



Lenten Apologetics Bible Study Series



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Weekly Topics



- **March 7th**
 - "Why do I need the Church when I have the Bible?"
- **March 14th**
 - "Is the Papacy in the Bible?"
- **March 21st**
 - "Why do Catholics Pray to Mary and the Saints?"
- **March 28th**
 - "Is the Eucharist Truly the Body and Blood of Christ?"
- **April 4th**
 - "Is Purgatory in the Bible?"
- **April 11th**
 - "Why the Catholic Church?"



Why the Catholic Church?



- An Unbroken History
- Four Marks of the True Church
- Seven Sacraments
- Communion of Saints
- Three Legs to Stand on
- Apostolic Succession
- Holy Mass – the Eucharistic Sacrifice
- Summary



An Unbroken History



- Jesus established His Church as a visible organization
- Jesus chose Peter to be the first in authority among the apostles
- Jesus intended for His Church to continue teaching the Gospel with His authority until the end of time
- The Apostles chose others to be bishops (Greek meaning “an overseer”) as their successors
- The Catholic Church has existed continuously since the time of the Apostles



A Visible Church



- Jesus established His Church as a visible organization
 - Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” (Mt 5:14)
 - He chose twelve men to be the foundation stones upon which the Church was built, with Jesus being the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20)
 - Jesus is God’s definitive Word, there will be no further Revelation after Him
 - The definitive *deposit of faith* was given to the Twelve Apostles who passed it on to their successors (the bishops of the Catholic Church)



Public Revelation in the Catholic Church



- God has said everything in His Word
 - “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father’s one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. (CCC 65)
- There will be no further Revelation
 - No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (CCC 66)



Private Revelation in the Catholic Church



- Some “private” revelations have been recognized by the authority of the Church
- “Private” revelations do not belong to the deposit of faith (they are not binding on the faithful)
 - It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation
 - The magisterium knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church
 - Christian faith cannot accept “revelations” that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment (CCC 66)



An Earthly Head



- Jesus chose Peter to be the first in authority among the apostles
 - It was upon “this rock” (Peter) that Christ promised He would build His Church
 - It was to Peter alone that Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven
 - He promised Peter infallibility (the inability to err when teaching in matters of faith and morals) when He said, “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt. 16:18-19)



A Continuous Church



- Jesus intended for His Church to continue teaching the Gospel with His authority until the end of time
 - Jesus is like the wise man who build His house (the Church) on a rock (Peter), "...it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." (Mt. 7:24-27)
 - He promised the gates of hell would not prevail against it when He said, "... you are Peter (Kepha – Rock), and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." (Mt. 16:18)



A Continuous Church (Cont.)



- Jesus commands His followers to take disputes involving religious matters to the Church for resolution (Mt. 18:15-18)
 - He would not instruct us to do such a thing if He knew that the Church would fall into total apostasy and become corrupted
 - The Church must, out of necessity, always exist in order for Jesus to give such a command
- Jesus promised that He would be with His Church until the end of time
 - "...lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20)



A Continuous Church (Cont.)



- St. Paul tells us that the Church is the pillar and ground (bulwark or foundation) of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)
 - These are very strong words used to indicate strength, stability, and permanence
 - In order to be the pillar and foundation Paul speaks of, the Church must be a permanent teacher of truth, not a temporary household build upon sand only to be rebuilt later
 - Jesus said, “Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock,” (Mt. 7:24-27)



Witness of the Early Church Fathers



- Jesus Christ founded a society, with Himself its Head, which is to last forever and which is called His Church
- There are four distinguishing marks of the one true Church founded by Christ
- The Church was hierarchically constituted
- Among the Apostles, Peter received from Christ the primacy of jurisdiction in the Church
- Supreme power over the whole Church belonged to the Bishop of Rome as successor of Peter



Witness of the Early Church Fathers (Cont.)



- Bishops of the Catholic Church are the legitimate successors of the Apostles
- The Church is infallible in transmitting the teachings of Christ
- The Roman Pontiff enjoys infallibility when he teaches ex cathedra
- Bishops gathered in an ecumenical council have always been acknowledged as infallible judges of the faith
- The Fathers knew all of our seven Sacraments



Witness of the Early Church Fathers (Cont.)



- Mary is truly the Mother of God (*theotokos*)
- Mary conceived as a virgin (*virgo ante partum*)
- Mary was a virgin during the birth (*in partu*)
- Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ (*virgo post partum*)
- Mary is the New Eve, the co-operatrix in the mystery of the redemption
- Mary was conceived immaculate, i.e., without the stain of original sin



Witness of the Early Church Fathers (Cont.)



- Sacred Tradition is a true source of revelation
- The Mass is a true Sacrifice offered for adoration, thanksgiving, propitiation (appeasement or satisfaction), and supplication (prayers of petition)
- Belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Communion of Saints (intercessory prayers)
- The existence of purgatory where the dead undergo temporary punishment
- The souls in purgatory can be aided by the prayers of the living



Four Marks of the True Church



- Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 in response to the Arian heresy: “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church” (Nicene Creed)
- Four marks (qualities or characteristics) which help to identify the true Church of Jesus Christ:
 - The Church is One
(Jn 10:16, 17:17-23; Eph 4:3-6; 1Cor 1:10, 4:4, 12:13; CCC 866)
 - The Church is Holy
(John 17:17, 19; Titus 2:14; CCC 867)
 - The Church is Catholic (Greek = Universal)
(Mt 24:14; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8; CCC 868)
 - The Church is Apostolic
(Jn 15:16, 20:21; Mt 16:18, 28:18-20; Eph 4:11; Tit 1:5; CCC 869)



The Church is One



- Unity in belief
 - Same teachings and traditions that were given to the Twelve Apostles (John 10:11-16, John 21:15-17)
- Unity in worship
 - Christ prayed “that they may be one” (John 17:11, John 17:22-23)
- Unity in government or leadership
 - One visible head of government and leadership, the Apostolic College with Peter and his successors as its head (Lk 22:32; Jn 21:17; Eph 4:11; CCC 813)



The Church is Holy



- Holiness in its founder - Jesus Christ
- Holiness in its principles
 - Jesus prayed for the holiness of His Church, to “Sanctify them” (John 17:17), “consecrated in truth” (John 17:19)
- Holiness in its members
 - Consisting of His own sheep who have been purified for Him as an acceptable people (Titus 2:14)
 - There will be both holy and unholy people in the Church until the end of times (Mt 13:3-8, 24-30)
- Holiness in its miracles
 - (Healings, Eucharistic miracles, the Incorruptibles, etc.)



The Church is Catholic



- From the Greek word *katholikos* meaning general or universal
 - St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Smyrnaeans around A.D. 110: “Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church”
- The Catholic Church consists of a universality in time and in place
 - The gospel will continue to be preached throughout the whole world until the end of time (Mt. 24:14), to the whole creation throughout all the world (Mk. 16:15), and by the power of the Holy Spirit to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8)



The Church is Apostolic



- The true church must always teach the identical doctrines that were originally delivered to it by Peter and the Apostles (Mt. 28:18-20)
- Her ministers must derive their powers from the Apostles by an uninterrupted chain of succession
- Peter is the rock upon which Christ built His Church (Mt. 16:18) (the successor of Peter is the Bishop of Rome)
- Any church claiming to be Christ’s own must be able to trace its lineage in unbroken continuity back to the apostles (only the Catholic Church can make this claim)



Catholic Priesthood Authority



- **Priesthood of the faithful**
(Heb 5:1-5; Rev 1:6, 54:9-10; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; CCC 784, 1119, 1546)
 - Christ gives the faithful a share in His priesthood through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation
- **Ministerial priesthood**
(Rom 12:4; Jn 20:21-23; Lk 24:47; Mt 28:18-20; CCC 1547)
 - The priesthood of Christ is made present in a special way in the Church through the ministerial priesthood, conferred through the Sacrament of Holy Orders (CCC 1539, 1544, 1547, 1554)
- **True priesthood offers sacrifice**
(Heb. 5:1, 8:3)
 - Catholic priests offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the salvation of souls and for the glory of God



Catholic Church Holy Sacrifice of the Mass



- **All gather together**
 - Eucharistic assembly presided invisibly by Christ
 - Bishop or priest acting in the person of Christ the head (all present participate in some way)
- **Liturgy of the Word**
 - Readings from OT/NT and Gospels, homily, prayers
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist**
 - **Transubstantiation:** The substance of bread and wine change into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearances or “species” of bread and wine



Seven Sacraments



- A sacrament is an efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (CCC #1131, #774)
 - Baptism (cleanses from the stain of original sin)
 - Confirmation (gift of the Holy Spirit)
 - Communion (Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist)
 - Confession (aka Penance, Reconciliation)
 - Anointing of the Sick (aka Extreme Unction, Last Rites)
 - Ordination (Holy Orders to the ministerial priesthood)
 - Matrimony (marriage between a man and woman)



Communion of Saints



- Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed
- The term 'communion of saints' therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion 'in holy things (*sancta*)' and 'among holy persons (*sancti*)' (CCC 948)
- Christ is the head of the Church, which is His Body (Eph 1:22-23; 5:21-32; Col 1:18, 24)
- If one suffers, all suffer; if one is honored, all rejoice (1 Cor 12:12-27)



Communion of Saints (Cont.)



- We are one body in Christ, individual parts of one another (Rom 12:5)
- One body, one spirit, called to one hope (Eph 4:4)
- You were called in one body (Col 3:15)
- Death cannot separate us from Christ (Rom 8:35-39)
- Love one another with mutual affection (Rom 12:10)
- Encourage, build up one another (1 Thess 5:11)



Communion of Saints (Cont.)



- Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Let us do good to all, especially those in the family of faith (Gal 6:10)
- As members of the Body of Christ, all Christians enjoy a communion in faith, fellowship, the sacraments, liturgies, and other spiritual goods
- All Christians enjoy a real communion with Christ and each other which extends across time and space, not severed by death



Three Legs to Stand on



- **Sacred Scripture** (Holy Bible)
 - The books (46 in OT and 27 in NT) which contain the truth of God's revelation, composed by human authors inspired by the Holy Spirit
- **Tradition** (capital "T")
 - The living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church (the oral preaching of the Apostles conserved and handed on as the deposit of faith through the apostolic succession in the Church)
- **Magisterium** (teaching authority)
 - The living, teaching office of the Church, whose task it is to give authentic interpretation of the Word of God



Apostolic Succession



- Jesus chose the Twelve Apostles to receive the fullness of the gospel teachings (Mt. 10:2-4, Mk. 3:16-29, Lk. 6:13-16, Acts 1:13)
- He chose Peter to be the first in authority among the apostles (Mt. 16:18-20, Lk. 22:32, Jn 21:17, Mk 16:7, Lk 24:34)
- Upon "this rock" (Peter) Christ promised He would build His Church
- He promised the gates of hell shall not prevail
- Peter alone was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:18-20)



Apostolic Succession (Cont.)



- Apostolic Succession was first demonstrated in Acts 1:20-26 when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas
- Every validly ordained bishop in the Catholic Church can trace his priesthood authority back through history to one of the Twelve Apostles
- This authority has been passed on in an unbroken chain of ordinations by the laying-on of hands from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops, and to their successors, other bishops



Continuity of the Catholic Church



- The bishops of the Catholic Church are the successors to the Apostles in a continuous line of apostolic succession
- The Catholic Church has existed continuously since the time of the Apostles
- The Catholic Church was founded as a divinely inspired earthly organization by Christ upon Peter, the rock
- No other Christian church can trace its authority unbroken back to the original apostolic source



Holy Mass – Eucharistic Sacrifice



- The divine sacrifice made “once for all” (Heb 7:27) is a unique historical event
- Jesus’ sacrifice, though occurring in the past to us, is nevertheless always present to God
 - God himself does not exist in time as we do
- The presentation of Jesus as “Lamb” to the Father is an ongoing occurrence (from God’s perspective, timeless), long after the death of Jesus (see Rev 5:6; 13:8)
- Jesus “has a priesthood that does not pass away” (Heb 7:24)



Holy Mass – Eucharistic Sacrifice (Cont.)



- The Mass is a re-presentation of Jesus’ historical, one-time sacrificial death on the cross
- The priest re-enacts Jesus’ priestly actions at the Last Supper, offering once more his Body and Blood
- Jesus is not sacrificed again in the Eucharist
- His unique sacrifice is made real and present to us here and now, because it is a divine reality that transcends space and time



Holy Mass – Eucharistic Sacrifice (Cont.)



- The Mass is truly a sacrifice offered by a priest upon an altar
- The elements of priests and altars also play a role in the New Covenant in Christ's blood (see Lk 22:20)
- Book of Revelation tells us of the "altar" with a "gold censer" in the "temple" where the sacrificed Lamb, Jesus, reigns (Rev 5:6; 6:9; 8:3; 9:13)
- Jesus is the Lamb who was slain for our sins
 - The sacrificial Paschal Lamb must be consumed



Holy Mass – Eucharistic Sacrifice (Cont.)



- In presenting us a vision of heaven, Revelation also provides us a glimpse of the Mass, our foretaste on earth of heaven's "wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9)



Source and Summit of Christian Life



- Catechism of the Catholic Church calls the Eucharist:
 - The “source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324)
 - The “sum and the summary of our faith” (CCC 1327)
- The Catholic Church has taught for 2,000 years that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist
- Under the appearance of bread and wine, Christ is completely present in his body, blood, soul, and divinity



Summary



- Who do you say Jesus is? (Matthew 16:13-19)
- The Catholic Church contains the fullness of truth
- The Church is the Pillar and bulwark (foundation) of the truth (see 1 Tim. 3:15)
- The Bible is a Catholic Book – rely on the Catholic Church for correct interpretation
- The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is commemorated and mysteriously made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church (the Mass)
- Obedience is submission to the authority of God



Summary (Cont.)



- Know, love, and practice your own faith
- Use good Catholic Christian charity when speaking to others about the faith
- Be prepared to respond with your own “testimony” of the fullness of truth contained only in the Catholic Church
- Virtually every distinctively Catholic doctrine is clearly found in the writings of the Early Church Fathers
- Avoid stupid controversies and genealogies (Titus 3:9)



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Question and Answer



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