

## **Understanding Catholicism**

Summer 2016

### **Lesson Eleven: Dogmas, Celibacy & Reaching Catholics**

#### **To the Catholic Reader**

Once again for newcomers: we are letting the Catholic Church speak for itself. Sources of Catholic Doctrine. The primary Document which quotes many others is: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church-* Edited by Joseph Ratzinger [Also known as Pope Benedict XVI (1994)]

Two books helpful in this study are:

- Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma – Ludwig Ott
- The Gospel According to Rome

#### **To the Catholic Reader:**

The Author of the Book, James G McCarthy would like you to know that “almost 20 years ago I stood at a junction where you may now stand or soon find yourself. Before me lay the most difficult decision of my life. In one direction there was the faith of my youth, my religious heritage and my church, In the other there was Christianity as I had come to know it from the Word of God. Complicating the decision was the knowledge that my family would be terribly hurt if I left the Church. Yet, no longer believing that the Roman Church was the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church founded by Christ. I knew I had to leave. I had to obey God rather than Men” (Acts 4: 19; 5:29).

“My prayer is that God will guide you even as He did me at that most difficult time. I offer the following Biblical principles to guide you as you weigh the matter for yourself.”

“Follow the example of the Bereans, whom the Bible commends as “noble minded...for they received the Word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“In faith, ask God to give you the wisdom to understand the Bible (James 1:5—8). If you are willing to do God’s will, He promises to provide the information and insight that you will need (John &:17). Whenever you learn something from God’s Word, act upon it immediately (James 1:22-25). As you do, the Lord will teach you further truth (Luke 19:26). I recommend that you start

reading the Gospel of John, The Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans”.

“Believe God and His promises (Hebrews 11:6). Most importantly, place your trust completely in Christ to save you (Romans 10:8—13). Renounce dependence upon the church, the sacraments, your good works, and Mary for salvation (Acts 4:12, Philippians 3: 7-11). “

“Do not think that by staying in the Roman Catholic Church you can change it. Though every error catalogued in this book has been pointed out by others long ago, the church refuses to listen. It has never acknowledged, a single doctrinal error. Indeed, it cannot lest people realize that the Church's claim to infallibility is a charade. Far from admitting error, the Roman Catholic Church has shamelessly opposed its critics, staining its hands with their blood down through the centuries. God's counsel to a Christian who finds himself in an unbiblical religious institution it to leave.”

Come out of her, my people, that you may not  
participate in her sins  
and that you may receive of her plagues;  
for her sins have piled up as high as heaven,  
and God has remembered her iniquities.

Revelation 18:4-5

“Therefore, come out from their midst and be  
separate,” says the Lord.

“And do not touch what is unclean.”

2 Corinthians 6:17

To those who obey...the Lord adds this promise

“And I welcome you,  
“And I will be a father to you.  
And you shall be sons and daughters to me”  
Says the Lord almighty.

2 Corinthians 6: 17,18

“Once you escape the fog of Roman Catholicism, you will see more clearly the truths of Scripture. Find church fellowship among Christians who love the Lord and recognize the Bible alone as their supreme authority. There you progress in your knowledge of God unhindered by false teaching. You will also find opportunities to serve the Lord and make Him known.”

What about your Catholic family and friends? The best thing you can do for them is to leave the Roman Catholic church and become part of a strong biblically based church. As you learn to live more like Christ, your life will become an exhibit of the transforming power of the Gospel. You will grow in your understanding of the truth and your ability to explain it. You will also be in a position to minister to others who are seeking God. When you leave the Catholic Church, your family and friends will want to know why. Use the opportunity to explain what you have found, but do so with gentleness and reverence.” (I Peter 3:15). “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

### **To the Non-Catholic Christian Reader**

“High above the main altar of Saint Peter’s Basilica there is an inscription around the inside base of the great central dome. Large enough for all to read, it is the banner verse of Roman Catholicism: “Thou art Peter; and upon this rock, I will build *my* church” (Matthew 16:18)”.

“How fitting that the distinctive claim of the Roman Catholic Church should be that it is an institution built upon a man! And so it is. Let us grant the Church this status that it seeks. As its theology *demonstrates*, Roman Catholicism rests upon a very human foundation, a combination of God’s way and man’s way, a mixture of truth and error. It is a belief system based upon Scripture (the Word of God) plus Tradition (the words of men). It offers atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus plus the sacrifices of priests. It teaches salvation by the work of Christ plus the works of men. It tells people to approach God through the Mediation of the lord Jesus Christ plus that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In each of its distinctive doctrines, Roman Catholicism is a “way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Appropriately the Church has built the main altar of Saint Peter’s Basilica upon a crypt full of dead man’s bones, allegedly including those of Peter himself.”

“Yet one might ask, how can so much error coexist alongside so much Christian truth? The prospect should not shock us. Biblical prophecy warns that apostasy, a falling away or departure from the Christian faith, will precede the second coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In the last days, says the scriptures, there will arise “false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them...” (2 Peter 2:1). These false teachers will not openly oppose the Christian faith. Quite to the

contrary they offer prayers in the name of Christ, use the Scriptures in their ceremonies, and promise salvation to those who follow their teaching. They will hold “to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Timothy 3:5).

“The false teachers of the end times will lead many people astray with an insidious imitation of Christianity. The Bible says that “many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned, and in their greed they will exploit you with false words...” (2 Peter 2: 3, 3).

“Who is behind this great deception? According to the Bible, “the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...” (1 Timothy 4:11). Ultimately the lie can be traced to Satan himself, the deceiver of old, “the father of lies “(John 8:44).

“This is not to say that the pope bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church are consciously aware that they are serving Satan’s purposes. Many are undoubtedly sincere. For the most part, they even as Paul before his conversion, are acting “ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13); they are “deceived” (Titus 3:3). Nevertheless, they are responsible before God, for they have failed to take heed to God’s Word. Having believed a false gospel, they remain in their sins. Consequently, but for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these last days, the vast majority of Roman Catholics on earth today, clergy and laity alike, will die in their sins. To God we must cry out. To the lost we must reach out”.

### **So what do we do? Pray for Catholics!**

The Bible tells us that the gospel “...is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God “(2 Corinthians 4:3,4). Pray that God would open the eyes of the Roman Catholics. That if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2Timothy 2:25, 26).

### **Develop Friendships**

Since Catholicism tends to run along family and ethnic lines, many Catholics do not have even one non-Catholic Christian friend. Relatively few have ever heard a clear presentation of the gospel.

- Ask God to increase your love and compassion for Catholics.
- Look for ways to nurture friendships with them.
- Opportunities to share our faith will come early in the friendship, don't let them pass.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to priests and nuns. Many are lonely and searching for answers.

### **Stimulate Thought**

Many Catholics are more dutiful than devout. They don't ask much of the church and the church does not ask much of them. Family expectations are met and soothed in an equilibrium of peaceful coexistence with the church.

Get your Catholic friend thinking about his spiritual condition. Try offering your friend some Christian literature or videotape that you can discuss. Ask your friend critical thinking questions, such as do you know with certainty what will happen to his soul when he dies? Build a foundation of scripture as you talk.

Don't be paralyzed with the fear of offending. Confronting your Catholic friend with the errors of the church may be the best thing for him. Some Catholics will get angry before they get saved and later they will thank you for having loved them enough to present the truth to them,

### **Promote Bible Study**

The average Catholic is trusting the church to care for his soul and to tell him what to believe about God and salvation. In coming to Christ such a person must learn to think for himself, to take personal responsibility for his soul and to base his faith upon God's Word. **This is major shift in his thinking.**

- Make sure he has a Bible that is readable and easy to use. No large family Bible
- Encourage your Catholic friend to read the Scriptures, suggest a place to start reading.
- Explain how the Bible is structured and how to find a passage.
- Invite your friend to attend a Bible study. Preferably a discussion – style study.

**Once a person seeking God discovers that he can learn directly from the scriptures there is no stopping them.**

### **Address the Real Problem**

Your friend's greatest problem is not the Roman Catholic Church it is his **sin**. The Roman Catholic Church should not become the focus of your discussions. Many Catholics have a deficient understanding of the seriousness of sin and its consequences. They think that because they were baptized and are living relatively moral lives, everything is just fine. Direct them to what God says about sin in the Bible. Pray for your friend's genuine conviction of his sins.

### **Explain the way of salvation.**

Do so directly from the scriptures using a Bible. This will help your friend to see that your authority is the Word of God. To make sure that he is understanding have him read the passage and explain it to you. Make sure you define the terms.

### **Go slowly**

Do not lead your friend prematurely in a prayer to accept Christ. Catholicism is an endless series of rites and prayers. The more the better, or so they think. Your friend may interpret your invitation to pray to receive Christ as just one more rite and repeat the words you give him whether he truly understands or not. Wait until your friend is truly under the conviction of sin and understands the gospel. Then encourage him to make a decision.

### **Encourage a Clean Break**

The work of evangelism, is not completed until your Catholic friend is saved, baptized, and incorporated into a sound Bible teaching church. Encourage a clean break with the Roman Catholic Church. A thorough housecleaning may also be in order. Explain that he should dispose of everything associated with unbiblical beliefs and practices, including statues, Rosaries, holy cards, and etc. Do not underestimate how ingrained Roman Catholicism can be even in lapsed Catholics. Pray for spiritual liberation and encourage your friend regularly.

If a newly saved Catholic is having trouble leaving the Catholic Church, try explaining a little more fully what Roman Catholicism teaches and why it is unbiblical. Start with the Mass. If your friend is truly saved, he should soon realize that he should not participate in a continuing sacrifice of Christ. If devotion

to Mary is the problem emphasize the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sufficiency. The best method is to offer something better in exchange.

### **Anticipate Trials**

Prepare a newly saved Catholic to expect trials. They usually start when the person leaves the Roman Catholic Church or decides to get baptized. Counsel the person to avoid harsh arguments and constant unwelcome attempts at trying to convert family members. Rather exhort the newly saved Catholic to witness to his family by living like Christ, by doing acts of kindness, and by being humble and patient.

### **Continue to Learn**

The better you understand Roman Catholicism, the better you will be able to effectively communicate the Gospel to Catholics. Consider reading the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Use it to point out to Catholics what Roman Catholicism teaches and to contrast it with Biblical truth. Consider obtaining a simplified catechism and a Catholic dictionary. Finally consider subscribing to a catholic newspaper or magazine to keep abreast of current trends within the Roman Catholic Church.

### **Oppose Ecumenism**

One of the principal objectives of the Second Vatican Council was to promote ecumenism, the restoration of unity among Christian churches of every kind. The council set forth three principles to guide the Church's ecumenical movement.

1. Catholics were to be aware that Christ established the Roman Catholic Church and gave it the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, and bishops with the Pope as their head to rule, so that the church might be unified.
2. It taught that non-Catholic Christians who have been justified by baptism are to be considered as *separated brethren*. They have a valid means of salvation, said the Church, but not in its fullness as in the Roman Catholic Church.
3. The Council stated that all Catholics should promote ecumenism by avoiding unfair criticism of other Christians. To promote understanding and cooperation, competent experts were to engage in dialogue.

The Council stated that the point of the Church's ecumenical strategy was

the unity of all Christian churches through common communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

The council further stated that The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion is overcome all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.

Though Rome has yet to achieve its ultimate purpose, it has succeeded in undermining the commitment of many Christians to the evangelization of Catholics. In example the 1994 signing in the U. S. of an accord titled *Evangelicals and Catholics: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. In it leading “evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” They labeled the evangelization of active members of each other’s flocks as illegitimate theology and “sheep stealing,” and resolved “to explore patterns of working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ. “

There is no room in biblical Christianity *for* unity or cooperation with Rome and its false gospel, its continuing sacrifice, and its idolatrous devotion to Mary. As long as the Roman Catholic Church continues to regard the Scriptures, taken together with sacred Tradition, as the supreme rule of her faith, there is not even a common basis for dialogue.

