

TEN MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Bridget Catholic Church May 23, 2010

1. **CATHOLICS WORSHIP MARY** (Worship of Mary or praying to her): The Roman Catholic Church worships one God as scripture clearly indicates. However, we give honor and respect to Mary as the Mother of Jesus, God's only Son. Mary is, for Roman Catholics, a model of the faith we are all called to have. In Luke 1:38, we read of Mary's response to the invitation to be the mother of Jesus, "I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done according as you say." We ask people to pray for us or intercede, we ask Mary to intercede for us, too. In that acceptance, Mary models for us submission to the will of God.

2. WHY DO WE NEED TO CONFESS OUR SINS TO A PRIEST?

Properly called Reconciliation, this is one of the sacraments of the church. Sacraments are also external signs of God's presence in our inner life. While it is appropriate to directly say "I am sorry for my sins" to a forgiving God, we believe that reconciliation is an opportunity to experience that presence/forgiveness of God in the words and actions of the priest. God alone forgives sins.

3. CATHOLICS ARE SAVED THROUGH WORKS NOT GRACE

Grace is God's love literally poured upon us at the waters of Baptism. When we are surrounded by God's grace or love, we are compelled to "**respond**" to that love in works and acts. In the letter of James 2:17 it says, "*So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless.*" Grace and works cannot be separated. The one who accepts grace lives that out in works.

4. WE SACRIFICE CHRIST AT EVERY MASS

When our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate Passover, it is "making present" what God did for them many years ago. Passover is the sharing in and "making present" God's care for the Jewish people. It is not just remembering Passover but sharing in the same event of long ago. At each Mass we experience again the continuing presence of Jesus who reminds us that He took our sins upon Himself. This same Jesus Christ, who gave His life once and for all, continues to be "made present" at each Eucharist. It is not a new sacrifice but "making present" what Jesus did over two thousand years ago.

5. CATHOLICS WORSHIP A WAFER AND BOW TO BREAD

The Roman Catholic Church uses the term transubstantiation to explain the change in the substance of bread and wine through the power of the Holy Spirit. Some religions use the term consubstantiation which means Christ is only present when people receive the "bread."

The "bowing" is a sign of the respect for the host, which is now the "bread of life; that is the Body of Christ." The words Body/Blood of Christ are words that also are to transform us into the Body of Christ. ! (We become what we eat—Christ to one another).

6. PRIESTHOOD ONLY FOR MEN

We are all called to priesthood at Baptism—the baptism of all believers.

”But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1st Peter 2:5-9)

The priest is called from the community to lead the community. Priests in the Roman Catholic Church are called “Father” as an indication of his role as the servant leader, not unlike the role of a parent in a family.

7. ONLY CATHOLICS GO TO HEAVEN

As Christians we believe that Jesus was the incarnate sign of God’s presence in the world. We believe God is involved with all people of the world; Jesus embraces even those who follow another faith tradition.

QUOTE FROM THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II “Those can also attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life thanks to His grace. Whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as preparation for the gospel. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men (and women) so they may finally have life. (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church 16)

8. INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE

The Pope is the first among the Bishops. Peter was the first head of the Roman Catholic Church. Only two times has a Pope spoken infallibly: 1) The Assumption of Mary into heaven and 2) the Immaculate Conception where Mary was preserved from sin from when she was conceived.

However, Catholics and others can engage in “creeping Infallibility.” This happens when Catholics and others begin to believe that everything the Pope said or says is infallible. However, as leader of the Christian community, Catholics do take seriously what the Pope says even if it is not an infallible statement. The Roman Catholic Church also takes seriously the councils of the Church such as Vatican II when the Bishops of the world come together and speak together as the leaders of Church.

9. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

This refers to Mary being free from sin from the moment of her human existence, namely, freed from the burden of sin. The inclination that all humans share in being inclined to sin is called original sin. (Note: this is often confused with Mary conceiving Jesus, which is properly called the virgin birth.)

10. CATHOLICS PRAY TO STATUES Worship of Idols

Statues have been part of people’s worship from the beginning of history. People keep pictures and mementos of loved ones as a reminder of their role in influencing our lives and as a means of keeping them in our memories; statues and icons today serve the same purpose. They remind us of the goodness and faithfulness of others and how we in turn should live.

Please note: *there is much more to say about each of the 10 statements. This paper is meant to provide a brief means of explaining or clarifying each belief.*

TEN MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fr. Harris will be addressing “Ten Misunderstandings about the Catholic Church” On May 23rd 2010 between masses at 9:30-10:15 in the Garden View Room

There are misunderstandings about what Catholics believe on the 10 listed below. They will be addressed one by one to clarify these statements.

1. CATHOLICS WORSHIP MARY (and pray to her)
2. WHY DO WE NEED TO CONFESS OUR SINS TO A PRIEST?
3. CATHOLICS ARE SAVED THROUGH WORKS NOT GRACE
4. WE SACRIFICE CHRIST AT EVERY MASS
5. ONLY CATHOLICS GO TO HEAVEN
6. INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE
7. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
8. CATHOLICS PRAY TO STATUES Worship of Idols
9. PRIESTHOOD ONLY FOR MEN
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