

# WHY BE CATHOLIC?



# Why be Catholic?

## 1. The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus

Jesus changes the apostle Simon's name to Peter, which means, "rock." He says, "*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 16:18) There have been 266 rocks, or earthly leaders, of the Church.

## 2. The earliest Christians were Catholic

Ignatius of Antioch writes in 107 AD: "*You must all follow the lead of the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed that of the Father; follow the presbytery as you would the Apostles; reverence the deacons as you would God's [own] commandment. Let no one do anything touching the Church apart from the bishop. . . . Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.*" (Second Letter to the Philadelphians). Further, Tertullian of Carthage states in 240 AD: "*If the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Apostles to preach, no others ought to be received except those appointed by Christ: For no one knows the Father except the Son.*"



### 3. The Bible is a Catholic book

We must concede that the Bible, and all of its books, were not “dropped from the heavens” in one complete (and printed) volume. In actuality, there is about a 1500-year writing span between the Book of Genesis, and the Book of Revelation. No author begins to pen the New Testament until 45 A.D. (12 years after the death of Christ). **The complete Bible was not officially canonized by the Church until the year 397 A.D.** at the Council of Carthage. Stephen Langdon, Archbishop of Canterbury, did not designate chapter numbers until about circa 1080, and printed bibles were not available until 1400 years after Christ. Indeed, verses did not appear until the Geneva Bible was printed in 1560. So, how did Christians come to know our Lord in the first 400-1500 years after Christ? Through the Mass, the sharing of the Eucharist, and the teaching office of the Catholic Church, as passed down by the bishops. The “table of contents” for the bible was chosen by the Catholic Church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



? *Where in the bible does it say to go by the bible alone?*

? *Where in the bible does it indicate which books belong in the bible?*

? *Shouldn't we "hold fast to our traditions?"*

2 Thessalonians 2:15

#### 4. The Eucharist is *not* a symbol – it's Jesus Christ himself

The founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, believed in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist: *“There is no life, but death alone, apart from His flesh and blood...The bread which is broken or distributed piece by piece is participation in **the Body of Christ**”* (1528 AD). God's plan of salvation is presented to us through food. The first sin is committed through the consumption of food (Genesis 3:6), the Passover meal was complete upon consuming the spotless Lamb (Exodus 12), the Israelites were fed in the desert by bread manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4), Jesus is born into a feeding trough in Bethlehem, which means, *“City of Bread”* (Luke 2:6).

Jesus says, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst... I am the bread that came down out of heaven... Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh...Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day...For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink”* (John 6:41-58). The Jews quarreled among themselves and left. Many disciples walked away from this “hard saying.” The Apostles stayed and proclaimed, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” Jesus Christ is calling you to receive Him in the Eucharist, which is only made present in the Catholic Church. *“Does this shock you?” -Jesus (John 6:61)*

## 5. Mary

Mary was the first Christian – the first follower of Jesus. The scriptures tell us that “all generations will call her **blessed**” (Luke 1:48). The Angel Gabriel kneels before her and says “Hail Mary, full of grace!” (Luke 1:28). The bible says that **Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant**. The Ark of the Old Covenant held (1) The Word of God in stone, (2) the rod of Aaron, our ancestral priest, (3) the Bread manna from heaven. Mary holds within her womb (1) The word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, (2) the High Priest, Jesus Christ, (3) The Bread of Life, Jesus Christ.



King David takes the Ark of the Old Covenant into the hill country for safekeeping. David **arose and went** to take the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:2); David says, “**How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?**” (2 Sam 6:9); David **dances for joy** in the presence of the Ark (2 Sam 6:14-15); the Ark remains in the hill country for **3 months** (2 Sam 6:11). Similarly, Mary **arose and went** to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39); Upon Mary’s arrival, Elizabeth says, “**How is it that the mother of the Lord should come to me?**” (Luke 1:43); Elizabeth’s unborn child, John the Baptist, **leaps for joy** in the presence of Mary (Luke 1:41); Mary stays with Elizabeth for **3 months** (Luke 1:56).

Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant is then seen in heaven, clothed with the sun, with a crown of 12 stars, to represent the 12 tribes united by Jesus Christ, from the line of David (Revelation 12:1). The Israelites didn't worship the Ark, rather they worshiped the contents of God within the Ark.

**Catholics do not worship Mary.** Rather, they follow the historical model of Christianity – they honor her (Exodus 20:12), and they ask for her prayers. They ask Mary to be their prayer partner. How righteous those prayers must be (James 5:16)! The founder of Protestantism speaks of Mary: *“Mary is the highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ. She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough.”* –Martin Luther, 1531 AD



## 6. Saints

Catholics believe that death is not the end. Those who enter heaven are alive through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:5). As we *run the race* here on earth, the saints in heaven are cheering us on as a

great **cloud of witnesses** (Hebrews 12:1). The scriptures show the saints offering prayers with incense rising up before God (Revelation 8:4). Jesus himself speaks with the righteous dead during His glorious transfiguration with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:2).

Catholics venerate statues and images of saints to remember their Christian lives and living witness. God commands the construction of two large cherubim statues of gold to be constructed on the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18). Just as you might kiss the pictures of your loved ones, and not worship the Kodak paper, so Catholics honor the memory of the saints using images and statues without worshiping the stone material.

## **7. Salvation**

Catholics follow the biblical understanding of “getting saved” and being “born again.” There are **four major elements** for salvation, as described in scripture:

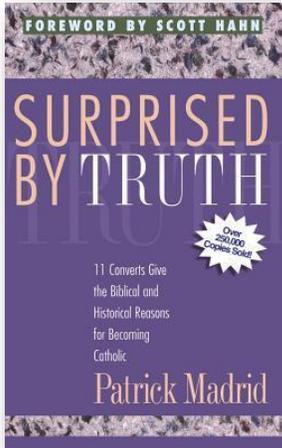
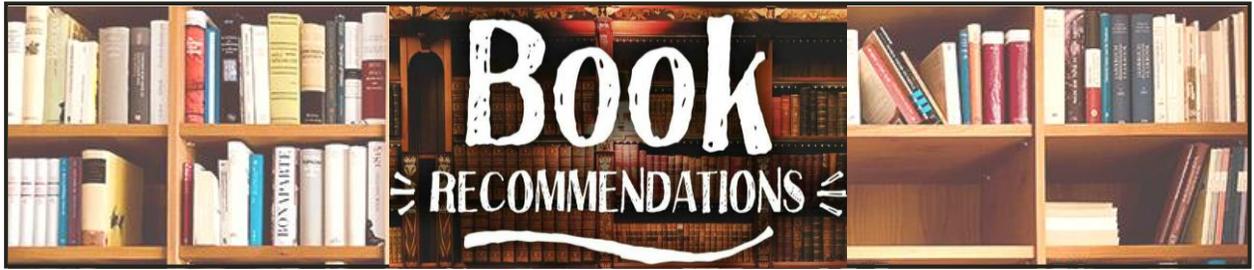
**1. Faith.** *“If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

(Romans 10:9)

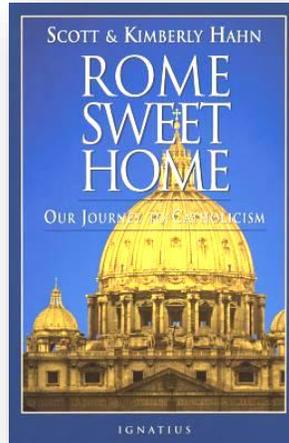
**2. Baptism.** *“No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”* (John 3:5) *“Baptism saves you.”* (1 Peter 3:21)

**3. Eucharist.** *“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”* (John 6:53)

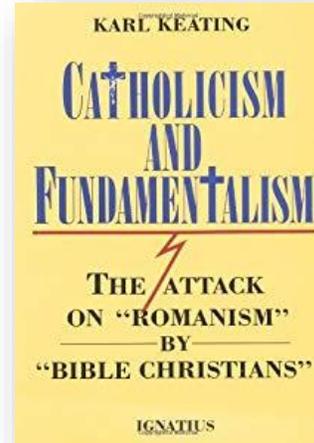
**4. Doing the Father’s Will.** Catholics *do not* believe that salvation can be *earned*. However, fruitful works are an appropriate demonstration of the Christian life. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21) *“We are justified by our works, not by faith alone.”* (James 2:24)



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How do I return to, or enter into the Catholic Church?

Get in touch with your local Catholic Church, and ask about their RCIA program (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

Come home to the church of the living God, which is the *pillar and foundation of truth* (1 Timothy 3:15).