

Catholics – What they believe.Summary Information

- 1.2bil. (16%) in the World, 69mil in US or approx. 24% of pop.
- Brazil, Mexico and Philippines have more Catholics than US.
- Began around 590 AD w/ Pope Gregory, but traced back to Peter “on this rock...” Matt. 16:18
- Perhaps less true today, Catholicism remains based on a premise that there is a priestly class and a lay class of people. The priestly class often acts as a conduit for truth (ex. Confession) and an intercessor for punishment (ex. Penance) for the lay class.
- Three general classifications of Catholics:
 - Traditionalist – Presenting the official doctrine of the church.
 - Two classes of adherents, Priestly and Laity.
 - Cultural / Liberal – Majority of Catholics. Like their liberal Protestant counterparts they have replaced the Bible and church authority with human reason. Often “Catholic” represents a social or cultural identification more than a religion.
 - As a group, they do not understand Catholicism.
 - Reject the Bible, church leadership, pope infallibility, and church doctrine on abortion, birth control and homosexuality, divorce, (which are all in transition).
 - Grown significantly due to disenfranchisement with church controversies and theological softening.
 - Charismatic/Evangelical – Began in 1967, currently 55 mil in the World and 10mil. in US.
 - There is an emphasis on having a personal relationship with Jesus and on the Sign Gifts (tongues, laying on of hands, performance of miracles, prophecy).
- Council of Trent (1545) – Catholics response to Marin Luther and the Protestant Reformation.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.Summary Information

- Catholicism appears on the outside to be very unified but in reality it has become more and more fractured over the last 50 years.
 - This diversity has been significantly increased since Vatican II which allowed for a more broad range of views and resulting loss of control by Rome (the pope).
 - This trend has continued for the last number of years as the church has tried to acquiesce to the changing moral climate in the world.
 - Pope Francis –
 - 5/2013 – Atheists have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.
 - 7/2013 – “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord, who am I to judge.”
 - 9/2015 – Streamlines annulment process
- Biblical Christianity does not have a priestly class.
- Peter 2:9a “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood...”
 - As individuals, our spiritual engagement with God is dependent on our faith and walk with Him, not our credentialing.
- Cultural / Liberal Catholics are very much like their Protestant counterparts and therefore the problem (challenge in witnessing) is more one of lack of interest in God and/or twisted teaching such as New Age rather than any Traditional Catholic errors in theology.
- Charismatic/Evangelical–Many are our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, for some, there remains an underlying works based theology and reliance on the evidence of gifts such as speaking in tongues.
- Common Ground - There is a large body of doctrine we agree on.
 - Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God.
 - God as Omniscient (all knowing), Omnipresent (everywhere), Omnipotent (all powerful) and creator of the world.

Catholics – What they believe.

- Solidified the Traditional Catholic doctrine of works Salvation / Justification and the Sacraments.
- Confirmed Indulgences as an acceptable practice of the Catholic church.
- Raised the Apocrypha from secondary status to Scriptures.
- Theistic Evolutionists – Catholic dogma has moved toward a belief in a merger between God and Evolution.
 - Pope Francis – “Evolution in nature does not conflict with the notion of Creation, because evolution presupposes the creation of beings who evolve.”
 - Affirms the Big Bang Theory and Evolution up to the point of God creating man by a direct and immediate act.

Authority

- There are three EQUAL authorities in Catholicism.
- Scripture – OT, NT and the Apocrypha
 - Bible is without error but must be interpreted within church tradition
 - The Scriptures are not sufficient. Oral apostolic traditions and Catholic Church interpretation of the Scriptures are also needed.
 - The Apocrypha
 - Between the OT and NT.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.

- Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man, virgin birth, miracles, atoning death on the cross, bodily resurrection from the grave, ascension into heaven, and future return in glory.
- Holy Spirit, personality, deity, involvement in redemption.
- Sin – acknowledged as both original and continuing
- Salvation – Recognized and necessary.
- Grace – God’s grace is necessary for salvation.
- Bible – Inspired and infallible, both OT and NT.
- Heaven / Hell – Real and literal.
- Martin Luther – Profession as a teacher at a university.
 - October 1517 Ninety-Five Theses posted on the church door.
 - “I dissent, I disagree, I protest.” Purgatory was major issue.
 - Start of the Protestant Reformation.
 - Justification (Salvation) is a gift from God not the result of penance and in particular the sale of indulgences.

Authority

- Solo Scriptura – the Bible (OT & NT). “We believe that the Bible as originally written is the inspired, infallible, authoritative and inerrant Word of God and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.” GPBC Statement of Faith
- Apocrypha – why is it not accepted as part of the Bible
 - Jews did not (and still do not) regard it as Scripture.
 - The NT never quotes the Apocrypha.
 - Until 1548 (at the Roman Catholic Council of Trent), it had a secondary status, and was not regarded as true Scripture.
 - Therefore the Protestant Reformers (1520's, 1530's) were clarifying the historical position of the early church when they excluded the Apocrypha.
 - It defends dishonesty and deceit and teaches that salvation depends on deeds of virtue (Tobit 5:4-13, Judith 9:10,13, Tobit 4:10-11; 12:9, Ecclesiasticus 3:30)
- Scripture - The main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things.

Catholics – What they believe.

- Apostolic Tradition – Oral history and tradition of the Church as taught by the Apostles apart from the Bible.
 - These are considered a living transmission accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2 Thess. 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.
 - Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
 - Examples of non-Biblical Apostolic Traditions:
 - Pope’s infallibility when speaking on theology.
 - Early church writings, which interpret or attempt to clarify or expand upon biblical doctrine.
 - Purgatory
 - Confirmation
 - Penance
 - Last Rights
 - 3 John 13-14 I have much to write you but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.
 - Indicates a favoritism of oral tradition over Scripture.
 - The Catholic Church traces its history and tradition back to the time of the apostles.
 - The Protestant Church broke off in 1517 to start the Reformation.
 - This provides a strong basis for tradition as a source of authority.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.

- God decided what would go into the canon (Bible) not the apostles.
- Scripture interprets Scripture.
- Constant appeal to the Bible - “It is written” 90 times in the NT.
- Apostolic Tradition (teachings)
 - Traditions are accepted by Biblical-Christians, they are just not considered infallible or equal with Scripture.
 - The Catholic church has never provided a list of what is considered extrabiblical Apostolic Tradition because oral tradition is so nebulous.
 - Those teachings which God deemed necessary for faith and practice from oral traditions were preserved in the Bible.
 - 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - Why would God leave anything out of the Bible that requires placing Traditions on the same level of authority.
 - 3 John 13-14 Oral tradition is an unreliable, inconsistent method of communication and just because John wanted to talk face to face to a contemporary does not suggest this as a superior form of authority passed down orally over hundreds of years.
 - There are contradictory and changing Christian traditions – not possible if they are divinely inspired.
 - How can Traditions be equal to Scripture when they are constantly changing.
 - It is now acceptable to eat meat on Friday.
 - Apocryphal books as inspired- Not considered true in the early church.
 - Bodily Assumption of Mary – Also not part of early church doctrine.
 - Matt. 15:3,6 Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?... you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”
 - 1 Cor. 4:6a “Do not go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.”

Catholics – What they believe.

- Church Teaching Ministry (Magisterium) – Pope and Bishops
 - Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
 - The pope is supposed to have a spiritual lineage back to Peter.
 - Rule on what is considered Apostolic Tradition.
 - Bishops (under review by the pope) have been given the responsibility to interpret both the Bible and Tradition.
 - Prevents the deterioration of the Church through denominationalism.
 - The Pope – per Vatican 1 (1870) can interpret the Bible without error.
 - If the successors of the apostles, the bishops of the Church, decided on the canon (what was Scripture and what was not) then their descendants (the pope and perhaps the bishops of today) should be infallible.
 - Not everything the pope says is equal to the Bible; only when he speaks “ex cathedra” (officially defining faith and morals for believers).
 - Nov.1, 1950 Pope Pius XII proclaimed that Mary was taken to Heaven supernaturally, without dying.

Mariology

- The exaltation of Jesus’ mother, Mary.
- Immaculate Conception – Mary was preserved from original sin and from all personal sin during her lifetime.
- Mary remained a virgin her whole life.
- Bodily Assumption – Mary did not die but ascended directly (body and soul) into heaven.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.

- Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.
- 1 Peter 1:18b from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers,
- Church Leadership – Pope and Bishops
 - Mat. 16:18 Does not make Peter the “rock”. Actually the Greek clearly refers to Jesus as the rock not Peter.
 - Further, Peter is never treated as the senior apostle or head of the church as the Catholic church would suggest.. Peter was given the same gifts as all the other apostles.
 - Galatians clearly puts Paul above the other apostles, even to the point of rebuking Peter.
 - Galatians 2:11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.
 - The only positions of leadership presented by Scripture are Overseers (Elders) and Deacons [6].
 - Throughout church history there have been 35 antipopes (times when there have been two opposing popes at the same period in history).
 - There is as much fracturing (denominationalism and liberalism) in the Catholic church as there is in the Protestant.
 - Protestant denominations usually differ over very minor doctrinal issues.
 - Popes condemnation of Galileo (earth revolves around the sun).
 - The Catholic response was (in hindsight) that the pope was not speaking ex cathedra. However, this did not appear to be the case at the time.

Mariology

- Not supported by scripture.
 - Mary did not remain a virgin her whole life. (Ps. 69:8, Matt. 12:46, 28:10, Mark 3:31, Luke 8:19, John 7:3)
 - There are no verses that support any of this. These concepts come totally from the Catholic church’s self imposed authority.

Catholics – What they believe.

- Mary is a co-mediator of God’s grace and looked to for intercession (prayed to). “nothing according to the will of God comes to us except through Mary.” “No one can approach Christ except through the Mother.” (1891 Pope Leo 12th)
- God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory is Queen of Heaven and Earth. She is to be praised with special devotion.
- Mary is the co-redeemer, for she participated with Christ in the painful act of redemption (controversial within Catholicism).
 - Mary suffered at the cross and as such participated in salvation for all mankind.
 - However, this dogma does not alter the Catholic belief that Christ was all-sufficient for our salvation.
- Pope John Paul VI, “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic [essential] to Christian worship.”
- Mary and other Saints images (statues) are prayed to in a request for intercession.

Sin

- Two types
- Mortal – Bad sins such as murder, adultery stealing, major lies, etc.
 - Must involve full knowledge or consent
 - Destroys God’s grace and thereby results in eternal death (Hell).
 - Necessitates forgiveness through the sacrament of penance.
- Venial – Lesser (minor) sins.
 - Does not destroy God’s grace and eventual salvation.
 - Does require some penance in this life or in Purgatory.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.

- Mary gave birth to other sons and daughters. Mat. 13:54-56)
- Mary never considered herself (Luke 1:46-49) or was never considered by Jesus (John 19:25-27, Luke 11:27-28) to be elevated to the state of co-mediator much less co-redeemer.
- Bodily Assumption was an ex cathedra statement by the pope. There is no scriptural support.
- Detracts from the worship of Jesus Christ alone and his work as our intercessor.
 - Prayers to Mary to intercede for us.
 - Calling her “Queen of Heaven and Earth”.
 - Images of a weak or infant Jesus in the arms of Mary.
- We should worship one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
 - Christ alone is our Redeemer. For he alone suffered and died for our sins. (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.
 - Deut. 4:24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
- Idol worship – Worship (kneeling and prayer) toward Mary and the saints is a form of idol worship and is condemned more than 160 times in the Bible.
 - Exodus 34:17 Do not make cast idols.
 - Deut 29:17 You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold.
 - 1 Cor. 12:2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.

Sin

- The Bible does not teach two types of sins. All (any) sin separates man from God and Heaven.
- Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- A true believer cannot lose his salvation.
 - John 10:27-29 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.

Catholics – What they believe.Sacraments / Mass

- Signs of grace from Christ and what is important for the Catholic (or Christian) to do.
- Baptism – usually shortly after birth and necessary for salvation.
 - It is the first part in a two part process of salvation.
 - The Catholic is reborn as a son of God.
 - All sins are forgiven (primarily original sin for an infant) and no punishment is due.
- Confirmation – Increases the gifts and strength of the Holy Spirit.
- Eucharist (communion) – Transubstantiation - the bread becomes flesh and wine becomes blood of Christ (in substance not in their properties).
- Penance – The confession of all mortal sins to a priest for the reconciliation of these sins.
 - Based on the Apostles offering forgiveness of sins.
 - Provides forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism.
 - Followed by some form of punishment or Indulgence.
 - Indulgences are given as a waver of punishment.
 - Can include prayer, money or actions.
 - Year of Jubilee (2000) a pilgrimage to Rome was offered by the Pope as an indulgence.
 - Francis offered Indulgences for a pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Brazil and for following his Twitter and other social media accounts.
- Last Rites – Completed by Priest or Bishop – anointing of oil on the sick and infirmed near death.
- Holy Orders – Three levels Bishop, Priest, Deacon.
 - Confers sacred power for service to God.
 - Pope – Bishop of Rome who has supreme and universal power over the Catholic church.
- Matrimony – Allows couples to have the capacity to love one another as Christ loved the Church.
 - Remarriage is not allowed while a spouse is still alive.
 - However, annulments (return to a state where the marriage never existed) are frequently granted by the Catholic Church.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.Sacraments

- Traditions (ordinances) from the Bible
- God looks to genuine love rather than formal rituals.
 - Gal. 5:6b The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.
- Biblical Christian Sacraments - Baptism & Communion –
 - An outward sign of commitment to Christ but not as a substitution for grace, faith or Christ.
 - 1 Cor. 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
- The Priest or Bishop is not a mediator between man and Christ. He has no power or authority to establish punishments (Penance) for the remission of sins. There is no scriptural support for Penance or Indulgences. Priests and Bishops have no authority to forgive sin. Christ is our only mediator. He forgives us of all our sins, past present and future. He paid the price for all our sins.
 - 1 Tim. 2:5 For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
 - Matt. 11:28 Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
 - Nowhere is there a limit placed on Christ only paying for original sins. He paid for all our sins.
 - Heb. 7:27 He sacrificed for their sins once and for all when he offered himself.
 - Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.
 - 1 Cor. 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
 - Gal. 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,
 - 1 John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Catholics – What they believe.Salvation / Justification

- A Cooperation between Man and God - also both an event and a process. Salvation only comes through the Catholic Church.
 - “For every human creature it is altogether necessary to salvation that he be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” (1302 Unum Sanctum)
 - There is a recognition that it was first necessary for Christ to die on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. However, knowledge and acceptance of that is not enough for salvation.
 - Baptism is required for salvation – that makes the unrighteous become righteous where typically original Adamic sin is forgiven. God infuses righteousness into man (often an infant).
 - Initial justification, through Baptism is considered a gift from God (i.e. God’s grace).
 - Acts 2:38a “Repent and be baptized...”
 - 1 Pet. 3:21 “Baptism now saves you...”
 - Progressive Justification – Justification is a process that continues throughout life in the believer as he performs “good works” to be forgiven of new sins and grows in a relationship with God (righteousness). These “works” take the form of the 7 Sacraments and in particular Penance (confession, priestly forgiveness of sins, in the extreme, self-flagellation), and the Eucharist (Communion). In this way the Catholic “merits” salvation / justification.
 - James 2:24 You see that a person is justified by works, not by faith alone.
 - This verse is only considered valid AFTER the event of Baptism. (see 5ai above)
 - Final Justification - The Catholic can only have relative (not absolute) certainty of salvation (Glory) prior to death.
 - Further punishment may be required after death (Purgatory).

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.Salvation / Justification

- Not a process but strictly an event and only for Biblical-Christians
- Traditional Catholicism
 - Baptism – Catholics may state that this is a gift from God (God’s grace) with no works involved. However, Faith in Christ is not in play considering that most often baptism is being performed on infants.
 - Progressive Justification – This is Sanctification - the event which occurs after Salvation / Justification. It is growth in a relationship to God (righteousness).
 - Sacraments such as Baptism, Communion, Confession and Marriage are traditions but not pre-requisites for salvation or on an equal level with Scripture.
 - To say salvation / justification requires both God’s grace and good works (merit) takes away from the omnipotent power of God.
 - James 2:24 Must be looked at in its context (James 2:14-26).
 - Clearly the verses refer to the fact that once a person is saved (justified) they exhibit the fruits of that changed heart (sanctification).
 - Final Justification – We can be sure of our salvation. The Bible guarantees eternal life.
 - John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Catholics – What they believe.

- Vatican II (1962-65)– offered a potential new route for Salvation while, at the same time reaffirming the Traditional view.
 - “This sacred synod teaches that the Church is necessary for salvation.”
 - Salvation is “not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.”
 - “Anonymous Christianity” (also termed, “Separated Brethren” – salvation may be possible with out explicit Christian faith, even through non-Christian religions.
 - The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation.

After Physical Death

- Traditional Catholic Justification / Salvation
- Christ returns at the second advent and all are resurrected.
 - Catholics are amillennialists. There is no battle of Armageddon or 1000 year reign of Christ or Tribulation as Catholics believe that Christ has already returned through Communion. When He does return in the clouds he will resurrect the dead (Rapture) and that will be the end of earth.
 - Purgatory will end at the resurrection.
- God reviews the life of the individual – three places they can go.
 - Immediate eternal life in Heaven.
 - If Venial sins are not offset then temporary punishment in Purgatory.
 - 1 Corinthians 3:15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.
 - Time in Purgatory can be shortened by :
 - Past penance and indulgences by the individual.
 - Living friends paying the church for a Mass for the departed.

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.

- Vatican II
 - Anonymous Christianity – opens the door wide for Ecumenism (universalism) which proposes that there is one god but many ways (religions) one can use to approach him. A satanic concept.
- True Salvation / Justification
 - Occurs when someone :
 - Realizes he is a sinner and can not save himself,
 - Accepts Christ as his Lord and savior
 - Grace alone (God’s gift), Faith alone (no works) through Jesus Christ alone (no other way).

After Physical Death

- There are only two places a person can go. There are no scriptural references that support Purgatory or the ability of the living in reducing the punishment of the dead.
- Heaven – Mat. 25:34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”
- Hell – Mat. 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Catholics – What they believe.

- Eventually Glory (Heaven) is reached.
- Death in a state of Mortal Sin as a non-Catholic – Hell

Catholics – Why what they believe is wrong.Witnessing to a Catholic

Again, in love not in theology.

- Most American Catholics are Cultural / Liberal Catholics and from this perspective a gospel presentation can be used with little modification.
- Consider that Cultural Catholics may feel uncomfortable converting to Protestantism since Catholicism is more of a life style than a religion (false teaching). Many in the Evangelical Catholic movement are theologically sound as long as they do not hold to the Sign Gifts (ex. speaking in tongues) as a pre-requisite for salvation. This may be a possible compromise for the awakening Catholic.
- Focus on the Bible (w/o Apocrypha) and Jesus Christ as sufficient for salvation. Begin from the substantial body of doctrine for which you both agree (Trinity, one supreme God, Jesus Christ, continuing sin, God's grace, literal heaven and hell) and then move to the fact that grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the path to salvation. Emphasize that you can know now for sure that you are saved . There is no purgatory. There is no opportunity after death (or before for that matter) to work off the debt of sin. The 'works' of penance, indulgences and the other sacraments will not earn a place in heaven. Ephes. 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." The sin debt has already been paid, in full, by Christ.