

What You Need to Know About Roman Catholicism

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I. Mary – Jesus' Earthly Mother

The Catholic Church Teaches:

1. Mary was preserved from all stains of original sin from the first instant of her conception (Immaculate Conception) (490–492)
2. Mary, “the All-Holy,” lived a perfectly sinless life (411, 493)
3. Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ (496–511)
4. Mary is the Mother of God (963, 971, 2677)
5. Mary is the Mother of the Church (963, 975)
6. Mary is a redeemer, for she participated with Christ in the painful act of redemption (618, 964, 968, 970)
7. At the end of her life, Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven (the doctrine of the Assumption) (966, 974)
8. Mary is the co-mediator to whom we can entrust all our cares petitions (968–970, 2677)
9. We should entrust ourselves to Mary, surrendering “the hour of our death’ wholly to her care” (2677)
10. God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory as Queen of heaven and Earth (966). She is praised with special devotion (971, 2675)

The Bible Teaches:

1. Mary, a descendant of Adam, was born in sin (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12)
2. Mary was a sinner; God alone is holy (Luke 18:19; Romans 3:23; Revelation 15:4)
3. Mary was a virgin until the birth of Christ (Matt. 1:25). She later had other children (Matt. 13:55–56; Psalm 69:8)
4. Mary was the earthly mother of Jesus (John 2:1)
5. Mary is a member of the Church (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27)
6. Christ alone is the Redeemer, for he alone suffered and died for sin (1 Peter 1:18–19)
7. Upon death, Mary’s body returned to dust (Gen. 3:19)
8. Christ is the one mediator to whom we can entrust all our cares and petitions (1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:13–14; 1 Peter 5:7)
9. We should entrust our death to Jesus, surrendering the hour of our death wholly to His care (Romans 10:13; Acts 4:12)
10. The name of the Lord is to be praised, for He alone is exalted above heaven and earth (Psalm 148:13. God commands, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3)

II. Authority of the Church

The Catholic Church Teaches:

1. Peter was the head of the apostles (552, 765, 880)
2. Bishops are successors of the apostles (861–862, 938)
3. The Pope, as the Bishop of Rome, is Peter's successor (882, 936)
4. The bishops, with the Pope as their head, rule the universal Church (883, 894–896)
5. God has entrusted revelation to the Roman Catholic bishops (81, 86)
6. The Magisterium is the authoritative teacher of the Church (85–87)
7. The Magisterium is the infallible interpreter of Scripture (890–891, 2034–2035)
8. The Pope is infallible in his authoritative teaching (891)
9. The Magisterium alone has the ability and the right to interpret Scripture (85, 100, 939)
10. Scripture is to be interpreted in the sense in which it has been defined by the Magisterium (113, 119)
11. The Magisterium has the right to define truth found only obscurely or implicitly in revelation (66, 88, 2035, 2051)
12. Scripture and Tradition together are the Word of God (81, 85, 97, 182)
13. Scripture and Tradition are the Church's supreme rule of faith (80, 82)

The Bible Teaches:

1. Christ was the head of the apostles (John 13:13)
2. Apostles had no successors, for to succeed then one needed to be a witness of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:2, 22)
3. Peter had no successor
4. Christ, the head of the body, rules the universal Church (Colossians 1:18)
5. God has entrusted Revelation to the saints (Jude 3). The Holy Spirit is the authoritative teacher of the church (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27)
6. Scripture is the only infallible interpreter of Scripture (Acts 17:11)
7. God alone is infallible (Numbers 23:19)
8. Every Christian, aided by the Holy Spirit. Has the ability and the right to interpret Scripture (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 2:12–16)
9. Scripture must be interpreted in the original sense intended by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 3:14–16)
10. No one has the right to go beyond what is written in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6; Prov. 30:6)
11. Scripture is the Word of God (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:30, 21). Tradition is the words of men (Mark 7:1–13)
12. Scripture is the church's rule of faith (Mark 7:7–13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

III. Conclusion

The Catholic Church's beliefs are impacted by cults that had a powerful influence in Roman culture. A person who is Roman Catholic may very well not be saved. They may believe in Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, the trinity, and the Bible, but are not actually saved. *"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."* (1 John 4:2-3; NASU) *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."* (Galatians 1:8-10; NASU)

I teach on this issue not to create confusion, but to save souls and edify those who are saved. This can educate these believers to be more effective in witnessing to friends and family. This subject can create tension for many, but it is the truth taken from the documents of the Catholic Church. Don't allow our culture of tolerance to influence acceptance of every religion. We must be kind, love our neighbors and our enemies, but we must also stand for truth and be salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13-16).