



Apologetics for Teens

Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette

Apologetics is a method of defending and explaining the faith.

This booklet attempts to briefly answer some questions teens may have about the teachings of our Catholic faith and aid them in responding to questions from their friends. It can be used as a resource to be handed out to each youth in your parish program.

The questions were developed as part of the Diocesan High School Faith Formation Curriculum that was published on January 1, 2013.

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REVELATION

1. Why do Catholics believe in things and do things that are not in the Bible?

The Bible is not the sole means that God chose to hand on the truths of Revelation. Scripture and Tradition are the two complementary ways Revelation is handed down. There are things taught in Tradition that are not explicitly found in Scripture. Nothing taught through Tradition however contradicts Scripture since both come from Christ through the Apostles. A good example of this is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Apostolic Tradition refers to what Jesus taught the Apostles and early disciples. This was first passed on orally and only later was it written down. Apostolic Tradition is part of God's revelation to us, as is Scripture.

2. Does God still reveal himself today?

Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation. There is no new public revelation to be expected before the second coming of Jesus. Yet even if revelation is already complete we do not fully understand it. The Church has continued to grow in understanding revelation's full significance over the course of the centuries. The understanding of revelation by the faithful, aided by the teaching authority of the Church, continues to grow, deepen and expand. Private revelations, such as the message of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes and Fatima, while revealing nothing new, help us to live more fully that which was revealed to us.

3. Is everything the Pope says infallible?

No. He rarely makes infallible statements, usually only when some doctrine has been called into question. Most doctrines have never been doubted by the majority of Catholics. The last infallible statement was made in 1950, when Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption of Mary as Church dogma. This statement of infallibility was made "ex cathedra" that is in his role as Supreme Teacher of the Church. Ex Cathedra is Latin for "the chair" (meaning the seat of St. Peter), from which the Pope derives this gift of the Holy Spirit. A pope's private theological opinions are not infallible, only what he solemnly defines is considered to be infallible teaching.

4. Can't I come to know God on my own, do I need the Church?

By our nature we are religious beings looking for something greater; God has made us to be in intimate relationship with him. The faithful must nurture their faith and relationship with God. The Church is entrusted to pass on the teachings of Jesus Christ, care for the deposit of faith and guard it with dedication. We need the Church's wisdom and guidance to fully understand revelation, to come to know, love and serve Jesus Christ and so to enter heaven.

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

1. Is it true Catholics do not use or read the Bible?

No. On the contrary, Catholics use the Bible regularly in many ways. The Bible is a part of the Church's liturgy, especially the Mass, and of the Church's official prayer, the Divine Office. Catholics also use the Bible for personal prayer. Scripture study groups are a common part of parish life. Scripture has always held an important part in Church life. In the fourth century, St. Jerome famously said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."

2. Why does the Catholic Bible have more books than other Bibles?

While all Christians accept the New Testament, there is disagreement on which books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired. Catholics accepted all 46 books of the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Bible. The Protestant reformers accepted only those books that were originally written in Hebrew and were accepted by Jewish rabbis in 90 AD.

3. Is the Bible always literally true?

Yes. The senses of scripture inform us how to understand passages of the Bible. The Bible is not a science book, it focuses on the larger truth; the who (God) and the why (our salvation) not the how (the means God uses.) Some non-Catholics focus on the how, not the who, and the why. What the Bible teaches, that which is necessary for our salvation, (moral teachings, the words of Jesus, etc.) is always without error or "inerrant".

While there are scientific and historical contradictions in the Bible according to modern understanding, this information is not necessary for our salvation.

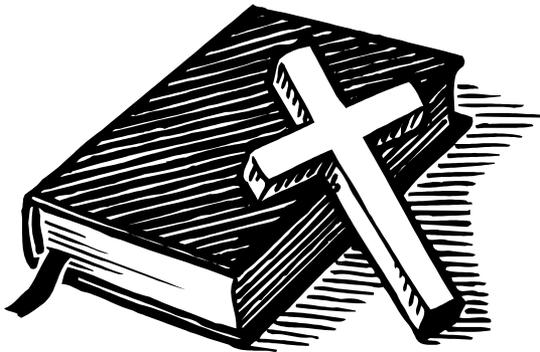
4. How should we read the Bible?

Catholics read the Bible contextually. That is, they understand the Sacred Scriptures in the broad historical, cultural, and geographical context in which they were written. They also examine the styles of literature present. Catholics rely on the Magisterium (Pope and bishops) to help them interpret the meaning of the Bible. Oppositely, a fundamentalist approach to reading the Bible involves taking all the words literally. For example, a fundamentalist would believe that God created the world in six twenty-four hour days. A no less important criteria, is that Sacred Scripture must be read in the light of the Holy Spirit by whom it was inspired and written. This means that the reader must pay attention to the content and unity of the Bible as a whole, read Scripture in light of the Church's entire Tradition, and be attentive to the analogy of faith, that is, "the coherence of

the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of revelation” (CCC. 114).

5. Are historical and scientific truths and Biblical truth at odds?

The Bible is not meant to be a history book. The Bible is not meant to be a science book. It is a written record of Divine Revelation with truths that reveal our destiny—eternal life of union with a loving, Triune God. The Church is open to both historical and scientific research. Historical research has proven that Jesus of Nazareth did exist, that the Romans under the prefect Pontius Pilate crucified him, and that he established a Church that exists to this very day. Through scientific research the wonders and workings of the universe have revealed the genius of our God, creator of all. Cardinal Baronius (1538-1607) provided us with great insight when he said, “The Bible teaches us how to go to Heaven, not how the heavens go.” When examining the scientific theory of evolution one should note that there is nothing in it that is in opposition to the existence of the loving creator who is the first cause of creation.



OLD TESTAMENT

1. Isn't the Old Testament meant for Jews and the New Testament meant for Christians?

While the Jewish people hold the Old Testament as sacred, Christians also recognize it as divinely inspired and an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture (DV, 14). As a Jew, Jesus cherished the Hebrew Scriptures and lived the core beliefs of the Jewish faith. As the Messiah, Jesus came to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament, establish the new covenant, and offer salvation to humankind. Christians read the Old Testament in light of Christ crucified and risen. Many of our practices and beliefs can clearly be traced back to the Old Testament.

2. Is the creation story found in Genesis 1-11 accurate?

The author of Genesis, who was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was not concerned with "how" God made creation or "how long" it took him to do it. He was not a modern historian interested in the chronological timeline of creation. In fact, the earliest Fathers of the Church, who were quick to defend orthodox Christianity against heretical teaching, repeatedly wrote that Christians don't have to believe that God made the world in six chronological days. (cf. www.catholic.com/library/Creatio_n_and_Genesis.asp)

So why did the author of Genesis 1 say that God made the world in six days and rested on the 7th? The reason is that in Hebrew the number 7 is the same word used for swearing an oath which was the means by which covenants were formed. Therefore, the author of Genesis says that creation took place in 7 days in order to show that God forged a covenantal family bond between himself and creation (especially man). The main point is that Genesis is accurate in saying what the author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intended it to say. It was not written as a science book. It was not written as a history book. It was written as an answer to the question "Why did God create and why is the world the way it is?" Science cannot answer those questions. History cannot answer those questions. Only philosophy and religion can, and Genesis 1-11 provides answers given by God to those questions.

3. Isn't a prophet a person who tells the future?

A prophet in the Bible delivers God's divine message. They warn of the consequences of peoples' actions and call people to conversion. Although they do not foretell specific dates, actions, and times, their message always contains urgency because, "as to the exact day or hour, no one knows it" (Mk. 13:32).

NEW TESTAMENT

1. Why are there differences between the Gospels?

The differences between the four separate Gospels have to do with the various times, audiences, and theological points of emphasis of each of the evangelists. For example, Mark emphasized Jesus the Suffering Servant and the meaning of discipleship; Matthew wrote for a primarily Jewish audience and traced Jesus as a descendent of Jewish patriarchs. Luke's Gospel was for Gentile Christians and served as an opening to the Acts of the Apostles. John's Gospel, written years later than the others, emphasized the divinity of Jesus.

2. We hear about other gospels. Why aren't they in the bible?

Like the four evangelists, many people wrote down their experiences and understandings of Jesus. Some of the more famous ones are the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of James. These were written after the death of the apostles and used by the early Christian community to foster the faith and learn about Jesus. While they may provide enlightenment and contain portions of truth, over time these documents were found to have serious theological defects. Taken as a whole, these non-biblical documents are not essential for our salvation and are not the inspired Word of God.

3. Does the book of Revelation tell us when the end of the world will be?

The book of Revelation is written in the apocalyptic style using language filled with mysterious symbols that require the reader to decipher what the author is actually saying. It is wrong for Christians to attempt to predict the end of the world, after all, "of that day and hour no one knows". (Matthew 24: 34-36). Unfortunately, many people today have written books or produce movies that fantasize the end of the world. They loosely cite the book of Revelation leading people to believe that an exact prediction exists.



LIFE ISSUES

1. We “put our pet down” to be merciful and humane. Why can’t we do the same for people?

Animals are not due the same dignity as human life. Pets are made by God, but they are not made in the “image and likeness of God,” with an immortal soul. Human life is to be defended from conception until natural death. While it is natural to want to ease a loved one’s suffering or discomfort we must rely on the wisdom and mercy of God. Even through suffering God’s plan can bring good; we unite our suffering with Jesus’ on the cross. God alone is the Lord of life.

2. What if I kill someone in self-defense?

Killing is always wrong. Killing someone in self-defense, also called legitimate defense, stems from our own human dignity and protecting the value of our life. Killing in self-defense is only acceptable when killing the other person is the only option to prevent being killed. Rendering an aggressor unable to cause harm is the desired effect. The killing is still wrong, but the moral culpability is removed.

3. My older sister and her husband can’t get pregnant. What is wrong with in vitro fertilization?

In vitro fertilization removes fertilization of the sperm and egg from the marital act; that is the total self-giving of husbands and wives in loving sexual intercourse. Separating the two is contrary to God’s plan for marriage and artificially mimics our participation in creation. Also in vitro fertilization, to be successful, fertilizes multiple eggs, many of which are then discarded which is a direct and intentional killing of a human person. A couple’s desire to have children is good and is often realized through adoption.

4. If the Church allowed contraception, wouldn’t there be less abortion?

With the widening use of contraception, the actual result has been more abortions, which the Church predicted. With artificial contraception, many people feel liberated to engage in sexual intercourse more often. The result is more unplanned pregnancies, which has resulted in an increase in abortions. The self-mastery of the passions is the true, respectful use of our gift of sexuality.

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

1. Is it wrong to get a tattoo or piercings?

Tattoos and acts of body piercing are not intrinsically evil. The Church offers principles by which Catholics can discern whether it is sinful to be tattooed or have one's body pierced in particular situations. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and as such we should treat our bodies with dignity. Much like getting one's ears pierced, a modest tattoo that is not an image opposed to Christianity, is not contrary to Church's teachings. Such actions become morally questionable when multiple tattoos or offensive images and sayings are placed on the body. The website below offers some questions if you are considering a tattoo or piercing http://www.cuf.org/faithfacts/details_view.asp?ffid=233

2. Will there be sex in heaven?

The answer depends on how you are using the word "sex". If you are referring to the conjugal act, that is sexual intercourse—no. If you are referring to gender—yes, because as we believe in the resurrection of the body. When that happens and the human body achieves "fullness of the perfection proper to the image and likeness of God—having regained them in their masculinity and femininity and those raised in glory will experience a bliss so far superior to earthly sexual union that our wee brain can't even begin to imagine it." (From John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, December 2, 1981; *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, Christopher West)

3. I love my boyfriend/girlfriend, why can't we have sex?

Without the permanent committed bond of marriage and the openness to new human life, sexual activity is using another person simply for the physical pleasure of sex. Engaging in this activity prior to marriage denies the sacred gift of intimate relationship between one man and one woman. While there may be love between a boyfriend/girlfriend the Church teaches that the conjugal act is reserved for marriage. Sex outside of marriage is a sin against the sixth commandment, which deals with all human sexuality not just married people.

4. Why is masturbation wrong?

Masturbation is wrong because there is no giving to another in love. It removes the pleasure of sex from the bond of a loving, committed, marital relationship. It is a selfish act focused only on one's own pleasure and not open to new life.

5. How far can I go before it is a sin?

Any deliberate seeking of sexual pleasure including passionate kissing, sexual petting, or oral intercourse outside of the bonds of marriage is a sin against the

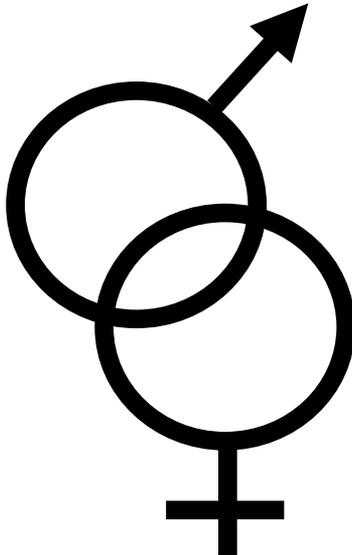
sixth commandment. All these acts are near occasions of sin and many times lead to unintended intercourse due to the level of arousal they create. These and all sexual expressions belong to the loving embrace of husband and wife. Fr. Larry Richards, author of many books, provides clear guideline—nothing below the neck.

6. I think I look good, so what is wrong with the way I am dressed?

Modesty in dress directs the thoughts of you and everyone you encounter. If you dress showing too much skin you may be an occasion of sin for someone else. Immodest attire conveys the message that your identity is based on your sexual attractiveness. Your dress should convey respect for yourself and express your dignity as a child of God and the incredible value God places on you.

7. Can I look at pornography on the internet if I do not get aroused?

Pornography removes the sexual act from marriage, and introduces a third party to what should be an intimate act between only two people. It turns people into objects only viewed for lustful pleasure, and harms the viewer by rendering the idea that sex for only pleasure is ok. It also is very addictive by its nature and can have long-lasting impacts.



TRINITY

1. Is God male?

This question is often asked as Jesus the Second Person of the Trinity came as a man. Through his resurrection and ascension his glorified body, that of a male, will remain for all eternity. In his divinity, God is pure, infinite Spirit and spirit can have no gender. There is no place for the difference between the sexes. In showing his love, God exhibits human characteristics of fatherhood and motherhood but he is neither male nor female. Scripture clearly shows us both aspects of God. For example, in 2 Corinthians 6:18, God says, "...I will be a father to you." And in Isaiah 66:13 the Lord says that "as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you." God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: He is God (CCC, 239; 370).

2. Three Persons or Three Gods?

St. Patrick used the analogy of a shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. Just as in a shamrock there are three leaflets but one leaf, so in the Trinity there are Three Divine Persons but one God. St. John Damascus used the analogy of a tree with the root being God, the Father; the branch as God the Son; and the fruit as God, the Holy Spirit. All one tree with three distinct parts in relation to each other. All three Persons of the Trinity are distinct, eternal, and fully God. They are not three separate gods because "the only real distinction between them lies solely in the relationships which relate them to one another" (CCC, 255). Thus in God there is one divine substance (essence, nature), equally possessed by three distinct, divine Persons in relationship to each of the others.

3. Catholics believe Mary is the Mother of God so does that make her a goddess?

Mary is the mother of the Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity made man. Because Jesus is God and Mary is the mother of the second person who is God, she is the mother of God. That does not mean that she is the mother of the Father and Spirit. She is not the source of Jesus' divinity but she is the mother of Jesus both God and man. She cooperated with God's plan to humble himself and take on human form.

SAINTS

1. Why do Catholics pray to saints?

We honor saints for their holy lives. Just like you would ask a faith-filled friend to pray for you, we ask saints to pray on our behalf because of their closeness to God; they are alive with him in heaven. We ask saints to pray for us and to intercede for us to Jesus. The saints do not take the place of God; we can and should pray directly to God as well.

2. What is necessary for someone to be a canonized saint?

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints is an office of the Pope in Rome. It examines the lives of people who have practiced heroic virtues and have been proposed for sainthood. The canonization process may take years as the person's life, death, writings, and miracles attributed to them are analyzed. Beatification is one of the steps in canonization. The person is called blessed and may be honored publicly. It's important to remember, though, that all baptized Christians are called to sainthood and that anyone who is with God is, in fact, a saint.

3. How do you grow in holiness?

The first step is to acknowledge our sinfulness. We grow in holiness through prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. Surround yourself with good people, like your parish youth group, who will help you make good choices. Guard closely what you watch, read and listen to. Through these choices, we grow in holiness which will be reflected in our actions which mirror the inner change of our hearts.

Be faithful to your role as a young disciple of Jesus, and live your faith heroically!

INCARNATION

1. Is Jesus God?

Yes. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus is one person, the Second Person of the Trinity, with two natures, human and divine. He is the “Word made flesh.”

2. Is Jesus human the same way that I am human?

Jesus was a divine person with two natures—one human and one divine. Jesus was a real person who lived 2000 years ago in Nazareth. “The Son of God...worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.” (GS, 22§2)

3. Why did God become man?

Years and years of sacrifice by the Jewish people—including prayer, fasting, and Temple sacrifice of animals—were not enough to bring salvation. As the book of Hebrews pointed out “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins.” Hebrews continues by quoting Jesus praying the words of the Psalms:

*Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in (Heb 10:4-6).*

The Son of God became man to reconcile sinners to God. He became man in order to teach us the meaning of true love. He became man in order to be a model of holiness. He became man to make us sharers of his divine nature. By becoming fully human, God has united himself to us. Unlike the early heresies that supposed Jesus only “appeared” to be human, Jesus is truly human—in body, mind, and soul.

MARKS OF THE CHURCH

1. Can non-Catholics go to heaven?

Yes, because Jesus came for the salvation of all (2 Cor. 5:14-15) and therefore all humans belong to the catholic unity of the people of God. Jesus himself “explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism” for salvation through the church he founded – the Catholic Church. While many good, God-loving people are baptized in another Christian tradition they . . . “do not enjoy full Catholic unity [and] are in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church”. (Compendium, 168) But this imperfect communion does not prohibit them from God’s salvation. Even those who never heard of Christ or the Church have not forfeited their chance for salvation. The people in greatest danger of not getting to heaven are those who know and understand that the Church is the Body of Christ yet reject it or do not live up to it.

2. Why do I need to be Catholic?

The fullness of truth resides in the Catholic Church which is the one true Church of Christ Jesus. The Sacraments offer graces which strengthen us to live a life of faith pleasing to God. This life and our loving of God and neighbor is the acceptance of salvation that Jesus offers us. The Catholic Church’s unity and uninterrupted apostolic succession assures faithful transmission of the teaching of Jesus. Through the history and tradition of the Church, saints have emerged who lived good and holy lives using their God-given gifts. These models of holiness known to us through the Church show us how to live holy lives pleasing to God using our gifts and talents.

3. How does the Catholic Church sustain its members when they live out their faith in different ways?

The Pope provides a visible bond of unity for the Church on earth. Members of the Church come from all races, nations, cultures, and ages. This diversity influences the way they give glory to God and live out their faith, but unity with the universal church is sustained through the common celebration of worship and the Sacraments. No matter what Roman/Latin Rite Catholic Church you attend throughout the world, you will recognize clearly the parts of the Mass or the Sacrament being celebrated.

4. Can’t I come to know God on my own, do I need the Church?

The one true church, the Catholic Church, was founded by Jesus. When Jesus left the earth he entrusted his apostles to “go make disciples”. The uninterrupted apostolic succession from the apostles to the Pope and the bishops assures faithful transmission of the teachings of Jesus which have been sustained and

upheld in the church. We can come to know about Jesus through our own study, but it would be mixed with error due to our human weakness. For a full, correct understanding we need a teacher who can lead and guide us. That teacher is the Church.



SACRAMENTS I

1. Can unbaptized babies be saved? What happens to children who died without Baptism?

Traditionally, the Church has taught that there are three types of baptism: of water (the Sacrament of Baptism); of blood (the death of martyrs who die before being baptized); and of desire. Baptism of desire refers to those who desire baptism but die before receiving the sacrament.

While divine revelation does not specifically address babies and children who die without baptism, it has long been thought that limbo was the place where these children go. However, limbo has never been defined as church dogma and is not mentioned in the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Church entrusts these children to God's infinite mercy and recalls Jesus' words, "Let the children come to me" (Mk. 20:14) as a sign of hope that children who have died without Baptism will be saved.

Pope Benedict XVI taught that there are "serious" grounds to hope that children who died without being baptized can go to heaven. Still, the Church recognizes the urgency to welcome children to Christ through Baptism.

2. As Catholics are we "born again"?

Many people in Protestant Churches talk about being "born again". Catholics too are born again. "Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ." (CCC, 1277) "The two principle effects [of Baptism] are purification from sins, and new birth in the Holy Spirit." (CCC, 1262)

3. Why can't I receive Communion in another Christian Church? Why can't my friend who is Christian, but not Catholic, receive Communion at my church?

The very word communion has to do with unity, both in our beliefs about Jesus Christ and with one another. It would not be honest for a person to receive communion if he or she does not hold the same beliefs as Catholics do about Jesus; that he is really present-body, blood, soul and divinity-in the bread and wine. For the same reason a Catholic cannot receive communion at a Protestant Church because Protestants believe in a symbolic representation of Christ.

4. Aren't the sacraments just celebrations to mark significant moments in our lives?

Certainly such an impression may be cast today. Sometimes people seem to use sacraments like Baptism, First Communion, and Marriage as occasions to get together with family and to celebrate a key stage of life. While the sacraments are celebrated at significant moments in life, they are much more than just celebrations of those moments. They are personal encounters with Christ who acts through the Sacraments to help us. Each sacrament gives a special grace.

5. Why do Catholics believe that Jesus is really present in the consecrated species of bread and wine and that they are not just symbolic of his presence?

Jesus said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. . . 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" (Jn. 6:54-56). This is the scriptural basis for our Catholic belief. Catholics believe that at the time of the consecration (when the priest repeats Jesus' words from the Last Supper, "This is my body" and "This is my blood) the substance of the bread and wine change into the reality of Jesus.



SACRAMENTS II

1. Why do you have to confess your sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Penance?

Jesus instituted this sacrament for the forgiveness of sins after Baptism. He entrusted to his Apostles the ministry of reconciliation (John 20:21-23). Bishops, who are their successors, continue to exercise this ministry with the help of their priests. (CCC, 1461)

The priest is both the representative of Christ and the Church. Confessing to a priest in the Sacrament of Penance is a way to experience first-hand the forgiving touch and saving love of Jesus. Reconciling with the Church is important so we can reclaim our roles within the body of Christ since it is necessary for forgiveness of grave sins and encouraged for forgiveness of venial sins. It is important to remember that even though forgiveness is expressed through the Church and this Sacrament, God alone forgives sins.

2. Why celebrate Anointing of the Sick if it does not always result in physical healing?

The celebration of this Sacrament gives tangible evidence of Christ's compassion toward the sick. The primary effect of this sacrament is the spiritual healing of the sick while strengthening them in their suffering and pain. Physical healing does occur if that is God's will and necessary for the salvation of the soul of the person. When a person who is dying celebrates this sacrament, it fortifies them as they make their final preparations for the struggles before entering the Father's house.

3. Why can't women be ordained priests?

While both men and women share in the priestly life of the People of God by virtue of their baptism, ordaining only certain baptized men follows the teaching and Tradition of the Church. Jesus chose only men for his twelve Apostles even though he associated with faithful and holy women such as the Blessed Mother and Mary Magdalene. The Apostles followed Jesus' example and they too chose only males to succeed them in ordained ministry and so for this reason the ordination of women is not possible. (For a fuller explanation see the USCCA, pages 267-269)

4. Why can't priests marry?

Celibacy has been highly esteemed in a special way by the Church as a feature of priestly life. (PO, 16) In its wisdom the Church requires all men who are to be ordained to take a vow of celibacy, that is, they pledge to remain unmarried "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven in order to give themselves entirely to God and to the service of his people." Without the demands of married life, a priest is free to serve the Church with an "undivided heart." In certain rare instances, some married men who were previously ministers in non-Catholic churches are allowed to become priests. This is an exception for the sake of charity.

5. What is the difference between an annulment and a divorce?

A divorce is a civil judgment that the legal arrangement of a marriage is ended. An annulment is a decree from the church made after a careful investigation. This investigation determines that the bond of marriage, the sacramental bond in heaven, never took place due to an impediment or obstacle. An impediment put simply, means that one of the three essential elements was missing at the time of the marriage.

An annulment says nothing about the legal, civil realities of the marriage. Children of an annulled marriage are legitimate because the marriage was real, the sacramental bond was not.

THE MASS

1. Do the bread and the wine really become the body and blood of Jesus?

Yes. Catholics believe that Jesus is present body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. This belief is based on John 6:54-56 when Jesus said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life...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.” While the outward appearances of the bread and wine, that is what it looks like and what it tastes like remain the same, the substance becomes the body and blood of Jesus at the words of consecration.

Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body...

Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood...

This is known as transubstantiation.

2. Am I really required to go to Mass every Sunday? Why can't I just pray by myself wherever I am?

Yes, Catholics are required to go to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. In the Third Commandment, God tells us to “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.” For the Jews, the Sabbath was Saturday; Christians, however, transferred the Sabbath to Sunday, the day of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

The Church tells us that we have an obligation to fulfill the Third Commandment by refraining from unnecessary work on Sunday and by participating in the Mass, our chief form of worship as Christians.

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have understood that being a Christian isn’t a private matter. We are called to be Christians together; while we can and should engage in the private worship of God throughout the week, our primary form of worship is public and communal, which is why Sunday Mass is so important. Intentionally missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin.

MARY

1. Why is Mary the Mother of God?

Even before the birth of Jesus, Mary was called by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, “the mother of my Lord” (Lk 1:43). The Son born to Mary, Jesus, was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence, Mary is the Mother of God.

2. In what sense is Mary the Mother of the Church?

Mary is the Mother of the Church because she gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God, the Head of the body which is the Church. When he was dying on the cross Jesus gave his mother to his disciple with the words, “Behold, your mother” (Jn. 19:27) (CCC, 963-973)

3. How can Mary be a virgin if the Bible talks about Jesus’ brothers and sisters?

The New Testament does mention “brothers and sisters” of Jesus (e.g., Mk. 3:31-35). The Church understands these references to be to children of another Mary, a disciple of Christ. The words brother and sister may also refer to close relations like cousins. The Church teaches that Jesus was Mary’s only child and that she was ever virgin, though she is the spiritual mother of all.

4. Did Mary go to purgatory?

No, purgatory is for those who die in a state of grace, assured of eternal salvation, but are still in need of purification before they enter into the happiness of heaven. Mary was sinless from the moment of her conception (the Immaculate Conception) therefore she had no need to be “purified” before being assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven.

5. Do Catholics worship/pray to Mary?

Catholics worship and adore God alone, as required by the first commandment. Worship of any other person or thing would be idolatry, honoring gods other than the one, true Lord. Catholics do venerate or respect Mary and all the saints because of their holiness and faithfulness as disciples of Christ. We revere Mary more than the other saints because she is the Mother of God, the queen of all saints.

6. How can Catholics be sure that these apparitions are real?

Officially apparitions are “private revelations.” The Church has established guidelines to discern the authenticity of apparitions. These include examining the moral certainty of the revelation, the personal qualities of the visionary, the conformity of the revelation to Catholic teachings, and the enduring quality that the apparition fosters e.g., conversion, increase in prayer life, healing, etc.

CALL TO HOLINESS

1. How does one grow in holiness?

Growth in holiness means to become more like Jesus. We grow in holiness when we live virtuous lives; when we choose the good and avoid the evil, love our neighbor as ourselves, pray regularly and celebrate the sacraments, especially Eucharist and Reconciliation. This does not happen overnight, but takes time and effort through asceticism.

2. How does one discern their particular vocation in life?

In our world today we often think of our secular profession (or job) as a vocation. The Church understands vocation as how we live our life as disciples of Christ whether we are lay or clergy. Discerning our vocation has nothing to do with choosing a career. Discernment comes by living a life of prayer and responding heroically to their call to holiness. You should always be asking God, "What is your will for my life".

3. How are the states of life of married people and clergy similar?

Married people live their vocation to build up the Church by welcoming children and raising them in the faith; work to bring their spouse to closer communion with Jesus by helping them to grow in holiness. Clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) like a married couple do these tasks for all the faithful under their care, i.e., they welcome children into the family of God through the celebration of Baptism, they support parents as they teach their children the faith, and work to bring all closer to God through the celebration of the Sacraments.

4. Isn't it the priest's job bring the church to the world?

While it is part of the responsibility of the priest, the laity, by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, more rightfully has the responsibility to bring the divine message of salvation to all the earth. This duty is more pressing when it is only through them [the laity] that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ.

5. Is a deacon clergy or laity?

A deacon is a unique vocation. Upon ordination, they become a member of the clergy. All bishops and priests are first ordained to the diaconate on their way to becoming a priest. Other men, many of whom are married are ordained to what is called the permanent diaconate.

6. Aren't a sister and a nun the same thing?

No, while both a sister and a nun are consecrated religious women who live in community, the difference between them is how they live out their ministry.

Sisters do the work of Christ among all the Christian faithful in the world. They teach, nurse, work with the poor, etc. Nuns exercise their ministry separated from the world and live lives of prayer, silence and contemplation. In our diocese both sisters and nuns are present. We have several orders of sisters serving the diocese. There is also an order of nuns called the Discalced Carmelite Nuns who reside at the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Iron Mountain.



MORALITY

1. How can I tell if I make the right decision in the area of morality?

Sometimes it is very difficult. To assist us it is important to have a well formed conscience. This is done through the study of Scripture, prayer, an examination of conscience, and assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the witness and advice of others, including the authoritative teaching of the Church. If you have a well formed conscience and you do not follow it you will often experience guilt. In this case, guilt can be productive. It reminds you of what you know to be right. Objective moral norms are rules of morality that apply to every decision that you make. Evil may never be done to produce a good result, the golden rule (“do to others as you wish done to you”) always applies, and loving decisions always involve showing respect for others.

2. Are Christians always obliged to obey civil law and authorities?

Christians must obey their conscience in all matters as it reminds you of what you know to be right. If civil law and authorities are opposed to the teachings of the Gospel, the fundamental rights of persons, and the moral law, then a Christian must in good conscience disobey the civil law. In order to discern this, a Christian must have a well formed conscience.

3. Is it wrong to judge other people by telling them something they are doing is wrong?

No. In fact, we have a responsibility to encourage one another to avoid sinful behavior. This is a spiritual work of mercy. Just as you would warn a friend of something that could cause physical injury, you are obliged to warn them of something that could cause spiritual injury—that is, sin. It is important to clearly point out the correct moral action that Jesus calls us to in a loving, compassionate manner. Speak the truth in love because Jesus hates the sin but loves the sinner.

4. If God created humans with free will, can't we alone decide what is right or wrong?

God gives us the gifts of intellect and free will, giving us the ability to choose what is right and good and to resist temptation. To use freedom to do whatever we want is a misuse of this God-given gift, and actually lessens our freedom. Freedom allows us to follow the natural law God planted in our hearts, moral acts increase our freedom. Adam's sin has weakened humans' ability to always choose the good, and therefore we must look to God and the Church for guidance in forming our decisions.

VIRTUE AND VICES

1. Are passions good or evil?

Passions are feelings and emotions-natural to human beings. Love, hatred, desire, fear, joy, sadness and anger are the principal passions, with love being the chief passion. In and of themselves, they are neither good nor bad. They are good when they contribute to a good cause or action. Passions are bad when perverted by the vices and used for evil. When anger over an injustice calls you to action to correct it, that is a good action. If anger causes you to vandalize another person's property, that is evil.

2. Is just thinking about something still a sin?

Our thoughts and internal feelings have a strong effect on our actions. When a fleeting image, memory, or impression that may cause us to sin passes through our minds, it is itself not sinful. When we continue to think about the image, dwell on it, and let it grow in our minds to where it may lead us to sin, is when it becomes sinful.

3. Does each vice have a virtue to counteract it?

Yes. Most vices can be traced back to the capital sins. Being rude to someone you know, at its root, can flow from feelings of envy and anger. Temperance is the antidote for the vice of gluttony; Humility, rooted in the Cardinal Virtue of Prudence, is the antidote for Pride.

4. How do I strengthen virtues in my life?

Like any habit, we need to practice those good actions to make them a natural part of who we are. We continually pray for the grace to incorporate the Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit into every part of our being to live a virtuous and moral directed toward God.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

1. If the Bible permits justice in terms of “an eye for an eye” why is the Church opposed to capital punishment?

The phrase “an eye for an eye” means that punishment must be proportionate to the gravity of the offense. Jesus himself, however, taught that retaliation should not be sought for those who have committed a crime. The fifth commandment, thou shall not kill, forbids direct and intentional killing as gravely sinful. Capital punishment, the killing of a human person for a crime, even if it is done by the state, is intentional and therefore gravely sinful because it is clearly is against the Church’s teaching on the dignity of and respect for human life!

2. What is more important justice or charity?

They are equally important. Justice is the cardinal virtue by which one is able to give God and neighbor what is due to them. Charity is the theological virtue by which we give love to God for his own sake and love to our neighbor on account of God. As Christians, charity is not optional because Jesus commands us to “love our neighbor as ourselves” and to “love our enemies” and therefore it directs how we work for justice. While we must continually strive to live a life of justice and charity, it only in eternal life that perfect justice will be realized.



PRAYER

1. Do I really need to pray all the time?

Yes. Scripture tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess.5:17). This does not mean you have to continually pray in those formal structured ways. Prayer can and should be incorporated in the daily activities of your life. Throughout the day when stressed, joyful, or simply between activities you can say a short prayer, either out loud or silently, that raises your awareness of God e.g., Heart of Jesus, I trust in you or Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Many people pray the sign of the cross especially when faced with temptation. We are also praying as we go about our day doing the work of Christ here on earth. “Everything that happens, everything that we encounter can become an occasion of prayer.” (YC, 494)

In addition to this spontaneous prayer, all people need to set aside specific times for prayer. Daily this can be done in a prayer corner in your room or home. It should also bring us to places such as chapels and churches. The Church clearly demands prayer in communal settings such as the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligations.

2. The Catholic version of the *Our Father* is different than the Protestant version. Which is correct?

The basic text of the Our Father is found in Matthew 6:9-13. The Protestants add the doxology (prayer of praise) - “For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.” Most modern translators of the early manuscripts of the Gospel have concluded that it was not in the original text. It actually comes from the *Didache*, a first century catechetical manual as well as from another early Church document called the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The final doxology (For thine...) is used in our Mass after the priest prays “Deliver us, Lord...as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ” takes up again the first three petitions to our Father, the glorification of his name, the coming of his reign, and the power of his saving reign. Neither version is correct or incorrect. What is important is that this common prayer unites all Christians.

3. I don't feel anything when I pray; does this mean God doesn't answer my prayers?

No. Feeling close to God in prayer without it making a difference in how you are living your life as disciple of Christ is deceptive. Your prayer life can be measured by how much you grow in holiness. Sometimes your growth in holiness moves slowly and at other times it is dramatic. All people, even the Church's greatest models of prayer, experience obstacles to prayer, times where

God does not seem present, and even discouragement in prayer. Humility, trust, and perseverance are necessary to overcome obstacles while praying. Above all, God does not always answer our prayers the way we think he should. Remember this when you say, "Your will be done . . ."

4. Prayer should bring peace, so why do Catholics refer to prayer as "a battle?"

Prayer is a response on our part to God's gift of grace and requires effort. The devil seeks to separate us from God. Through prayer we strengthen ourselves to resist the temptations we face in our daily lives. Our life is the battlefield where we face the devil. The tempter places obstacles to prayer precisely because in prayer we lift our hearts and minds to God. Prayer is the weapon Christians use to battle against the Devil. One can still be at peace however in the midst of great difficulties. Prayer leads us to grow in our spiritual life, leads us to do God's will, and draws us more closely to Christ.

CATHOLIC APPROACHES TO PRAYER

1. Scripture says when you pray do not babble lots of words. So what about the Rosary?

We read in the Gospel of Matthew that “in praying do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words” (6:7). The pagans that Matthew refers to were required to use numerous names for gods in their official sacrifices. They were often in foreign languages that people listening to them did not understand. Therefore to an observer it would sound like babble. While the Rosary seems like it is “a lot of words”, the repetition of the Hail Mary, in the language of those praying, allows us to enter into God’s presence in a peaceful way. The gentle repetition of this devotion occupies our physical being. As we meditate on the Mysteries of Rosary and reflect on the events of the life of Jesus, we enter into the silence of our hearts, where Christ’s Spirit dwells. (USCCA, 300)

2. Why does the Church have Religious Orders and how are they different?

In the early centuries of the Church, men and women wanted to give themselves completely to God. They did this by dedicating themselves to strict spiritual practices such as fasting, prayer, doing works of mercy, etc. This sacrificial way of life helped them to focus on living as a disciple of God. As time passed, these “ascetics” organized themselves into various religious orders, each with a common prayer life and discipline (spirituality). New religious orders continued to emerge, reflecting their own “charism” or special gift. These Catholic orders continue to serve the Church and the world in many ways. Some are dedicated exclusively to prayer, meditation, and manual labor while others serve the poor or teach or take care of the sick. They play a vital role in building the Kingdom of God here on earth.



CHURCH HISTORY

- 1. In the history of the Church there have been events such as the Inquisition, abuses of indulgences, excommunication of Galileo, etc. so how can the Church claim to be holy?**

These events while sad and truly regrettable are the result of human failures. The members of the Church just like you and I do sin, however the Church herself is sinless and holy. The Church is entrusted by God with the truth of the Gospel, the means of holiness, the power of the sacraments and the graced means of salvation. Reflecting the contrition of the Sacrament of Penance, Blessed John Paul II has apologized for the sins of the members of the Church and various occasions including the excesses of the Inquisition and the atrocities committed during the Crusades.

- 2. If the Catholic Church actually has the fullness of truth why have other churches broken away from her?**

Many people have broken away from the Catholic Church based on their own authority; over a disagreement and lack of understanding of Church teachings. Other times a person saw a need for reform but was not patient enough for the Church to address the problem. St. Thomas More sought to change many of the same abuses as Martin Luther, but chose to do so without leaving the Church. Also people in their longing for power, control, and money used the need for reform to advance their own desires and not God's!

CHURCH IN AMERICA

1. The modern world is different than Jesus' time. Shouldn't the Church adapt its teachings and move with the times?

Truth is truth. The teachings of the Church which are necessary for the salvation of souls cannot change, they are eternal. The Church evaluates other teachings and sometimes finds it necessary to clarify its teachings or its position. In the United States, the USSCB consults with the universal church and guides us in living the Church's teachings in our culture here in this country, while holding steadfastly to the truths of the faith in light of the modern world.

2. Why do I want to belong to a church that allowed priests to hurt innocent children?

The Church is made up of people who sin. This became painfully evident as the priest scandal became public. It forced us to acknowledge the human side of the Church and as a result of the scandal the Church has become a leader in her efforts to protect her children. The Church herself however is sinless and holy and contains the means of salvation; therefore that is why we need to belong to the Church.

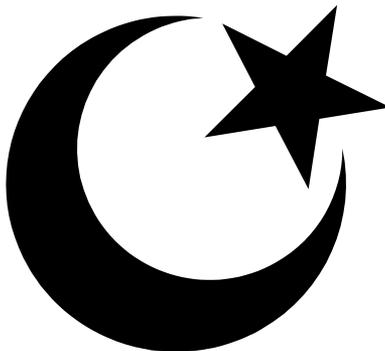
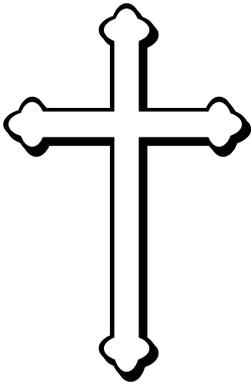
ECUMENISM-INTERRELIGIOUS ISSUES

1. Isn't one Christian denomination as good as the other, as long as people love Jesus?

Jesus founded one church. We simply cannot choose any other church. Continuity of doctrine and leadership that extend all the way to Jesus and the Apostles exists only in the Catholic Church. No Protestant churches existed before 1517. All were founded by a human who had separated themselves from the Catholic Church. Like the father in the story of the prodigal son, the Church prays for their safe return and waits for them with open arms. Why would you go anywhere else?

2. If people want unity, why can't we compromise?

While we truly seek unity in the Church, we simply cannot compromise the truth as handed on to us by the apostles. Truth is truth. Whatever is not truth, regardless of how close to truth it may be, is falsehood. To pick and choose which truth to accept is a rejection of truth. And Jesus tells us, "whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me". (Lk. 10:16)



END TIMES

1. If God is merciful and all-loving, how can hell exist?

The Gospels make multiple references to the reality of hell. Hell exists because God is all-loving. God gives humans free will; to turn to him, to follow his will for us, to return his love. He loves us so much that he gives us the capacity to exercise free will, even to the extent of rejecting him. He will not force his love and grace on us. A forced love is not love at all. God has not pre-selected people to love him or reject him. He invites all to accept his offer of love. When we freely choose to turn away from God, when we choose to set our will against his, we separate ourselves from God. Hell is eternal separation from God. God does not send people to hell; they choose it freely.

2. Where is purgatory in the Bible?

The word purgatory is not found in scripture. It is alluded to in many passages* with references to a need to be purified, if not in this world than in the next. In heaven there is no need for purification, and in hell is no forgiveness. Therefore there is a third, intermediate state, where one can be purified after death “but only as through fire” (1Cor. 3:15). Affirmed explicitly in Maccabees we read, “...therefore he made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin”. (2Mac. 12:45) This however is a difficult point to make as Protestants do not accept the book of Maccabees. Maccabees is a religiously accurate account of Jews in the second century. Who gave Martin Luther the authority to remove a book from the Canon of the Bible that had been in place for over 1000 years?

* Revelation, Matthew, 1Peter, Hebrews, also contain passages on purification

3. Do Catholics believe in the rapture?

No. Neither did Luther, Calvin, Wesley or other Protestant leaders. The idea developed in the 19th century through a faulty, fundamentalist interpretation of a short passage of scripture. (1Thes. 4:13-17) It is contrary to Christianity in that those who are “snatched up” avoid the suffering of the end of the world. Those who follow Christ have always been called to suffer for him, to take up his cross and follow. The Catholic Church and all mainline Protestant Churches interpret this passage as a description of the Second Coming of Christ. This topic is relevant lately as many movies and books, most notably the Left Behind series, have sensationalized this erroneous teaching.

