

## Introduction:

Why bother with this?

“We believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. So parishioners are led to quote each week at Mass. But is it true? Is Catholicism the faith received from Christ? Does the Roman Catholic Church extend back to the time of Christ? Does the Church have a legitimate claim to the teaching, ruling and sanctifying authority of Peter and the Apostles? Are the sacraments able to make a person holy and acceptable to God? Does the Roman Catholic way of salvation lead a person to heaven?

I have been asked on many occasions why Catholicism and [for lack of a better term] Protestantism seem so vastly different. If they both have roots in the Bible, God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit, why was there ever a divide?

To answer those questions, I have to ask a question or two. Does the truth matter? Does doctrine matter? Does the source for truth and doctrine matter? Is there another gospel? Gal 1.6-9

*Gal 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 2 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be **accursed**. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be **accursed**.*

- Paul under inspiration announced a serious condemnation [anathema – devote to or bind to destruction] on anyone preaching another gospel.
- At the Council of Trent (1545-1563) Catholicism announced more than 100 anathemas on anyone that questioned the Church’s official teaching on exactly that.

I want to clarify from the beginning that these lessons are intended to talk about official beliefs and teaching of Catholicism. The information I will give comes from their own mouths with their own explanations. I will merely compare what they have said with scripture. Here are their sources. Remember this; there is only one Roman Catholic Faith. Regardless of the variations in patterns or

obedience the beliefs are practices are received from Scripture and Tradition as interpreted by Roman Catholic Bishops under the leadership of the Pope.

### Sources of Catholic Doctrine

- Catechism of the Catholic Church- Edited by Joseph Ratzinger [Also known as Pope Benedict XVI (1994)]
- Decrees of Ecumenical Councils
- Papal Documents
- Code of Canon Law
- The Liturgy (teaching) of the church
- Roman Catechism (Council of Trent)
- Summa Theologica – Thomas Aquinas
- Many other books by leading theologians

Two books helpful in this study are:

- Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma – Ludwig Ott
- The Gospel According to Rome- James McCarthy<sup>1</sup>

We will look at four major sections regarding Catholicism:

- Salvation
- The Mass
- Mary
- Authority

Lesson one: Salvation part one – Infant and adult justification

Infant baptism.

There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Faith. I'll list them briefly here but we will encounter them as they rise in person's life. *1) Baptism 2) Eucharist (Mass) 3) Confirmation 4) Penance (also known as reconciliation or confession 5) Anointing of the sick (Extreme Unction or last rites) 6) Holy orders 7) Matrimony*

1. Original sin: the basis for **infant baptism**. The church correctly declares that all people are born in sin as the descendants of Adam. Rom 5.12; 1 Cor 15.20-22. As a result all people including children are separated from

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<sup>1</sup> McCarthy, James G. *The Gospel according to Rome*. Eugene, Or: Harvest House, 1995.

God at birth and are in danger of eternal death. The church also correctly declares that God sent Jesus as the remedy for sin and its resulting separation. *Ro 3:24 ...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith... 1 John 2.2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.* As well they are correct in saying that this death is not automatically applied and people are not automatically saved (2 Cor 5.15) Council of Trent.

- a. The **application** of Jesus' sin payment or redemption is through infant baptism.
    - i. Holy Baptism; Holy water.
    - ii. Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ and are incorporated into the church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." – Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994.
  - b. Official teaching that by baptism a child is:
    - i. Rescued from the power of Satan
    - ii. **Freed** from original sin
    - iii. Made innocent and stainless before God
    - iv. **Born** again
    - v. Given the gift of **divine** life
    - vi. Made partaker of eternal life
    - vii. Made a **temple** of the Holy Spirit
    - viii. Made a member of Christ's body
    - ix. Welcomed into the church
    - x. Committed to being **raised** in the Roman Catholic faith.
2. **Limbo**: What happens if a child dies before being baptized? Thomas Aquinas the premier theologian of Catholicism said that of all sins original sin is the least because it was not a choice of the child. Yet without baptism Catholicism declares that a person can never see heaven. So there must be a place though not declared in the scriptures between heaven and hell that is pleasant and peaceful though not as wonderful as heaven

because God isn't there. It is called Limbo. Limbo is neither an official teaching nor is it explicitly denied by the church. Limbo is in "**limbo.**"

3. **Sanctifying** Grace – Adam and Eve were created righteous and had a supernatural gift called divine life. It is referred to as *sanctifying grace* or sometime **deifying** grace. When they sinned they forfeited this sanctifying grace as do all natural born children; descendants of Adam. According to the church (Catechism 1266, 1996-1997, 1999, 2023) sanctifying grace is reclaimed though baptism by the infusion or pouring in of sanctifying grace.
4. **Justification** – Baptism is the **instrumental** cause of pouring in or infusing this sanctifying grace. Baptism justifies both babies and adults. So a baptized individual is in the state of grace or he is justified.
5. A biblical response. The bible teaches from cover to cover justification by **faith** not by baptism. Just in Romans we see...
  - a. Justification is a **divine act**. *Ro 8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*
  - b. Justification is by divine **decree**. *Ro 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,*
  - c. Justification is when God **credits us** with Jesus' own righteousness. *Ro 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;*
  - d. Justification if only for those who have **personal** faith in Jesus. *Ro 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
  - e. Justification by faith is the **consistent** teaching of scripture. Rom 3.28; Rom 4.3; *Ro 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
6. The Catholic Church agrees that faith is necessary for salvation and justification (Catechism 161) yet they reject the idea that faith is absent at infant baptism. When we say the infant is incapable of faith they counter that the faith of the priest, the parents and godparents justifies the child.

Faith is not a single decision but a process. The rite of baptism saves the child and justifies him/her. (Catechism – 1217-1218,1238.).

What is the danger in infant baptism? A child so baptized may think he or she is on the road to heaven because of a right relationship with God decided for them before they were even self-aware.

## Adult Baptism

It pays to begin young. Baptism as an infant is certainly a preferred way of getting started in the Catholic Church. It can all be done for you and it can all happen in a day. Not so with converts to Catholicism.

1. First **actual** grace – God reaches out to the person and creates a desire to seek him. We can agree in principle to this. No man seeks after God... No man can come to the Father unless his Spirit draws him. This first *actual* grace must be acted upon; he must decide to yield or not.
2. **Faith** – Once he had decided to respond to the first actual grace he must affirm the faith, that is state that he believe in the theology of and confesses to the faith.
3. **Good works** – This is the step of preparation and doing of virtuous deeds as proof of faith. It may last years. It was not defined well until the second Vatican Council in 1963. It was clarified in a specific course of action called the R.C.I.A (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (the catechumenate – the person is a catechumen). There are three steps.
  - a. **Evangelization** – The candidate for justification is given a sponsor and they are led through questioning to see if they are sincere and if they truly desire to convert to Catholicism.
  - b. **Instruction** – The candidate moves on to the preparation period in which the officiating priest states: this is the way of faith along which Christ will lead you toward eternal life. Are you prepared to begin the journey today under the guidance of Christ? If yes the priest marks the person with the sign of the cross. He goes on to exorcism and initiation for purification.
  - c. **Purification** - indoctrination which may take years because he must become strong. His indoctrination will include many secret rites

and initiations into the mysteries of salvation. When he has sufficiently participated in the faith worship and charity of the church he moves on to **election**. Note the bible terms. He is presented as examined and ready and his sponsors must testify to his having heard the word, walked in the faith, assembled with the community and in general done all that is asked. Then comes purification in which he must spend the season of lent (40 days leading up to Easter) in reflection, penance and prayer. He is to fast on Saturday before Easter.

4. **Baptism** – Finally in a ceremony very similar to the infant baptism he is justified. Holy Eucharist and Confirmation immediately follow for the adult convert.

A biblical response.

God justifies by **Grace** not **works**. The Church councils announce anathemas unending on anyone that says a man is justified by faith and that doesn't add cooperating works to it. Yet the bible says clearly:

- **Ro 4:5** But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, **6** just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:
- **Ga 3:11** But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."
- **Ga 2:15** We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, **16** knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.
- **Eph 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

God justifies the **ungodly** not the **righteous** – Romans 4.5 says God justifies the ungodly.

- **Repentance** - He calls sinners to repentance and faith Acts 17.30. Repentance is the response to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in

which a person is convinced of his evil doings and agrees with God that his condemnation is just (Jn 16.7-11)

- Not **reformation** - The whole of Catholic theology rests in the idea of performance based justification. The person is to reform himself completely by way of the R.C.I.A in order to make himself a worthy candidate to election and then for baptismal justification. The Catholic Church points people to a **process** instead of pointing them to Jesus the **Savior**. They are doing exactly what Paul said in *Rom 10.2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Next Week: Re-justification and Final destiny