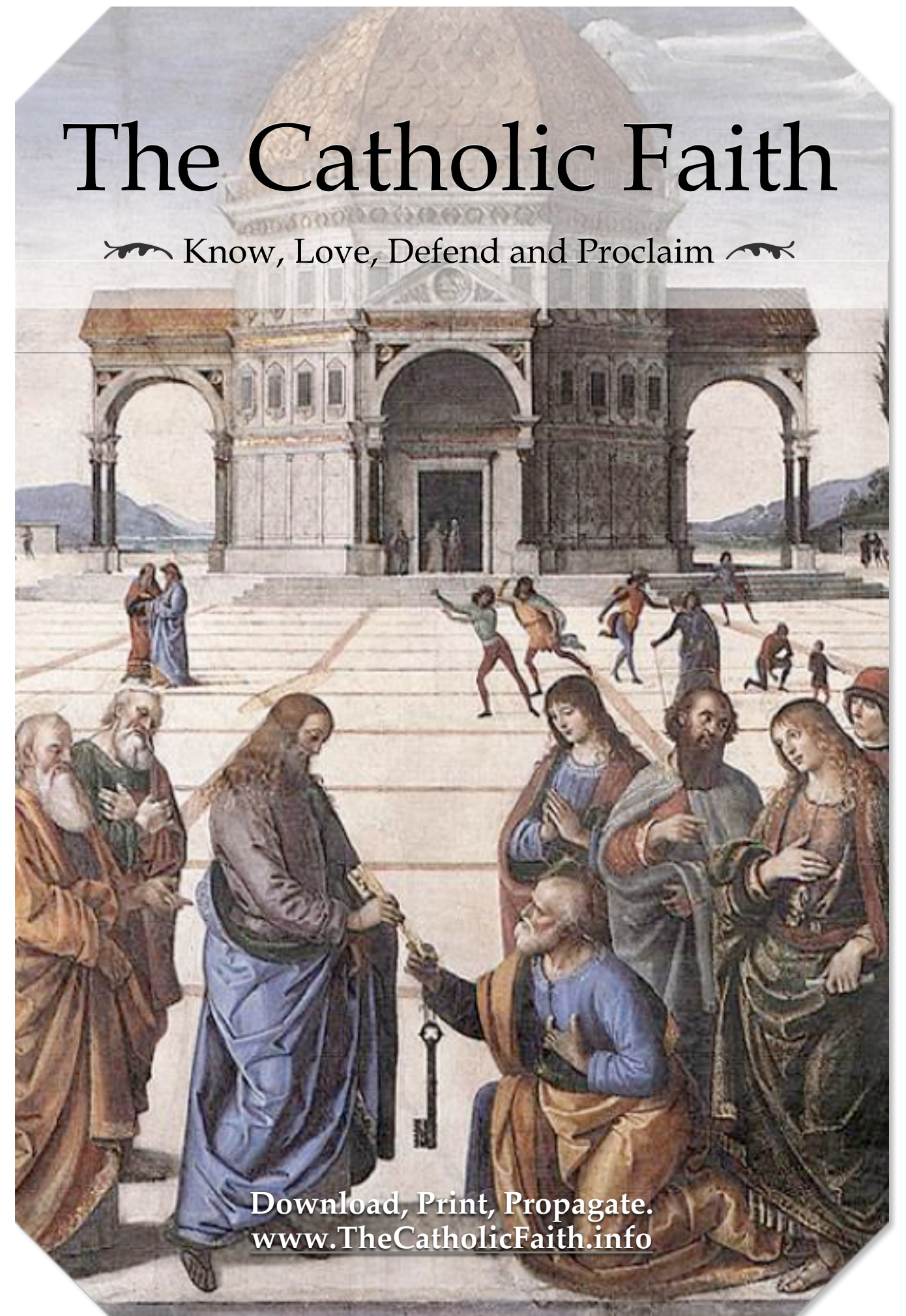


The Catholic Faith

✎ Know, Love, Defend and Proclaim ✎



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The Catholic Faith Booklet
- Catholic Apologetics Core edition -
www.thecatholicfaith.info

Dedicated to St. Joseph, patron of the Universal Church.

About this booklet:

This booklet is directed to all Catholic lay faithful, young and old, to mobilise the ‘sleeping giant’ of the Church by helping them to know, love, defend and proclaim the Catholic faith. However, it may be of use also to non-Catholic Christians interested in the Scriptural evidence for Catholicism.

This is the Catholic Apologetics Core Edition of the booklet. The full edition which also includes Natural and Christian apologetics can be downloaded from The Catholic Faith website above.

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An exceptional resource for Christian apologetics covering such topics as faith and reason, the existence of God, the problem of evil, the reliability of the Scriptures, the divinity of Christ, and objective truth. A very adequate prerequisite to Catholic apologetics.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

One of the most famous works of Christian apologetics that is also easy to read. Written by the Anglican author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Theology for Beginners by Francis J. Sheed

One of the best introductions to Catholic theology.

Good News about Sex and Marriage by Christopher West

An expounder on the ‘theology of the Body’ by Pope John Paul II reveals the authentic meaning of human sexuality. An outstanding and crucial book for this time of confusion.

How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization by Thomas E. Woods

An eye-opening book outlining how the Church had an indispensable role in every facet of Western civilization, including science, economics, morality, law, and fine arts.

Introduction to the Devout Life by St Francis de Sales

A guide to devout life while in the world. Written by the Saint at a dangerous time & place, where saying Mass was punishable by death, it has never gone out of print in 400 years.^{xxv}

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas á Kempis

One of the greatest Catholic spiritual works, it has been cherished by all Christians. It is said to be second only to the bible in publication, and has been available in over fifty languages.^{xxv}

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin by St Louis Marie de Montfort

Praised by popes, theologians and mystics, this is perhaps the most celebrated book ever written about devotion to Mary.^{xxv}

Preface

The greatest commandment given to us as Catholics is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). So, we must know our faith with all our mind, for it reveals God – we cannot love what we do not know.

As we continue to grow in knowledge and love of the faith – which naturally includes living it to the full – we are called to proclaim the good news (in Greek, ‘euangelos’), both in word and deed, and be ready to make a defence (‘apologia’) for it at any time. The Scriptures tell us, “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and, “always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). This is the work of evangelisation and apologetics to which we are all called, as part of the volitional faith that saves us and brings salvation to others (James 2:26, Matthew 25:31-46); but we must first know and love our faith – we cannot give what we do not have.

Through our baptism we share in the threefold office of Christ as priest, prophet and king. Specifically, the task given to us as the laity is to engage with the world, since we, like no other, are the Church’s point of contact with it. I We are the missionaries in our own environment, proclaiming and defending the Catholic faith for the love of God; for winning souls, rather than arguments. In growing in sanctity and leading others also to the Father through the faith, we are united to Christ more and more – this is the very meaning of life, the purpose for which we were created.

Here’s a resource that, we hope, would be of help to you in getting to know the Catholic Church as mater (mother) and magister (teacher), who nurtures us with the fullest revelation of Christ. It features easy-to-read and engaging fictional dialogues that present common objections and the Catholic answers to them. Is the Catholic Church really the Church Jesus Christ himself founded upon St. Peter, against which the gates of hell shall not stand (Matthew 16:18)? Does the Catholic Church really have a three-fold authority entrusted to her, in the Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Magisterium?^{II} The only honest reason for believing is because it is true: if it is not, we are in the wrong place and we should be seeking elsewhere; if it is, though, the Church has a unique authority among Christian denominations and among the world religions, and we must love her with all our heart, soul and mind, proclaiming her teachings with humility - because it would mean trusting Jesus, God the Son, who is trust-worthy.

To enable others to do the same, please feel free to download, print and propagate these booklets from www.thecatholicfaith.info. May God lead you in proclaiming the Good News!

Sincerely in Christ through Mary,
The Catholic Faith team

^{xxv} Also available to read online at www.catholictreasury.info

^I Lumen Gentium, 11 and 31. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II)

^{II} See Scripture and Tradition, p.53, and Papacy, p.3.

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The famed anthology of questions and answers about virtually any topic on the faith.

The Pure Love Club

www.pureloveclub.com

A great site for anything related to chastity, presented in a way youths can relate to.

New Advent

www.newadvent.org

A giant resource website which includes the Catholic Encyclopedia, Early Church Fathers' writings, the Bible, and St. Thomas Aquinas' theological masterpiece, Summa Theologica.

Catholic Culture Site Reviews

www.catholicculture.org/reviews

Find more links and check how any Catholic website is rated on fidelity, resources and useability.

Recommended Books^{XXIV}

A Biblical Defence of Catholicism by Dave Armstrong

A "rigorous, Scripture-packed analysis" of the Catholic faith by a former Protestant campus missionary turned Catholic apologist.

Catholicism and Fundamentalism by Karl Keating

The founder of Catholic Answers (see Recommended Links above) details the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Catholicism as found in some anti-Catholic literature. Keating provides clear and detailed rebuttals in a charitable manner.

Early Christian Writings translated by Maxwell Staniforth

Writings of the Fathers known to the Apostles, including Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp.

Handbook of Christian Apologetics by Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli

^{XXIV} Some of these are available for preview at books.google.com. For purchases, see bookdepository.com. See also your local library catalogue, which can be found from nzlibraries.com.

Recommended Readings and Resources

Here are some of the most essential readings and resources for knowing, loving, defending and proclaiming the Catholic faith.

Recommended Links

Biblia Clerus

www.clerus.org/bibliaclerus/index_eng.html

The Holy See offers Sacred Scripture in the light of Sacred Tradition and Magisterial teachings, cross-referenced to commentaries, catechisms, conciliar pronouncements, etc. Available for online use and as a comprehensive downloadable edition.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), and; Compendium of the Catechism (CCCC)

www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm and;

www.vatican.va/archive

The Catechism is *the* reference text for authentic Catholic teachings, with cross-references. The Compendium is a question-and-answer Catechism for reading. Available also as books.

Catholic Education Resource Center

www.catholiceducation.org

Authentic Catholic education resource, invaluable for all Catholics, to engage the secular, relativist and at times anti-Catholic culture and media. It makes available the best in Catholic faith and culture – “the latest, the best, the brightest from outstanding writers, authors and journalists around the globe” – which you can search, browse, or otherwise keep up with via subscription to their bi-weekly update.

Catholic Answers

www.catholic.com

One of the most comprehensive and indispensable websites for Catholic apologetics. Have a browse, and try the "Quick Search" box on the top left of the page to look up any topic.

Radio Replies

www.icatholicism.net/apologetics/radio-replies.html

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Papacy

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic and a non-denominational Christian, which explores the New Testament evidence for the primacy of Peter and what this means with regard to Catholic claims about the role of Peter's successors. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author – the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups.

Introduction

[We're at work. Every week some of the Christians at work get together for prayer and Bible study. Now it just so happens that the place where you work is predominantly Catholic (the people who are at the prayer and bible study meeting are in fact all the workshop participants^{III}). One of the prayers is this (and this is a serious prayer):]

Catholic: Dear Lord Jesus, I pray for our Holy Father Pope John Paul and for his prayer intentions. Please keep him in good health, and bless and strengthen him in his ministry. Amen.

[After the prayer time is over, the non-Catholic starts to speak:]

The Dialogue

Non-Catholic: Hey, you know that prayer for the intentions of the pope? Well, I think he's a great guy and everything, but you guys need to know that this whole papacy thing is really unbiblical. I don't need a pope to tell me what to believe. It's all right here in the Word of God! And you shouldn't call him "Holy Father", either - the Bible says "Call no man 'Father'". Look at all the wealth and power he has - the pope takes glory that belongs to Christ alone. It's no wonder some people think that the pope is the anti-Christ, the way popes have behaved in the past and the way they stand between the believer and the Lord Jesus! And how can you guys think the pope is infallible - there have been tons of bad popes, even Peter got told off by Paul for getting things wrong!

C: Hey, stop being so subtle Brendan - tell us what you really think.

^{III} The audience

Prayer and Works

The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Comfort the afflicted.
5. Forgive offenses.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, let me sow pardon;
where there is doubt, let me sow faith;
where there is error, let me sow truth;
where there is despair, let me sow hope;
where there is darkness, let me sow light;
and where there is sadness, let me sow joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven (Didascalia 2 [A.D. 225]).

Fililoque

Tertullian

"I believe that the Spirit proceeds not otherwise than from the Father through the Son" (Against Praxeas 4:1 [A.D. 216]).

Origen

"We admit... that the Holy Spirit is the most excellent and the first in order of all that was produced by the Father through Christ" (Commentaries on John 2:6 [A.D. 229]).

NC: I am telling you - it's unbiblical. That's all, plain and simple. There's no papacy in the Bible.

C: Sure there is.

NC: No there isn't.

C: Sure there is.

NC: Nope, sorry.

C: Look, you must know where we're gonna take you.

[To the audience: which Scripture are we likely to start with?]

Yeah, we're gonna take you to Matthew 16. Check this out:

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Peter and the Rock

NC: That passage doesn't prove anything! I know you guys think that Peter is the rock, but he's not. Jesus is the rock.

C: You know that Peter means rock, don't you?

NC: I know that's what you think. But if you look at the Greek, you'll see that there are two different words there. The Greek of the passage says "you are Petros, and on this petra I will build my church". Petros means "small stone". That's the name Jesus gave to Peter. But Petra means "big rock", and that's what Jesus said he'd build his Church on. Bet you didn't know that! Jesus is the big rock.

C: Come on Brendan, every Catholic worth his salt has heard that objection before, and it just doesn't fly. There's a reason for that difference in the Greek: in Greek, names of things have gender, like they do in French and Spanish and lots of other languages. So Peter can't be called "Petra" because that's a feminine noun and it would be like giving him a girl's name, like that chick on TV. To translate into Greek the best Matthew can do is say "Petros" which is a masculine word, and is

suitable to apply to a man. Otherwise it'd be like me calling you "Brenda".

NC: They're still different words: petros is Peter the little pebble, and Jesus is petra, the big rock.

C: Actually, they don't have a different meaning. There was once a distinction between them, in ancient Greek poetry, but by the time of the Gospels, the words meant the same thing. So your argument just doesn't work. And I'm not making this up, this is what Protestant Greek scholars are saying. They may not believe in the Papacy, but they know that the Petra/Petros distinction is only a grammar thing and not a difference in meaning. There's a whole other word for small stone in Greek: lithos.

NC: Hey, even if petros and petra mean the same thing, Jesus must have made things clear with his gestures or tone of voice or something, like "you [pointing to Peter] are Peter, and on this rock [pointing to himself] I will build my Church".

C: I thought you were big on the Bible alone? Doesn't this wishful thinking and pantomime and stuff about how Jesus might have been waving his arms around go against your principle of the Bible by itself being all you need?

Besides, Jesus probably wasn't even speaking in Greek, he was speaking Aramaic, the local language. And in Aramaic the word is the same: "kepha". So Jesus said "You are kepha and on this kepha I will build my church". Even Protestant scholars say it's unquestionable that Aramaic is the language underlying this passage. That's why in John's Gospel, chapter 1, Jesus calls Peter "Cephas", which is how you'd say "kepha" in Greek if you just took the word straight across from Aramaic instead of translating it like Matthew does.

And what about the keys? In verse 19, Jesus says to Peter "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Jesus, Peter and the Keys

NC: Yeah, well, that's obviously talking about how Peter can preach the Gospel, which is the key to eternal life.

C: No-one else is given the keys though, are they? But there's a lot more here than just a nice metaphor. Are you up with the Old Testament background to what Jesus was saying?

NC: Uh, I can't say I've ever actually checked it out for myself...

Tatian the Syrian

We are not playing the fool, you Greeks, nor do we talk nonsense, when we report that God was born in the form of a man (Address to the Greeks 21 [A.D. 170]).

Melito of Sardis

It is no way necessary in dealing with persons of intelligence to adduce the actions of Christ after his baptism as proof that his soul and his body, his human nature, were like ours, real and not phantasmal. The activities of Christ after his baptism, and especially his miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the deity hidden in his flesh. Being God and likewise perfect man, he gave positive indications of his two natures: of his deity by the miracles during the three years following after his baptism, of his humanity in the thirty years which came before his baptism during which, by reason of his condition according to the flesh, he concealed the signs of his deity, although he was the true God existing before the ages (Fragment in Anastasius of Sinai's The Guide 13 [A.D. 177]).

Clement of Alexandria

The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning — for he was in God — and of our well-being. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things (Exhortation to the Greeks 1:7:1 [A.D. 190]).

Sunday Worship

Ignatius of Antioch

[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e., Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death (Letter to the Magnesians 8 [A.D. 110]).

The Didascalia

The apostles further appointed; On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, and the oblation [sacrifice of the Mass], because on the first day of the week [Sunday] our Lord rose

Contraception

Clement of Alexandria

Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted (The Instructor of Children 2:10:91:2 [A.D. 191]).

To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature (ibid. 2:10:95:3).

Hippolytus

[Christian women with male concubines], on account of their prominent ancestry and great property, the so-called faithful want no children from slaves or lowborn commoners, they use drugs of sterility [oral contraceptives] or bind themselves tightly in order to expel a fetus which has already been engendered [abortion] (Refutation of All Heresies 9:7 [A.D. 225]).

Jerome

But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother seed. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children? (Against Jovinian 1:19 [A.D. 393]).

You may see a number of women who are widows before they are wives. Others, indeed, will drink sterility [oral contraceptives] and murder a man not yet born, [and some commit abortion] (Letters 22:13 [A.D. 396]).

Divinity of Christ

Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church at Ephesus in Asia . . . predestined from eternity for a glory that is lasting and unchanging, united and chosen through true suffering by the will of the Father in Jesus Christ our God (Letter to the Ephesians 1 [A.D. 110]).

C: Well, Jesus was referring to Isaiah 22. There we have Isaiah making a prophecy about a man who is to take over the job of prime minister in the kingdom of Judah. Here's what it says, starting at verse 20:

²⁰ In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, ²¹ and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. ²² And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

See, the role that Jesus was giving Peter was like the role that was given to Eliakim a few hundred years before. Eliakim was the Prime Minister over the Davidic kingdom, the kingdom promised by God to David and his descendants. Jesus was a descendent of King David, and he appointed Peter as the Prime Minister over his kingdom, the Church. The job of Prime Minister had already been around for several hundred years when Isaiah made this prophecy. It had been set up by King Solomon, and was a lot like the job that Joseph had in the book of Genesis when the Pharaoh put him in charge of Egypt.

Anyway, in this passage from Isaiah, the king delegates his authority, so the Prime Minister is able to speak with the authority of the king. And Jesus is setting up Peter to do the same thing. It's interesting how it says "he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah". This is just like how we call the Pope our Holy Father.

The Prime Minister is given the key of the house of David, just like Peter is given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And the person with these keys can open and shut, just like Peter can bind and loose.

NC: Hey, Jesus is the one with the keys. Look in Revelation 3 verse 7, where it says that Jesus "has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens".

C: Yeah, but that just reinforces the fact that it is Jesus who is watching over and protecting what is being done with those keys. And that's just Matthew 16. There's a bunch of other Scriptures that we ought to talk about. Have a look at Luke 22:31-32.

"Strengthen Your Brethren"

NC: OK, Jesus is at the Last Supper, and he says:

³¹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

That's hardly a proof text for the papacy, saying Satan demanded to have your first pope.

C: Well, the interesting thing here is that when Jesus says "Satan demanded to have you", the "you" is in the plural, so he's talking about all the apostles. But when Jesus says "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail", that's in the singular, which means that it's just Peter he's praying for. And then he says "when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren". So what we see is that Peter is protected by Jesus' prayer, so he will be able to display the rock-like qualities that the church will need; Jesus will support him so that he'll always strengthen his brethren and not lead them into error.

Another passage along the same lines is John 21:15-17. This is where Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" three times, and Peter says "You know I love you", and Jesus says "Feed my lambs... tend my sheep... feed my sheep".

"Feed My Sheep"

NC: Yeah, but that's just Jesus letting Peter know that he's forgiven after denying him three times.

C: Well, it is that, but it's also a commissioning to be a shepherd of the flock of Jesus, which is the Church. I mean, who's the Good Shepherd?

NC: Jesus is.

C: Yep, and here he's clearly delegating some sort of shepherdly authority to Peter, isn't he?

Succession

NC: OK, look, I can agree that Peter was fairly important figure in the Gospels and so on. He was obviously a leader of the Church. But that doesn't mean that any special job he had was passed on to the people who came after him, does it?

C: Well, do you think there was a need for leadership in the Church after Peter died? Was everything plain sailing for the Church after the first century?

NC: Well, no, there were heresies and persecutions...

C: Exactly. The Church has always needed a strong leadership, and there have been times in history when the Bishop of Rome has been almost alone in standing firm against heresy. Remember, Jesus is the son of David and the new King of Israel, and he reestablished the office of "prime minister", like the Davidic kings used to have. He gives that

John Chrysostom

Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed." Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding; but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? "Whose sins you shall forgive," he says, "they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men [Matt. 10:40; John 20:21-23]. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven (The Priesthood 3:5 [A.D. 387]).

Divorce and Remarriage

Hermas

What then shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this disposition [adultery]? Let him divorce her, and let the husband remain single. But if he divorces his wife and marries another, he too commits adultery (Shepherd 4:1:6 [A.D. 80]).

Justin Martyr

In regard to chastity, [Jesus] has this to say: If anyone look with lust at a woman, he has already before God committed adultery in his heart. "And, whoever marries a woman who has been divorced from another husband, commits adultery." According to our Teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it be in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desire at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts (First Apology 15 [A.D. 151]).

Origen

Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seems to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry her [and] who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her (Commentaries on Matthew 14:24 [A.D. 248]).

anyone be disturbed because the sick are poured upon or sprinkled when they receive the Lord's grace" (Letter to a Certain Magnus 69(76):12 [A.D. 254]).

Confession

The Didache

Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . , On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure (Didache 4:14,14:1 [A.D.70]).

Ignatius of Antioch

For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop (Letter to the Philadelphians 8 [A.D. 110]).

Hippolytus

[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your Royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles. . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command (Apostolic Tradition 3 [A.D. 215]).

Cyprian

Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . I beseech you, brethren; let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord (The Lapsed 15:1-3 (A.D. 251)).

office to Peter. And in the Old Covenant, that job had successors - it was passed on - and it's the same in the New Covenant.

I mean, if you think about it, Jesus' Kingdom is gonna last till the end of time, right?

NC: Yeah...

C: So there is no good reason to think that the office of prime minister won't last till the end of time as well. And you want to be part of a "New Testament" kind of Church, don't you?

NC: Well, yeah...

C: Well, God's people have always had some sort of hierarchical leadership, right through the Old and New Testaments, so if we're gonna be a real New Testament Church, it's perfectly reasonable to expect a similar sort of leadership. Peter was obviously the head of the Church after Christ's ascension, and there's no good reason to think that the fundamental structure of the Church should change after he died.

NC: Well, that's all very interesting, and there is quite a lot to think about there, but you haven't really talked about infallibility - I mean, Peter was told off by Paul for not acting in accordance with the Gospel - doesn't sound very infallible to me! And I know for a fact that lots of popes have been very fallible sinful men. Plus you've got the problem that Peter never even went to Rome anyway, which makes it strange that you think he'd be Pope there. I mean, Paul wrote a big long letter to the Romans and never greeted Peter once! Bit of an oversight, forgetting the Pope like that, don't you think? And Peter was married, but not your Pope! And you call him "Holy Father" when Jesus says "call no man 'father'". And... [cue bells - back to work.]

C: Hey, hang on, just wait a second. Every one of those points has a reasonable Catholic response.^{IV} But we're out of time now, we've gotta get back to work. Maybe next week?

NC: Yeah, maybe next week. See you then.

^{IV} For finding more information, see Recommended Readings and Resources, p.93

Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic and a non-denominational Christian, which explores the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author – the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups.

The Scenario

A guy in the square is giving out tracts, including one condemning the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist. He gives one to a Catholic who happens to be walking past.

Catholic: [Looks at tract] Hey, why are you handing out this stuff?

Tract Guy: Just doing my bit for the Truth.

C: For the Truth, huh? Well, I think your motives are good, but this stuff that you're spreading is not truth.

TG: Oh really? Tell me, have you been born again?

C: Sure have. Been born again of water and the spirit, just like Jesus said in John chapter 3.

TG: Uh, glad to hear it. So why have you got a problem with what we're saying here?

C: Because I'm Catholic, and I believe the Lord Jesus with all my heart, and what you're saying here goes against what him and the apostles taught.

TG: You're a born-again Catholic? Isn't that a contradiction in terms?

C: No. What do you think you have to do to be born again?

TG: Well, I've got a tract on that right here. You have to understand that sin separates us from God, and that the only way to be put right with God is to turn from your sin and ask Jesus into your heart to be your personal Lord and Saviour.

C: Oh, that's OK then, I did that at Mass this morning. So anyway, why are you bagging the Catholic Church like this? Why are you blaspheming the Eucharist?

TG: Because what the Catholic Church teaches about the Eucharist is unbiblical, that's why. You don't really believe that you eat Jesus when you receive Communion, do you? It's obvious from Scripture that Jesus was speaking symbolically when He talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He didn't mean that literally.

their sins that are past, we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father... and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19], they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (First Apology 61 [A.D. 151]).

Irenaeus

He [Jesus] came to save all through himself – all, I say, who through him are reborn in God; infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age (Against Heresies 2:22:4 [A.D. 189]).

Tertullian

[N]o one can attain salvation without baptism, especially in view of the declaration of the Lord, who says, "Unless a man shall be born of water, he shall not have life" (On Baptism 12:1 [A.D. 203]).

Origen

The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of divine sacraments, knew there is in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit (Commentaries on Romans 5:9 [A.D. 248]).

Cyprian

[I]t behooves those to be baptized . . . so that they are prepared, in the lawful and true and only baptism of the holy Church, by divine regeneration, for the kingdom of God . . . because it is written "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Epistles 72 [73]: 21 [A.D. 252]).

In the saving sacraments, when necessity compels and when God bestows his pardon, divine benefits are bestowed fully upon believers, nor ought

these, but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus (First Apology 66 [A.D. 151]).

God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles" [Mal. 1:10-11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist (Dialogue with Trypho 41 [A.D. 155]).

Cyprian

If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and if he commanded that this be done in commemoration of himself, then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ (Letters 63:14 [A.D. 253]).

Baptism

The Didache

After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Didache 7:1 [ca. A.D. 70]).

Justin Martyr

As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, and instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of

C: Well, what if I could show you from the Bible that Christ did teach that He is really present in the Eucharist?

John 6

TG: There is no way you can prove that from the Bible. And besides, you're a Catholic. Your doctrines don't come from the Bible, anyway. So go ahead and try. But first, you tell me this: in John 10:1, Jesus said He is a 'door.' Do you believe He has hinges and a doorknob on His body? In John 15:1, Jesus said He is a 'vine.' Do you take Him literally there? And if you don't, then why do you take His words literally in John 6 where He talked about His flesh and blood being like food and drink? You Catholics are pretty inconsistent, don't you think?

C: Well, let's have a look at what he said in John 6, shall we? Exactly one year before the Last Supper, right before the Passover, Jesus said:

⁵³ "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; ⁵⁴ he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56)

TG: Yeah, and he's using a metaphor: eating his flesh and drinking his blood means putting our faith in him.

C: Well, if he was just using a metaphor, he wasn't a very good teacher. After all, everyone listening to Him understood that He meant things literally. They said, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" When Jesus said He is a "door" or a "vine," no one asked him "How can this man be a door made out of wood?" or, "How can this man claim to be a plant?" It was very clear from the context of what Jesus said in those passages that He was using metaphors. But in John 6 He was speaking literally. Here, look at John 6:41, and 6:52.

TG: "The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.'...and then... "The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'"

C: Yeah, they understood him literally, they just couldn't handle it. He didn't tell them it was just a metaphor like he should have if they weren't getting it. Instead, he goes on to make the same point several more times in even stronger terms. After verse 53, Jesus stops using the normal Greek word for "eat"; he switches from using *phago* (which just means "eat", and can sometimes have a symbolic meaning). He starts using *trogo*, which is a very vivid word meaning "munch" or "gnaw",

and which is never anything but literal in the Greek Bible and other Greek literature.

TG: Yeah, well in verse 63 Jesus says "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life". It's a spiritual message he's getting across.

C: C'mon, there's nowhere in Scripture where "spirit" is used to mean "symbolic". I mean, John 4:24 says God is spirit - you don't think God is just a symbol do you?

TG: No!

C: And if you do a study on the word Jesus uses for "flesh" here, you'll find that there's nowhere in the Gospels where it is used symbolically either.

Besides, this is the only place in the Bible where followers of Jesus abandon Him for theological reasons. In verse 60 they say, "this is a hard teaching, who can listen to it". And then in John 6 verse 66 it says "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him." I've always thought it was interesting that the only verse in the Bible that is 6:66 is where people reject Jesus because of his teaching about the Eucharist.

TG: Hey, that's just a coincidence.

C: Yeah, I know that. Funny though, isn't it? Anyway, here we have people leaving Jesus because of this hard teaching. Some people think this was the biggest crowd Jesus ever preached to, which would make this his single biggest public relations blunder. He could have cleared everything up and stopped everyone from leaving just by saying "No, no, listen guys, that was just a symbol, I don't really mean my literal body and blood". But he doesn't do that. Instead, he says to his disciples, "Do you also wish to go away?". And they don't because they know he has the words of eternal life. Here, read Mark 4:34.

TG: "he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything."

C: Yeah, and if he had some mysterious symbolic meaning here, he didn't explain it to his disciples, which is another reason to think he was being literal. Besides, there's other places in the Gospels where Jesus just repeats a true but unpopular teaching like this, like in Matthew chapter 9 where he talks about his power to forgive sins, and people don't believe him, and he insists on it, and John chapter 8, where he talks about his eternal existence, people don't believe him, and he goes on to say "Before Abraham was born, I am!". This passage about the Eucharist is just like those ones. Plus there's heaps of places where he says something, the disciples get it wrong, and Jesus explains it to them. But

Second Clement

If we do the will of Christ, we shall obtain rest; but if not, if we neglect his commandments, nothing will rescue us from eternal punishment (Second Clement 5:5 [A.D. 150]).

Mass and Real Presence

The Didache

Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist: but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice [Matt. 5:23–24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, "Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations" [Mal. 1:11, 14] (Didache 14 [A.D. 70]).

Ignatius of Antioch

Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2-7:1 [A.D. 110]).

Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his blood, and one single altar of sacrifice – even as there is also but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God (Letter to the Philadelphians 4 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr

We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive

dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them (Homilies on First Corinthians 41:5 [A.D. 392]).

Not in vain was it decreed by the apostles that in the awesome mysteries remembrance should be made of the departed. They knew that here there was much gain for them, much benefit. When the entire people stands with hands uplifted, a priestly assembly, and that awesome sacrificial victim is laid out, how, when we are calling upon God, should we not succeed in their defense? But this is done for those who have departed in the faith, while even the catechumens are not reckoned as worthy of this consolation, but are deprived of every means of assistance except one. And what is that? We may give alms to the poor on their behalf (Homilies on Philipppians 3:9-10 [A.D. 402]).

Augustine

There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for other dead who are remembered. It is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended (Sermons 159:1 [A.D. 411]).

Temporal punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by some after death, by some both here and hereafter, but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But not all who suffer temporal punishments after death will come to eternal punishments, which are to follow after that judgment (The City of God 21:13 [A.D. 419]).

Ignatius of Antioch

Corrupters of families will not inherit the kingdom of God. And if they who do these things according to the flesh suffer death, how much more if a man corrupt by evil reaching the faith of God for the sake of which Jesus Christ was crucified? A man become so foul will depart into unquenchable fire, and so will anyone who listens to him (Letter to the Ephesians 16:1-2 [A.D. 110]).

he doesn't do that here, because they took him literally and they got it right.

TG: Well I still think that eating his flesh and drinking his blood means believing in him.

C: Well, "eating flesh" and "drinking blood" does actually have a metaphorical meaning in the Old Testament. What's your Bible version?

TG: NIV.

C: Cool. Well, read Psalm 27 verse 2.

TG: "When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall."

C: Yeah, and what does the footnote say for "devour my flesh"?

TG: "to slander me".

C: Right, so if Jesus was speaking symbolically, he would have been saying that people must slander Him in order to have eternal life. I don't think so. And then there's the teaching of St. Paul.

TG: Hey, Paul was the "apostle of grace" - he was no Catholic!

C: You think? St. Paul was a Catholic bishop. All those letters he wrote, he did between times when he was saying Mass! And in one of those letters, he had a lot to say about the Real Presence.

TG: Go on then.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

C: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

¹⁶ "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."

See, communion is a participation in the body of Christ! And for you guys, where you say the bread remains bread, you haven't got one bread, you've got lots of different bits of bread.

TG: Actually, we use crackers and grape juice.

C: Yeah, well, because the bread and wine really becomes Jesus, we can honestly say we partake of the one bread, like St. Paul says.

And then you've got 1st Corinthians 11:27-29. Why don't you read that?

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

TG: *²⁷ "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of*

the Lord. ²⁸ A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

C: Yeah, sounds a lot like Paul's talking about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. You wouldn't be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord if it was just a symbol. And did you know that the Greek phrase for being "guilty of someone's body and blood" is a technical way of saying "guilty of murder". It's very serious. If you were just fooling around with a bit of grape juice it would be no big deal. But if Jesus is really present, then to receive communion unworthily would be a big deal. Which is why we take St. Paul very seriously, and why we take the Eucharist very seriously as well.

The Last Supper

C: Oh, and I forgot to mention, at the Last Supper, Jesus didn't say "This represents my body", did he? He said "This is my body". And we just take him at his word.

The Eucharist in the Early Church

TG: Well, this is all very interesting, but I've got a tract here that says your doctrine of transubstantiation was not adopted until 1215 A.D. So it doesn't matter what sort of tricky arguments you're gonna use, if you put your faith in something that wasn't believed until more than a thousand years after Christ, I'm not gonna follow it.

C: Let me get this right: you are accusing the Catholic Church of introducing something new?

TG: That's right.

C: What church do you go to anyway?

TG: Well, we're non-denominational...

C: But you must have a name - is this it on the bottom of the tract?

TG: Well, yeah, we're the Reformed Evangelical Congregational Elim fellowship of New Testament Independent Non-denominational Vineyards, affiliated to the Episcopal Newlife Truegospel International church Of the Nazarene. We have a long, proud history, in a couple of years we'll be celebrating our tenth anniversary as a fellowship.

C: Right. So that would make you... the uh, church of the RECENT INVENTION, wouldn't it? Anyway, the Catholic understanding of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is nothing new. Transubstantiation is a technical term that describes what happens, and

Timothy of Jerusalem

Therefore the Virgin is immortal to this day, seeing that he who had dwelt in her transported her to the regions of her assumption (Homily on Simeon and Anna [A.D. 400]).

Purgatory, Hell and Sin

Clement of Alexandria

The believer through discipline divests himself of his passions and passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, passes to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance for the faults he may have committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more, not yet attaining what he sees others have acquired. The greatest torments are assigned to the believer, for God's righteousness is good, and His goodness righteous, and though these punishments cease in the course of the expiation and purification of each one, "yet" etc. (Patres Groeci. IX, col. 332 [A.D. 150-215]).

Origen

If a man departs this life with lighter faults, he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter. For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (I Cor., 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works. (Patres Groeci. XIII, col. 445, 448 [A.D. 185-232]).

John Chrysostom

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice [Job 1:5), why would we doubt that our offerings for the

This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one (Homily 1 [A.D. 244]).

Gregory the Wonderworker

For Luke, in the inspired Gospel narratives, delivers a testimony not to Joseph only, but also to Mary, the Mother of God, and gives this account with reference to the very family and house of David (Four Homilies 1 [A.D. 262]).

Peter of Alexandria

They came to the church of the most blessed Mother of God, and ever-virgin Mary, which, as we began to say, he had constructed in the western quarter, in a suburb, for a cemetery of the martyrs (The Genuine Acts of Peter of Alexandria [A.D. 305]).

Athanasius

Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that He took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary (Discourses against the Arians 2:70 [A.D. 360]).

Augustine

We must except the Holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin (Nature and Grace 36:42 [A.D. 415]).

Pseudo – Melito

If therefore it might come to pass by the power of your grace, it has appeared right to us your servants that, as you, having overcome death, do reign in glory, so you should raise up the body of your Mother and take her with you, rejoicing, into heaven. Then said the Savior [Jesus]: "Be it done according to your will" (The Passing of the Virgin 16:2-17 [A.D. 300]).

the only reason it wasn't widely used until the 11th century was because that was the first time on record that anyone significant denied the Real Presence. So the Church used transubstantiation (which just means "change of substance") to define things very clearly in a single word. The Eastern Church had been using the Greek word metaousiosis, which means the same thing for hundreds of years before that. I mean, you believe in the Trinity, don't you?

TG: Of course I do!

C: Well, the word "Trinity" wasn't "officially" used until the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, but that doesn't mean that no-one believed in the Trinity until then. And as for the Real Presence in the early Church, listen to this, I happen to have a quote right here... this is from Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred in AD 110 and was a disciple of both Peter and John; he wrote about some of the heretics that he had to deal with:

"They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again."
(Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to Smyrnaeans, 7, 1, c. 110A.D., in Coxe's Ante-Nicene Fathers I:89)

TG: Oh. Well, that's just one guy.

C: No, it's not just him, I could give you tons of quotes that say the same thing. But look, here's a book - I was just taking it back to the library - it's by a very well-respected historian, who's not a Catholic, and this is how he summarises what the early Church believed about the Eucharist:

"Eucharistic teaching, it should be understood at the outset, was in general unquestioningly realist, i.e., the consecrated bread and wine were taken to be, and were treated and designated as, the Savior's body and blood."
(J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p. 440)

TG: OK, that's very interesting and I'll have to think about it. Look, maybe I'll stop giving out this tract for time being while I look into things a bit more. But here, why don't you take this tract on Purgatory instead?

C: Oh man. I gotta go, but how about I give you a tract, and then you can call me if you want to talk about it some more. See ya!

Sacrament of Reconciliation

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic priest and another Catholic who has some problems with understanding the Sacrament of confession. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author – the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups.

The Scenario

[A confessional; priest is waiting; a Questioning Catholic enters.]

Priest: Hello there my child. What would you like to talk about this fine day?

Questioning Catholic: Hello, Father O'Dooley. I have a problem.

P: Well, that's what the confessional's for, isn't it my son? Shall we begin?

QC: Well, no, you see, that's the problem Father. The confessional and everything.

P: Oh, it's been a while then, has it?

QC: No Father, it's not that. It's just that I've been, well, there's this girl, you see...

P: Ohh, that sort of problem. Never fear, my child, the grace of God knows no bounds.

QC: No, Father, I don't think you understand. There's this girl I work with at the racetrack, she trains the horses while I muck out the stables, you see, and we get to talking sometimes. And she's not a Catholic, Father.

P: Oh, she's in the racing industry but not Catholic? Strange. Reminds me of a joke I heard once; there was this horse and a priest, you see...

QC: Father, Father, about my problem, Father... we talk about the Church and Jesus and the Bible and things like that.

P: Splendid subjects, every one of them.

QC: Anyway, I mentioned the other day that I was going to go to confession, and she told me that it was a terrible deception, because only God can forgive sins. And then she started quoting a whole lot of Bible verses at me.

P: Oh, did she now?

by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence the first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father's mercy (Letters 56[60]:5 [A.D. 252]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

Then [during the Eucharistic prayer] we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition... (Catechetical Lectures 23:9 [A.D. 350]).

Jerome

You say in your book that while we live we are able to pray for each other, but afterwards when we have died, the prayer of no person for another can be heard . . . But if the apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still be solicitous about themselves, how much more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs? (Against Vigilantius 6 [A.D. 406]).

Blessed Virgin Mary

Hippolytus

He [Jesus] was the ark formed of incorruptible wood. For by this is signified that His tabernacle [Mary] was exempt from defilement and corruption (Orat. In Illud, Dominus pascit me, in Gallandi, Bibl. Patrum, II, 496 ante [A.D. 235]).

Origen

The Book [the Protoevangelium] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first fruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity (Commentary on Matthew 2:17 [A.D. 248]).

manner, even if works have not followed. To begin with, it was to the Jews alone that he spoke this phrase, who had lived in accord with the law and blamelessly and who had lacked only faith in the Lord (Stromateis or Miscellanies 6:14:108:4 [post A.D. 202]).

Origen

Whoever dies in his sins, even if he profess to believe in Christ, does not truly believe in him; and even if that which exists without works be called faith, such faith is dead in itself, as we read in the epistle bearing the name of James (Commentaries on John 19:6 [A.D. 226-232]).

Cyprian

You, then, who are rich and wealthy, buy for yourself from Christ gold purified in fire, for with your filth, as if burned away in the fire; you can be like pure gold, if you are cleansed by almsgiving and by works of justice. Buy yourself a white garment so that, although you had been naked like Adam and were formerly frightful and deformed, you may be clothed in the white garment of Christ. You who are a matron rich and wealthy, anoint not your eyes with the antimony of the devil, but with the salve of Christ, so that you may at last come to see God, when you have merited before God both by your works and by your manner of living (Works and Almsgiving 14 [A.D. 252]).

Saints

Origen

But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels... as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep (On Prayer II [A.D. 233]).

Pectorius

Aschandius, my father, dearly beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren, remember your Pectorius in the peace of the Fish [Christ] (Epitaph [A.D. 250]).

Cyprian

Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions

Only God Can Forgive Sins

QC: She sure did. And I have to confess, she was very convincing, and to be honest I think she's right. We shouldn't confess our sins to anyone but God.

P: Well, now, it's very good that she knows her Bible. Tell me some of what she said.

QC: OK, Father, I have some of it written down. First of all, she said that in Isaiah chapter 43, God says "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

P: Oh, she's a King James'er. Very good. Anything else?

QC: Well, she said that Hebrews 3:1 and 7:22-27 tell us Jesus is our one and only true High Priest and that there are not many priests, but one in the New Testament. And the Bible makes it clear in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus 'is the propitiation for our sins,' and not some priest, 'and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'. And how can we Catholics claim priests act in the role of mediator in confession when 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us, 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'?"

P: Oh, very good. Well, you've come to the right place. Let's have a look at this together shall we? By the way, that's a strange accent you've got there - you're not really Irish are you?

QC: No, I'm a sort of Welsh/Scottish half-breed.

P: Well, we won't hold that against you. I see you have a Bible there.

QC: Yes, she gave it to me. She even highlighted parts of it for me.

P: Ohh, I'll bet she did. Well, where shall we start? Here, do you know what this is? [Holds up Catechism]

QC: Well, it's not the Bible, is it?

P: No, it's the Catechism of the Catholic Church.^v Every home should have one. It tells you what we really believe. And here's what it says about forgiveness of sins, in paragraph 1441: "Only God can forgive sins". Well, what a surprise!

QC: So, what are you doing here then?

P: Well now, let's not be in too much of a hurry. Jesus could forgive sins, couldn't he?

QC: Yes he could, because he's God. Which is why we should confess our sins directly to him, not to some power-hungry priest - uh, no offense. That's what she said.

^v For a searchable Catechism online, see Recommended Links, p.93

P: Do you think that Jesus, if he wanted to, could pass this authority of his to men who could act in his name?

QC: Well, I dunno...

Confession Before the Time of Christ

P: Let's have look at how they did it in the old days, before Vatican II, in the time of Moses. Let's read Exodus 10, starting at verse 16:

¹⁶ "Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. ¹⁷ Now therefore, forgive my sin, I pray you, only this once, and entreat the LORD your God only to remove this death from me." ¹⁸ So he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the LORD."

Interesting, don't you think, that Moses is being asked to forgive sin, and that he acts as a go-between for Pharaoh and God, a minister of some kind.

QC: Well, yes, but Pharaoh was a pagan, he probably didn't know better, and he certainly didn't have any sort of relationship with God.

P: Maybe so, maybe so. 'Tis a good point, to be sure. But let's not be too hasty. Look at Leviticus, chapter 5, verse 5, where Moses is giving the law to God's chosen people:

⁵ "When a man is guilty in any of these, he shall confess the sin he has committed, ⁶ and he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD for the sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin."

Hoo, confession and a priest to make atonement. Well, well, well. And that sort of thing's all through Leviticus chapter 4 and chapter 5 you know. Reminds me of another passage, in the book of Numbers, chapter 5:

"And the LORD said to Moses, ⁶ "Say to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person is guilty, ⁷ he shall confess his sin which he has committed; and he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it, and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong."

Well, confession with some penance. Look at that! But it goes on...

⁸ "But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him."

Interesting, isn't it? And do you know what a scapegoat is?

does not hold life and salvation (On the Unity of the Catholic Church 6 [A.D. 251]).

Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress [a schismatic church] is separated from the promises of the Church, nor will he that forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is an alien, a worldling, and an enemy. He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother (The Unity of the Catholic Church 6, 1st ed. [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]).

Salvation: Faith and Works

Clement of Rome

Let us therefore join with those to whom grace is given by God. Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being humble and self-controlled, keeping ourselves far from all backbiting and slander, being justified by works and not by words. . . . Why was our Father Abraham blessed? Was it not because of his deeds of justice and truth, wrought in faith? . . . So we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, were not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the almighty God justified all men. (Letter to the Corinthians 30:3, 31:2, 32:3-4 [A.D. 110]).

Clement of Alexandria

When we hear, 'Your faith has saved you,' we do not understand the Lord to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever

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).

Clement of Alexandria

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]).

Origen

If someone from this people wants to be saved, let him come into this house so that he may be able to attain his salvation. . . . Let no one, then, be persuaded otherwise, nor let anyone deceive himself: Outside of this house, that is, outside of the Church, no one is saved; for, if anyone should go out of it, he is guilty of his own death (Homilies on Joshua 3:5 [A.D. 250]).

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,

QC: Yes, it's me. I'm the one who always gets the blame when my little sister does something wrong.

P: Well let me show you where the word comes from - Leviticus 16 describes what the high priest does on the Day of Atonement:

²⁰ "And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat; ²¹ and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat."

Now the point here is that if the high priest is to confess all the iniquities of the people of Israel, he has to know what they are, doesn't he? They have to be confessed to him first.

QC: That's all very interesting, but that's the Old Testament. We're under grace now, not under law.

P: Well, confession is a beautiful grace, to be sure. Let's look at the New Testament then, shall we? I think we'll find that the practice God begun in the Old Covenant is not removed in the New, it's fulfilled! Read Mark chapter 1, verses 4 and 5 for me.

QC: *⁴ "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."*

P: Well, well, confession to a mere man. How strange! And let's look at Jesus. Forgiveness of sins was a big part of his ministry now, wasn't it? But let's see what the Bible says about the capacity in which he did it. Read Matthew 9:6-8, the passage about Jesus healing the paralytic man.

The Gospels

QC: "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,)" - that's the paralytic, right? - "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. ⁷ And he arose, and departed to his house. ⁸ But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men."

P: Very good. Notice that the people praise God that he has given such authority to men, plural. Don't you think that's significant?

QC: Well, I guess it would be significant if the people Matthew was writing to were going to confession all the time. But that's what you still have to prove, isn't it.

P: Actually, no, since confession has always been the ancient practice of the Church, we don't have to prove anything. It's your friend who's

inventing things here, so she's the one who has to prove something - she has to show that Jesus told us to stop doing confession. But, just to set your mind at ease, I'll prove it to you anyway. First, let's go back to where we started: only the Lord can forgive sins, but if he decides to give his authority to other men then it's still him who is behind the forgiveness.

In Matthew chapters 16 and 18, Christ gives his apostles the power to bind and loose. Are you familiar with those passages?

QC: Uh, yes I am Father. They are rather convincing, aren't they? It's funny; neither of them have been highlighted in this Bible.

P: 'Tis passing strange, to be sure. Anyway, Jesus also said to his disciples that "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." - there's certainly some authority he's delegating there! And after giving his authority to his disciples, they passed that authority on in the same way to their successors. But we still haven't come to the best passage on this. That's in John chapter 20. But first, do you think Jesus was sent by God to forgive sins?

QC: Yes, of course I do, Father.

P: Good. Now read John 20:21-23. Jesus is talking to his disciples.

John 20:21-23

QC: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Oh, I see your point. Jesus sent them out in the same way he was sent, which means - well, which could mean, that he sent them to forgive sins in his name.

P: Exactly. Keep reading.

QC: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Oh.

Why didn't you show me this right at the start?

P: Because you don't see a big queue outside waiting for confession now, do you?

Can you see then that the apostles would have to hear someone's sins in order to know whether to forgive them or retain them; hence the Sacrament of Confession. In this passage Jesus is bestowing on the apostles his authority and his ministry: just like the Father sent him, he is sending them. And this ministry did not perish with the apostles -

apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans where Clement was ordained by Peter. In just this same way the other Churches display those whom they have as sprouts from the apostolic seed, having been established in the episcopate by the Apostles. Let the heretics invent something like it. After their blasphemies, what could be unlawful for them? But even if they should contrive it, they will accomplish nothing; for their doctrine itself, when compared with that of the Apostles, will show by its own diversity and contrariety that it has for its author neither an Apostle nor an apostolic man. The Apostles would not have differed among themselves in teaching, nor would an apostolic man have taught contrary to the Apostles, unless those who were taught by the Apostles then preached otherwise.

The Church and Priesthood

Ignatius of Antioch

You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the Apostles. Reverence the deacons as you would the command of God. Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8:1 [A.D. 110]).

Be not deceived, my brethren: If anyone follows a maker of schism [i.e., is a schismatic], he does not inherit the kingdom of God; if anyone walks in strange doctrine [i.e., is a heretic], he has no part in the Passion [of Christ]. Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of his blood; one altar, as there is one bishop, with the presbytery and my fellow servants, the deacons (Letter to the Philadelphians 3:3-4:1 [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

yourselves the title of holy Church" (The Schism of the Donatists 2:2 [circa A.D. 367]).

Augustine

Among these [apostles] Peter alone almost everywhere deserved to represent the whole Church. Because of that representation of the Church, which only he bore, he deserved to hear "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Sermons 295:2 [A.D. 411]).

Who is ignorant that the first of the apostles is the most blessed Peter? (Commentary on John 56:1 [A.D. 416]).

Apostolic Succession

Clement of Rome

Our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned, and afterwards added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry (Letter to the Corinthians 44:1 [A.D. 95]).

Irenaeus

It is necessary to obey those who are the presbyters in the Church, those who, as we have shown, have succession from the Apostles; those who have received, with the succession of the episcopate, the sure charism of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father. But the rest, who have no part in the primitive succession and assemble wheresoever they will, must be held in suspicion (ibid 4:26:2).

Tertullian

Moreover, if there be any [heresies] bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, so that they might seem to have been handed down by the Apostles because they were from the time of the Apostles, we can say to them: let them show the origin of their Churches, let them unroll the order of their bishops, running down in succession from the beginning, so that their first bishop shall have for author and predecessor some one of the Apostles or of the apostolic men who continued steadfast with the Apostles. For this is the way in which the

they were told to make disciples of all nations, and Jesus promised to be with them even until the end of the age (Matt 28:19-20).

Confession in the Epistles

QC: OK then: do you know of any priests in the New Testament using this authority?

P: Surely, surely. One of the greatest bishops the Church has known gives us a good example.

QC: Really? Which bishop might that be?

P: Bishop Paul, of course, in the diocesan newsletter Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. Why don't you read it for us, I like the way the King James puts it; 2nd Corinthians 2:10, where Paul forgives the repentant Corinthian man.

QC: "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ". Hmm, "in the person of Christ" - that's interesting...

P: Yes it is. And in Acts chapter 19 we see the believers in Ephesus coming and confessing their sins to St Paul: Acts 19:18 - "Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices."

And St James tells us, "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church," - and the word for elders here is presbuteros, which is where we get the word priest - "and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:14-16).

QC: Well, that says "confess your sins to one another", not to a priest.

P: But before you said we should only confess our sins to God, didn't you. So now at least you can see that there's more to the matter than that, can't you?

QC: Well, yes, that's a good point...

P: And if you look at the context, St. James is talking about the role of the priests. He's not saying we should confess our sins to just anyone. First, he's just told us to go to the priests in verse 14. Then, verse 16 begins with the word "therefore", which connects that verse back to the previous ones, so I think it's reasonable for us to conclude that it's the priests to whom St. James is telling us to confess our sins.

QC: OK Father, I feel a lot better now. So if I confess to you now, it's not really you who's doing the forgiving?

P: No, it's the Lord Jesus. I am just his humble servant. It is never the priest who forgives the sin, but Christ using the priest to bestow forgiveness on the people he loves. Listen to the words of absolution that we say:

The Words of Absolution

"God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

See, it's God doing all the work.

QC: That's beautiful. I think, I think, well, you've been a lot of help, Father. Shall we make a start then?

P: Yes, let's make a start.

Appendix

"Is the Catholic who confesses his sins to a priest any better off than the non-Catholic who confesses straight to God? Yes.

First, he seeks forgiveness the way Christ intended it to be sought. Second, by confessing to a priest the Catholic learns a lesson in humility, which is conveniently avoided when one confesses only through private prayer (and how we all desire to escape humbling experiences!). Third, the Catholic receives sacramental graces the non-Catholic doesn't get; through the sacrament of penance not only are sins forgiven, but graces are obtained. Fourth, and in some ways the most important, the Catholic is assured that his sins are forgiven; he does not have to rely on a subjective 'feeling.'

Lastly, the Catholic can also obtain sound advice on how to avoid sin in the future, while the non-Catholic praying in private remains uninstructed."

(from Catholic Answers^{VI} tract, Forgiveness of Sins).

proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles. Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles. With that church, because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition (Against Heresies 3:3:2 [inter A.D. 180-190]).

Cyprian

With a false bishop appointed for themselves by heretics, they dare even to set sail and carry letters from schismatics and blasphemers to the Chair of Peter and to the principal church [at Rome], in which sacerdotal unity has its source" (Epistle to Cornelius [Bishop of Rome] 59:14 [A.D. 252]).

The Lord says to Peter: "I say to you," he says, "that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" . . . On him he builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the sheep [John 21:17], and although he assigns a like power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single chair [cathedra], and he established by his own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was [i.e., apostles], but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair. So too, all [the apostles] are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed by all the apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he [should] desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church? (The Unity of the Catholic Church 4 [A.D. 251]).

Optatus

In the city of Rome the Episcopal chair was given first to Peter, the chair in which Peter sat, the same who was head — that is why he is also called Cephas — of all the apostles, the one chair in which unity is maintained by all. Neither do the apostles proceed individually on their own, and anyone who would [presume to] set up another chair in opposition to that single chair would, by that very fact, be a schismatic and a sinner. . . . Recall, then, the origins of your chair, those of you who wish to claim for

^{VI} See Recommended Links, p. 93

of the Lord [between A.D. 115 and 140] as recorded by Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3:39 [A.D. 325]).

Irenaeus

For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it. The Universal [Catholic] Church, moreover, through the whole world, has received this tradition from the Apostles (Against Heresies 2:9 [A.D. 189]).

Origen

Seeing there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of these think differently from their predecessors, yet as the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the Apostles, and remaining in the churches to the present day, is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition (On First Principles Bk. 1 Preface 2 [circa A.D. 225]).

Papacy

Clement of Rome

Accept our counsel and you will have nothing to regret. . . . If anyone disobeys the things which have been said by him [Jesus] through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in no small danger. We, however, shall be innocent of this sin and will pray with entreaty and supplication that the Creator of all may keep unharmed the number of his elect (Letter to the Corinthians 58:2, 59:1[A.D. 95]).

Irenaeus

Matthew also issued among the Hebrews a written Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter (Against Heresies 3:1:1 [A.D. 189]).

But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the succession of all the churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is

Mary

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic and a non-denominational Christian, which explores the reasons for the honour Catholics give to Mary. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author – the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups.

The Scenario

A Catholic is on an airplane, sitting in the window seat reading a book about Mary, with the Catechism open in his lap as well, waiting for the plane to take off. He's joined by a guy who sits down in the seat next to him, smiles, says hello, and starts listening to a walkman. The Catholic gets out his Bible to double-check a reference, and his companion notices and they start talking.

Non-Denominational Christian: [Loudly] Hey, is that a Bible you've got there?

Catholic: Yep.

NDC: You're a Christian then? Where do you fellowship?

C: Our Lady of the Assumption parish, in town.

NDC: So you're a Catholic?

C: Yep. You?

NDC: I'm a non-denominational Christian. We have "no banner but Christ"! So, ah, what's that book you're reading then?

Mother of God

C: It's called Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God^{VII}. It's very good.

NDC: Hey, would you mind if I asked you a few questions? I've just come from a Biblical prophecy conference where one of the speakers was an ex-Catholic. He was supposed to talk about current events in Israel and the book of Revelation, but he mainly just went on and on about how the Catholic Church is the, uh, the Whore of Babylon and how you guys worship Mary and how the Pope's gonna lead the coming one-world

^{VII} A book by Scott Hahn who, formerly as a Presbyterian minister, despised Marian devotion. Today, he is one of the foremost apologists for the Catholic faith, having written numerous books including Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth, and Rome Sweet Home, which details his conversion to the Catholic faith.

government and all that sort of stuff. Now, the only Catholic I know is the cleaning lady at work and she doesn't strike me as an evil supporter of the Anti-Christ, so I thought it might be best to get the story straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

C: Fair enough.

NDC: So when I came to the airport I told the Holy Spirit that the first Catholic I saw I'd ask about some of that stuff. So here we are. You're an answer to prayer.

C: Well, hey, lucky me. So what can I help you with, Brendan?

NDC: How'd you know my name?

C: Word of Knowledge. It's the Holy Spirit, you know how it is...

NDC: Hey, so you guys actually have the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church?

C: Sure. Plus you're still wearing your name tag from the conference.

NDC: Hmm. Very funny. OK, here's a copy of the notes from the conference [hands over copy of notes]. Since you're reading a Mary book, maybe that's what we could talk about. It seems to me like you guys give her a whole lot of attention that, to be honest with you, seems very unbiblical. You know, you call her the "Mother of God", "Queen of Heaven" - all sorts of weird stuff. This guy at the conference said you even worship her. Now, I think he was probably going a little bit overboard - he did seem kind of out there, you know, a few sinners short of an altar call, if you get my meaning. But even if he's only half right, that still leaves a bunch of problems, it seems to me. You guys do believe the Bible, don't you?

C: Sure we do. Catholics wrote half of it.

NDC: Uh, right. Well, whatever, I got a lot of respect for the Catholic Church, you know, how they stand firm against abortion and euthanasia and divorce and stuff - but it would really reassure me if you could give me some sort of insight into this Mary stuff, 'cause it sure looks dodgy to me.

C: Sure, I'd be happy to help. Where shall we start?

NDC: Do you worship Mary?

C: Only in May. Just kidding! Nope, there's rules against that sort of thing. Here, do you know what this is? [holds up Catechism.]

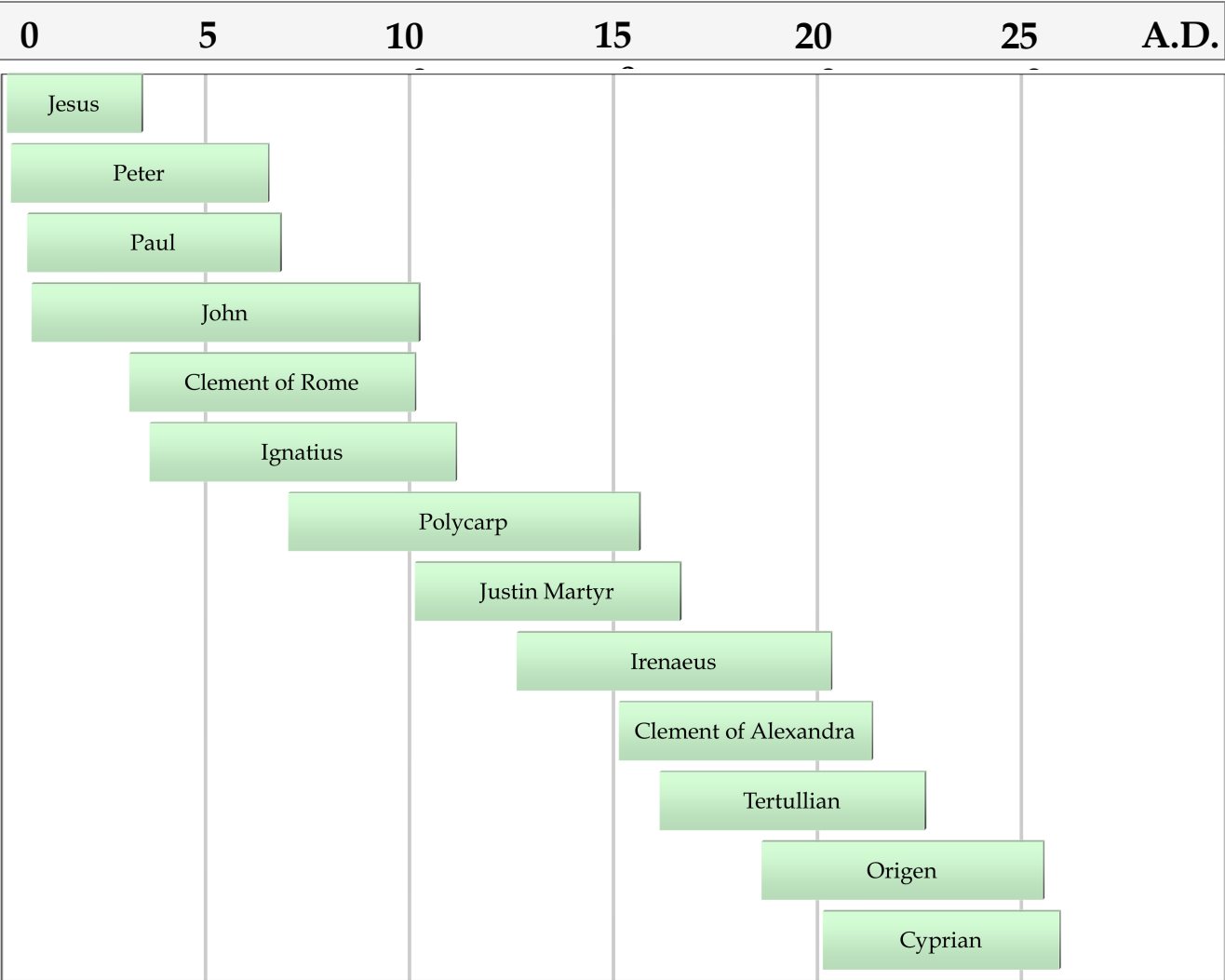
NDC: Well, it's not the Bible.

C: No, it's the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It's where you look if you want to find out what the Church really teaches about anything. And when we look up what it says about worshipping anything besides God, it says "Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man

Early Church Fathers

Timeline

The Early Church Fathers lived during or shortly after the time of the Apostles. Here is a timeline showing the approximate dates of some of



them, next to Christ and the Apostles.

Scripture and Tradition

Papias

Whenever anyone came my way, who had been a follower of my seniors, I would ask for the accounts of our seniors: What did Andrew or Peter say? Or Phillip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any of the Lord's disciples? I also asked: What did Aristion and John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord say. For, as I see it, it is not so much from books as from the living and permanent voice that I must draw profit (The Sayings

Repetitious Prayer

*Mt 6:7 - do not babble like pagans with their many words
1Kgs 18:25-29 - example of vain repetition: call Baal for hours
Mt 26:44 - Jesus prayed a third time, saying the same thing again
Lk 18:13 - collector kept beating breast & praying: be merciful
Rev 4:8 - repeat day & night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord"
1Thess 5:17 - pray without ceasing
Ps 136 - (26 × "his steadfast love endures forever")
Mt 6:9-13 - Our Father

commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God" (CCC, #2113). Mary's a creature, right, she was created by God? So we're not allowed to worship her. Not that we want to. She's cool, but only God is cool enough to worship.

NDC: Well, what about this "Mother of God" stuff? Isn't that like saying she came before God, or she created God, or something like that?

C: Well, you need to know what we mean when we say "Mother of God". We are not saying Mary is the mother of the Trinity, or that Mary existed before God did. You know, I was at a seminar once where the speaker was bagging the term "Mother of God". He said that Mary didn't exist before God, so she couldn't have been the mother of God.

NDC: Maybe it was the same guy!

C: Could've been. But what he didn't get was, when we are talking about Mary the mother of God, we are talking about God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ. No Bible-believing Christian denies that Jesus is God. So maybe it's best to look at it like this: (a) Mary is the mother of Jesus; (b) Jesus is God; therefore (c) Mary is the mother of God. Simple, really.

NDC: Well, I dunno...

C: Let me put it this way: you believe that Jesus, when he was walking around Palestine healing people and doing miracles and stuff, was God, right?

NDC: Yep.

C: And when he was a kid and he got left behind at the temple, he was God then?

NDC: Yep.

C: And when he was a little baby and the shepherds and wise men came and worshipped him, he was God then?

NDC: Yep.

C: And when he was being born, he was God then?

NDC: Well, yep.

C: And when he was in Mary's womb, he was God then?

NDC: Yep, I guess so.

C: So what would that make Mary?

NDC: Well, yeah, OK, the mother of God. God the Son, not God the Father.

C: Yep, that's exactly it. Way to go.

NDC: Well, OK, that kinda makes sense. But why make such a big deal out of it anyway?

C: Well, there was a reason for it, actually. The title "Mother of God" is really quite important. It comes from the Greek word Theotokos, or "God-bearer", which was used at the Council of Ephesus in 431AD to defend the doctrine of Jesus' divinity against heretics who were saying that there may have been a point in time when Jesus was not fully God and fully man. But the Council sorted it out, and pretty much everyone has believed that Mary is the Mother of God ever since, even the Protestant Reformers. It's only people who haven't really thought about it properly that have a problem with it.

And it's Biblical anyway - we call Jesus "Lord" because he's God, and in Luke 1:41, when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth says, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'"

Jesus Didn't Treat His Mother Like She Was Special

NDC: All right then, I can go with that. What about this though: something else that this guy said at the conference was that Jesus never made a big deal out of his mother. He quoted Matthew 12, where it says:

⁴⁶ "While [Jesus] was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ But he replied ... 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' ⁴⁸ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother'."

So this guy was saying, "See, Jesus was quite rude to his mother sometimes, so there's no way those Catholics should be making such a big deal out of her."

C: Well, the thing that gets me here is that he would actually think that Jesus would be rude to his mother. I mean, that would be a sin, right? He'd be breaking the 4th commandment, which is to honour your father and your mother.

NDC: Isn't that the 5th commandment?

C: Depends on your tradition. But that's a whole 'nother can of worms. The point is, Jesus is not gonna sin by being rude to his mother, so we have to look at what else he might have meant. I mean, Jesus would have fulfilled the Ten Commandments perfectly, right, so he would have honoured his mother perfectly. Right?

NDC: I guess so...

Divinity of Jesus

Jn 1:1 - the Word was God

Jn 1:14-15 - glory of Father's only Son, full of grace and truth

Jn 8:19 - if you knew me, you would know my Father

Jn 8:58-59 - I assure you, before Abraham was, I AM; almost stoned

Ex 3:14, 20:7; Lev 19:12, 24:14-16 - above reaction due to these

Jn 10:30-33 - the Father and I are one

Jn 10:38 - the Father is in me and I am in the Father

Jn 12:45 - whosoever sees me sees the one who sent me

Jn 14:8-12 - whoever had seen has seen the Father

Jn 20:28 - Jesus accepts Thomas's "my Lord and my God"

Col 2:9 - in him dwells whole fullness of deity bodily

Acts 20:28 - church of God he acquired with his blood

Eph 1:7 - in him we have redemption by his blood

1Jn 1:7 - blood of his Son Jesus cleanses from all sin

Tit 2:13 - glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ

Time of Second Coming Unknown

Mt 24:44 - be prepared, Jesus coming at unexpected hour

Mt 25:13 - stay awake, you know neither the day nor hour

Mk 13:35-37 - watch, unknown when lord of house coming

Lk 12:46 - master will come like a thief in night

1thess 5:2-3 - day of Lord will come like a thief in night

2Pet 3:9-10 - day of lord will come like a thief

Rev 3:3 - if not watchful, will come like a thief

Mt 24:36 - no one but Father alone knows day and hour

Holy Spirit a Person, Not a Force

Jn 14:26 - "he will teach you all things"

Acts 8:29 - "and the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up...'"

Acts 13:2 - "Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me...'"

Rom 8:27 - "Spirit intercedes for the saints..."

1Cor 2:11 - no one understands the thoughts of God, but Spirit

1Cor 12:11 - Spirit apportions to each as he wills

Eph 4:30 - "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"

Rom 1:27 - called unnatural, shameful, and a perversity
1Cor 6:9 - active homosexuals won't inherit kingdom of God
1Tim 1:9-10 - those who engage in such acts called sinners

Drinking Wine

Gn 27:25 - Isaac brought Jacob wine, and he drank
Dt 14:23-26 - spend money on sheep, wine, & strong drink
Prov 20:1 - wine is a mocker, unwise to be led astray by it
Eccl 9:7 - drink your wine with merry heart - God approves
Is 25:6 - God will provide feast of rich foods & choice wines
Is 5:11 - woe to those who rise early & run after strong drink
Is 5:22 - woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine
Luke 7:33-34 - son of man eats & drinks: behold glutton & drunk
Jn 2:2-10 - miracle at Cana: water turned into good wine
Eph 5:18 - do not get drunk with wine, that is debauchery
1Tim 5:23 - drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach

Miscellaneous

Scandals in the Church

Jer 32:32-35 - OT leaders & priests offered child sacrifices
2 Kgs 23:7 - OT cult prostitutes in the temple of the Lord
Jn 4:22 - in spite of their infidelity, salvation is from Jews
Mk 14:43-46 - although chosen by Christ, Judas betrayed him
Mk 14:66-72 - Peter denied him
Jn 20:24-25 - Thomas refused to believe his resurrection
Mk 14:50 - they all left him and fled in garden of Gethsemane
Rom 3:3-4 - will their infidelity nullify fidelity of God? No!
2 Tim 2 :13 - if we are unfaithful, God remains faithful
Mt 13:24-30 - Parable of the weeds among the wheat
Mt 13:47-48 - parable of net that collects good and bad

Fasting

*1Tim 4:3 - condemns anti-flesh heretics
Mk 7:19 - Christ declared all food clean
1Tim 4:4-5 - everything created by God is good
Dan 10:3 - Daniel refused to eat choice foods for 3 weeks
Mt 9:15 - Christ's followers will fast once he is gone
Mt 6:16-18 - Jesus gave regulations concerning how to fast

C: So what we've got in this passage is Jesus minimising family ties in favour of commitment to the Father's will. But if being part of Jesus' family means being committed to God's will, then Mary becomes even more of a model for us, because she was totally committed to God's will. She's the one who said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word". Right?

The Assumption

NDC: OK, fair enough. What about the Assumption then? You know what I'm talking about?

C: Yep, here's the official definition, from the Catechism:

"Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death." (CCC, #966)

NDC: Yeah, that's it. Now show me that in the Bible.

C: Well, there's no verse that says "And then Mary died and lo! her body was taken up to heaven, and then the disciples went fishing". But there are a lot of clues to have a look at.

NDC: Well, one of those clues would have to get around John 3:13, which says "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man"

C: Fair enough. But there's a big difference between "assumption" and "ascension". Ascending into heaven is something that Jesus did under his own power, 'cause he's God and he can do that sort of thing. But being Assumed is different, because that's something God does to someone else. Mary's assumption is not something she had any control over.

Anyway, here's the first thing: have we got any Biblical precedent for this sort of thing, for someone besides Mary being taken up into heaven?

NDC: Gimme a clue.

C: Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home...

NDC: Oh, OK, Elijah!

C: Yeah, 2nd Kings chapter 2, Elijah gets assumed bodily into heaven by a whirlwind. He was with Elisha, and then "behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Can you think of anyone else?

NDC: Nope.

C: Someone who "walked with God" and then "was not, for God took him"?

NDC: Uh, Enoch? Sure, that's a weird disappearance, but it's stretching a bit to call that an Assumption.

C: Maybe, but his disappearance is mentioned in the New Testament too; in Hebrews 11:5 it says that Enoch "was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him". Anyway, that's not all. Have you ever heard of The Assumption of Moses?

NDC: No. Should I?

C: Not really. It's an old book from around the time of the Bible, but it's not Scripture or anything. But in the Bible, Jude verse 9, it says "the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses". And that refers to the story in this old book, The Assumption of Moses, which was about how the body of Moses was assumed into heaven after he died. And I think it's fair to speculate that Moses was taken up to heaven bodily, since at the Transfiguration on the mountain (Matt 17:1-8), who does Jesus talk to?

NDC: Moses and Elijah.

C: Yeah. And Elijah we know was assumed into heaven, so it seems likely that Moses was too. Can you think of anyone who will be assumed into heaven? In the future?

NDC: No.

C: Ever heard of the "Rapture"?

NDC: Yeah, that's what half the conference was about, when's it gonna happen, who's gonna be left behind, what gonna happen to them...

C: Yeah, well, Catholic teaching on the end times is probably a little different from what they covered at the conference...

NDC: But that's a whole 'nother can of worms, right?

C: Yep. But we know what St Paul says: at the Second Coming, "the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thes 4:16-17). So Mary's assumption is probably something like what will happen to us if we're still around when Jesus returns.

NDC: OK, I never thought of that.

C: And what about the two witnesses of Revelation 11? They must have talked about them at your conference as well. St. John prophesies that three and a half days after they are killed they will be assumed into heaven - he says "And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud" (Rev 11:12).

Eph 5:22-32 - union of man & wife image of Christ & Church

Heb 13:4 - let marriage be honored among all

Social Teachings

Divorce and Remarriage

Mal 2:14-16 - for I hate divorce, says the Lord

Mt 5:32-33 - to divorce or marry divorced wife is adultery

Mt 19:4-6, 9 - to divorce wife and remarry = adultery

Lk 16:18 - to divorce & remarry or marry divorced = adultery

Rom 7:2-3 - wife consorts = adulteress if living, but not if dead

1Cor 7:10-11 - if wife separated, stay single or reconcile

Contraception

Gn 38:9-10 God killed Onan for spilling seed [see next]

Dt 25:5-10 - penalty for defying Levirate law: not death

Gn 1:27-28 (Gn 9:1, 35:11) - be fruitful and multiply

Ps 127:3-5 - children gift from God, blessed is a full quiver

1Chr 25:5 - God gave 14 sons & 3 daughters to exalt him

1Chr 26:4-5 - God indeed blessed Obededom with 8 sons

Hos 9:10-17 - Israel is punished with childlessness

Ex 23:25-26 - blessings promised: no miscarrying, barrenness

Lv 21:17-20 - crushed testicles is called a defect & blemish

Dt 23:1 - no one castrated shall enter the assembly

Dt 25:11-12 - punishment for potential damage to genitals

Rom 1:25-27 - natural function of women = childbearing

1Tim 2:11-15 - women saved through the bearing of children

Acts 5:1-11 - Ananias/Saphira slain - withholding part of gift

Gal 6:7 - God is not mocked-accepting pleasure, denying fruit

Mt 21:19, Mk 11:14 - Jesus cursed fruitless fig tree

Gal 5:20, Rv 9:21, 21:8 - Greek pharmakeia = abortifacient potions

1Cor 6:19-20 - body temple of the Holy Spirit, glorify God with body

Homosexuality

Gn 1:27 - complementarity of sexes reflects God's inner unity

Gn 2:21-24 - transmission of life through total self-giving; one flesh

Gn 19 - original sin deteriorates to Sodom's sin, destroyed

Lv 18:22 - called abomination, cut off from people (v.29)

Lv 20:13 - both shall be put to death for abominable deed

1Cor 2:14-3:4 - explains what "the flesh" means in Jn 6:63
Ps 14:4; Is 9:18-20; Is 49:26; Mic 3:3; 2Sm 23:15-17; Rv 17:6, 16 - if symbolic,
to eat & drink one's body & blood = assault

Confirmation

Acts 19:5-6 - Paul imposed hands on baptized, received Holy Spirit
Acts 8:14-17 - laid hands upon them, they received Holy Spirit
2Cor 1:21-22 - put seal on us and given Holy Spirit in our hearts
Eph 1:13 - you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit
Heb 6:2 - instruction about baptism & laying on of hands

Confession

Mt 9:2-8 Son of Man has authority to forgive sins
Jn 20:23 - whose sins you forgive/retain are forgiven/retained
Jn 20:22 - breathed on them, "receive Holy Spirit" [recall Gn 2:7]
2Cor 5:17-20 - given us the ministry of reconciliation
Jam 5:14-16 - confess your sins to one another
Mt 18:18 - whatever you bind & loose on earth, so it is in heaven

Anointing the Sick

Mk 6:12-13 - anointed with oil many sick, cured them
Jam 5:14-15 - presbyters pray over sick, anoint, sins forgiven

Holy Orders

Acts 20:28 - Holy Sprit appointed you overseers, to tend Church
Lk 22:19 - do this in memory of me
Jn 20:22 - As Father sent me, I send you...receive Holy Spirit
Acts 6:6 - the apostles prayed and laid hands on them
Acts 13:3 - they laid hands on them & sent them off
Acts 14:22 - they appointed presbyters in each church
1Tim 4:14 - gift received through laying on of hands of presbyterate
2Tim 1:6 - gift of God you have through imposition of hands
Tit 1:5 - appoint presbyters in every town as I directed you
(also see The Priesthood)

Matrimony

Mt 19:5-6 - leave father & mother, join wife, 2 become 1 flesh
Mk 10:7-12 - what God joined together, let no man separate

NDC: You know, that's really interesting. But none of those passages of Scripture are about Mary, are they?

C: No, but the point is, the idea of Mary being assumed into heaven is in no way anti-Biblical, is it? In fact, what you see is that it's not unheard-of for some particularly righteous people to be taken up bodily into heaven. Now on to Mary... First of all, have a read of the book of Revelation, the end of chapter 11 and the start of chapter 12.

NDC: ¹⁹ "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. ¹ And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery."

Then there's a bit about a dragon, then it says,

⁵ "she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne".

C: Cool. So first of all we have John seeing a vision of the heavenly temple, and in there, seeing the Ark of the Covenant. Now, are you familiar with Biblical typology?

NDC: Yeah, I think so. That's where we see things in the Old Testament that foreshadow something in the New Testament, like how the Passover lamb in Exodus points toward the real Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

C: Exactly. Or like how Moses and the Jews passed through the Red Sea and that is a "type", or a pointer, to baptism, or like how the manna in the desert is a "type" of the real bread from heaven, Jesus.^{VIII}

NDC: Yep, gotcha there. Are you saying the Ark of the Covenant was another type that points to something in the New Testament?

C: Yep. A lot of Catholics see the Ark of the Covenant as a "type" of Mary. Now that may sound funny, but let's think about it for a minute: Hebrews 9:4 tells us what was in the ark. So what was it? [Anybody know? Cue slide.]

[The Ark held the tablets with the ten commandments, along with some manna, and Aaron's rod.]

C: The ark held the tablets with the Decalogue, right, the ten Words of God, which were a "type" of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1).

^{VIII} "New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is revealed in the New" - St. Augustine. The fulfilment in New Testament is usually greater or more perfect, more universal, revealing the real meaning of the type in the Old.

It also held the manna, the bread from heaven, another "type" of Jesus, the true bread from heaven (John 6:32). And the ark held Aaron's high priestly rod, which was the symbol of Aaron being the high priest, and that's another "type" of Jesus, who is our Great High Priest (Heb 4:14).

So the ark held stuff that represented Jesus, and since Mary held Jesus himself in her womb, that makes her the New Testament Ark of the Covenant. Cool, huh?

NDC: Yeah, well, I've never really thought about that...

C: Well, there are also some interesting parallels between 2 Samuel chapter 6, which talks about King David's attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, and Luke chapter 1, which talks about Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth. Get a load of this:

- The ark spent time in the hill country of Judea, and Mary went to the hill country of Judea to visit Elizabeth;
- David said "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?", and Elizabeth said "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?";
- The ark stayed in the house of Obed-edom for three months, and Mary stayed in the house of Zachariah for three months;
- David leaped before the ark when he finally got it to Jerusalem, and the baby John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth's womb when she heard Mary's greeting.

Now none of that proves anything, but it is interesting, isn't it?

NDC: Well, yeah...

C: Anyway, in John's vision in the book of Revelation, he's looking up into the heavenly temple, seeing the ark, and then that's replaced in his vision by a woman. The woman gives birth to the male child, who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron. That child is Jesus, because the bit about ruling the nations with a rod of iron comes from Psalm 2, a Psalm about the Messiah.

NDC: So you're saying that since the child is Jesus, that would make the woman Mary.

C: Yep. I'm always amazed at how a lot of people can look at the Book of Revelation and see Russian attack helicopters and nuclear weapons and stuff, but they don't see that the woman who gives birth to the Messiah might be Mary.

Anyway, just like the ark of the Old Covenant was taken up to the old Jerusalem, the ark of the New Covenant was taken up to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is why in the Vigil Mass for the feast of the Assumption,

Eph 2:1-3 - we all once lived in the passions of our flesh

The Sacraments

Baptism

Ezek 36:25-27 - baptism prophesied: water cleansing, spirit infilling

Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16 - baptism required for entering heaven

1Cor 12:13 - by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body

Acts 22:16 - be baptized, and wash away your sins

Acts 2:38 - be baptized for the forgiveness of sins

1 Pet 3:21 - Baptism [corresponds to Noah's ark] saves you

Mk 10:14 - let children come; to such belongs the kingdom

Col 2:11-12 - baptism has replaced circumcision

Gen 17:12 - Circumcision for infants at eight days old

Jos 24:15 - as for me and my house, we will serve Lord

Mt 8:5ff. - daughter healed because of centurion's faith

Mt 15:21ff. - daughter healed because of Canaanite woman's faith

Mark 2:5 - Jesus saw 'their' faith and forgave paralytic

Lk 7:1ff. - just say the word, and let my servant be healed

Acts 16:31 - believe in Lord Jesus you & house will be saved

Acts 16:15 - she was baptized, with all her household

Acts 16:33 - he and all his family were baptized at once

1Cor 1:16 - I baptized the household of Stephanas

Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

Jn 6:35-71 - Eucharist promised

Mt 26:26ff (Mk 14:22ff., Lk 22:17ff.) - Eucharist instituted

1Cor 10:16 - Eucharist = participation in Christ's body & blood

1 Cor 11:23-29 - receiving unworthily his body & blood

Ex 12:8, 46 - Paschal lamb had to be eaten

Jn 1:29 - Jesus called "Lamb of God"

1 Cor 5:7 - Jesus called "paschal lamb who has been sacrificed"

Jn 4:31-34; Mt 16:5-12 - Jesus talking symbolically about food

Two key points to be demonstrated regarding baptism are:

- i. Its sacramental efficacy (not a mere symbol)
- ii. Validity of infant baptism

Sacramental efficacy of baptism includes:

- i. Cleansing of sin
- ii. Infilling of Holy Spirit (sanctifying grace)
- iii. Incorporation into the body of Christ

Infant baptism is valid since:

- i. Sacramental efficacy effected by faith of community (solidarity)
- ii. Baptism replaces circumcision

*1Tim 3:2 - bishop must be married only once
Eph 5:21-33 - marriage is good: holy symbol of Christ & church
Mt 19:12 - celibacy praised by Jesus, who was chaste
Jer 16:1-4 - Jeremiah told not to take wife & have children
1Cor 7:8 - St. Paul was celibate
1Cor 7:32-35 - celibacy recommended for full-time ministers
2Tim 2:3-4 - no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits
1Tim 5:9-12 - pledge of celibacy taken by older widows

(also see Apostolic Succession and the sacrament of Holy Orders)

Purgatory, Hell and Sin

Purgatory

Jam 3:2 - we all fall short in many respects
Rev 21:27 - nothing unclean shall enter heaven
Jam 1:14-15 - when sin reaches maturity gives birth to death
2Sam 12:13-14 - David, though forgiven, still punished for his sin
Mt 5:26 - you will not be released until paid last penny
Mt 12:32 - sin against Holy Spirit unforgiven in this age or next
Mt 12:36 - account for every idle word of judgment day
2Macc 12:44-46 - atoned for dead to free them from sin
1Cor 3:15 - suffer loss, but saved as through fire
1Pet 3:18-20; 4:6 - Jesus preached to spirits in prison
2Tim 1:16-18 - Paul prays for dead friend Onesiphorus
1Cor 15:29-30 - Paul mentions people baptizing for the dead

Hell

Is 33:11, 14 - who of us can live with the everlasting flames
Mt 25:41 - depart, you accursed, into the eternal fire
Mt 25:46 - these will go off to eternal punishment
Lk 3:16-17 - the chaff will burn in unquenchable fire
2Thess 1:6-9 - these will pay the penalty of eternal ruin

Original Sin

Gn 2:16-17 - the day you eat of that tree, you shall die
Gn 3:11-19 - God's punishment for eating of the tree
Rom 5:12-19 - many became sinners through one man's sin
1Cor 15:21-23 - by a man came death; in Adam all die

we say Psalm 132:8 - "Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might."

NDC: OK, like you say, that's all interesting, but I'm not really convinced.

C: You don't have to be convinced; belief in Mary's Assumption is basically a matter of faith, and that's between you and God. But you do have to realise that Catholics aren't just making this up from nowhere; we do have good Biblical reasons for what we believe. Plus there's the historical fact that no-one's ever found her body.

But the Assumption is mainly about the dignity Jesus gives to the people he redeems, and Mary is a great example of what we can look forward to. The Catechism puts it like this: "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians" (CCC, #966).

Immaculate Conception

NDC: OK, you're doing pretty well. I'll have a think about that. Here's my next question: the Immaculate Conception. Now, I always thought that was about Jesus, how Mary was a virgin when he was born. But that's not it, is it?

C: No, the Immaculate Conception is not about the conception of Jesus, it's about the conception of Mary. What we believe is basically that Mary was preserved, by God's grace, and because of Jesus, from the stain of original sin, and that she remained free from sin all her life.

NDC: Yeah, well I think you've got a whole bunch of problems with this one. You know, Paul says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".

C: OK, we'll get to that in a minute. Lemme set it up for you first. The main thing to remember is that we just believe that God gave Mary gifts that were fitting for her job as Jesus's mother.

When we talk about this we normally start at Luke 1:28, where the angel Gabriel says to Mary "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!". The Greek word that means "full of grace" is kecharitomene, which is a special kind of word, a perfect passive participle, which indicates that the fullness of grace is perfect and complete and enduring. But when we say Mary is "full of grace", we're not saying it's her grace that she owns herself or anything, we're saying she's perfectly full of the grace which she has received from God.

The Ark of the Covenant stuff is important here too. God's presence makes things holy, like the ground that Moses was standing on when he talked to God in the burning bush. God used to overshadow or cover

the ark and occupy the mercy seat on top of it, so everything about the ark had to be made carefully and perfectly, and because it was the site of the presence of God, the ark was so holy that almost no-one could touch it and live. Mary was also overshadowed by God and she became the pure tabernacle of God the Son.

So when you think about it, it's pretty reasonable really.

NDC: You think?

C: Hebrews chapter 12 tells us to strive "for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Mary did more than just see the Lord, she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and she carried God the Son in her womb. God is perfectly holy, and the closer we get to him, the more we must be holy. And Mary got closer than anyone.

Now, can you think of anyone else who was conceived without sin?

NDC: Jesus.

C: Anyone else?

NDC: Uh, the angels?

C: Hey, that's good! I never thought of that - but that's not what I had in mind. I was thinking of Adam and Eve.

NDC: But it was through those guys that original sin came into the world! I don't think you wanna be saying Mary's just like them do you?

C: Well, good call, but my point is more about the idea of Mary being the "New Eve", which is a theme we see very early on in the Fathers of the Church. St. Irenaeus, writing in the second century, put it like this: "the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary: What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith". Eve was conceived without sin but blew it; Mary was conceived without sin and by the grace of God persevered in that her whole life.

NDC: Yeah, well, that's all nice speculative theology, and it sounds pretty good, and maybe I could go along with it if it weren't for the fact that it's obviously unbiblical. I got three big fat problems for you. Here's problem number one: Luke 1:46-47, where Mary says "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior". Now if she needed a Saviour, she must have had something to be saved from, which means she must have sinned.

C: Well, that's not too big a problem, actually. We believe that Mary needed a saviour, just like we do. The classic picture of this is if you think about a big pit of quicksand. If you were drowning in the quicksand and someone threw you a rope and pulled you out, you could say that they saved you, right? But if you were just about to step into the quicksand and someone stopped you, they would also have

angels because of their great dignity, which comes from their union with God. Saints also are united with God)

1Jn 3:2 - we shall be like him, we shall see him as he is

1Thess 1:5-8 - you become an example to all the believers

Heb 13:7 - remember leaders, consider/imitate their faith & life

Relics

2Kgs 13:20-21 - contact with Elisha's bones restored life

Acts 5:15-116 - cures performed through Peter's shadow

Acts 19:11-12 - cures through face cloths that touched Paul

Statues

*Ex 20:4-5 - do not make and worship any graven images ^{XXII}

Ex 25:18-19 - make two cherubim of beaten gold

Num 21:8-9 - Moses made bronze serpent & put on pole

1Kgs 6:23-29 - temple had engraved cherubim, trees, flowers

1Kgs 7:25-45 - temple had bronze oxen, lions, pomegranates

The Priesthood

Call No Man Father

Acts 7:2 - St. Stephen calls Jewish leaders "fathers"

Acts 21:40, 22:1 - St. Paul calls Jerusalem Jews "fathers"

Rom 4:16-17 - Abraham called the father of us all"

1Cor 4:14-15 - I became your father in Christ through gospel

1Tim 1:2 - my true child in our common faith

Heb 12:7-9 - we have earthly fathers to discipline us

Lk 14:26 - if anyone comes to me without hating his father...

1Thess 2:11 - we treated you as a father treats his children

Philem 10 - whose father I became in my imprisonment

1Jn 2:13, 14 - I write to you, fathers, because you know him

Celibacy^{XXIII}

*1Tim 4:1-3 - forbidding marriage is a doctrine of demons

XXII See Do Catholics Worship Statues? www.catholic.com/library/do_catholics_worship_statues.asp and Answers to Protestant Objections To The Crucifix www.catholic.com/thisrock/2000/0010fea4.asp
XXIII See Celibacy and the Priesthood at www.catholic.com/library/celibacy_and_the_priesthood.asp

Zech 1:12 – angel intercedes for Jerusalem
 Mk 12:25, Mt 22:30 – men in heaven are as the angels
 Rev 5:8 – those in heaven offer prayers of the holy ones to God
 *Saints dead, prayer is necromancy (Dt 18:10-11)^{xx}
 Mk 12:26-27 – he is God of the living, not of the dead
 Mk 9:4 – Jesus seen conversing with Elijah & Moses
 Lk 9:31 – Elijah & Moses aware of earthly events
 Rev 6:9-11 – martyrs under altar want earthly vindication
 Heb 12:1 – we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses
 Lk 16:19-30 – departed rich man intercedes for brothers
 Rev 20:4 – saw the souls of those who had been beheaded
 Wis 3:1-6 – the souls of the just are in the hand of God
 2Macc 15:7-16 – the departed Onias & Jeremiah pray for the Jews
 Jas 5:16 Prayers of righteous man
 1 Cor. 13:12 – I shall understand fully
 1 John 4: 20-21 whoever loves God must love his brother
 1 Cor 12:21 – parts of Christ's Body cannot say to other parts, “I do not need you”.

*1Tim 2:5 – “One mediator between God and man”^{xxi}
 1Tim 2:1-7 – offer prayers, petitions for all men
 1Pet 2:5 – be a holy priesthood to offer sacrifices through Christ
 Mk 10:18 – only God is good
 Mt 25:23 – well done my good and faithful servant
 Jn 10:11-16 – I am good shepherd; one flock I shepherd
 Jn 21:15-16 – feed my lambs, tend my sheep
 Eph 4:11 – He gave some as apostles...others as pastors
 Heb 3:1, 7:24, 9:12-13 – Jesus eternal high priest; one sacrifice
 Rev 1:6, 5:10 – He made us a kingdom of priests for God

Veneration of Saints

Jos 5:14 – Joshua fell prostrate in worship before angel
 Dan 8:17 – Daniel fell prostrate in terror before Gabriel
 Tob 12:16 – Tobiah & Tobit fall to ground before Raphael
 Mt 18:10 – angels in heaven always behold face of God (we venerate

^{xx} See *Praying to the Saints* at www.catholic.com/library/Praying_to_the_Saints.asp

^{xxi} See *Any Friend of God is a Friend of Mine* at www.catholic.com/thisrock/1992/9209fea1.asp

saved you. In both cases you are saved, but in the second one you are saved without getting dirty. This is what happened with Mary.

NDC: OK, here's problem number two: In the next chapter of Luke, Mary takes a purification offering to the temple after Jesus' birth. But according to you guys, she didn't need to be purified from anything.

C: Well, this is a lot like Jesus' baptism. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, and if you read Mark 1:4, you'll see that this was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Now Jesus didn't need to repent of anything, but he got baptised anyway, saying "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness". So he thought it was best if he went through with this sort of thing, because then no-one could say that he was slack in observing the right procedures. It was just like this for Mary. If she didn't do the offering, she'd be breaking the law of Moses, and she wouldn't do that.

NDC: OK, here's problem three (and this is the biggie), Romans 3:23, which says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". And not just that, there's the rest of the chapter, like Romans 3:10, "None is righteous, no, not one".

C: OK, "all have sinned" doesn't necessarily mean all individuals...

NDC: Oh, really? "All" doesn't really mean "all"?

C: Hey, it means "all", in the sense of "everyone in general". I mean, babies haven't sinned, have they, or severely retarded people who don't know what they're doing? It's like in Mark chapter 1, where it says John the Baptist baptized all the people of Jerusalem. Or like 1 Corinthians 15:22, where St. Paul says "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." But not all people have died (like Enoch, right, or Elijah), and not all will be made spiritually alive by Christ, because some people will choose to go to hell.

But the key thing with Romans chapter 3 is to look at the context. Read chapters 1 and 2 to see where Paul is going with his argument here. He spends the first part of the letter saying that both Gentiles and Jews are equally guilty before God. He's answering the objections of those Jews who think that they are right with God just because they are Jews and have the Law as their guide. He says that both Jews and Gentiles are under the power of sin. That's what he means by "all", he means Jews and Gentiles together; it's not just Jews that benefit from the work of Christ, it's all people, men of all nations.

NDC: Well, what about Romans 3:10, where Paul says "None is righteous, no, not one". Sounds pretty comprehensive to me!

C: Hey, Jesus was righteous, wasn't he? That's a pretty big exception, wouldn't you say?

NDC: Yeah, well, he's the Son of God. That doesn't count.

C: And Mary's the mother of God. Maybe she doesn't count either. The point is, Paul really doesn't mean no one's righteous, with no exceptions or qualifications. If he did, then we've got a problem with a contradiction in Scripture, because Luke 1 verse 6 says that Zechariah and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless".

But it makes a lot more sense when you realise what Paul was really doing when he says "None is righteous, no, not one". He's actually quoting from Psalm 14. Maybe we should have a look at that?

NDC: OK.

² *"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.* ³ *The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.* ⁴ *All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

C: There's your quote. That Psalm is about people who have turned away from God. It's all of them who are not righteous. And the Psalm is written about Jews, which is why Paul quotes it, because it shows his readers that Jews aren't automatically righteous just because they're Jews. But keep going.

NDC: ⁵ *"Will evildoers never learn – those who devour my people as men eat bread and who do not call on the LORD? ⁶ There they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous."*

C: See, it also talks about God's people, the ones who are righteous. Like Mary was.

So you see once you look at Romans chapter 3 in context, it really doesn't become a problem for the Catholic idea about Mary being kept free from sin by God's grace.

And look, I've got a quote for you, listen to this:

"It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin... thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin."

Guess who said that?

NDC: I dunno. Some pope?

Jn 7:3-4 - brothers advise like elders: "go to Judea, manifest self"; unthinkable for younger siblings

Mk 3:21 - as above: set out to seize him, "he is out of his mind"^{XIX}

*Mt 1:25 - Joseph knew her not until she bore first-born

Mt 28:20 - I am with you always, UNTIL the end of the age

1Tim 4:13 - until I arrive, attend to reading, teaching...

1Cor 15:25 - he must reign until has enemies underfoot

Lk 1:80 - John in desert until day of his manifestation

Ex 13:2; Nb 3:12 - consecrate first-born that opens womb

Ex 34:20 - first-born among your sons you shall redeem

* Mt 1:18 - BEFORE they came together

Jn 4:49 - come down before my child dies

Saints, Relics and Statues

Communion of Saints

Eph 1:22-23 - he is head of the Church, which is His body

Eph 5:21-32 - Christ is the head of the Church, Savior of the body

Col 1:18, 24 - He is head of the body, the Church

1Cor 12:12-27 - if I suffer, all suffer; if I am honored, all rejoice

Rom 12:5 - we are one body in Christ, individual parts of one another

Eph 4:4 - one body, one Spirit, called to one hope

Col 3:15 - you were called in one body

Rom 8:35-39 - death cannot separate us from Christ

Rom 12:10 - love one another with mutual affection

1Thess 5:11 - encourage, build up one another

Gal 6:2 - bear one another's burdens

Gal 6:10 - let us do good to all, especially those in family of faith

Intercessory Prayer of Saints

Rom 15:30 - join me by your prayers to God on my behalf

Col 4:3, 1Thess 5:25 - pray for us

2Thess 1:11 - we always pray for you

2Thess 3:1 - finally, brothers, pray for us

Eph 6:18-19 - making supplication for all the saints & for me

Tob 12:12 - angel presents Tobit & Sarah's prayer to God

Ps 148 - David calls upon angels

^{XIX} The subject here is "his people", sometimes translated as his "family", "friends", or "relatives"

Mother of God

Lk 1:43 - Elizabeth calls her "mother of my Lord" = God
Mt 1:23 - virgin bear a son, Emmanuel = "God is with us"
Lk 1:35 - child born will be called holy, the Son of God
Gal 4:4 - God sent his Son, born of a woman

The Assumption

Gn 5:24 (Hb 11:5) - Enoch taken to heaven without dying
2Kg 2:11 - Elijah assumed into heaven in fiery chariot
Mt 27:52 - many saints who had fallen asleep were raised
1Thess 4:17 - caught up to meet the Lord in the air
1Cor 15:52 - we shall be instantly changed at the last trumpet
Rom 6:23 - for the wages of sin is death
Rev 11:19-21 - ark in heaven = woman clothed in sun
Ps 132:8 - Arise, O Lord & go to thy resting place, thou & the ark of thy might.

The Immaculate Conception ^{XVII}

Lk 1:28 - hail full of grace [highly favored] Lord is with you
Lk 1:30 - you have found favor with God
Lk 1:37 - for with God nothing shall be impossible
Gn 3:15 - complete enmity between woman & Satan, sin
Ex 25:11-21 - ark made of purest gold for God's word
*Rom 3:23 - all have sinned & are deprived of God's glory
*Lk 1:47 - my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

Perpetual Virginity^{XVIII}

Lk 1:34 - how can this be, since I do not know man
Lk 2:41-51 - age 12, Jesus evidently only son of Mary
Mk 6:3 - "the son of Mary" not "a son of Mary"
*Mt 13:55-56 - brothers James, Joseph, Simon & Jude
Mt 27:56 - Mary the mother of James & Joseph also
Jn 19:25 - Mary the wife of Clopas
Jn 19:26 - entrusted Mary to John, not a younger sibling

^{XVII} See *Immaculate Conception and Assumption* at

www.catholic.com/library/Immaculate_Conception_and_Assum.asp

^{XVIII} See "Brethren of the Lord" at www.catholic.com/library/Brethren_of_the_Lord.asp

C: Nope, it was Martin Luther^{IX}, he said it in a sermon in 1527, on the feast of the Conception of the Mother of God.

NDC: All right, you're doing pretty well. I, uh, I still don't agree, but well, that's OK, I can see where you're coming from, and it's not as bad as I thought. It's kinda reassuring to see that you're not saying Mary did it all herself or anything.

C: No, it's all the grace of Christ.

Queen of Heaven

NDC: OK, well that brings us to my next question. You guys call Mary "Queen of Heaven", don't you. I mean, it's right there on the title of your book. But, in the Bible the only time you read about a "queen of heaven" is in Jeremiah chapter 7 and chapter 44, where he rips into people for idolatry - they're offering sacrifices and worship to a "queen of heaven", who is really a pagan goddess. So it seems to me that that's something any good Christian would really want to stay away from.

C: Yeah, well Mary's title as Queen comes purely from the kingship of Jesus.

NDC: Well, sure, Jesus is king. But Mary's his mother - how does that make her a queen?

C: Well, here's the thing: Jesus came to re-establish the kingdom of King David, right, in fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah.

NDC: Yeah, I've got no problem with that. But what's your point?

C: My point is that in the kingdom of David, as in much of the ancient Near East, the queen was the mother of the king.

NDC: Ahh...

C: It was an institution known as the Gebirah, which literally means "great lady". The queen in David's dynasty was not the king's wife. Kings often had lots of wives, who were normally called "princesses".

NDC: OK, keep going...

C: The Gebirah had a throne, and a crown, and we see some of the ceremony associated with her in 1st Kings chapter 2. When Solomon was king, his mother Bathsheba was the queen, and what we see is this:

¹⁹ "So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother; and she sat on his right."

^{IX} For more information, see Dave Armstrong's article, Martin Luther's Devotion to Mary, at www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?id=788

So the queen mother sat at the right hand of the king.

Part of the job of the queen mother was to intercede to the king on behalf of the people as well. Bathsheba went to Solomon to intercede on behalf of Adonijah, like we just saw. And in Proverbs 31 we read the advice King Lemuel got from his mother, the queen, like "Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all who are left desolate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, maintain the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverb 31: 8-9). This is one of the reasons Catholics ask Mary to intercede for us; it's her job.

The other thing is that the queen mother also guaranteed that the king came from the right bloodline, which is probably why both the king and queen mother are named in the books of Kings whenever a new king takes the throne. So, in Luke Chapter 1, when the angel announces that Jesus will be the new Davidic king, that obviously tells us who the new queen mother will be. And Elizabeth's greeting to Mary confirms it when she says: "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

NDC: Hey, that's really interesting. We don't get a lot of sermons on Mary, you know. So I can see how she'd be the queen mother of King Jesus, but what about "Queen of Heaven"?

C: Well, Jesus is the king of heaven, isn't he? And look, remember Revelation chapter 12, and the woman "clothed with the sun", who gives birth to the Messiah?. This is obviously Mary. And we are told that the woman has "on her head a crown of twelve stars".

And hey, it's not just Catholics who see Mary as Queen of Heaven. There's a famous church at Wittenberg in Germany which has a burial chamber and on its door there is a sculpture of the Coronation of Mary. The tomb belongs to our friend Martin Luther.

Perpetual Virginity.

NDC: OK, we're nearly there. I've got one more for you, and I'm really curious to see how you're going to get out of this one. You guys believe that Jesus was an only child, that Mary stayed a virgin her whole life. Is that right?

C: Yep, we call it Mary's "perpetual virginity".

NDC: OK, well what about Matthew 12:46:

"While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him".

And how about this, from Mark chapter 6:

Mt 24:13 - those who persevere to the end will be saved

Rom 11:22 - remain in his kindness or you will be cut off

Phil 2:12 - work out your salvation in fear and trembling

1Cor 9:27 - drive body for fear of being disqualified

1Cor 10:11-12 - those thinking they are secure may fall

Gal 5:4 - separated from Christ, you've fallen from grace

2Tim 2:11-13 - must hold out to the end to reign with Christ

Hb 6:4-6 - describes sharers in Holy Spirit who then fall away

Heb 10:26-27 - if sin after receiving truth, judgment remains

Regenerative Baptism

Jn 3:5, 22 - born of water & Spirit: Apostles begin baptizing

Tit 3:5 - saved us through bath of rebirth & renewal by Holy Spirit

Acts 2:37-38 - repent, be baptized, receive gift of Holy Spirit

Acts 22:16 - get selves baptized and sins washed away

1Cor 6:11 - you were washed, sanctified, justified

Rom 6:4 - baptized into death; live in newness of life

1Pet 3:21 - baptism...now saves you

Heb 10:22 - heart sprinkled, bodies washed in pure water

(also see The Sacraments)

Health and Wealth Gospel

Mk 10:28 - no "take cross and follow me" = not worthy of me

Rom 8:16-17 - heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him

Rom 8:18 - present suffering nothing compared w/future glory

Phil 1:28-29 - granted to believe, also to suffer for him

Col 1:24 - filling up what is lacking in Christ sufferings

Heb 12:5-7 - whom God loves, he disciplines as sons

Heb 12:11 discipline seems painful, but brings righteousness

1Pet 1:6 - for a while you must suffer various trials

1Pet 2:19-21 - suffering = grace; Jesus suffered as our example

Blessed Virgin Mary

Mary

Lk 1:28, 30 - angel: "full of grace, found favor with God

Lk 1:42 - Elizabeth: "most blessed among women"

Lk 1:48 - Mary: "all generations will call me blessed"

grace

Tit 3:5 - He saved us through bath of rebirth, renewal by Holy Spirit

Present Process (I am being saved)

Phil 2:12 - work out your salvation with fear and trembling

1Pet 1:9 - as you attain the goal of your faith, salvation

Future Event (I will, with perseverance, be saved)

Mt 10:22 - he who endures to the end will be saved

Mt 24:1 - he who perseveres to the end will be saved

Mk 8:35 - whoever loses his life for my sake will save it

Acts 15:11 - we shall be saved through the grace of Jesus

Rom 5:9-10 - since we are justified, we shall be saved

Rom 13:11 - salvation is nearer now than first believed

Cor 3:15 - he shall be saved, but only as through fire

1Cor 5:5 - deliver man to Satan so his spirit may be saved

Heb 9:28 - Jesus will appear second time, to bring salvation

Good Works

Mt 7:21 - not Lord, Lord but he who does the will of father

Mt 19:16-17 - to have life, keep my commandments

Jn 14:21 - he who keeps my commandments loves me

Rom 2:2-8 - eternal life by perseverance in good works

Gal 5:4-6 - nothing counts but faith working through love

Eph 2:8-10 - we are created in Christ Jesus for good works

Phil 2:12-13 - work out salvation with fear and trembling

Jam 2:14-24 - a man is justified by works & not faith alone

Judged According to Deeds

Rom 2:2-8 - eternal life by perseverance in good works

2Cor 5:10 - recompense accord to what did in body

2Cor 11:15 - their end will correspond to their deeds

1Pet 1:17 - God judges impartially according to one's works

Rev 20:12-13 - dead judged according to their deeds

Col 3:24-25 - will receive due payment for whatever you do

Assurance of Salvation?

Mt 7:21 - not everyone saying "Lord, Lord" will inherit

³ *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"*

What do you guys do with that?

C: Well, the first thing you need to know is that the word used for brother, adelphos, doesn't necessarily mean a strictly biological brother. In Hebrew and Aramaic, which were the language Jesus and the people around him were mostly using, there aren't separate words for "brother", "cousin" or "close relative". So instead of calling your cousin something like "the son of the sister of my father", you'd normally just say "brother". And when the New Testament writers were writing in Greek, they normally just used the Greek equivalent of what the Hebrew or Aramaic would have been. So brother could mean brother, but it could also mean cousin, kinsman, fellow countryman, and so on. Like in the Septuagint, which is the ancient Jewish translation of the Old Testament into Greek, Abraham's nephew Lot is called his "brother" in Genesis chapter 14. Those "brothers" of Jesus are probably some sort of relatives, but not direct brothers and sisters.

There's no sign of them when Jesus was left behind at the temple when he was 12, and there's no sign of them when Jesus was on the cross and he entrusts Mary to John and not to any brothers.

Something else to think about is Luke 1:34, after the angel has told Mary she's going to have a son - Mary says "How will this be, since I am a virgin?". Now there is some evidence that Mary may have actually taken a vow of life-long virginity, and what she says here fits in with that. Otherwise it would have made more sense for her to say "When will this be?" rather than "How?". I mean, she would have known what has to happen before someone can have a child, but she still says, "How will this be?"

NDC: What about this: Matthew chapter 1:

²⁴ *"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus".*

It says he didn't have sex with her until Jesus was born, which means that the situation changed after the birth of Jesus, right, and they had normal marital relations after that. Doesn't it?

C: Well, not really. The "until" doesn't have to mean a reversal of the situation afterwards. You could just interpret it as "before". I mean, think about this: in 2nd Samuel chapter 6, it says that "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death". Obviously that didn't change after she died, did it?

NDC: Well, no , I guess not...

C: There are plenty of other examples like this, which show that the word "until", by itself, leaves the question open.

NDC: Well, maybe, but I don't know if I buy the bit about "brothers" not really meaning "brothers". I mean, you've got real people being named as Jesus' brothers here: James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. This still sounds a lot like the Catholics are wrong. Sorry.

C: Hey, that's OK. But if you look at the women who were by the cross when Jesus died, you see that the mother of those "brothers" was standing there with Mary the mother of Jesus. They're not the same person. The trouble is, you've got to correlate three different Scriptures to figure that out, one from John 19, one from Mark 15, and one from Matthew 27, which is why a lot of people don't see it.

Finally, look at Galatians 1:19. Paul talks about meeting with Peter in Jerusalem for 15 days, then says... "But I saw none of the other Apostles except James, the Lord's brother." So we see that James, the Lord's brother, is an Apostle. But there are only two Apostles called James. Matthew chapter 10 lists the apostles, ...and we see that the two people called James are "James the son of Zebedee" and "James the son of Alphaeus". It doesn't say anything about a James who is the son of Joseph or Mary. So this James referred to as the Lord's brother must be either the son of Alphaeus or the son of Zebedee, and he couldn't be the son of Zebedee, because that James was killed by King Herod before Paul wrote Galatians (see Acts 12:2). So this James the Apostle, the "Lord's brother", is the son of Alphaeus, which means he can't be the direct brother of Jesus, can he?

Conclusion

[Cue stewardess telling NDC he has the wrong seat and should move up to first class with the rest of his family.]

NDC: Well, this has been really interesting, and thanks for clearing up some stuff for me. I still don't believe everything you do about Mary, but at least you guys aren't worshipping her or anything really weird like I was scared of.

C: Hey, it's been a pleasure. Just remember, anything special about Mary comes from Jesus. It's perfectly fitting that the Mother of God should be free from sin. The thing with Mary is, in a lot of ways she's the "prototype" of the Christian life. If anyone had a real personal relationship with Jesus it was her! And what happened to her tells us a

Infallible Church

Jn 16:13 - guided by Holy Spirit into all truth

Jn 14:26 - Holy Spirit to teach & remind them of everything

Lk 10:16 - speak with Christ's own voice

1Tim 3:15 - Church called "pillar and foundation of truth"

1Jn 2:27 - anointing of Holy Spirit remains in you

Acts 15:28 - Apostles speak with voice of Holy Spirit

Mt 28:20 - I am with you

Perpetual Church

Mt 7:24 - Jesus is like a wise man who built his house on a rock

Mt 16:18 - gates of hell will never prevail against Christ's church

Mt 5:14-15 - Jesus lit the lamp, so would not hide it; city on hilltop

Is 9:6-7 - of Christ's government there will be no end

Dan 2:44 - God's kingdom shall stand forever

Dan 7:14 - His kingdom shall not be destroyed

Eph 3:21 - to him be glory in the church to all generations for ever and ever.

Lk 1:32, 33 - no end to Christ's kingdom

Mt 13:24-30 - let wheat & weeds grow together until harvest

Jn 14:16 - Holy Spirit will be with you always

Mt 28:19-20 - I am with you all days

Salvation: Faith and Works

Jam 2:24 - a man is justified by works and not by faith alone

Jam 2:26 - faith without works is dead

Gal 5:6 - only thing that counts is faith working in love

1 Cor 13:2 - faith without love is nothing

Jn 14:15 - if you love me, keep my commandments

Mt 19:16-17 - if you wish to enter into life, keep commandments

1Tim 5:8 - he who doesn't provide for family worse than unbeliever.

"Have You Been Saved?"

Past Event (I have been saved)

Rom 8:24 - for in hope we were saved

Eph 2:5, 8 - by grace you have been saved through faith

2Tim 1:9 - He saved us, called us according to his

The Scripture provides moral assurance of salvation only - that is, it is guaranteed upon perseverance - not formal assurance.

Rom 16:17, 1Cor 1:10 - I urge that there be no divisions among you
 Gal 5:19-21 - dissention condemned
 Phil 2:2 - be of same mind, united in heart thinking one thing
 Rom 15:5 - God grant you to think in harmony with one another
 Jn 17:17-23 - Prayer of Jesus: that they may be one, as we are one
 1Cor 12:13 - in one spirit we are baptized into one body
 Rom 12:5 - we, though many, are one body in Christ
 Eph 4:4 - one body, one Spirit, called to be one hope
 Col 3:15 - the peace into which you were called in one body
 Mt 16:18-19 - upon this rock I will build my Church (singular)
 Acts 14:23 - able to appoint presbyters in each church; parishes
 Mt 18:17 - tell it to THE Church; if not listen to THE Church

The Church has a visible and material dimension as well as invisible and formal dimension, just as a human being has bodily and material dimension as well as the invisible soul.

The characteristics of the Church derive out of the four marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

Apostolic Church

Jn 15:16 - Jesus chose special men to be his Apostles
 Jn 20:21 - Jesus gave the Apostles his own mission
 Lk 22:29-3 - Jesus gave them a kingdom
 Mt 16:18 - Jesus built Church on Peter, the rock
 Jn 10:16 - one shepherd to shepherd Christ's sheep
 Lk 22:32, Jn 21:17 - Peter appointed to be chief shepherd
 Eph 4:11 - church leaders are hierarchical
 1Tim 3:1, 8; 5:17 - identifies roles of bishops, priests, deacons
 Tit 1:5 - commission for bishops to ordain priests

Authoritative Church

Mt 28:18-20 - Jesus delegates all power to Apostles
 Jn 20:23 - power to forgive sin
 1Cor 11:23-24 - power to offer sacrifice (Eucharist)
 Lk 10:16 - power to speak with Christ's voice
 1Rom 5 - bringing obedience
 Mt 18:18 - power to legislate
 Mt 18:17 - power to discipline

lot about what will happen to us when we die and go to heaven, or at the Second Coming, if that happens first. See, when we trust in Jesus and get "saved", it's not just about what we're saved from; it's not just a get out of jail free card that means we won't burn in hell (although that's good). It's about what we're saved for, which is union with God in heaven. What Jesus did for us is more than rescuing us from the power of sin, it also includes our souls and bodies being glorified with him in heaven. And Mary, she was the first one to say "Yes" to Jesus, and she got to have the full effects of his redemption before anybody else will.

NDC: Sounds good, but I think I'll just take it easy with this Mary stuff for the time being. But one thing's for sure, I'll be taking any anti-Catholic stuff that preacher guy says with a grain of salt from now on.

C: Yeah, I think his focus is a bit wrong. Scripture says that all generations will call Mary blessed, not that we should go around trying to dig up dirt on her. But Mary's kind, she'll probably pray for him anyway. See you around!

Praying to the Saints

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic and a non-denominational Christian, which explores why Catholics consider the saints in heaven to be a very active part of the Body of Christ. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author – the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups.

Introduction

NDC2: Hi, my name's Brandon.

C: [confused] Hi Brandon, you look very familiar.

NDC2: I see you've been talking to my little brother, Brendan.

C: Yeah, he's a great guy...

NDC2: What do you think you're doin' filling his head with all those Catholic lies?

C: Hey, he was asking some questions, I gave him the most honest answers I know.

NDC2: Yeah? Well I know all about you guys and your Jesuit philosophies and traditions of men! Trying to make your Romish falsehoods sound like sweetness and light! Trying to sucker everybody in to joining your false religion, so you can set up the New World Order and usher in the anti-Christ. I'm on to you guys!

C: Well, you're on to something, but I don't think it's the Catholic Church.

NDC2: Are you a Jesuit by any chance?

C: Why do you say that? I'm just this guy in an airplane.

NDC2: Yeah, well that's just what you'd say if you were a Jesuit! I've read all about you guys, how you were behind the assassination of JFK and Abraham Lincoln, how the Vatican financed the Nazis - Hitler was a faithful Catholic, you know, and the Pope backed him all the way - you guys are clever, I'll give you that much.

C: I really think you've been reading the wrong sort of books. Look, do you love Jesus?

NDC2: With all my heart!

C: And you've asked him into your heart to be your personal Lord and Saviour? You've repented, you've been baptised, you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead?

NDC2: Amen to that!

1 Cor 12:28-29 - God designated in church: apostles, ...

Acts 1:20 - let another take his office

Acts 1:25-26 - Matthias takes Judas' apostolic ministry

1 Tim 3:1, 8; 5:17 - qualifications for: bishops, priests ('presbyterios'), & deacons

1Tim 4:14 - gift conferred with the laying on of hands

1Tim 5:22 - do not lay hands too readily on anyone

Acts 14:23 - they appointed presbyters in each church

2Tim 2:2 - what you heard from me entrust to faithful teachers

Titus 1:5 - appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed

The Church

Mt 16:18-19 - upon this rock I will build my Church

Jn 14:16, 26 - Holy Spirit with you always, teach/remind everything

Jn 16:13 - Spirit of truth will guide you to all truth.

1Cor 12:4 - Many gifts, one Spirit (Apostolic Church given charism of truth)

1Tim 3:15 - Church is the pillar and foundation of truth.

Mt 18:17 - if he refuses to listen even to the Church...

Mt 28:18-20 - go baptize and teach all nations

Mk 16:15-16 - go to whole world and proclaim gospel

Lk 10:16 - whoever hears you, hears me; rejects you, rejects me.

The Church is the body of Christ

Col 1:18 - He is the head of the body, the church.

1 Cor 12:20-27 - you are Christ's body, individually parts of it.

Eph 5:30 - we are members of His body.

Rom 12:4-5 - though many, we are one body in Christ

1 Cor 6:15 - Don't you know your bodies are members of Christ?

The Church shows visible unity

Jn 10:16 - there will be one fold and one shepherd.

Eph 4:3-6 - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father

The Church is shown to be authoritative in several ways:

- i. It is established by Christ on Peter and the Apostles
- ii. It is given the charism of truth by the Holy Spirit
- iii. Thus, she teaches with Christ's authority
- iv. This is consistent with the fact that the Church is Christ's body
- v. It is a visible authority; city set on a hill
- vi. Its visibility is perpetual: house built on rock
- ii. Visible unity is thus inevitable; willed by Jesus

Is 22:19-25 – Prime Ministerial office under Davidic king prefigured: fatherhood, key of Davidic house, opening/shutting and succession
Jn 21:17 - given Christ's flock as chief shepherd
Mk 16:7 - angel sent to announce Resurrection to Peter
Lk 24:33-34 - risen Jesus first appeared to Peter among the Apostles
Acts 1:13-26 - headed meeting which elected Matthias
Acts 2:14 - led Apostles in preaching on Pentecost
Acts 2:41 - received first converts
Acts 3:6-7 - performed first miracle after Pentecost
Acts 5:1-11 - inflicted first punishment: Ananias & Saphira
Acts 8:21 - excommunicated first heretic, Simon Magnus
Acts 10:44-46 - received revelation to admit Gentiles into Church
Acts 15:7 - led first council in Jerusalem
Acts 15:19 - pronounces first dogmatic decision
Gal 1:18 - after conversion, Paul visits chief Apostle
*Gal 2:11-14 - I opposed Cephas to his face for his hypocrisy (reply: personal failings in conduct does not affect infallibility in authoritative teaching; Peter knew correct teaching prior to incident)
xvi
Peter's name always heads list of Apostles: Mt 10:14; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13
“Peter and his companions” Lk 9:32; Mk 16:7
Spoke for Apostles - Mt 18:21; Mk 8:29; Lk 8:45; 12:41; Jn 6:69
Peter's name occurs 195 times; more than all the rest put together

Apostolic Succession

2 Chr 19:11 - high priest is over you in everything of Lord's
Mal 2:7 - seek instruction from priest, he is God's messenger
Eph 2:20 - Church built upon foundation of apostles & prophets
Eph 4:11 - God gave some as apostles, others as prophets...

Church	possesses
Apostolic authority, with the successor of Peter as head	
Peter:	
i. Prepared by Christ with new name (Rockship) and Prayer of Protection	
ii. Foundation for Church	
iii. Has keys to the Kingdom, Shepherdship, authority of Christ's 'Rock-ship'	
iv. Shown and practices primacy in Scripture	
v. Prime Ministerial office and succession prefigured in Old Testament	
Apostolic authority:	
i. Prefigured in Old Testament	
ii. Integral part of Body of Christ	
iii. Is an 'office' to be handed down	
iv. Basis of hierarchy	

xvi See *Papal Infallibility* at www.catholic.com/library/Papal_Infallibility.asp

C: Good, me too! That makes us brothers. Let's talk. Why don't you sit down?
NDC2: I don't think I want to talk with any statue-worshipping slave of Rome.
C: Hey where have you been all last year? Don't you know we've changed?
NDC2: What do you mean?
C: Well, ever since the Jubilee 2000, we don't worship statues any more, we worship banners.
NDC2: Well, it's still idolatry, and it's detestable to the Lord.
C: Hey, I was only joking. Look, we don't worship statues, we're not allowed to. We only worship God. I just explained that to your brother before.
NDC2: In that case, why do you pray to dead guys? You do pray to them don't you? And that's worship isn't it? And if you're not worshipping them, then you're consulting the dead, and that's necromancy, that's almost as bad. Here, you've got a Bible - ugh, it's a Catholic Bible - you should use the King James.
C: Hey, I've got a lot of respect for the King James, but it's OK to use a more modern translation too you know.

Praying to the Saints is Not Necromancy

NDC2: Nope, if the King James is good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me. Anyway, in Deuteronomy 18:10-11 it says that anybody who does necromancy is an abomination to the Lord.
C: Brandon, there's a big difference between asking a departed brother in Christ to pray for us and holding a seance. Look, have you seen this? It's the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the best official summary of Catholic teaching you can get. Every home should have one. Here's what it says about necromancy:

"All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future" (CCC, #2116).

NDC2: So you say. But show me where the Bible says you should pray to dead guys.

The Saints are More Alive than We Are

C: Show me where the Bible says that the saints in heaven are dead! Here's what Jesus says about it, in Luke 20:

³⁷ "... that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him"

Christians who have died are still a part of the Body of Christ; they're closer to God, they're more alive than we are!

NDC2: Hey, it doesn't matter how alive they are, you still shouldn't pray to them!

We Ask the Saints to Pray to God for Our Needs

C: Do you even know what we mean when we say we pray to the saints?

NDC2: Sure I do - I've spoken to a few ex-Catholics in my time, so I know all about you guys. You're worshipping the saints, and that is a blasphemous sin.

C: No we're not. "Pray" just means "ask", when we're talking about praying to the saints. I know that for you, prayer is a big part of the worship you give to God, but the language has changed a little bit since Protestants ditched the really cool parts of worship, like the Eucharist, but just because you use the word "pray" in a modern way that always means "worship" doesn't mean we have to. Got your Bible?

NDC2: Always!

C: Why don't you look at what your Bible says in Acts 27:34 about St Paul asking the guys he was with to have something to eat?

NDC2: "Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health".

C: Yeah, he's asking them to eat. We use the word "pray" in the same sense with the saints - we ask for their intercession. We ask them to pray to the Lord on our behalf.

Our "One Mediator" Jesus, and the Saints

NDC2: Yeah? Well maybe someone should tell you about 1st Timothy 2:5 - "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". You should pray straight to Jesus.

C: Of course we should pray straight to Jesus. That's absolutely necessary for the Christian life. But that's not all there is to it.

NDC2: Really? Why would you let saints come between you and Jesus. He's our only mediator. Go straight to the top!

C: Brandon, would you consider yourself a "prayer warrior"?

NDC2: Sure I am. Every Christian should be.

John 1-5 - Gospel written for Greeks incorporates the 'logos' (Word), derived from Greek philosophy

Oral Teaching and Sacred Tradition^{XIV}

1Thess 2:13 - Apostles' oral teachings as word of God

Mk 13:31 - heaven & earth shall pass away, but my words will not

1Pet 1:25 - word of Lord abides for ever = good news preached to you

2Thess 2:15 - hold fast to traditions, whether oral or by letter

Mt 23:2-3 - chair of Moses; observe whatever they tell you (valid traditions and authority endorsed)

1Cor 11:2 - hold fast to traditions I handed on to you

2Tim 1:13 - follow my sound words; guard the truth

2Thess 3:6 - shun those acting not according to tradition

2Tim 2:2 - what you heard from me, entrust to faithful men (3 generations: Paul - Timothy - faithful)

Rom 10:17 - faith come from what is heard

1Cor 15:1-2 - being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached

Mk 16:15 - go to the whole world, proclaim gospel to every creature

*Mt 15:3, Mk 7:9 - break commandment of God for your tradition (reply: condemned tradition are only those which nullified God's commandments)

Deuterocanonicals^{XV}

Heb 11:35 ~ 2Macc 7

Matthew 27:42-43 ~ Wisdom 2:12-20

Romans 1:19-25 ~ Wisdom 12/13

Papacy and Apostolic Succession

Primacy of Peter

Jn 1:42 - Jesus changes name to Cephas (Peter), signifying bestowing of His own authority as Rock

Lk 22:32 - Peter's faith will not fail due to Christ's prayer, strengthen his brethren

Mt 16:18 - upon this rock (Peter/Kepha) I will build my church

Mt 16:19 - give you keys of the kingdom; power to bind & loose

^{XIV} See *Scripture and Tradition* at www.catholic.com/library/Scripture_and_Tradition.asp

^{XV} See *How to Defend the Deuterocanonicals* at www.catholic.com/thisrock/2000/0009sbs.asp

Scripture Cheat Sheet

This is a collection of scriptural verses useful for both study and reference. Verses marked with an asterisk (*) are those often quoted by non-Catholic Christians against the Catholic position, and thus requires familiarity from the Catholic apologist. For more verses, see:

www.scripturecatholic.com

Scripture and Tradition

Not Scripture Alone^{XII}

Jn 21:25 - not everything Jesus said recorded in Scripture

Acts 20:35 - Paul records a saying of Jesus not found in gospels

2Pet 1:20 - no prophecy is a matter of private interpretation

2Pet 3:15-16 - Paul's letters can be difficult to grasp & interpret

*2Tim 3:16-17 - scripture profitable for teaching/reproof/correction/righteousness^{XIII} (reply: "profitable" does not indicate formal sufficiency; possible translation is "All scripture, inspired by God, ...", which is likely since the canon of scripture was not settled at time of writing)

*Acts 17:11 - Bereans praised for checking with scriptures (reply: argument based on this would imply formal sufficiency of Old Testament and Apostolic authority but not New Testament; its canon was established by the Church)

*Col 2:8 - seductive philosophy according to human tradition (reply: not all philosophy/tradition is against Christ)

Acts 17:22-33 - St. Paul himself engages in philosophical discourse in Athens

Quick Commentary

This is a question of authority; non-Catholic Christians accept the Bible as the sole authority whereas Catholics also require Sacred Tradition and Sacred Magisterium, both of which are handed down from the Apostles.

Scripture cannot be the sole authority since:

- i. It does not claim to be the sole authority
- ii. Not everything is written
- iii. Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic authority are also shown to be the Word of God
- iv. Private interpretation has been historically proven not to work, producing heresies & contradictions

^{XII} See *Quick Ten-Step Refutation of Sola Scriptura* at www.catholic.com/thisrock/2004/0409fea3.asp

^{XIII} See *Material and Formal Sufficiency* at www.catholic.com/thisrock/1993/9310fea2sb2.asp

C: So if someone in your family or in your church asked you to pray for them for their needs, you'd help them out?

NDC2: It would be my duty and my pleasure as a brother in Christ.

C: You wouldn't tell them to go away and just pray straight to Jesus would you? If you pray for them, are you coming between them and Jesus?

NDC2: Uh, no...

C: Same with us and the saints. They are the best prayer warriors around, because they are standing in the presence of God. See, right before that verse you quoted, St. Paul tells us to pray for each other: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men... This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior". Then St. Paul says straight after that, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". It's because Jesus is our one mediator that we have a relationship with God that lets us pray for our brothers and sisters. And the saints in heaven have this relationship through Jesus just like we do - except even more closely.

Do the Saints Pray for Us?

NDC2: Yeah, well, you tricked me, which is just what I'd expect from a Jesuit. Of course I agree that we should pray for each other. But what makes you think the saints in heaven are praying for us?

C: Because the Bible tells us. Like in 2 Maccabees chapter 15: Judas Maccabeus has a vision where Onias the high priest shows him Jeremiah the prophet, who died hundreds of years ago and is now in heaven, and Onias says: "'This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God'" (2 Maccabees 15:14).

NDC2: Aw, look, that's not even in the Bible. You guys added that book at the Council of Trent in the Middle Ages.

C: No, that's not true: the Protestants ditched that book, but that's a whole 'nother can of worms.^x Anyway, there's the same sort of thing in the book of Revelation, where we see the twenty-four elders, who represent the leaders of the saints in heaven, offering to God the prayers of the saints on earth:

⁸ "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and

^x See 5 Myths about 7 Books, in Envoy magazine, vol. 1.2: www.envoymagazine.com/browse.htm

with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints"
(Revelation 5:8).

The elders in heaven are interceding with God by presenting our prayer requests to him.

NDC: I don't know... is that before or after the bit about the Russian attack helicopters?

C: It's definitely before. But that's not all; it's the same thing with the angels in heaven, they offer our prayers to God as well - Revelation 8 says:

³ "And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; ⁴ and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God"
(Revelation 8:3-4).

Can the Saints Hear Us?

NDC2: Well, maybe they might pray for us, but how can the saints hear our prayers? You guys make them out to be omniscient, like God.

C: C'mon Brandon, there's a big difference between knowing a lot and knowing everything. The saints don't need to be omniscient to be aware of our prayers - they've got the beatific vision of God, and they can see in God everything they need, so they can see our prayers too; it's through God's omniscience that they can know what's going on. And the saints in heaven do know more than we do: 1 Corinthians 13:12 - "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

And don't forget, Hebrews 12, we're surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses, who cheer us on in the race that we're supposed to run. These witnesses are the saints in heaven.

NDC2: Look, even if they could somehow hear our prayers - which I still don't believe - your most popular saints would receive way more prayers than they could ever hear and respond to anyway. I mean, take Mary: how many prayers do you think she gets?

C: Hey, we could work it out: uh, 1 billion Catholics, let's say 1% of them say 1 decade of the rosary once a week, that's uh, 10 'Hail Mary's x 1% x 1 billion, that's 100 million 'Hail Mary's a week, which is about, uh, well, it's about 165 prayers a second.

NDC2: 165 prayers a second, huh? Well, maybe God could handle that, but there's no way anything else could!

"I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering. Partly from tradition; partly because most real good that has been done me in this life has involved it. But I don't think the suffering is the purpose of the purgation... The treatment given will be the one required, whether it hurts little or much."

"My favorite image on this matter comes from the dentist's chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am 'coming round', a voice will say, 'Rinse your mouth out with this.' This will be Purgatory."

So there you go.

"Why Pray for Someone Whose Purification May Already be Finished?"

P: Well, wait a second. I could kind of buy into the idea of Purgatory being a final blast of sanctification. But if you don't know when it's over, what's the point of praying for someone when it might have already all happened to them?

C: It's just like praying for anything else where we don't know what happened. I mean, if you heard that your family had been in a car crash but you didn't know any details, would you pray "O God, please may they be all right", or would you not pray anything because it's all over and your prayer couldn't make any difference?

P: I think I get your point.

C: Good. Your prayers aren't wasted - God is outside of time so he knows what you're praying from all eternity, and he can apply your request to whenever it is most needed.

"No Bible-Believing Christian Would Believe in Purgatory"

P: OK. Well, my last objection was that no Bible-believing Christian would believe in Purgatory. Got any names for me?

C: Sure. Ever heard of C.S. Lewis?

P: Lewis?! He's my hero! He wrote Mere Christianity - that's one of the books that helped get me saved! And he wrote The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, which my nephews love (though they haven't figured out yet that Aslan the lion is really Jesus). I know he wasn't Catholic. You're not gonna tell me he believed in Purgatory are you?

C: Sure am! I just happen to be reading a book by him. It was the last one he wrote before he died; it's mostly about prayer, here's what he says about Purgatory - I think it sums things up nicely for us:

"Of course I pray for the dead... At our age, the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to him?"

"I believe in Purgatory... Our souls demand Purgatory, don't they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, 'It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy'? Should we not reply, 'With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I'd rather be cleansed first.' 'It may hurt, you know'--'Even so, sir.'"

C: Hey, I get nearly that much spam in my Hotmail account! And just think, plenty of e-mail servers handle more than 165 messages a second; don't you think things in heaven would be at least a little bit more efficient than they are at Microsoft?

NDC2: Very funny. I wonder what Mary's e-mail address is.

C: It's arkofthecovenant@heavenlyjerusalem.com

NDC2: What?

C: Long story. I bet it's not in your address book anyway. Look, even if Mary did get too many people asking her to pray for them, God still knows about them all, so it's no big deal. But even if she couldn't personally pray for you because her in-box was too full, she could still pray for you generally - like "Lord, please help all those who are asking for my intercession."

Besides, I don't think you could explain to me how time works in the afterlife anyway, could you? The saints are in eternity, they're outside of time, so time to deal with prayer requests is not too much of an issue for them, is it?

NDC2: Well...

C: And I don't think the saints in heaven can be overloaded with too many prayer intentions. Their glorified intellects are pretty capable. Think about what happens on Judgment Day. Jesus says "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken". On Judgment Day we'll see a review of our whole lives, everything that we've done, and we'll understand the significance of it all, and we'll see the same sort of thing in the people around us. Now that is a huge amount of information processing that we'll be able to handle when we're no longer in our current condition.

NDC2: You are a Jesuit, aren't you!

C: Hey, like I said, I'm just this guy on an airplane.

"Show it to Me in the Bible!"

NDC2: Look, you can make this necromancy business sound all fine and dandy, but you show me somewhere in the Bible that says it's OK to communicate with anyone in heaven besides God!

C: Brandon, there's nowhere in the Bible that says something has to be in the Bible for it to be OK. The Bible's not some legalistic contract or something that just creates tiny little pockets of freedom for stuff we're allowed to do. We're free in Christ, and as long as we are consistent with his principles, we're fine. And we are being consistent: the saints are still

part of the body of Christ, so we can ask them to pray for us just like we'd ask any other Christian brother or sister to pray for us.

NDC2: You're arguing just like a Jesuit.

C: I'm not finished. You can't show me where the Bible says "everything we're allowed to do must be in the Bible", so you're the one with a problem in your belief system here. But even though I don't have to, I'll answer your question anyway: you asked where the Bible says it's OK to communicate with someone in heaven besides God - read Psalm 103:20-21.

NDC2: "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure."

C: You see? Here we have a Psalm where we ask the angels and the hosts of heaven to worship the Lord with us. The angels and the hosts of heaven are not God, but they're still part of the body of Christ, so we're still in communion with them, through Jesus.

NDC2: You're a Jesuit, no doubt about it.

C: Come on, Brandon. I've shown you that asking the saints in heaven to pray to God on our behalf is no different, in principle, from me asking you to pray for me that I have a safe airplane trip. And I'll tell you what: if we crash, and I die, you just say the word, and I'll pray for you!

NDC2: Thanks. I think. Well, I've gotta go and slap some sense back into my brother. I'll think about what you said, but don't go asking any saints to pray for me, OK? [Gets up and goes back to seat]

C [quietly]: Sorry, too late. [Puts on long black robe, collar, starts reading 'Jesuit Monthly' (headline: "How I Infiltrated the United Nations")].

P: Well, I've never heard it explained like that. And so you're not saying that Purgatory is a final destination for people who aren't bad enough for hell or good enough for heaven?

C: Nope. Purgatory is only for people who are saved. That's one reason why lots of saints have said that the pains of Purgatory are really quite joyful, since you can feel your attachment to sin getting burned away by God's love, and you know that you're being made more and more like Jesus.

"There's No Pain in the Afterlife, Is There?"

P: Why this focus on pain then? Why should Purgatory be uncomfortable?

C: I don't really know, but that's the way God seems to work. Jesus was made perfect through suffering, wasn't he?

P: That's Hebrews chapter 5, isn't it? You Catholics aren't supposed to do that sort of thing.

C: What, love the Bible? Sure we are, it's our book! Hebrews talks a lot about that sort of stuff actually: in chapter 12 it says "the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." And think about Isaiah, when he saw the Lord in Isaiah chapter 6: his "unclean lips" were purified by being touched with a burning coal. And then there's St. Paul, in 1st Corinthians chapter 3:

¹¹ "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — ¹³ each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

So when we are judged by the Lord, that judgment won't necessarily be fun, especially if our Christian work has not been very fire-proof. What this shows is that pain or discomfort is a reality in the afterlife, even for those who are saved. And since just like in real life we can pray for our brothers and sisters that they might be made holy without having to suffer too much, we can pray for our loved ones who may be in Purgatory, that they can be made holy more easily or more painlessly as well.

P: Oh really. This I gotta hear!

C: OK. You believe that you're a sinner, right?

P: Yeah, I'm a sinner, saved by grace, but I'm bound for heaven - and that ain't just Paradise Nevada either.

C: But you haven't been totally freed from sin yet, right? I mean, there's still areas of your life that the Holy Spirit is doing his work in, right?

P: Yeah, I'm not perfect, and I inherited a depraved human nature thanks to Adam - but Jesus is perfect, and it's his righteousness that God looks at when he judges me, not mine.

C: Well, that's kind of another discussion too. If I wasn't getting off in Colorado, we could talk about that when we go through Utah.

P: Utah? That's Mormon country. Maybe we could talk about them!

C: We could, but I'll be on the slopes at Purgatory by then! Anyway, the point is, and no offense here, but there's still sin of some kind in your life occasionally, right?

P: Yes, there is. But dealing with it is what growing in the Christian life is all about. It's called sanctification.

C: Yeah, becoming a saint. Us Catholics are big on saints and stuff you know. Anyway, most Christians still have sin of some kind in their lives when they die, yeah?

P: OK...

C: But we won't be sinning in heaven, will we?

P: No, we won't.

C: And, in fact, nothing unclean can enter heaven, can it?

P: That's right; Revelation 21:27.

C: So what we have here is that most of us die with some elements of sin still in our life, but in heaven we'll be perfectly clean and will no longer have to worry about sin. So between death and heaven there must be some sort of sanctification right? We get made holy, we get purified, made fit for heaven. Right?

P: Well, yeah, when you put it like that...

C: Yeah, and you know what we call this purification, don't you?

P: I think I can guess..

C: Good. And this purification may take no time for all we know, but that's no problem for believing in purgatory. We have no idea how time works in the afterlife anyway. But you've got the fact that between death and heaven must come purification, and that is purgatory by definition. If it helps though, don't call it "Purgatory" - call it "the final blast of sanctification" or something like that.

Purgatory

This is a fictional dialogue between a Catholic and a non-denominational Christian, which explores the principles behind the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. It is an adaptation of a presentation given by the author - the cues written into the script may be useful for presentation in parishes and youth groups. The material here is drawn very liberally on James Akin's excellent article, *How to Explain Purgatory to Protestants*.^{x1}

The Scenario

[Two guys at a bus stop in Oklahoma City. One's a Catholic, one's a friendly Protestant. Sign says bus is heading for San Francisco via Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada.]

Catholic: Hi.

Protestant: Hi.

C: Gonna be a long bus trip, huh? Where're you headed?
San Francisco?

P: Nope. Paradise.

C: Really? You're going to Paradise? What are you, a Christian or something?

P: Sure am. But it's not that Paradise I'm goin' to, at least, not yet anyway. I'm going to Paradise, Nevada. It's a town just out of Las Vegas.

C: Well, that's funny. Why you goin' there?

P: I'm a pastor. I'm picking up a new position there, a little church on the edge of town.

C: Hey, congratulations.

P: Thanks. So where are you goin'?

C: Purgatory.

P: Purgatory? What are you, a Catholic or something?

C: Well, yeah, I am Catholic, since you asked.

P: So Purgatory's not just a myth after all, huh?

C: Nope. It's a ski resort in Colorado. But why would you say it's a myth?

P: Come on, this Catholic Purgatory thing is just a big unbiblical piece of fiction. I understand that's what you've been taught, but really the Catholic Church has this huge doctrine of purgatory, which they invented in the middle ages, based on books that don't belong in the Bible! And since Christians go straight to heaven the minute we die,

^{x1} Highly recommended by the author. See www.cin.org/users/james/files/how2purg.htm

there's no point praying for people in purgatory either. No Bible-believing Christian could have anything to do with it.

C: How about we take just one thing at a time here? I think I could help you understand things a lot better. Wanna hear it?

P: Sure, we got, what, at least 14 hours here. Think that'll give you enough time?

C: We can make a good start. ☺ So what was the first thing you said?

"The Catholic Church has this Huge Doctrine of Purgatory"

P: The Catholic Church has this huge doctrine of purgatory.

C: OK, we believe in Purgatory, but I wouldn't describe it as a huge doctrine. Look, do you know what this is? [Holds up Catechism.]

P: It ain't the Bible, is it?

C: Nope, it's the Catechism of the Catholic Church. But like the Bible, every home should have one. This is a summary of what the Church believes. There are 800 pages here, nearly 3000 paragraphs. How much do you think is devoted to Purgatory?

P: As much as you've got on Mary?

C: Hey, don't get me started. We can talk about Mary when we get to Kansas. Nope, there's exactly three paragraphs on Purgatory. That's it. Anyway, there's only really three things the Church insists on about Purgatory:

- (1) that there is a purification after death (that's what's Purgatory means, it means being purified);
- (2) that this purification involves some kind of pain or discomfort; and
- (3) that God helps people in this purification in response to our prayers and stuff. The Church doesn't insist that purgatory is a place or that it takes time.

P: Oh really. Well, that's news to me.

C: Here check it out - nothing on it in here. There's been speculation about how things work in Purgatory, but no one really knows. What was the next thing you said?

"Purgatory was Invented in the Middle Ages"

P: Purgatory was invented in the Middle Ages.

C: OK, lots of cool things were invented in the Middle Ages, like universities, parliaments, printing - but purgatory wasn't one of them. In fact, it's been part of the true religion since before Jesus. Jews before the time of Jesus prayed for their departed so they would be purified

from their sins, the New Testament witnesses to it, and the early Church Fathers believed in it too. And it's not just Catholics who believe in it either: the Eastern churches do as well (although they don't call it purgatory). Even Orthodox Jews do today - when a Jewish person dies, his family prays a prayer known as the Mourner's Qaddish for eleven months after the death for his purification.

Because the doctrine of purgatory was held by Jews before the time of Jesus, by Jews after Jesus, by Catholics, and by Eastern Orthodox, Protestants are the only ones who deny it today.

P: You shouldn't look so smug when you say that. God's truth isn't decided by a vote you know.

C: Yeah, but God's truth shouldn't be cast aside by some Johnny-come-lately either. That reminds me of something else invented in the Middle Ages.

P: What?

C: Protestants. ☺

P: Very funny.

C: What was your next point?

"It's Based on Books that Don't Belong in the Bible"

P: The idea of Purgatory is based on books that don't belong in the Bible.

C: OK, I guess you're thinking of 2 Maccabees 12, where Judas Maccabee and his men pray for their friends who had been killed in battle so that they may be "freed from their sins" in the afterlife. Here's what it says: [Reads from Bible, 2 Macc 12: 43-45]

"In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. ⁴⁴ For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. ⁴⁵ But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin".

P: Yep, and that ain't in my Bible. You guys conveniently added some books like that in the 1500s.

C: Actually, you guys ditched them in the 1500s - but that's a whole 'nother story. Maybe we can talk about that when we get to Colorado. But while we can see Purgatory in 2nd Maccabees chapter 12, the doctrine's not based on that; we can see it in the New Testament, but the main thing is that we can understand Purgatory just from your Protestant theology alone.