith with
Mike Winger

WEBSITES

carm.org/roman-catholicism

Str.org

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

The Scripture is what Catholics and Protestants hold in common. It puts both on equal footing when it comes to the authority of the Catholic church and how protestants interpret it for their authority and doctrine.

The Bible teaches we are saved by faith alone.

Ephesians 2:8-10, Acts 4:12; 16:31, Romans 10:9-10, 13

The bible teaches that justification is a position given by Christ.

Romans 3:20-26; 8:30-33, Galatians 2:16, Titus 3:7

The Bible does not teach...

A doctrine of purgatory, praying through Mary, papal infallibility, that those who die with unrepentant sin will go to Hell, and other Catholic practices.

SHARING JESUS WITH CATHOLICS

General tips and suggestions

Start with prayer. Ask God to show you the right time and way to witness. As always, build a relationship with Catholics, be kind and compassionate in your conversations with them. Engage them out of a desire to help them understand the gospel and to believe what is true. Don't focus on the minor issues but rather focus on their understanding of the gospel and salvation.

Specific tips and suggestions

The books of Romans and Galatians are a great books to use and encourage Catholics to read. Paul really goes into detail about what the gospel is and what it is not. He talks about the issues of work being added to grace alone.

Catholicism by its nature is very liturgical and ritualistic. Focusing on idea that the Bible teaches we must have a relationship with God through Jesus.

Objection: The Catholic church was the original church.

Response: The word Catholic in it's first use, just meant the universal church. The early church father's used the term catholic but referred to the Christian church all together.

Objection: There are 45,000 protestant denominations, but only one Roman Catholic church that has a uniform teaching and doctrine.

Response: This is not true, there is a wide variety of beliefs that are held within the Catholic church as well. The beliefs have changed over the 21 ecumenical councils in their history.

