



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone
who asks you for a reason for your hope"
1 Peter 3:15

Catholic or Christian: An Oxymoron

Catholic or Christian: An Oxymoron

Have you ever heard a non-Catholic tell you, ***“I’m Christian and you’re Catholic?”***

You might be told that since the term, “Christian” is in scripture and “Catholic” isn’t. This is usually presented as proof that the name “Catholic” came along centuries later, which is not the case. That’s like asking a man whether he is a man or a human. The plain fact is that Catholics were the very ***first*** Christians.

Believers were first called **“Christians”** in Antioch (**Acts 11:26**). It is interesting to note that the 1st century bishop of Antioch (St. Ignatius) referred to the ***“Catholic Church”*** in his ***Letter to the Smyrnaeans*** while on the way to his death by martyrdom just a few decades later. His use of the term makes it clear that the Church was already being called the “Catholic Church” for some time. He was a pupil of the **Apostle John**.

St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch

“Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. **Obey your clergy** too as you would the apostles; **give your deacons the same reverence** that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop’s sanction. **The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself**, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, **wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church**” (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 107]).

There was no TV, no radio, no newspaper, no internet – just word of mouth. For Ignatius to have written to his readers using this term and expecting them to understand what he was talking about doesn’t make **ANY** sense unless it was universally recognized as “The Catholic Church”.

The writings of the **Early Church Fathers** illustrate that they had the very same beliefs that we Catholics of the 21st century have, including: the Holy Eucharist, the Real Presence, Sunday worship, the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mother, Infant Baptism, Confession, Church Authority, etc.

Our “Bible-only” friends might also be reminded of the fact that simply because something isn’t explicitly mentioned in Scripture doesn’t mean that it is invalid. For instance, the word “**Trinity**” is not **explicitly** named in the Bible but it is **implicitly** taught and is an essential belief of the Christian faith.

The word “**Incarnation**” is not in the Bible but is a **basic tenet** of Christianity. A list of the books that should be in the Bible is not in the Bible - for that matter, the word “**Bible**” isn’t in the Bible. It was the Catholic Church who coined these words and declared the canon of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:12-15**).

Why are they willing to accept SOME Catholic Traditions – but not all?

This is the “Cafeteria” approach to Christianity that gave birth to the Protestant Revolt in the 16th century. Some doctrines were simply tossed aside and rejected. Denominations arose with **newly-invented** doctrines at the whim of a single man. The splintering continues to this day.

Some Protestant traditions that are **not** found in Scripture include:

- **Limited Atonement**
- **Altar Calls**
- **Dedication / Rededication**
- **Revival**
- **Eternal Security**
- **The total depravity of man**
- **Imputed righteousness**
- **The Sinner’s Prayer**
- **Accepting Christ as personal Lord and Savior**

The Catholic Church was founded by Christ and grew under the leadership of the Apostles and their successors who were led to “*all truth*” under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:12-15**). Our non-Catholic friends can only trace their respective denominations back to the 16th century or later.

Whereas, every single Protestant denomination was started by a fallible human being, the Catholic Church was built by Jesus, the Son of God – **God himself**.

Are we Catholic - or Christian?

We're **BOTH**.

An Early Church Father Speaks

St. Pacian (310—391 AD), Bishop of Barcelona

“And yet, my brother, be not troubled; Christian is my name, but Catholic my surname. The former gives me a name, *the latter distinguishes me*. By the one I am approved; by the other I am but marked.”

“Suppose, this very day, I entered a populous city. When I had found Marcionites, Apollinarians, Cataphrygians, Novatians, and others of the kind who call themselves Christians, by what name should I recognise the congregation of my own people, unless it were named Catholic?

This name “Catholic” sounds not of Marcion, nor of Apelles, nor of Montanus, nor does it take heretics as its authors.”

By the way - Marcionites, Apollinarians, Cataphrygians, Novatians, etc., were *heretical* sects – the “**denominations**” of St. Pacian’s day. It is important to note that every Protestant denomination was founded on one or more heretical teachings.

How Old is YOUR Church?

If you worship with a “*non-denominational*” Reformed Evangelical Christian group – **most** of your churches were established by men and women in the **last fifty years** or so.

If you worship **Cornerstone Church**, it was **founded by John C. Hagee** in May of **1975** in San Antonio, Texas. Since then, several other churches have adopted this name.

If you are a believer at the **Vineyard Christian Fellowship**, your denomination was started by **Ken Gullickson and Keith Green** in Santa Monica, California in **1974**.

If you are a member of **Calvary Chapel**, **Chuck Smith** began your congregation in Costa Mesa, California in **1965**.

If you are a follower of the **Church of Scientology**, your sect owes its origin to **L. Ron Hubbard** in Washington, D.C. in **1952**.

How Old is YOUR Church?

If you are a worshipper at the **Iglesia in Cristo**, Felix Manalao instituted your group in the in **1914**.

If you are a disciple of the **Assemblies of God** or other splinter **Pentecostal** groups, “**Church of the Nazarene**”, “**Holiness Church**”, “**Pilgrim Holiness Church**”, your religion is one of the hundreds of new sects founded by men during the 20th century.

If you are a **Christian Scientist**, your organization was brought into existence by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy in **1879**.

If you are a **Jehovah's Witness**, your church was established by Charles Taze Russell in Pennsylvania in **1879**.

If you worship with the **Salvation Army**, your sect began with William Booth in London in **1865**.

If you are a **Seventh Day Adventist**, Mrs. Ellen Gould White inaugurated your group in the in **1860**.

How Old is YOUR Church?

If you are a **Mormon** (Latter Day Saints), your religion was organized in New York by Joseph Smith in **1830**.

If you are a **Unitarian**, Theophilus Lindley founded your church in London in **1774**.

If you are a **Methodist**, your form of Protestantism is credited to John Wesley in London in **1738**.

If you are of the **Dutch Reformed** church, you recognize Michaelis Jones as founder, because he originated your religion in New York in **1628**.

If you are a **Baptist**, you look to John Smyth as originator of your institution in Amsterdam in **1609**.

If you are a **Congregationalist**, your religion was originated by Robert Brown in Holland in **1582**.

How Old is YOUR Church?

If you are a **Presbyterian**, your religion was founded when **John Knox** brought the teachings of **John Calvin** to Scotland in the Year **1560**.

If you belong to the **Church of England**, your religion was founded by **King Henry VIII** in the year **1534** because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.

If you are a **Lutheran**, your religion was founded by **Martin Luther**, an ex-monk of the Catholic Church, in the year **1517**.

If you are a member of the **Orthodox Church** (Russian, Eastern or Greek), your church went into schism in **1054**.

If you are a **Catholic**, your Church was founded in Jerusalem by **Jesus Christ** (**Acts 2, 1 Tim. 3:15**) with **Peter** as its first Pope (**Mt. 16:18-19, Lk. 22:31-32, Jn. 21:15-17**) in the year **33 A.D.**

What is the Church?

Acts 9:31 talks about how the Early Church grew throughout the region. The language used here describes the **Catholic Church**:

*“Then the **church throughout** Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experienced peace and thus was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, the church increased in numbers.”*

According to **Strong’s Greek Concordance** – the verse is translated as:

*“The **true Church throughout** all Judea . . .”*

Here is the phrase in **Greek**:

η μεν ουν **εκκλησια καθ ολης της ιουδαιας**

What is the Church?

The Catholic Church gets its name from the **GREEK** for “*according to the whole*” and “*universal*” - **εκκλησια καθ ολης**, which is pronounced “*ekklesia katah-holos*”.

Εκκλησια (ekklesia) - *A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly; **CHURCH***

Καθ (katah) - *Through out, according to*

Ολης (holos) - *All, whole, completely*

“Ekklesia Kata-holos” = CATHOLIC CHURCH.

- Jesus established **ONE** Church (**Matt. 16:16-19**). He prayed fervently that this Church remain **ONE** - as He and the Father are **ONE** (**John 17:20-23**). There is **NO** other.
- Jesus is **Truth** itself (**John 14:6**).
- Jesus promised His Church that the Holy Spirit would guide her to **ALL** Truth (**John 16:12-15**).
- The Church is the ***Pillar and Foundation of Truth*** (**1 Tim. 3:15**).
- The Church is the ***Body*** of Christ and He is the **Head** (**1 Cor. 12:12-31, Eph. 4:3-6, Col. 1:8**).
- The Church is the ***FULLNESS*** of Christ (**Eph. 1:22-23**).
- Jesus identifies His very **SELF** with His Church (**Acts 9:4-5**).
- Jesus gave the Church supreme **Authority** on earth and **whatever** it ordains on earth is also ordained in heaven (**Matt. 16:18-19, Matt. 18:15-18, Luke 10:16, John 20:21-23**).

Some Differences Between Catholicism and Classic Protestantism

Transubstantiation vs. Consubstantiation

Transubstantiation (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25)

- **The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1411** Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.
- **1412** The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: "This is my body which will be given up for you. . . . This is the cup of my blood. . . ."
- **1413** By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

Consubstantiation

- The doctrine, especially in Lutheran belief, that the substance of the bread and wine *coexists* with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

MOST Protestant denominations believe that the Lord's Supper is completely ***symbolic***, involving neither transubstantiation ***NOR*** consubstantiation.

Scripture and Tradition vs. Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

Scripture and Tradition (Matt. 16:18-19, Matt. 18:15-18, Luke 10:16, John 16:12-15, John 20:21-23, 1 Thess. 2:13 , 2 Thess. 2:15, 1 Cor. 11:2, 2 Tim 2:2)

- **(CCC) 76** In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:
- - **orally** "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received - whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit";³³
- - **in writing** "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing".³⁴

Sola Scriptura

- **Sola Scriptura** (Latin: *by scripture alone*) is a theological doctrine held by most Protestant denominations that the Christian scriptures are the sole infallible rule of faith and practice.

This teaching cannot be supported by the very Scriptures it purports to be our "SOLE Authority".

Faith and Works vs. Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Faith and Works (Matt. 7:21, Matt. 25:31-46, 1 Cor. 13:13, Gal. 5:6, James 1:22-25, James 2:14-26)

- **(CCC) 2000** Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. *Habitual grace*, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.
- **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.

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

- **Sola fide** (Latin: *by faith alone*), also known as justification by faith alone, is a theological doctrine commonly held to distinguish many Protestant churches from the Catholic Church, as well as the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

*This teaching **cannot** be supported by the context of Scripture and had no validity in the Oral Traditions of the Church.*

Baptismal Regeneration vs. Baptism as a symbol

Baptismal Regeneration (Mark 16:16, John 3:5, 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38)

- **(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."

Baptism as a symbol of faith

- Water baptism symbolizes the believer's total trust in and total reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as a commitment to live obediently to Him. It also expresses unity with the Body of Christ. Water baptism conveys this and more, but it is not what saves us.

*This teaching **cannot** be supported by the context of Scripture and had no validity in the Oral Traditions of the Church.*

The Early Church Fathers on the Catholic Church

The Early Church Fathers believed that the Catholic Church was the one true Church, that it taught infallibly and that the clergy was made up of three ranks; bishop, priest, and deacon.

The Catholic teachings they passed onto us include the Real Presence, reverence for the Eucharist, the Marian doctrines, Infant Baptism, Confession, Church authority and much more.

Ignatius of Antioch

Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. **Obey your clergy** too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction. **The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself**, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, **wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church** (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 107]).

In like manner let everyone respect the deacons as they would respect Jesus Christ, and just as they respect the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and college of the apostles. Without these, it cannot be called a Church. I am confident that you accept this, for I have received the exemplar of your love and have it with me in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a great lesson and his meekness is his strength. I believe that even the godless do respect him (*Letter to the Trallians* 3:1-2 [A. D. 107]).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

When finally he concluded his prayer, after remembering all who had at any time come his way – small folk and great folk, distinguished and undistinguished, **and the whole Catholic Church throughout the world** – the time for departure came. So they placed him on an ass, and brought him into the city on a great Sabbath (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8 [A.D. 110]).

Irenaeus

The Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world, as we have already said (*Against Heresies* 1:10 [A.D. 189]).

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. **For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers.** On this account we are bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there should arise a dispute relative to some important question among us. Should we not have recourse to the most ancient churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? ***Would it not be necessary [in that case] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the churches?*** (ibid. 3:4).

Tertullian

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus then, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago – in the reign of Antoninus for the most part – and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the **Catholic Church**, in the **church of Rome** under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled (*On the Prescription Against Heretics* 22,30 [**A.D.200**])

Clement of Alexandria

A multitude of other pieces of advice to particular persons is written in the holy books: some for presbyters, some for bishops and deacons; and others for widows, of whom we shall have opportunity to speak elsewhere (*The Instructor of Children* 3:12:97:2 [pre-**A.D. 202**]).

Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete righteousness according to the gospel (*Stromateis* 6:13:107:2 [post-**A.D. 202**]).

Hippolytus

When a deacon is to be ordained, he is chosen after the fashion of those things said above, the bishop alone in like manner imposing his hands upon him as we have prescribed. **In the ordaining of a deacon, this is the reason why the bishop alone is to impose his hands upon him: He is not ordained to the priesthood, but to serve the bishop and to fulfill the bishop's command.** He has no part in the council of the clergy, but is to attend to his own duties and is to acquaint the bishop with such matters as are needful. . . . **On a presbyter [priest], however, let the presbyters impose their hands because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy.** Even so, the presbyter has only the power to receive [the Spirit], and not the power to give [the Spirit]. **That is why a presbyter does not ordain the clergy; for at the ordaining of a presbyter, he but seals while the bishop ordains.** (*Apostolic Tradition* 9 [ca. A.D. 215]).

Origen

Not fornication only, but even marriages make us unfit for ecclesiastical honors; for neither a bishop, nor a presbyter, nor a deacon, nor a widow is able to be twice married (*Homilies on Luke*, 17 [ca. A.D. 235]).

Cyprian

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is uncorrupted and chaste. She knows one home . . . Does anyone believe that this unity which comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the divine sacraments, can be broken asunder in the Church and be separated by the divisions of colliding wills? He who does not hold this unity, does not hold the law of God, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation (***On the Unity of the Catholic Church*** 6 [A.D. 251]).

Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear or obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ; and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. ***Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church***, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think that they communicate secretly with some; **while the Church which is Catholic and one**, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another (*Letters* 66 [A.D. 253]).