



Catholic Is More Than Just A Word **by Joe Sixpack**

If you read last week's installment, you saw where my wife was having a conversation with a friend who is an anti-Catholic Protestant Fundamentalist, and her conversation inspired the last article. This installment of *What We Believe...Why We Believe It* is also inspired by a conversation with her.

It seems that my wife was trying to share the Catholic gospel message with this lady. When my wife mentioned to her that the one true Church founded by Christ is the Catholic Church, the lady replied (in her typical arrogantly self-assured and dismissive manner), "Catholic is just a word."

Is Catholic just a word? Well, sure it is. It's an English word derived from the Greek word "katholikos". It means "universal". Of course, it also explicitly applies to the one true Church Jesus founded.

Until the year 1517, there was no other Christian religion beside the Catholic Church. Protestantism gave us the denominations of Christianity. For the first millennium and a half of Christianity, only the Catholic Church existed. The first non-Catholic religion to come along was the Lutheran church in A.D. 1517. The others came along as follows:

- ➔ Swiss Reformed Church, 1523
- ➔ Mennonites, 1525
- ➔ Anglican Communion, 1534
- ➔ Calvinism, 1536 (now encompassing *a lot* of different denominations)
- ➔ Presbyterianism, 1560
- ➔ Baptist Churches, 1605
- ➔ Methodism, 1739
- ➔ Seventh Day Adventists, 1860
- ➔ Pentecostalism, 1900
- ➔ ...and so on.

Actually, there are more than 40,000 denominations in America alone, but I just wanted to touch on a few I thought you might be most familiar with.

I will show you that Jesus founded the Catholic Church and how it came to be known as Catholic, but first there is something else I want to cover. Sadly, borne of historical ignorance, this is just a minor thing but it sticks in this convert's craw.

I'm grated the wrong way every time I hear a Catholic refer to the Church as a denomination. We're not. The word denomination implies the division of one religion into separate groups,

sects, or schools of thought. Since the Catholic Church was the first and only Church for 1500 years, and since all the denominations ultimately trace their origin to us, *it is not a denomination.*

Now let's talk about the foundation of the Church.

The clearest scriptural text to show that Jesus founded the Catholic Church is found in Matthew 16:13-19. "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death [or the more common "gates of hell"] shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

What an incredibly pregnant passage! Peter (from the Greek *petros*, meaning rock) is the rock upon which Jesus will build His Church. Reenforcing that Peter is the rock Jesus was talking about is the fact that his name was never Peter until Jesus named him such—and his new name (Peter) supplanted his old (Simon).

After Jesus then promised that the Church would stand until the end of time against all forces, then He gave Peter powers that had never been given to any man. Jesus promised Peter absolute authority over the faith and morals of the Church, telling him that heaven would honor whatever decision he made.

Anyone who knows anything about the hierarchy and practice of the Catholic Church can readily see that this is the Church Christ founded. I could easily write a book on this topic. Indeed, books have been written on the topic. One book I would recommend is *Jesus, Peter & the Keys* by Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren and Rev. Mr. David Hess. It is published by Queenship Publishing Company. What makes this book so unique and convincing is that the authors quote dozens of Protestant Bible scholars and theologians who definitively assert that this passage is accurately interpreted by the Catholic Church, and that this passage does indeed demonstrate Jesus founding of the Catholic Church on St. Peter.

But when did the Church Christ founded begin to be called Catholic?

It is true that the Bible nowhere calls the Church Catholic, and the word derives from a Greek word meaning "universal"—and the word adequately describes the Church, as she is for all people of all times and in all places.

The earliest record of the Church being referred to as Catholic was in the year A.D. 107—a mere 65 years after Jesus founded the Church. Ignatius of Antioch, who as an old man was being led away to his martyrdom, in his letter to the Smyrnaeans wrote that "[w]here the bishop is, there let the multitude of believers be; even as where Jesus Christ is, *there is the Catholic Church.*"

St. Ignatius of Antioch was a disciple St. Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John the Apostle. It is likely that St. Ignatius knew St. John, especially since the two saints died only seven years apart. The point to this is that since St. Ignatius uses the word Catholic as though it is nothing new—that it has already been long in use—then it is even likely that St. John himself used the word Catholic to describe the Church. This is What We Believe...Why We Believe It.

I've covered the foundation of the Church in previous articles, so I didn't go as deep as I could or did in the past. But you can be assured I'll be writing about it again. Until then, if you have any questions or just want to learn more, go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com. I'll be more than happy to carry on a personal dialog. Oh, and by the way, be sure to visit my Twitter page at twitter.com/JoeSixpack1776.