

What We Believe... Why We Believe It

By
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Give Me Souls; Keep the Rest!

Give Me Souls; Keep the Rest! That was St. John Bosco's motto. I must admit that I've borrowed it as my own, too. On its surface, this is a very evangelistic saying. But we should ask ourselves what Don Bosco meant in this motto. After all, 19th century Italy was almost all Catholic, so he obviously didn't mean evangelizing non-Catholics to become members of the Mystical Body of Christ. That stated, what did he mean?

Although you don't hear a lot about it, the Church has always taught that we all have to be evangelized every day. In fact, the Church actually enshrined this in one of her precepts: "The faithful are to study Catholic teaching in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, be confirmed, and then *to continue study and advance the cause of Christ.*" It doesn't actually use the word *evangelize* in this precept, but that's what it means when it says to continue study and advance the cause of Christ. So we have to be evangelized every single day, and the two ways we're told to do that is through study and advancing Christ's cause.

This precept is really more important to us today than it's ever been in our 2000 year history. Why? Because the Body of Christ is bleeding... badly. The Church isn't in danger of dying. That's impossible, because of Jesus' promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against her, but that doesn't mean that Holy Mother Church won't get really, really sick. And it's up to us laity to save the Church, just the way we did 1700 years ago.

The Church had a heresy running rampant through her called the Nestorian Heresy. A Bishop of Constantinople named Nestorius held and promoted the idea that Jesus was not a divine Person. This heterodox position was even held by a majority of bishops! But the laity knew better, and they insisted that this heresy be abolished. So in AD 315, the pope convoked the Council of Ephesus to deal with the issue. The final result? Mary was declared the theotokos (God bearer), which was actually a Christological ruling. By declaring Mary the theotokos, or Mother of God, the Church affirmed and declared that Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, was a divine Person. When it was announced to the laity waiting to find out what the Council would decide, they broke into mighty cheers and mass celebrations. The laity saved the Church then with their fidelity to the one true faith.

What of today? What is wrong in the Church that makes her sick enough today that the laity are required to save her? Well, just check out the statistical information below to begin to understand the illness she suffers.

Did you know...

- one out of every ten Americans is an ex-Catholic

- if they were a separate denomination, they would be the third-largest denomination in the United States, after Catholics and Baptists
- one of three people who were raised Catholic no longer identifies as Catholic
- 6.5 people leave Catholicism for every one that joins
- 50% of young people who were raised Catholic are no longer Catholic today
- and 79% of former Catholics leave the Church before age 23

We could write hundreds of pages trying to explain how and why this happened, pointing fingers and getting ourselves all worked up, but that does no good. Analyzing what led to this situation is superfluous, because it does nothing to change it. The only way it will change is if we laity change it!

Everyone has heard of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Code of Canon Law, the precepts of the Church, *et cetera*. These things place seemingly endless obligation on Catholics, but I believe in keeping things simple. Every Catholic obligation can be boiled down to two primary obligations and only two: to become a saint (Matthew 5:48), and to share the faith (Matthew 28:16–20). All other Catholic obligations are merely subsets of these two, and you can't accomplish one without the other.

Become a saint! As I heard a priest ask in a homily once, “If you don't want to become a saint, why in the world are you a Catholic?” You can't become a saint on your own; it takes a joint effort between you and God.

Share the faith! We all have to share the faith. That means talking to all the lapsed Catholics you know, whether you want to or not. Will it be comfortable? No! Nothing worth doing rarely is. As my email signatures say, “Comfort and Conviction don't live on the same block!”

The elephant in the room must be addressed if we're to begin sharing the faith with the lapsed Catholics we know. That elephant is catechetical knowledge. You see, I **know** (not merely believe or think) that people who know and understand the Catholic faith will never even think about leaving the Church. I also know that lapsed Catholics will return to the Church if someone will just love them enough to share the fullness of the faith with them. I know this because I've shared the faith with scores of lapsed Catholics who returned to our holy and ancient faith.

But how do you gain the knowledge you need? Well, reading *What We Believe... Why We Believe It* is a good start, but it's not nearly enough. How about if I offer to teach you painlessly? I will, you know. There are two ways I'll teach you... if you love the lapsed Catholics you know enough to learn. All you have to do is visit JoeSixpackAnswers.com and enter your name and best email address into the form on the left hand side of the page. You'll begin getting a free lesson, written by me, in your inbox every three days. The other way I'll teach you is through live webinars every week. When you sign up for the email course, you'll begin getting invitations to free webinars you can attend and ask me questions in real time, no matter where you live. If you don't have access to the internet, write me at P.O. Box 41, Villa Ridge, Missouri 63089. I'll mail you the lessons for free every three days. Why? Because I want only for God to “Give Me Souls; Keep the Rest!” And that's What We Believe... Why We Believe It.