

Potential Encounter Questions

Catholic Apologetics

We can't possibly cover or be an expert in everything a person might have a question about or object to (actual objections are rare by the way).

"I DON'T KNOW." Always an acceptable answer that is truthful and establishes rapport with another person.

- When that is the case: offer to find the answer and relay it back to them.

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather some of the more common topics people might ask about. Here we have attempted to include the general topic, a concise preliminary answer, and reference points to Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or Church Tradition via the fathers and doctors. Take time to read the references, quality apologetics, and become more knowledgeable about your faith.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

- As the Theotokos (Mother of God): If Mary is the mother of Jesus, and if Jesus is God, then Mary is the Mother of God. (Rom. 1:3) Mary is the Mother of God in the sense that she carried in her womb a divine person—Jesus Christ, God “in the flesh” (2 John 7, cf. John 1:14)—and in the sense that she contributed the genetic matter to the human form God took in Jesus Christ.
- Perpetual Virginit/Other Children/Siblings of Jesus: It is fairly easy to dispute the “brothers of the lord” were biological based on the familial relations recorded in Sacred Scripture. But it is complicated for this space. Consider looking at: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/how-we-know-mary-was-a-perpetual-virgin-0> . Also consider that some of the earliest Christian writings (60ish years after Mary's dormition) confirm the truth. Also the earliest protestants also proclaimed Mary ever virgin (Luther and Calvin included).
- As Queen of Heaven: Mary as “Queen of Heaven” is an ancient address to Mary used in prayer that dates back to at least the fourth century. Jesus is king (Matt. 21:5; Luke 1:32; John 12:12-15; Heb. 1:3, 8), thus Mary is the Queen Mother according to Jewish tradition. The king would usually acquiesce to her wishes (1 Kings 2:20; Jer. 13:18; 29:2) – also making sense as to why we ask Mary to carry our needs to her son's throne. In 1 and 2 Kings, the kings are almost always listed with their mothers and are depicted as advising their sons. See also Revelation 12.
- Catholics Worship Mary (applicable to Saints as well): Worship and adoration is reserved for God alone. We honor Mary, who God chose to use in salvation history to uniquely cooperate with Him for the redemption of ALL mankind, past present and future. Honoring Mary (or any of the saints) takes nothing away from God. Complimenting an artist's greatest creation, praises the artist. In addition, scripture tells us in the words of Mary: “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;” (Luke 1:48)
- The Immaculate Conception: Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant. Just as the bearers of the Ark in the OT had to be sanctified, all the more so for the Ark that would literally contain the Second Person of the Trinity. Luke 1:28: “Hail, full of

grace, the Lord is with you." This does not preclude that Jesus was not Mary's savior. He indeed did save Mary at her conception in a most perfect manner, preserving her from sin. See also CCC 491

The Pope and the Papacy

- "And I tell you, you are Peter (meaning literally "Rock") and on this rock I will build my church ... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 16:18-19).
- Christ confers an office to Peter *and his successors*, not least of all because of its direct reference to the office of steward in Isa 22:15-25.
- A pope can make infallible, binding pronouncements under certain conditions (must be on a matter of faith and morals and issued in a binding way). Infallibility doesn't mean that absolutely everything a pope says is free from error. All Christians believe that God protected Holy Scripture from error by means of inspiration, even though sinful, fallible men wrote it. We Catholics also believe that God the Holy Spirit protects His Church and its head from error (Jn 14:16) by means of infallibility, even though sinful, imperfect men are involved in it.
- See also CCC 881

Purgatory

- A state where those who die in friendship with God, but are not yet fully perfected in His love, are purified and then drawn to heaven (1 Cor 3:12-15) – Not a second chance, rather a compassionate and merciful gift. Attachment to earthly things, though in friendship with God, if not perfected and completely removed before seeing God would be a painful experience.
- 1 Peter 1:6-7
- CCC 1030-132
- Matthew 5:25-26 (a person may be imprisoned – until the last penny paid – and then released. Can't be hell, there's no release!)

The Communion of Saints

- Catholics worship saints (may apply to Mary as well): Worship and adoration is reserved for God alone. So, a "prayer to" a Saint is simply asking ask them to intercede on our behalf, just as we would a friend on earth. James 5:16 tells us the prayer of a righteous man is very powerful. Who is more righteous than those perfected in heaven before the throne of God?
- Saints are dead: We believe (as do most Christians) that life is eternal. And that all Christians are members of the mystical Body of Christ- which even death cannot separate (as evidenced by Christ himself!). See Matthew 22:31-32
- Only Jesus can hear (or answer) prayers: Christ could have told us that praying for one another didn't matter, but he did the opposite. He told us (as did Paul and many others in Scripture) to pray for one another, because God acts through his Church on earth, and in heaven, to give us grace through the prayers of others (see point #1 above as well). Also see Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-5. We also have evidence from Christ himself in Luke 15:7-10: "*I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance....*" Those in heaven could not rejoice over a sinner repenting on earth unless they knew about it. Lastly – the beatific vision (our state in Heaven) – is something we can't begin to understand or fathom.

Who are we to place constraints or limits on God and his providence? He created the everything from nothing, took flesh through a virgin birth, raised from the dead... but he isn't able to allow the saints, members of the Body of Christ, to hear our petitions and pray for us?

- See also CCC 957, 962

Why do you confess sins to a priest?

We're simply doing what Jesus told us to do. Catholics don't just confess their sins to a priest. The priest is an "alter Christus"; that is, he stands in for Christ. When a Catholic confesses his sins in the presence of a priest, it's Christ he's talking to *through* the priest, and Christ who is offering forgiveness. See Matthew 16:18-19, Matthew 18:18, John 20:21-22 (the command & authority to bind & loose). After Christ handed this authority to his new bishops, He does not forgive any sins. The ability to forgive sins is God's alone – however and whomever he delegates to exercise that ability on His behalf is a divine choice. See also James 5:12 and the *Didache* 4:14, 14:1 (written around A.D. 70) which says: "Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . . On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure".

The Philosophical Justification of God

- The beauty and complexity of the universe reflects the intellect, power, and majesty of the creator (Wis 13, Rom 1, Ps 19).
- The unmoved mover – A philosophical argument. Everything effect that exists is not such that it needed to exist. Because there are things that exist, there must be a cause that was an effect of nothing else, and that cause must be necessary. We call that necessary cause from which all effects come, God.
 - Magnet and nails example.

Why Catholicism? Aren't all religions the same?

- Only one faith had a founder that claimed that He was God...and proved it, through miracles, fulfilling all prophecies foretelling Him, rising from the dead, and giving the gift of the Holy Spirit that transformed a group of afraid followers to convert the known world.
- It is not that I think I have it right, but God has shown me the truth, that I am wrong, and I must follow Him.

The Church Scandal

"No apology will be adequate, no explanation will be sufficient, no promise will be believable."

- We must first acknowledge the terrible damage done by the sins of fallible human beings.
- The sins that human beings commit do not change the presence of Christ in the Sacraments and His Church.
- Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (Mt 13:24-30)
- Judas was the first among the leaders of the Church to betray Christ in an extreme way despite being chosen...by Christ Himself!

Infant Baptism

- We need to start with what baptism is. CCC 1213 and 1257. It is more than an outward sign – it has actual effects of removing original sin, all actual sin, and imparts an indelible mark on our soul. It is what makes us a member of the Body of Christ, and it is required. See John 3:5; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21
- Baptism replaces circumcision-the action that brought an 8-day old infant into the covenant. Col. 2:11-12
- The biblical text always assumed that the children of Christian homes are already Christians, that they have already been “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3). If infant baptism were not the rule, then we should have references to the children of Christian parents joining the Church only after they had come to the age of reason, and there are no such records in the Bible.
- We have scriptural references to whole households being baptized. See Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:16
- Anecdotally, we don’t wait for our children to decide issues of bodily health (ie. vaccinations), why for spiritual?
- Sin enslaves us. If we actually want our children to make a free decision for God, we liberate them from that which enslaves.

Same Sex Attraction

- All are created in the image and likeness of God (CCC 225, 357). As a unique person with dignity, we love all people. We are called to hate no one, but to love all. We hate the sin; love the sinner.
- The modern world has done a great job of diminishing the dignity of people and defining them as an issue. When a person is reduced to an action that they do, there is an extreme reduction of their dignity.
- Love ≠ sexual contact. This reduction: 1) reduces the concept of love and friendship to only be possible between sexual partners; 2) denies any person living celibately the capacity to live a life of self-gift; 3) fundamentally denies that love is anything different than the sexual contact that animals are capable of.
- What ever a person’s attraction for whatever reason, we are all called to be chaste. (CCC 1832, 2337, 2339, 2348)
- As for marriage, only a union between one man and one woman allows for the two ends of marriage: unity and procreation. No real unity except that which also unites the bodies of one man and one woman into a singular reproductive system in a one flesh union (no other system of the body is like this, ie digestion is self-contained in each person). No use of the reproductive system can lead to the purpose of the reproductive system unless it is one man and one woman.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

- The Church teaches that the Mass is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. It does *not* teach that the Mass is a re-crucifixion of Christ, who does *not* suffer and die again in the Mass. Christ does not die again—his death is once for all. Through his intercessory ministry in heaven and through the Mass, Jesus continues to offer himself to his Father as a living sacrifice, and he does so in what the Church specifically states is “an unbloody manner.”
- See St. Justin Martyr First Apology Chapter 65, written about 150 AD.

The Idolatry of Statues and Paintings

- Exodus 20:4 God condemned the carving of statues for the sake of worshipping them as idols—a blasphemy the Catholic Church also condemns. In Exodus 25:18-20, on the other hand, God commands Moses to carve statues for a religious purpose: two cherubim which would sit atop the Ark of the Covenant. Similar divine commands to carve statues and embroider images of various religious objects are found in Exodus 21:6-9, Numbers 21:6-9, 1 Kings 6:23-28, and 1 Kings 7:23-39. The difference? The first is itself, the object of worship; the second is for an exalted purpose, a useful tool in the worship (which is reserved for God alone) of God.

Sola Fide/Sola Scriptura (Faith Alone/Scripture Alone)

- James 2:24 is the only verse in the Bible that uses the phrase “faith alone”—and it says that people are “justified by works and not by faith alone.”
- Consider this: the very act of accepting Jesus is a work that comes from faith.
- The Canon of Scripture was considered complete in 397 AD. Discerned by the Church. If anyone accepts the bible, they rely on the Holy Catholic Church (until Luther started adding and subtracting).
- See 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6 – hold to the traditions we taught you either by word of mouth or by letter.
- The thing not included in the inspired text? A table of contents.

The Sacraments

- Knowing is in the mode of the knower (ie God comes to us in a way that *WE* understand). A good teacher is not the one who is a genius, but rather the one who can convey the information in the way the students can understand. We are body and soul; matter and spirit. Therefore, God does not come to us in His divinity, but in a human mode, matter and spirit, the way that we best understand. This is His pattern with Moses, the prophets, the Incarnation of the Son, the Church, and every Sacrament.
- This mode allows us to be utterly free, which allows us to love maximally as well.

The Eucharist is Just a Symbol

Christ was pretty clear and straightforward. Seen John 6:53 and John 6 in general. If the Eucharist is not the Body and Blood: why did Jesus’ disciples leave at this hard teaching? And why didn’t the Savior correct them? See. John 6:60-69. And for additional scriptural proof – Paul’s instruction that anyone who eats or drinks in an unworthy manner is guilty of profaning the body and blood of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 11:27-30. If it is not actually Jesus, how can this offense take place? Punching a picture of Fr. De Oreo might be symbolic, but it is not the same as actually profaning Fr. De Oreo by punching him!

Vicarious Suffering

See Colossians 1:24. Christ’s suffering was total and complete – what is missing is our cooperation.