

Our Catholic Faith Series 2017

Week 1- January 14 & 15, 2017

Our Catholic Faith is a series of responses to questions being raised in our local faith community. We hope these responses will help deepen your understanding of our Catholic faith, strengthen your commitment and draw you closer to Jesus himself.

Do Catholics believe and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior? Yes, we certainly do, is the short answer. Some faith traditions suggest that unless you make a commitment to Jesus saying the specific words “I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior” you cannot be saved. And yet, Jesus is the one who saves, and Jesus can save anyone.

In our Catholic faith, we experience sacred moments where individuals make a commitment in faith to the Lord Jesus, particularly in receiving the sacraments. We believe sacraments are sacred actions instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is rendered to God and the sanctification of humankind is effected through God’s grace.

In Baptism, the gate to the sacraments, men and women are freed from their sins, reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. In the sacrament of Confirmation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and are bound more perfectly to the Church; it strengthens and obliges us more firmly to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed, and to share and defend the gift of faith. The Most Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian worship where we receive Jesus himself, his Body and his Blood. The Eucharist in our Catholic faith is not merely table fellowship, but the memorial of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, our great prayer of thanksgiving for all that God has done, and where we are offered and receive the very Body and Blood of Christ.

In each of the sacraments we not only make an assent of faith, but a deep commitment to the Lord Jesus. Parents and godparents help us make this commitment of faith in Baptism and First Holy Communion. Confirmation is the time we are asked to stand on our own conviction and commit ourselves more deeply to the Lord Jesus. And each time we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, we say “Amen,” “yes it is” Jesus himself. Every time we receive Holy Communion, we say yes to Jesus accepting him as our Lord and Savior and pledging our lives to him.

May the sacraments deepen and strengthen our faith and draw us ever closer to the Lord Jesus.

Courageously Catholic is coming Wednesday, February 22, 2017, at 7 PM. Watch for details.

Week 2- January 21-22, 2017

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Baptism – the indelible mark. Can a person be rebaptized? Most mainline Christian churches such as Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist, believe, profess and teach the indelible

mark of baptism and do not rebaptize. In the Catholic Church, we believe that baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. It incorporates us into the Church or as our IC school children proudly say, makes us “God’s holy boys and girls, one big happy family.” Given once for all, baptism is not repeated.

While baptism is not repeated, there may be deep and defining spiritual moments that sometimes occur in our lives; significant moments where we experience a rebirth of faith, or a coming home to the Lord; encounters with the Lord himself that transform our lives completely. These are wonderful gifts and blessings from the Lord that are cause for celebration and recommitment, but not rebaptism that suggests our baptism in the Lord was somehow lacking. How might one celebrate these amazing moments of grace from the Lord? If we lost our way or drifted from the Lord in sinful ways, our celebration may be the sacrament of reconciliation. It may seem odd to think of reconciliation as a celebration, and yet recall stories of Jesus finding the lost and offering forgiveness such as the lost sheep or the prodigal son. Each person coming home to the Lord is invited to celebrate the amazing gift of forgiveness and being found. Significant moments may be celebrated with a blessing from the Lord – blessing of a marriage after a rocky time or blessing for beginning a new journey in life. They could be marked by a special journey or pilgrimage to a church or shrine, spending time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Or it could be celebrated by recommitting oneself through a profession of faith.

The indelible mark of baptism is obvious when a person from another faith tradition becomes a member of the Catholic Church at the East vigil. Their baptism in another church is respected and they are received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church receiving the sacrament of Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

Each time we enter the church, we dip our fingers in holy water and make the sign of the cross as a reminder of our baptism. May our baptism always remind us of our commitment to the Lord Jesus and draw us closer to him.

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Week 3- January 28 & 29, 2017

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Experiencing the Lord Jesus through the tradition of the Catholic Church. The word tradition comes from Latin and Greek words that mean transmission. Tradition refers to the transmission of beliefs, doctrines, rituals and entities such as sacred scripture. It is the way that we pass on what is truly important in the Catholic Church.

While many Protestant churches claim that the Bible is the only rule of faith, the Catholic Church has always held that both sacred Scripture (the Bible) and sacred Tradition (the teaching authority of the Church) are necessary for transmitting or passing on the gift of faith. Jesus not only gave us His words and actions to know faith and share faith (sacred Scripture), he also gave us His apostles, entrusted with the responsibility of helping us understand faith throughout time and how to pass that gift along (sacred Tradition). The

Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that “sacred Tradition is the true Faith itself, given to the Apostles by Christ and faithfully transmitted to each new generation.”

Part of our Catholic tradition is the way we worship, the prayers that we say, the gestures that we use, the devotions that we follow. The Mass is our primary form of worship fulfilling God’s command to keep holy the Sabbath and the command of Jesus spoken in Luke 22:19-20: “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Jesus himself has given us his very body and blood and calls us to join in the great prayer of thanksgiving, the Eucharist that we do in memory of him. The Mass is a perfect blend of sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition.

Truly, Jesus is present in the tradition of the Catholic Church, in sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition, in the way that we transmit the gift of faith and in the way that we worship. Each Eucharist, God calls us to holiness, strengthens our faith, nourishes and sends us, in order to grow in communion, in unity, with one another and with God. May the Eucharist draw us more closely to Jesus himself and send us forth to be his heralds of faith and hope in the world.

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