



Why should Christians belong to the Catholic Church?

If we trust in Our Lord we should trust in His promises. He promised to build a church that would be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Do you trust the Lord enough to seriously consider that this church still exists?

Reason Number One - The Catholic Church is the Church of the Bible.

In the Gospel of Matthew Our Lord says that He will build a Church and that the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. His church would not fail. (Matthew 16:18)

Later in the same book, Our Lord told His disciples that His Church would settle disputes involving sin. If any refused to listen to His Church he was to be cast out. So His Church would have real authority. (Matthew 18:15-20) In order to be cast out of such a church you would have to be able to tell whether you were in it....It would be visible, just like it was in the beginning.

Our Lord told St. Peter that he would be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven and that what he bound on earth would be bound in heaven, what he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

These words were similar to those used in the book of Isaiah when the prophet spoke of the office of prime minister of the kingdom of David. He wrote, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

(Isaiah 22:15-23)

Our Lord was telling St. Peter that he would be the prime minister (or pope) of His kingdom on earth.

The Gospel of John tells us that before He suffered Our Lord prayed that all of those that followed Him would be united. (John 17:20-23)

The Catholic Church has over one billion members, about half of all Christianity. The Orthodox churches and thousands of Protestant denominations make up the rest. Although many Catholics do not adhere to the teachings of our Church, the lack of unity among Protestants is not just at the individual level, but also between churches. As they disagree with the Catholics on essential Christian doctrine, they disagree with one another.

In the Gospel of John, Our Lord told His apostles that He was sending them as He was sent by His Father. He breathed the Holy Spirit on them and said that they had the power to say whether sins were forgiven OR NOT. (John 20:21-23)

This authority remains as the sacrament of reconciliation.

In Acts chapter one St. Peter made the replacement of Judas his first official action. This is the first example of apostolic succession. Basically, only those with the authority to send others (the apostles and their successors, our bishops) can ordain. (Acts 1:15-25)

Other parts of the book of Acts and St. Paul's letters show that bishops, priests, and deacons were installed by the laying of hands of those that had already been given authority. (Acts 6:6, 14:22-23, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Titus 1:5-10)

The Church of the Bible clearly understood that the only way to start a church was to be given permission from its leaders.

Did the members of the early Church really see St. Peter as the pope?

The book of Acts tells us that St. Paul was trying to settle a dispute as to whether gentile converts had to follow all of the Jewish rules, especially circumcision. The dissension was so great they had a council among the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem.

The leaders debated it until St. Peter spoke. He simply said the burden was too large and they would not place it on non-Jewish converts. Do you know what happened next? Everyone was silent. All that debate, and it was ended by a few words from the pope. (Acts 15:1-12)

But can't we just read the Bible and find the truth all by ourselves?

NO, NO, NO!

St. Peter warns us in his second letter that no teaching in Sacred Scripture is open to individual interpretation and that some of the writings of St. Paul are difficult to understand. He wrote that people will distort them, bringing about their own destruction. (2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:15-17)

This helps explain the existence of 34,000 Christian denominations and independent churches. (World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2001.)

In St. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians he tells them to hold the traditions which they have been taught, both in writing and orally. So everything was not written down. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

Nowhere does Sacred Scripture state there will be a New Testament. Also, Our Lord never commanded His disciples to write books. The Catholic Church (under the direction of the Holy Spirit) decided there would be a New Testament and selected the books for it. The Catholic Church did not decide which books would be in the Bible until about 400 AD. (Here is a link for more details on this. <http://home.inreach.com/bstanley/canon.htm>)

The idea of being a Bible-only Church is actually pretty modern and conflicts with the Bible.

Reason Number Two - The Church has solid responses to the challenges against it.

Actually, this was the first test I placed on the Catholic Church. When the Church passed this test I was more open to seeing how the other pieces fit together.

I believe that an inquiry into a religion or denomination is incomplete without

considering the challenges made against it. It is also incomplete if knowledgeable representatives of that religion do not have an opportunity to respond to the challenges.

I began by searching for challenges to the Catholic Church on the Internet. Soon after, I found overwhelming criticism of the Catholic Church in a book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, by David Hunt. It showed how the teachings were flawed, the Church was corrupt, and even offered evidence that the Catholic Church was the whore of Babylon described in the book of Revelations and the Pope was the antichrist. I read the book and loaded it with Post-It Notes.

I met with a priest who had encouraged me to talk with him about the Catholic Church. I started with some of the less offensive criticisms and his responses made sense. So I turned up the heat. For the next two and a half hours I played "stump the priest" and lost. He effectively dealt with every challenge. His arguments were not just plausible, they were convincing. I know people that have left the Catholic Church. I am sure they never raised their issues with a knowledgeable priest or Catholic apologist.

I still looked for more challenges, but after that night I expected the Church might have the answer.

[Lies](#) offers brief responses to some basic challenges.

Reason Number Three - Consistency of Teaching

The Catholic Church claims that the Holy Spirit guides its teachings on faith and morals. I investigated many claims that the Catholic Church has changed its teachings throughout history. These claims will evaporate if you actually look into them.

Let's look at moral issues.

There is a wide variety of moral teachings among Christian churches today. There are differences in beliefs on homosexuality, divorce, and even abortion. Many of these have no tie to what was taught throughout the history of Christianity.

Many non-Catholics know that the Catholic Church teaches that the use of artificial birth control is sinful. I am not aware of any other Christian

church that shares this belief. What most people do not realize is that up until 1930 every Christian denomination was in agreement with the Catholic Church on this subject.

Early in the last century the use of contraception grew among non-Christians. Over time this exerted a strong influence over the Christian community. As a result, between 1930 and 1960 all of the other Christian churches dropped their stands against contraception.

The Catholic Church is the only church that did not give in to the pressure of the world.

How can the other churches justify this complete about face? Is it possible that God changed His mind? I don't think so.

For more information on the Catholic Church's teachings on marital chastity visit our other Web site www.ThinkChastity.com.

What about issues of faith?

Just as Christian churches disagree on moral issues, they disagree on faith issues.

Let's consider one teaching essential to the Catholic faith. The Catholic Church believes in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist—body and blood, soul and divinity. We believe that the bread and the wine actually become Our Lord during the celebration of the Mass.

Our Lord said that we must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood and that His Flesh was real food and His Blood was real drink. (John 6:52-56)

If you read the writings of the early Church fathers you see they believed He was talking about the Eucharist. All of the Orthodox churches, those that broke from the Catholic Church as early as the fifth century believe as we do.

Of course the more modern Christian churches don't believe Our Lord is fully present. They have to see the bread and the wine as just symbols. They don't have any priests; they don't have apostolic succession.

Those were the three reasons that I became convinced that if I was to be a

Christian, faithful to Our Lord, I should join the Church He created for me.

Why should a Christian belong to the Catholic Church?

Because Jesus Christ built a church and the gates of hell did not prevail against it.

Sincerely,

Bob Babecka