

The Big Picture

Defining the Catholic Faith

What does it mean to be a Catholic?

Let's make a sort of "decision tree" that describes how being a Catholic is connected (and not connected) to all the different ways we use to describe reality/truth.

First Level: Is there some Being/"Reality" beyond us humans and this world?

We Believe...	OR	We DON'T BELIEVE
There is something or someone beyond us and our earthly existence, a "spiritual" reality in addition to the "material" reality we perceive with our senses.		There is nothing beyond what we experience in this material life or what we experience in our own consciousness (or, if there is, we could never know about it).
<i>Christians</i> <i>Jews</i> <i>Muslims</i> <i>Hindus</i> <i>Pagans/"New Age"</i>		<i>Atheists</i> <i>Agnostics</i> <i>Buddhists</i>

See Acts 17:24-27

Second Level: Is this "spiritual" reality one or many different gods?

We Believe in ONE GOD	OR	We believe in many gods
This God is the creator of all that is. God is holy, true and just. God is personal, loving and faithful. God is not a "force" or part of creation. We worship God.		Spiritual beings exist and have powers. They are more or less involved in human life. Our task is to influence or please gods so they may help us (or, at least, not hurt us).
<i>Christians</i> <i>Jews</i> <i>Muslims</i>		<i>Hindus</i> <i>Pagans/"New Age"</i>

See Acts 14:8-17



"The world cannot have its origin and its destination within itself. In everything that exists, there is more than we see. **The order, the beauty, and the development of the world point beyond themselves toward God.** Every man is receptive to what is **true, good, and beautiful.** He hears within himself the voice of conscience, which urges him to do what is good and warns him against what is evil. **Anyone who follows this path reasonably finds God.**"

YouCat (Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church, pg 15-16)

Third Level: Who is this One God?

<p>We Believe in One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit—a Holy Trinity (one nature, three persons)</p>	<p>OR</p>	<p>We believe in God who is one in both nature and personhood.</p>
<p>God is one, but is not solitary; God is one in nature, but three in persons. God exists as a communion of love. The Father sent the Son, who took on our humanity and redeemed us by His death. He rose from the dead and sent the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Him. God promises us eternal life where we will share in the life of the Triune God.</p>		<p>God is one God and there are no other gods. God’s oneness is not only in His nature as one God, but also as a solitary, single person.</p>
<p><i>Christians (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestants)</i></p>		<p><i>Jews Muslims</i></p>

See Acts 26:12-23



“The two most distinctive doctrines of Christianity, the two things all orthodox Christians believe and no one else does, are the **Trinity** and the **Incarnation**. The Incarnation means that one of the three Divine Persons—the Son—became a man, while remaining God; that Jesus is both human and divine. ...

Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in the same God. God has the same attributes according to all three religions, because Christians and Muslims learned of this God from the same source: his revelation to the Jews, beginning with Abraham. The three theistic [believing in one God] religions agree about (a) the **oneness of God** and about (b) the **nature of God**, but they disagree about (c) the **Persons in God**, because they disagree about Christ. Jews and Muslims do not believe in the Trinity because they do not believe in the Incarnation; Christians believe in the Trinity because they believe in the Incarnation.”

Peter Kreeft Catholic Christianity (Ignatius Press, 2001)

Fourth Level: Did this God establish a Church?

<p>We Believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church</p>	<p>OR</p>	<p>We believe that a church is helpful but not necessary to belong to; or if He did establish one, that it is not the Catholic Church.</p>
<p>Jesus intended to found a Church and prepared His apostles to lead it. The Twelve Apostles preserved, preached and passed on the faith given them by Jesus. The fullness of this faith is preserved in the Catholic Church, united under Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome [the pope].</p>		<p>Jesus did not intend to found a Church OR the Church Jesus intended to found is not contained in one single organized community. Authority and Tradition can be preserved and passed down through different communities (or are considered not necessary).</p>
<p><i>Catholics</i></p>		<p><i>Orthodox Protestants</i></p>

See Acts 10:34-48

“The fundamental reason for being Catholic is **the historical fact that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ**, was God’s invention, not man’s. ... **One visible Church needs one visible head.** Christ appointed Peter the head of the apostles. Peter’s successors, the popes, are the heads of the apostle’s successors, the bishops. Pope and bishops are mutually dependent in pastoring the whole Church... If anyone wonders which of the twenty thousand different churches that claim to be Christ’s true church is really the one Christ established, this is how to recognize it. **Only one church has all four marks [lone, holy, catholic and apostolic] in their fullness: the Catholic Church.**”

Peter Kreeft, Catholic Christianity (Ignatius Press, 2001)



So....

A Catholic is a Christian who worships in a Catholic church united to the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).

St. Mary Parish in Spokane Valley (led by Fr. Jeff Lewis as Pastor) was established in 1913 and includes around 900 households,

Is part of the **Diocese of Spokane, Washington**, established in 1913 and containing around 90,000 Catholics over 82 parishes and other institutions (hospitals, colleges, schools) in 12 counties of Eastern Washington led by Bishop Thomas Daly. (Catholics 17% of WA population)

Is part of the **Catholic Church in the United States of America** (77.4 million Catholics in over 17,651 parishes in 197 dioceses/archdioceses led by over 428 active or retired bishops/archbishops) and 15 cardinals (Catholics 22% of US population)

Is part of the **universal Catholic Church** (1.2 billion members in over 223,000 parishes in almost 3,000 dioceses/archdioceses led by Pope Francis, the 265th pope since St. Peter). (17% of the world's population, 1/2 of all Christians are Catholics)

"No man lives alone, no man believes alone. God speaks his word to us and in speaking it calls us together, creates a community, his people, the Church. After the return of Jesus to his Father, the Church is the sign of his presence in the world."

Saint Basil the Great (Bishop, 5th century)

"If you follow Jesus you never feel alone, because you are part of the Church, which is a great family in which you can grow in true friendship with so many brothers and sisters scattered in every corner of the world."

Pope Benedict XVI (11/27/2005)

The Religious Landscape of the World (2015, in billions of people)

Christians	2.3 (31.2% (1.2 billion Catholics)
Muslims	1.8 (24.1%)
Unaffiliated	1.2 (16%)
Hindu	1.1 (15.1%)
Buddhists	0.5 (6.9%)
Folk Religions	0.4 (5.7%)
Other Religions	0.1 (0.8%)
Jews	0.01 (0.2%)