

# Bringing the Gospel to Roman Catholics

A Handbook



Petra Media Publication

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Published by



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# Terms & Definitions

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**

Published in 1994, Catechism of the Catholic Church is a universal catechism that sums up the beliefs and practices of the Catholic faithful.

## **Vatican Council II**

The Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II (Latin: Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum) addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world and a means of spiritual renewal for the Roman Catholic Church. It took place from 1962 to 1965.

## **Council of Trent**

Held in three parts: 1545–47, 1551–52, 1562–63. It is the 19th Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church, convoked to meet the crisis of the Protestant Reformation.

## **Roman Catholic Church**

The Roman Catholic Church, is the largest Christian church, with more than 1.2 billion baptised Catholics worldwide. The church is headed by the Bishop of Rome, known as the Pope. Its central administration, the Holy See, is in the Vatican City, an enclave within Rome, Italy.

## **Roman Catholicism**

Roman Catholicism comprises the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

## **Roman Catholic**

A Roman Catholic is a baptized member of the Roman Catholic Church.

## **Biblical Christianity**

Biblical Christianity adheres to the Scriptures (Holy Bible) as the only, sufficient, infallible rule of faith and practice.

## **Biblical Christian**

This term is referred to a 'born-again' Christian who is saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone based on Scripture alone.

## Course Objectives

This course is designed to equip you to be able to witness effectively to Roman Catholics.

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15)*

### **Upon completion of this course you will be able to:**

- Have a better understanding of Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholics
- Identify the Six Major Differences
- Learn about 'Seeking the Seekers'
- Learn how to effectively share the Gospel with Roman Catholics
- Identify different categories of Roman Catholics and learn how to witness to them
- Understand the 'Catholic Conversion Cycle'
- Learn about Reformation and Ecumenism

## A Ministry to Roman Catholics

### A Great Need

There are more than a billion Roman Catholics, and most have never heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ. They know about Jesus but have never trusted Him as their Lord and Savior. They do not have a **personal relationship** with Jesus.

### A Lack of Knowledge

Many Biblical Christians are not aware of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The general feeling is that Roman Catholics are true Christians, since they profess Jesus Christ and proclaim Him as the only Savior of the world. The Roman Catholic Church also believes in some of the essentials of the Christian faith such as: The Authority of the Scriptures (Bible), the Deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His death on the cross, His bodily resurrection and His second coming. So, the question is, 'Why evangelize Roman Catholics?'

The issue however is not whether they know all these things about Jesus. It's not even the knowledge that 'Jesus can save them'. The most important question is: "**How** does Jesus save them?" Or "**What** must one do in order to be saved?" There is a big difference between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity, as to how a person is saved. Is salvation by 'faith plus works' or is it by 'faith alone'?

### The Galatian Heresy (Galatians 1:6-10; 3:1-3)

Apostle Paul confronts the Galatians because they were turning from the gospel of grace to 'another' gospel by adding the 'works of the law'. By doing so, they were perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul warned them that this was a different gospel, which was really no gospel at all. It was indeed a false gospel.

The Catholic Church has added '**works**' to the gospel too. (CCC 2068)<sup>1</sup>

The difference between salvation through 'Faith **alone**' and salvation through 'Faith **plus works**' is the difference between a true gospel and a false gospel. (Refer to Lesson 6)

## Understanding Roman Catholicism

**These are some Major Beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church that Biblical Christians agree to:**

1. The Deity of Christ - Jesus is God
2. Jesus as the eternal Son of God
3. His virgin birth
4. His incarnation – Son of Man
5. Jesus is fully God and fully Man
6. His sinless perfection
7. His miracles
8. His death on the cross
9. His bodily resurrection on the third day
10. His bodily ascension into heaven
11. The divine inspiration and authority of the Bible
12. The Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit

There are however several fundamental doctrinal differences between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity.

Apostle Paul warns us not to compromise or put up with wrong doctrines. *'For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** which you have not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!'* (2 Corinthians 11:4)

The six major ones are listed in the topic: ***Six Major Differences between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity.*** (Refer to Lesson 3)

## Six Major Differences Between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity

### ROMAN CATHOLICISM

1. Salvation through Faith plus 'Works', i.e. meriting salvation through **Good deeds, , Indulgences, Purgatory**, etc.  
(CCC 2010)<sup>1</sup>
2. Scripture **plus** Tradition and Magisterium - (Teaching Authority)  
(CCC 95)<sup>2</sup>
3. Mass (Transubstantiation and Eucharistic Sacrifice)  
(CCC 1367)<sup>3</sup>
4. Apostolic Succession (Ministerial Priesthood and Common Priesthood)  
(CCC 77; 1547)<sup>4</sup>
5. Worship of God **plus** Veneration of Mary and Saints (CCC 971; 957)<sup>5</sup>
6. The Church is the **visible communion** of all Roman Catholics, with the Pope as the visible head of the Church - the 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic' Church (CCC 811; 882)<sup>6</sup>

### BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

1. Salvation by 'Faith alone' **apart from** 'Works'  
(Galatians 2:16)
2. Scripture **alone** as the sole, sufficient and supreme authority  
(2 Timothy 3:16, 17)
3. Memorial Meal  
(1 Corinthians 11:24, 25)
4. Priesthood of all Believers  
(1 Peter 2:9)
5. Worship of God **alone**  
(Exodus 20:3-5)
6. The Church is the **invisible union** of all true believers with Jesus Christ as the head of the Church - the true and living Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27; Colossians 1:18)



# What a Roman Catholic Needs to Know

## An Average Roman Catholic...

1. **Knows** about Jesus Christ
2. Believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the **world**.
3. Considers Christianity a **Religion**
4. Believes that he can **merit** salvation through faith in Christ plus 'Works'
5. Believes that salvation comes through Christ **plus the mediation of the Church, Mary and the Catholic Saints**
6. Believes that he is saved **by** good works
7. Worships God through **sacramental and liturgical rites**
8. Is **not sure** of going to heaven

## A Roman Catholic Needs to...

1. **Believe** in the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 16:31
2. Believe that Jesus also died on the cross **personally** for him. Romans 5:8
3. Realize that Christianity is a **Relationship** with Jesus Christ. John 1:12
4. Believe that salvation is by **grace** through faith in Christ 'alone'. Ephesians 2:8-9
5. Believes that salvation comes through Christ as the **only** 'Mediator' between God and man. 1 Timothy 2:5
6. Believe that he is saved **for** good works. Ephesians 2:10
7. Believe that God is only worshipped in **Spirit and in Truth**. John 4:23
8. Know that he can be **sure** of going to heaven if he believes in Jesus. John 3:16

## Seeking the Seekers

While witnessing, we must remember that God has already prepared souls who are '**ripe for harvest**' (John 4: 35). The main thing is to learn how to identify those that are 'ripe'. Once we identify them, we can then focus on leading them to Christ. Pray that God will enable and empower you by His Holy Spirit to identify them and make you a fruitful witness. Acts 1:8

We will typically encounter three types of contacts while witnessing, Apostle Paul encountered these during his ministry, too. Here is an example.

*"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some **mocked**, while others said, "We will **hear** you again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and **believed**..."* Acts 17:32-34.

**The three types of contacts are:**

1. **COLD** contacts – Generally these are people who are not interested and they can sometimes be hostile. (Acts 17:32)
2. **WARM** contacts – These are people who are open, but want to hear more before they make a decision to trust Christ. (Acts 17:32)
3. **HOT** contacts – These are people who are ripe and are willing to trust Christ as their Lord and Savior. (Acts 17:34)

Once the HOT contacts are identified, it is relatively easy to share the Gospel and draw them to Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8

**How to respond to each type?**

1. **COLD** contacts – Thank them for their time, depart gracefully and keep the door open. Leave a gospel tract, if possible. Pray for them.
2. **WARM** contacts – Be ready and prepared to have further discussions with them. Leave a gospel tract. Pray for them.
3. **HOT** contacts – Share the gospel with them and lead them to Christ. Help new believers grow in Christ.

# The Right Path to Salvation

“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”

**T**wo thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul was asked this question that many still ask today.

Paul's response was brief and simple:

**“BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be SAVED.”** Acts 16:31

This answer deals with HOW one can be SURE of SALVATION and Eternal Life in HEAVEN.

(References contained in this lesson are taken from the Holy Bible)

## Why Do We Need To Be Saved In The First Place?

We are in need of salvation because we are **all** SINNERS and unrighteous before a HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS GOD.

*“For all have **sinned** and fall short of the glory of God.”* Romans 3:23

The sinner is under the **wrath** of God. The punishment for sin is **DEATH** (SEPARATION from God and Eternal Suffering in HELL). *“For the wages of sin is **death**...”* Romans 6:23

Therefore, it is very important to clearly understand what we must do to be **Saved**.

## What is Salvation and How are we Saved?

SALVATION, according to the Bible, is **Deliverance** from Eternal Suffering in HELL to Eternal Life in HEAVEN.

**GOD**, because of His LOVE for the Sinner, offered His Son **JESUS CHRIST** as a SACRIFICE to pay the PRICE for our Salvation. (John 3:16)

## The Question is: **What must we do to be saved?**

There are Two Main VIEWS of How to get SAVED in CHRISTIANITY

**VIEW 1** - Saved by '**Faith in Christ plus Works**'

**VIEW 2** - Saved by '**Faith in Christ Alone**'

### **Which View is Right?**

There is only **one** RIGHT View according to the Bible. Our very 'SALVATION' depends on believing the **RIGHT VIEW** or else we are in grave danger of believing in a **FALSE GOSPEL** and going to HELL.

The Apostle Paul warns us: *"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel **other than the one** we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!"* Galatians 1:8.

Let's Examine these **Two Views of 'SALVATION'**.

### **View 1 - Saved By 'Faith In Christ Plus Works'**

According to this VIEW, one is **Saved** by '**Faith in Christ plus Works**'. These 'Works', as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, include receiving sacraments, doing penance, gaining indulgences, performing good deeds, etc.

#### **Initial Salvation**

The 'Catechism of the Catholic Church' (**CCC**), the official teaching of the Catholic Church, states that Salvation begins at **Baptism** (CCC 1213).<sup>1</sup> One is then required to continue a life-long process of **Meritorious Works** toward the increasing of graces to attain Eternal Life (CCC 2010).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Final Salvation**

This takes place when one fully **merits Graces** to attain Eternal Life (CCC 2027).<sup>3</sup> But one can never be sure of attaining Final Salvation, unless one dies with **Excess Merit** or Grace (CCC 956).<sup>4</sup> Thus spending time in **Purgatory** is a means of attaining FINAL PURIFICATION so as to achieve holiness to enter heaven (CCC 1030-31).<sup>5</sup>

**Mortal Sin** results in loss of grace (CCC 1855).<sup>6</sup> Grace is restored through

**Penance** (CCC 1456).<sup>7</sup> An unrepented sinner will suffer eternally in **Hell** (CCC 1861).<sup>8</sup>

Attaining Final Salvation is therefore a **LIFE-LONG** process. One can never be sure of it in one's lifetime.

## View 2 - Saved By 'Faith In Christ Alone'

According to this VIEW, one is **Saved** by 'Faith in Christ Alone' apart from 'Works'.

*"Know that a person is not justified by the **Works** of the law, but by **Faith** in Jesus Christ..."* Galatians 2:16 (NIV)

God offers Salvation as a **GIFT** through DIVINE EXCHANGE.

### What Is 'Divine Exchange'?

**The Bible says, "For He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus Christ paid the **FULL PRICE** for our Salvation. He took our SIN upon Himself and He placed His RIGHTEOUSNESS upon us.

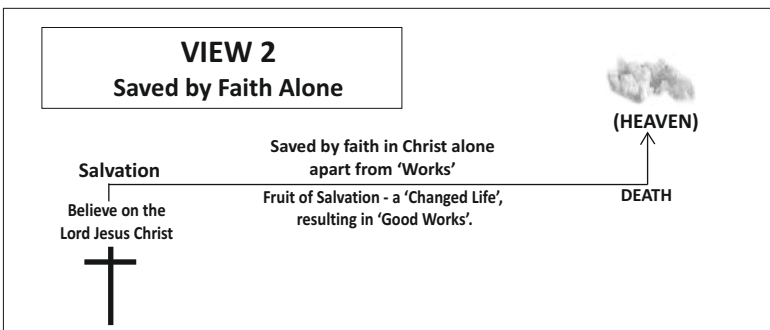
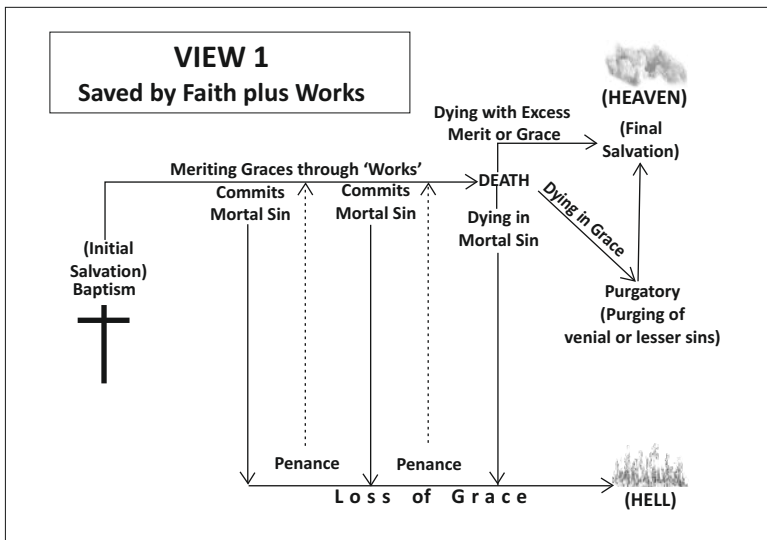
The sinner has no part or work in it, except to **BELIEVE** on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are **saved** by grace through Faith in Christ alone, **apart** from WORKS.

*"For by grace you have been **saved** through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of **works**, lest anyone should boast."* Ephesians 2:8,9

The FRUIT of Salvation is a 'Changed Life', (2 Corinthians 5:17), resulting in 'Good Works'. (Ephesians 2:10)

The moment we **BELIEVE** on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are **SAVED**. One can be sure of Salvation in one's lifetime.

# THE TWO VIEWS OF SALVATION



## The Two Views of 'SALVATION' Compared

### VIEW 1

- ♦ Faith in Christ plus Works
- ♦ Salvation is a life-long process
- ♦ Earned or merited by self
- ♦ Christ and Church are needed to be Saved
- ♦ Baptism = Initial Salvation + Works = Final Salvation
- ♦ Not sure of Salvation

### VIEW 2

- ♦ Faith in Christ Alone
- ♦ Salvation is once and for all
- ♦ Freely given by God's grace
- ♦ Christ Alone is needed to be Saved
- ♦ Faith in Christ Alone = Salvation = Good Works
- ♦ Sure of Salvation

## The Right Path To Salvation

Salvation is by God's **GRACE** alone. We cannot merit or earn it by our 'WORKS'.

*"And if **by grace**, then it is no longer of **works**; otherwise grace is no longer grace..."* (Romans 11:6)

Salvation is a 'Gift' of God, **freely** given through **CHRIST alone** by God's **GRACE alone** to all those who receive it by **FAITH alone**.

Do you want to receive this Gift of Salvation?

Here's how YOU can RECEIVE this 'GIFT':

***"BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and you will be SAVED."*** Acts 16:31

**You can BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ right now**

(Turn from SELF-EFFORT to Faith in **CHRIST alone** for your Salvation)

You can **TRUST Christ**, at this very moment, in your own words or through the suggested prayer given below.

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. I **BELIEVE** that you died in my place to pay the **FULL PRICE** for my Salvation. I **REPENT** and **TRUST** You alone as my **LORD** and **SAVIOR**. Thank you for the Gift of Salvation and Eternal life. Amen.

**If you have BELIEVED on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
you can now be SURE of your Salvation and Eternal Life.**

*These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, that you may **know** that you **have** eternal life.*

(1 John 5:13)

## Identifying Roman Catholics

***“If you want to pull out a tooth, you need to study dentistry - or else you may end up with a fight.”***

Identifying the different kinds of Roman Catholics will help you effectively witness to them, without causing frustration for either you or for them. Therefore, it is important to discern where the person stands with regard to his faith in Jesus Christ and his relation to the Roman Catholic Church.

Not all Roman Catholics believe and practice the same kind of faith, though all may consider themselves to be Roman Catholics.

### **List of Different Types of Roman Catholics:**

1. **Traditional Catholics** – are 'conservative' Catholics who strictly adhere to the pre- Vatican Council II church doctrines and practices.
2. **Liberal Catholics** – are 'progressive' Catholics who hold liberal views on sex, marriage, abortion, contraception, etc., contrary to the Church's teaching.
3. **“Protestant” Catholics** – are former Protestants who have embraced the Roman Catholic faith.
4. **Nominal or Social Catholics** – are those who are largely uncommitted and they seldom go to church.
5. **Syncretistic Catholics** – absorb paganism in their practice of Roman Catholicism.
6. **Lapsed Catholics** – are non-practicing Catholics who have given up their Roman Catholic faith altogether.
7. **Charismatic Catholics** – believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and charismatic gifts. Some are born-again, but others are not.
8. **“Regenerated” Catholics** – are those who are 'born again' Christians, but still continue with the Roman Catholic Church.



# Broad Classification of Roman Catholics

**Mostly, Roman Catholics fall into three broad categories.**

These categories should not be taken as distinct classification for every Roman Catholic. Not every one fits exactly into a particular category. There is significant religious diversity and overlapping within Roman Catholics.

**The Three Categories are:**

1. Religious Catholics
2. Regressed Catholics
3. Regenerated Catholics

**Brief Description of Each Category**

## **1. Religious Catholics**

These are Roman Catholics who are faithful to the Roman Catholic Church to various degrees. They are churchgoers who adhere to the church doctrines and teachings. They may either follow some or all of the practices and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. They believe in the Roman Catholicism way of salvation, i.e. 'Salvation by faith plus works'.

## **2. Regressed Catholics**

These are Roman Catholics who remain largely uncommitted to the Roman Catholic Church. Their identification as a 'Roman Catholic' is more cultural and social than religious. Most do not find an interest in the Catholic religion. This may be expressed through their lack of spirituality or their indifference. Many have given up their Catholic faith altogether.

## **3. Regenerated Catholics**

These are Roman Catholics who claim to have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior, and profess to be 'born again' Christians. Some of them are part of the 'Catholic Charismatic Renewal' and believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and charismatic gifts. But for one reason or another they continue to remain in the Roman Catholic Church.

## Sharing with Different Roman Catholics

Once we have identified the spiritual condition of the Roman Catholic we are witnessing to, it is easier for us to relate to them appropriately.

### A Simple Way to Share with Each Category

#### 1. Religious Catholics

Since these Catholics believe in the Roman Catholicism way of salvation, i.e. being saved by faith plus works, we need to help them understand the Biblical way of salvation of being saved by faith alone. **Present the true way of salvation, which is by faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from 'works'.** (Galatians 2:16)

#### 2. Regressed Catholics

Since these are Catholics who are uninterested in either God or religion, we need to help them understand the difference between 'Religion' and 'Relationship'. They need to understand that God loves them and offers them eternal life. **Present the 'Good News' about God's love, forgiveness and the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.** (John 3:16)

#### 3. Regenerated Catholics

Since they profess to be 'born again' Christians, but still continue to remain as Roman Catholics, we need to help them to see some of the major differences between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity. They need to understand that the Roman Catholic Church teaches and practices unbiblical doctrines, dogmas and rituals. **Present the way of God more adequately.** (Acts 18:26) (NIV)

## Tips for Effective Sharing with Roman Catholics

### Lesson 10

1. Pray for Roman Catholics. Like all non-believers, they are also spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4). We need to pray that God would open their spiritual eyes and bring them to repentance (2 Timothy 2:25, 26).
2. Realize that most profess to be 'Roman Catholics' because they were born into a Catholic family and not because they chose to be Roman Catholics.
3. Do not assume that all Roman Catholics know their Catholic doctrine. In fact, most have very little knowledge and understanding about their Catholic faith. Expect different categories of Catholics and a broad spectrum of beliefs.
4. Become familiar with the Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. Know the facts. This will keep you from appearing ignorant and losing credibility. Have information organized for easy and quick access.
5. Your greatest opportunities to share your faith may usually come early in a new relationship.
6. Never be rude or ridicule their beliefs. Do not argue, debate or confront them. You may win the argument, but lose the soul.
7. Share your personal testimony of how you trusted Christ and explain how He changed your life. Your testimony should be brief and to the point.
8. Always share the Gospel first. Do not waste time with trivia or useless arguments.
9. Do not talk about controversial topics or issues initially, but if asked, tell them that you will be willing to discuss those things at a later time.
10. Use the Catholic edition Bible or the New Testament.

## Pointing Roman Catholics to Christ

Many of the methods that may be suitable for non-Catholics are not necessarily successful with Roman Catholics. No one method will always work. The soul-winner must depend on the Holy Spirit to work in his own life and also in the life of the person receiving the witness.

### CAUTIONS

**\*\* Do not view Roman Catholics as enemies.**

We must ask God to help us love the person.

**\*\* Avoid arguments.**

It is useless to debate whether Mary had other children, etc.

**\*\* Don't ask the wrong questions.**

A wrong question can bring the conversation to a dead end. It can sometimes also lead to a misunderstanding or even an argument.

### Questions to avoid

These are questions that the Roman Catholics might respond to, based on their understanding of Roman Catholicism.

#### 1. Are you a Christian?

Catholics may answer, "Yes." They generally think of themselves as Christians. For a Roman Catholic, being a Catholic and a Christian is one and the same thing.

#### 2. Do you believe in Christ?

The answer may be, "Yes, of course." But it is more an intellectual consent and not one based on a saving faith.

#### 3. Have you received Christ?

To this question, Catholics may say "Yes". But they may not really know what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ.

Catholics believe that they receive Christ whenever they receive communion. They believe that the whole of Christ is received in the communion wafer...body, blood, soul and divinity. This is the result of the teaching on transubstantiation -- the so-called real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

#### **4. Are you saved?**

The answer will most likely be, "Depends on my good works". A Roman Catholic's Salvation is progressive and is based on faith plus works.

A Catholic does not understand Salvation as a Biblical Christian does. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a Catholic is initially saved at baptism and then he has to go through a lifelong process of increasing in merits till he reaches final salvation. A Catholic can never be sure whether he is saved or not.

#### **5. Have you been born again?**

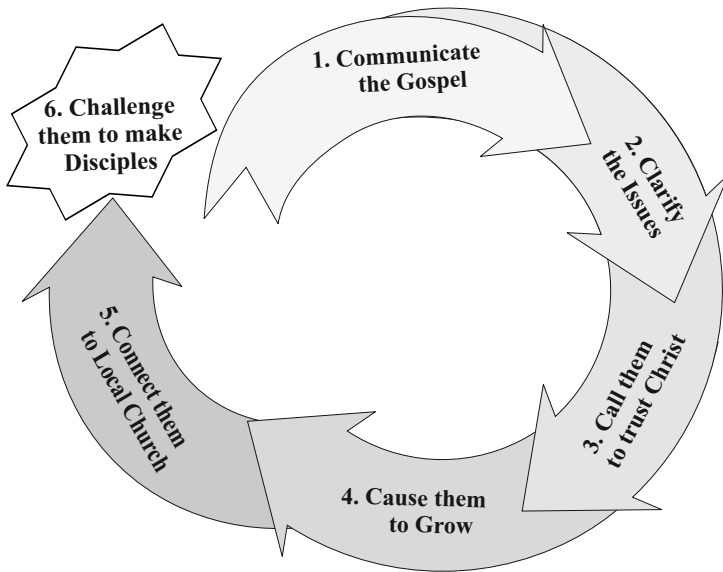
Catholics may respond "Yes". They have been taught that the new birth is the result of the sacrament of baptism. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that John 3:5 is a proof that baptism produces the new birth / regeneration.

#### **Good questions to ask**

A good question will help reveal where the Catholic stands in relationship with Jesus Christ and where he will spend eternity.

1. Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
2. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
3. Where do you think people go after death? What about you?
4. Have you ever wondered where you will spend Eternity?
5. How do you hope to get into Heaven?
6. What must one do to be saved?

# Catholic Conversion Cycle



Following the **‘Catholic Conversion Cycle’** will enable you to witness to Roman Catholics in a systematic and effective manner. This is not a strict format, since each person may respond to their spiritual need differently. It will nonetheless help you to stay on course and lead the person step by step.

## 1. Communicate the Gospel

*“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2)*

Paul had resolved to know nothing, except preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The central point of the gospel is the Cross - *“the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). We should therefore focus on Jesus and His crucifixion alone and avoid wasting time with trivia. It is useless to argue about Mary, the Pope, Mass or other such issues that are irrelevant to the presentation of the gospel. Our sole purpose should be to share the gospel as clearly as possible, without getting sidetracked from the main issue, i.e. sharing the ‘Gospel of Jesus Christ’.

## 2. Clarify the Issues

*"And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks."* (Acts 18:4)

Often, a listener's initial questioning is not resistance, but it really signifies that he wants to know more. His questions could indicate that he is sincerely interested in clarifying some important issues before accepting the gospel. *"And always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."* (1 Peter 3:15). So do not give up too quickly.

Though Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity have some beliefs in common (e.g. Virgin birth of Christ, His death, Resurrection, etc.), there are also some major differences between the two. These differences would have to be clarified at some stage. But be careful not to get sidetracked, and always answer questions that arise only in the context of sharing the gospel.

## 3. Call them to trust Christ

*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

The whole purpose of witnessing to Roman Catholics is to call them to repentance and trust Christ **alone** for their Salvation, so that their sins can be forgiven and they can have eternal life. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life."* (John 3:36).

Our main objective is to call every person to believe in Christ. It is therefore important to share God's plan of Salvation with them and explain how they can receive this gift of Salvation that God offers to sinners through Jesus Christ by faith **alone**, apart from 'Works'. Speak about the condition of their heart and the need for repentance. Lead a person to Christ if he is ready.

## 4. Cause them to Grow

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."* (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Those who trust Christ, need to grow in their faith. We need to realize that **only** God causes a person to grow as he learns to trust and obey Him.

Get new believers involved with other Christians in a small Bible study group, etc. Teach them the importance of God's word. The conviction of truth must come from Scripture. For example, don't force them to remove statues or objects of worship unless you have explained to them why they should do so. Allow the Holy Spirit to convince them of the truth. *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth."* (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit will enable and empower them to walk in obedience to God's word.

## **5. Connect them to Local Church**

*"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42)

Stress the importance of Christian fellowship – through a local church. Instruct them *"not to forsake the assembling of themselves together with other believers..."* (Hebrews 10:25). The new believer needs to be encouraged to receive 'Water Baptism' and to participate in the 'Lord's Table' in accordance to the Lord's command in the word of God.

## **6. Challenge them to make Disciples**

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; ..."* (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Help new believers learn how to share their faith with non-believers and disciple those who come to Christ. *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2:2). Help the new believers to understand that when they follow Christ in obedience to His command, He will make them fruitful.

## **Conclusion**

Following the 'Catholic Conversion Cycle' will help us to stay on track and lead the person step by step in his faith and growth in Christ.



# Reformation

The Reformation can be considered as one of the greatest spiritual revivals in Church History. It was a call to the Roman Catholic Church to return to true Biblical Christianity as taught by the Holy Scriptures. Reformation is usually considered to have started with the publication of the Ninety-five Theses by **Martin Luther** in 1517. Initiated by Luther, it was joined in by Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, John Knox and the other early Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Reformation that started in Germany, soon spread throughout Europe and it led to a schism (division) from the Roman Catholic Church.

The Roman Catholic Church responded with a Counter-Reformation (or Catholic Reformation) that was directed both toward internal renewal and against the 'contentious issues' of the Protestant Reformation. Pope Paul III convoked the **Council of Trent** (1545-1563) to defend the important Church doctrines such as, the necessity of Sacraments for salvation, Mass (transubstantiation), Catholic Tradition as equally authoritative as the Holy Scriptures, Veneration of Mary and Saints, etc. The Church pronounced 'Anathemas' (to be cursed under the penalty of excommunication) on those 'heretics' who did not comply to the cardinal doctrines of the Catholic faith. Much work of opposing and refuting Protestantism was done by the well-organized new order formed in 1540, called the Society of Jesus (a.k.a **Jesuits**) under Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556).

## The Fundamental Issues of the Reformation

There were five main issues that were raised by the Reformers that were fundamental to the doctrine of salvation. These are called the '**Five Solas**'.

Sola is a Latin phrase for 'Only' or 'Alone'. The five solas were the five main foundational issues of Reformation that separated the Biblical gospel from the false gospel. They mark the distinctions between the Roman Catholic Church and Biblical Christianity. Each sola represented a key belief that rejected the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

### *The Five Solas that formed the heart of the Reformation are:*

1. Sola Scriptura: "Scripture alone"
2. Sola Fide: "Faith alone"
3. Sola Gratia: "Grace alone"
4. Solo Christo: "Christ alone"
5. Soli Deo Gloria: "Glory to God alone"

### 1. **Sola Scriptura** means 'Scripture **alone**'.

'Scripture alone', rejected the 'Tradition' of the Catholic Church. The Reformers held on to the view that the Scripture **alone** was “inspired by God” or “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). They believed in the '**All Sufficiency of Scriptures**' – which deals with the source of our Authority. This means that the Christian authority is Christ and His word alone, not the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. Anything found in the 'Tradition' of the Roman Catholic Church or taught by the 'Magisterium' that contradicted the Scripture was to be rejected.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that both Scriptures and Tradition are God's word, bound closely together and flowing out from the same divine well-spring. They must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence (CCC 80-82).<sup>1</sup> The Magisterium is the authentic interpreter of the word of God whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition (CCC 85).<sup>2</sup>

### 2. **Sola Fide** means 'Faith **alone**'.

'Faith alone', rejected that a person is saved by 'Faith plus Works'. The Reformers emphasized salvation as a 'Free Gift' to all who accept it by faith **alone**, because of God's grace alone, in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is not based on human effort or merit. The sinner has absolutely no part in his justification. There is nothing that we can add to what Christ has already accomplished.

According to the Roman Catholic Church, salvation is by 'Faith plus Works'. One has to continue in a life-long process of **meritorious works** toward increasing of graces to attain eternal life (CCC 2010).<sup>3</sup> These meritorious works include receiving sacraments, performing good deeds, gaining indulgences, etc., as means to accumulate merits in order to attain salvation.

### 3. **Sola Gratia** means 'Grace **alone**'.

'Grace alone', rejected that a person is saved by 'Grace plus Merits'. It emphasized the fact that we are saved because of God's grace **alone** and not by our merits attained through works (Romans 11:6). In other words, salvation comes from what God has done, through Christ, rather than what we do.

The Roman Catholic Church believes that a person has to merit graces, which are needed to attain eternal life (CCC 2027).<sup>4</sup> If this righteousness is not achieved here on earth, the person goes to purgatory where final purification takes place to attain holiness to enter heaven (CCC 1030-31).<sup>5</sup> If a person dies in

#### 4. **Solo Christo** means 'Christ **alone**'.

'Christ alone' rejected that a person needs 'Christ plus Church' (or the mediation of the Roman Catholic priesthood), in order to approach God for salvation. It emphasized that salvation is through the atoning work of Christ **alone**, and He alone is the mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). The Reformers believed in the '**All Sufficiency of Christ**' – which deals with the source of our 'Justification' (Salvation). This means that we are justified through Christ alone. The Church has no role in our salvation.

According to the Roman Catholic Church, both Christ and Church are necessary for salvation. The Church is Christ's **instrument** for the salvation of all (CCC 776),<sup>7</sup> and is needed to minister the **Sacraments**, which are the means of salvation, right from the time of Baptism (CCC 1213)<sup>8</sup> until the time of Extreme Unction (CCC 1499).<sup>9</sup> The Church is also needed to help souls get out of purgatory through the offering of Indulgences (CCC 1471).<sup>10</sup>

#### 5. **Soli Deo Gloria** means 'Glory to God **alone**'.

'Glory to God alone' rejected that a person needs any other mediator except Christ, to be saved. Christ paid the full price for our salvation by His blood (Romans 3:24-25). Soli Deo Gloria is the teaching that all glory is to be due to God **alone**, since salvation is of God and is accomplished solely by God, for the glory of God alone. No one gets the glory except God.

The Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches that the mediation, of the Church (CCC 780),<sup>11</sup> Mary (CCC 969)<sup>12</sup> and the Saints (CCC 956),<sup>13</sup> is necessary to attain salvation.

### **Conclusion**

Is the Reformation over? Are the issues of Reformation resolved?

In reality, these issues have never been resolved. The 'Five Solas', which were at the heart of the Reformation, continue to be a cause of division. The issues of the Reformation cannot be ignored for the sake of unity. Unless these issues are resolved, the Roman Catholic Church and Biblical Christians can never be 'united or reconciled'. Doctrine is paramount, especially when it concerns the Gospel. **Any such unity will come at the expense of the gospel.**

We must therefore stand for the true gospel. We must '*contend for the faith*' (Jude 3), as the Reformers did.

## What is Ecumenism?

Ecumenism comes from the Greek word “oikoumene,” which means 'worldwide', 'universal' or 'the inhabited world'.

The modern Ecumenical Movement is promoted generally by the World Council of Churches (comprising Orthodox and Protestant Churches) and the Roman Catholic Church.

## Ecumenism according to the Roman Catholic Church

The goal of Ecumenism is two-fold. First and foremost, it is to bring all the Protestant denominations together with the Roman Catholic Church into a **full and visible unity** of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, in a broader sense, the Roman Catholic Church has an ultimate goal to achieve unity with all the religions of the world. Ecumenism that started primarily with a tolerant acceptance of other churches, denominations and para-church organizations is now moved toward unity with all religions, evolving into what is called 'Interfaith Dialogue'. (It is also known as, 'Interfaithism', 'Interfaith Unity' and 'Interfaith Globalism').

## Unity among the Christians

The world's 2.2 billion Christians are divided into different communions or denominations. This includes the more than 1.2 billion Roman Catholics.

The Ecumenical Movement serves as a means to show the world that all Christians are in 'Unity'. The goal is therefore to promote cooperation and unity among Christians. The emphasis is for people to focus primarily on Christ and to set aside individual doctrines. It is believed that Christ is at work in the diverse churches and various denominations, bringing unity in His Body. Ecumenical alliances are thus rapidly taking place between the Roman Catholic Church and the various Protestant denominations.

Ecumenism seeks to promote love, cooperation and better understanding among different Christian churches and denominations through dialogues,

coming together for common prayer, cooperation on projects for the common good, etc. This process is brought about by emphasizing Scripture verses such as Ephesians 4:3-6 '*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit*' and John 17:21 '*that they all may be one*'.

### **The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Ecumenism**

The Roman Catholic Church has been at the forefront of the Ecumenical Movement. The **restoration of unity** among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Through the 'Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity' (PCPCU), the Roman Catholic Church seeks to promote unity among all Christians.

The Roman Catholic Church is of the belief that a divided Christianity '*openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature*' (Decree on Ecumenism-Vatican Council II, p. 1).<sup>1</sup>

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, states: "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time". Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit ... (CCC 820).<sup>2</sup>

### **The Ecumenical Agenda of the Roman Catholic Church**

The ultimate hope and objective is that 'through internal renewal, holiness, prayer, fraternal (brotherly) knowledge of each other, ecumenical formations, theological dialogues, meetings among Christians of different churches and communities and collaboration on 'Human service', (CCC 821),<sup>3</sup> the Roman Catholic Church will '***realize the holy objective of the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ***' (CCC 822).<sup>4</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Christ founded just one Church, not many churches and declares herself as the '***One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church***' (CCC 811).<sup>5</sup>

According to the Roman Catholic Church, '***the Pope is the 'perpetual and***

***visual' pastor of the entire Church. He is the Vicar of Christ and has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church'*** (CCC 882).<sup>6</sup> The Pope is therefore invariably the supreme head and leader of this Ecumenical union.

The final goal and outcome of Ecumenism is therefore the **reconciliation and unity of all Christians with the one and only Church of Christ, which is the Roman Catholic Church, with the Pope as the 'full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church'.**

*But does the Bible really advocate such a unity?*

### **The Coming Together of all Religions**

What began by the Roman Catholic Church as drawing the 'separated brethren' of Protestantism into unity, also includes bringing all religions into an 'Interfaith unity' with the Roman Catholic Church.

According to the Roman Catholic Church, *'All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God...'* (CCC 836).<sup>7</sup> *'To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity this catholic unity of the People of God...'* (CCC 845).<sup>8</sup> The Roman Catholic Church aims to reunite all religions to the one true holy Catholic Church of Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Should Biblical Christians be involved in the Ecumenical Movement?

There can be no real unity, unless there is **unity in the faith** *'once for all delivered to the saints'* (Jude 3). According to Ephesians 4:1-6, true unity is in the Spirit, in our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 17:21-23, we find that biblical unity is found only in Jesus Christ. It is not man-made but God-made. The only way to be united in the 'One Body' is for a person to be born-again (John 3: 3), and placed into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit - *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..."* 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

To embrace everyone into an Ecumenical unity without a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is to deny the uniqueness and the truth of the gospel.

# Reaching Roman Catholics for Christ

## Fulfilling the 'Great Commission'

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave us the 'Great Commission'.

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."*

If we are disciples of Jesus Christ, then it means that we must be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission.

## Why should we be involved in fulfilling the 'Great Commission' among the Roman Catholics?

Most Roman Catholics do not know Jesus Christ personally as their Lord and Savior.

Through the Ecumenical Movement, the Roman Catholic Church invites all Christians of every denomination to unite with them and also partner with them in the evangelization of the world. But Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity are completely divided over the gospel. Catholics who believe in the gospel of the Roman Catholic Church are eternally lost, because they believe in a false gospel or '*another gospel*' (Galatians 1:8). Thus, Roman Catholics cannot be our partners in the mission field, but rather, they are the mission field! We must therefore make every effort to reach them with the true Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ.

## How to Reach Roman Catholics for Christ?

Here are three things we can do:

- Pray
- Plan
- Proceed

### ▪ **Pray**

Make prayer a high priority. Faithfully intercede for the Roman Catholics. Pray for individuals, families, nations and the entire Catholic World. Pray that there would be a mighty spiritual awakening. Pray that God would open their minds so that they can see the light of the Gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4). Pray daily that hundreds of thousands of Roman Catholics would receive Christ in their lives. Create prayer networks to pray for Roman Catholics.

### ▪ **Plan**

Develop your own strategy to reach Roman Catholics for Christ. A personal strategy is an intentional action plan that you can prepare towards your goal. Your plan should include both witnessing to Roman Catholics and discipling them. You can also plan to help and encourage other like-minded Christians to be effective witnesses among Roman Catholics. Your plan should have specific action points in order for it to become a reality.

### ▪ **Proceed**

Take the initiative to reach Roman Catholics for Christ and don't expect them to come to you. This will involve working hard, making sacrifices and enduring hardships (2 Timothy 2:3-7). Be willing to give of your time, talent and treasure to help reach Roman Catholics for Christ. Begin immediately to work out your plan.

### **The Challenge**

There are more than a billion Roman Catholics who do not know the true gospel of Jesus Christ. **There is a great need for them to hear the 'TRUE Gospel'.**

Do you have the desire to get involved in the fruitful task of reaching the Roman Catholics for Christ?

If your answer is yes, you can be wholeheartedly committed through your Intercession, Involvement and Investment.

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*  
Corinthians 15:58



# References

## Lesson 1

1. **CCC 2068** - The Council of Trent teaches that the Ten Commandments are obligatory for Christians and that the justified man is still bound to keep them; the Second Vatican Council confirms: "The bishops, successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord . . . the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments."

## Lesson 3

1. **CCC 2010** - Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

2. **CCC 95** - It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

3. **CCC 1367** - The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."

4. **CCC 77** - In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority." Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.

**CCC 1547** - The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, "each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ." While being "ordered one to another," they differ essentially.

5. **CCC 971** - "All generations will call me blessed": "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship." The Church rightly honors "the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs. . . . This very special devotion . . . differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration." The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an "epitome of the whole Gospel," express this devotion to the Virgin Mary.

**CCC 957** - Communion with the saints. "It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself"

6. **CCC 811** - "This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic." These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

**CCC 882** - The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."

## Lesson 6

1. **CCC 1213** - Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

2. **CCC 2010** - Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

3. **CCC 2027** - No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.

4. **CCC 956** - The intercession of the saints. "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus. . . . So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.

5. **CCC 1030** - All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

**CCC 1031** - The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire. As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire...

6. **1855** - Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him.

7. **CCC 1456** - Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance: "All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly."

8. **CCC 1861** - Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. However, although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God.

### Lesson 13

1. **CCC 80** - "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine

well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal." Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age".

**CCC 81** - "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."

**CCC 82** - As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

2. **CCC 85** - "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

3. **CCC 2010** - Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

4. **CCC 2027** - No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.

5. **CCC 1030** - All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

**CCC 1031** - The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy

Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.

6. **CCC 1861** - Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. However, although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God.

7. **CCC 776** - As sacrament, the Church is Christ's instrument. "She is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all," "the universal sacrament of salvation," by which Christ is "at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for men." The Church "is the visible plan of God's love for humanity," because God desires "that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit."

8. **CCC 1213** - Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

9. **CCC 1499** - "By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ."

10. **CCC 1471** - The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance.

What is an indulgence? "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints." "An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin." The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.

11. **CCC 780** - The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men.

12. **CCC 969** - "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. . . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."

13. **CCC 956** - The intercession of the saints. "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus. . . . So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped." Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life. I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.

#### **Lesson 14**

1. **Decree on Ecumenism - Vatican Council II, p. 1** - The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

2. **CCC 820** - "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time." Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her... The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.

3. **CCC 821** - Certain things are required in order to respond adequately to this call: a permanent renewal of the Church ... conversion of heart as the faithful "try to live holier lives...prayer...should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism;'" fraternal knowledge of each other; ecumenical formation of the faithful and especially of priests; dialogue among theologians and meetings among Christians of the different churches and communities; collaboration among Christians in various areas of service to mankind. "Human service" is the idiomatic phrase.

4. **CCC 822** - Concern for achieving unity "involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike." But we must realize "that this holy objective - the reconciliation of all Christians in

the unity of the one and only Church of Christ - transcends human powers and gifts." That is why we place all our hope "in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit."

5. **CCC 811** - "This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic." These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

6. **CCC 882** - The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."

7. **CCC 836** - "All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God. . . . And to it, in different ways, belong or are ordered: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation."

8. **CCC 845** - To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood.

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