

1 Because of the Eucharist, the greatest gift on Earth

Catholics follow the unbroken testimony of the Bible (Jn 6, Mt 26), the earliest Christians (e.g., St Ignatius c.110AD, St Justin c.155AD, St Irenaeus c.185AD), and innumerable saints since. We believe Jesus meant what He said at the Last Supper: “Take and eat; this is my body...this is my blood” (Mt 26:26-28). Jesus clarified in another discourse: “Whoever eats [*trogon* = **chews**] **my flesh and drinks my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is **true food**, and **my blood is true drink**” (Jn 6:54-55). When some of the disciples murmured against this “hard saying”, Jesus did not clarify with a more symbolic interpretation: instead, he allowed them to depart.



“In the patristic period [1st-5th centuries], there was remarkably little in the way of controversy on the subject... That the Eucharist conveyed to the believer the Body and Blood of Christ was **universally accepted** from the first, and the language was very commonly used which referred to the Eucharistic elements as themselves the Body and Blood.”

- *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*

Thus, Catholics believe that the bread and wine at Mass truly become the flesh and blood of Christ,

who was crucified to pay the debt of our sins. In the Eucharist, Christ offers his greatest gift: Himself. By eating the Host, we receive His body, soul, and divinity into our very being. The saints (e.g., Mother Teresa) drew their strength from frequent reception of Holy Communion.

“The Eucharist is the **single most important reason** for staying faithful to the Church. You can’t find it anywhere else.” – Bishop Robert Barron

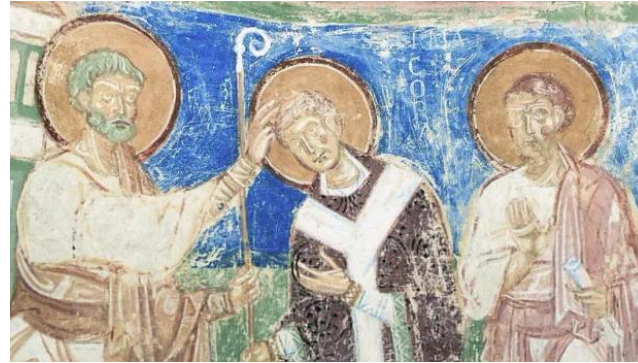
The doctrine of the Eucharist explains why Catholic churches are constructed with great beauty: they are the meeting place of Heaven and Earth, where Christ is truly present on the altar and in the tabernacle. The beauty of Catholic architecture (e.g., Notre Dame, Sagrada Familia), artwork (e.g., stained glass, paintings), music (e.g., Mozart) mirrors the beauty of the Eucharist. Lives have been transformed by silently praying in front of the tabernacle housing the Eucharist. Try it!

2 Because this is the Church that Jesus Christ founded

We have excellent reasons to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God incarnate (see pamphlet ‘Top 6 Reasons to Believe in Jesus Christ’). Jesus did not leave us any writings, but He chose apostles and founded a Church—with Peter as the ‘rock’ and chief apostle (Jn 21:17, Mt 16:18). He promised that the gates of Hell would never prevail against this Church, that He would remain with his followers always, and that their judgments on earth would be also ratified in Heaven (Mt 16:18, 28:20, 18:18). Thus, we can trust that Christ’s apostles led by Peter ‘the rock’ transmitted his teaching faithfully. Some teachings were passed down orally (2 Thes 2:15).

The earliest Christians understood that Christ’s teaching authority was passed down from Jesus to his apostles to their successors (the bishops). Early writers (e.g., Irenaeus) took pains to recount the direct line of succession to their own day (e.g., apostle John → bishop Polycarp → bishop Irenaeus).

This succession of bishops helped preserve Church unity against heresy (e.g., Gnosticism).



“[The apostles] appointed... **bishops and deacons** of those who should afterwards believe. ... Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the [bishop’s] office of the episcopate. [So...] they appointed those already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, **other approved men should succeed them in their ministry**. ...For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have...fulfilled its duties.”

-St. Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD)

“... do all things with a divine harmony, while your **bishop presides in the place of God**, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me...” –St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110 AD)

“The true knowledge is the **doctrine of the apostles...** and the manifestation of the body of Christ according to the **succession of bishops**, by which **succession** the bishops have handed down the Church which is found everywhere. ...[T]he greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized **at Rome** by the two most glorious apostles, **Peter and Paul...** with this Church, because of its superior origin, **all churches must agree...** And it is in her that the faithful everywhere **have maintained the apostolic tradition.**” –St Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 190 AD)

Since Christ was God, and He promised to preserve His Church, and his earliest Church saw the apostolic succession of bishops as the guarantee of authenticity, then we can trust this as God’s plan.

The proof is in the pudding: since the Protestant Reformation, thousands of churches have splintered, disagreeing on key issues (e.g., on the Eucharist). Only the Catholic Church (and its close sister, the Orthodox Church) can point through an unbroken line to Jesus as its founder. Others must point to human founders (e.g., Luther or Wesley).

Of course, Jesus did not promise that all members of his Church would be perfect (indeed, Peter ‘the rock’ denied him three times). There has been great corruption in the Church’s 2,000-year history (e.g., worldly popes). But no pope has ever made definitive (*ex cathedra*) teachings on faith and morals which were later recanted or proven wrong. Despite many sinful leaders, the Church has persevered – and remains the largest and longest continuously running institution in the world.

3 Because the Bible, the greatest book in history, is a Catholic book



The Bible is the best-selling book of all time, a literary masterpiece that has inspired countless artists and writers. The Bible is a compilation of various genres of writing (e.g., prophesies, poems, parables, and letters) written by numerous human authors (c. 1300BC-100AD), all inspired by the Holy Spirit and conveying faithfully the truth God wishes for His people. The Bible as we have it today did not fall from the sky.

In a gradual process, bishops determined the ‘canon of Scripture’, i.e., which books were truly inspired by the Holy Spirit, and which not. Some writings were unanimously accepted from the beginning (e.g., the 4 Gospels and Paul’s epistles), but others (e.g., James, Rev.) were debated (see Eusebius’ *History*, c.320 AD). The debate was settled c.382 by Pope Damasus and several synods – defining the New Testament we still accept today. Medieval monks faithfully copied manuscripts to preserve these texts. **No Church, no Bible.**

Anyone Christian who accepts the Bible as the Word of God is accepting a decision made by the early bishops, and therefore implicitly **accepting the authority of these 4th century bishops**. They taught other Catholic doctrines that can be traced to the earliest centuries: the Trinity, the Real Presence of the Eucharist, the Sign of the Cross, apostolic succession, the communion of saints, and use of relics. Thus, many Protestants who study the **early Church Fathers** end up becoming Catholic.

“In my philosophical journey, I saw that Christianity could only be rationally believed if we trust the testimony of the early Christians. But this same testimony points unmistakably to Catholic beliefs like the Eucharist and apostolic succession. This truth led me to Catholicism.”

-Dr. Chad Marxen, Ph.D. Brown Univ.

4 Because of Confession

The resurrected Jesus sent his apostles saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (Jn 20:21-23). The apostles’ successors (bishops and priests) continue this role of forgiving sins. The early Church offered Confession (e.g., Mt 9:8, Jam 5:13-16, and *The Didache*, 80 AD). The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is a great gift: anyone who has experienced it can attest to the giant ‘weight’ one feels lifted off one’s shoulders. Our life goal is to become a saint, in joyful communion with God. Confession helps us

when we sin, like visiting a doctor when we are sick. Christ offers this healing through the physical presence of an ordained priest—who acts as an instrument for Christ to forgive our sins.

5 Because of the Saints



Like many jewels in a crown, the Church is resplendent with many saints – heroes who hailed from every inhabited continent, every personality type, and nearly every occupation. Examples include **St Francis of Assisi** (who left a life of wealth to serve the poor), **St Mother Teresa** (who served the poorest of the poor in India), **St. Damien of Molokai** (who moved to Hawaii to live and die with lepers), and countless other saints.

“You can’t argue with a saint. Their smiles, their charity, their wrinkles of experience and suffering and patience make your words bounce off them like stones thrown at battleships.”

-Dr. Peter Kreeft, Professor, Boston College

The saints found joy even in hardship, in lives of virtue, and in unity to Christ. Each saint manifests one or more aspects of Jesus Himself—e.g., His love of the poor or children, His wisdom, His courage, His humility. The Catholic Church has the greatest ‘dream team’ -- one that all Catholics hope to join.

Prime among the saints is **the Virgin Mary**, “full of grace”, whom “all generations call blessed” (Lk 1:28-48). Mary always directs us to her Son: “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5).

The ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431 AD) officially accepted her title as “Mother of God.” Billions have found comfort and strength in the humble Virgin Mary. Catholics do not worship Mary (or any saints or statues); we worship God alone (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We love Mary dearly, as the human closest to Jesus, the one who contemplated his face more faithfully than anyone.

“Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did.”
-St. Maximilian Kolbe, martyr of Auschwitz

6 Because is it true

Although many people have drifted away from Catholicism (e.g., out of apathy), many others have joined the Church after researching Church History, the saints, or the Church’s rich intellectual tradition. We hope you will do the research too!

“[T]he difficulty of explaining ‘why I am a Catholic’ is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one reason: **that Catholicism is true.**” -G.K. Chesterton, famous author

Suggested further reading (all Catholic converts):
Why I Am Catholic (Vogt)
Rome Sweet Home (Hahn)
Four Witnesses (Rod Bennet)

For more information, visit:
www.EvidenceBasedCatholic.com



See our other pamphlets:
8 Reasons to Believe in God,
6 Reasons to Believe in Jesus,
Answers to Top 9 Objections

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