

WHY WE'RE CATHOLIC

Summary & Discussion Questions

PART 3: THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

Jesus did not leave us to follow Him alone. He founded a Church, entrusted it to the Apostles and their successors, nourishes us through the Eucharist, and welcomes us into His family through Baptism.

Through the Catholic Church, Christ continues His saving work in the world today.

Ch. 11 - Why We Belong to the Catholic Church

Christ founded a visible Church so His truth and sacraments would remain with His people throughout history.

1. Jesus didn't simply gather followers—He established a Church.
2. He chose the Apostles, gave them authority, and sent them to teach, sanctify, and lead His people. That leadership continues today through bishops, priests, and deacons in apostolic succession.
3. The Catholic Church is unique because it can trace its leadership directly back to the Apostles and continues to teach the same essential faith handed down from the beginning.

Questions & Application

- What first attracted you—or continues to attract you—to the Catholic Church?
- What evidence of the Catholic Church's claim to apostolic origins do you find most compelling?
- What attracts people to the Catholic Church today?

Ch. 12 - Why We Have a Pope

The Pope is the visible shepherd of the universal Church, helping preserve unity and truth.

1. Among the Apostles, Jesus gave Peter a unique role of leadership:
2. *"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. 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."* (Matthew 16:17–19)
3. Peter became the visible leader of the Church, and that mission continues through the Popes, the bishops of Rome.
4. The Pope's role is to preserve the unity of the Church and faithfully guard the teachings Christ entrusted to the Apostles. Through the gift of infallibility, the Holy Spirit protects the Pope from formally teaching error on matters of faith and morals under specific circumstances.

Questions & Application

1. What is the purpose of the papacy?
2. How does Peter's role support Catholic teaching on the Pope?
3. What misunderstandings about the papacy have you encountered?
4. What value do you see in having a visible leader for the universal Church?

Ch. 13 - Why We Have Priests

Priests act in the person of Christ to bring God's grace to His people through the sacraments.

1. Jesus established the ministerial priesthood to continue His work through ordained ministers.
2. Priests preach the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments, offer the Eucharist, and forgive sins in Christ's name. Their ministry fulfills the priesthood of the Old Covenant and continues Christ's mission in the New Covenant.
3. In the Latin (Western) Church, priests ordinarily remain celibate so they can devote themselves completely to Christ and His Church.

Questions & Application

- How has a priest positively influenced your faith or spiritual growth?
- Why does the Church have ordained priests?
- What biblical foundations exist for the priesthood?

Ch. 14 - Why We Go To Mass and believe in the Eucharist

We go to Mass not simply to remember Jesus, but to encounter Him personally in the Eucharist.

1. The Mass is the center of Catholic life because Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.
2. At the Last Supper, Jesus fulfilled the Passover by offering Himself as the true Lamb of God.
3. At every Mass, Jesus is **not sacrificed again**. Instead, His one sacrifice on Calvary is made present to us so we can share in its saving grace.
4. When we receive Holy Communion, we receive Christ Himself—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.
5. *“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; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.”* (John 6:53-57)

Questions & Application

1. Why do Catholics believe the Eucharist is more than just a symbol?
2. Why did Jesus choose bread and wine to give us His Body and Blood?
3. How can you participate more fully in the Mass?
4. Why do you think many of Jesus' followers left Him after His teaching in John 6?

Ch. 15 - Why We Baptize Babies

Baptism is God's gift of new life, not something we must earn or be old enough to request.

1. Baptism is much more than a symbol.
2. It removes original sin, makes us children of God, and welcomes us into Christ's Church.
3. Just as loving parents provide food, shelter, and medical care for their children before they can ask for it, Catholic parents also give them the spiritual gift of Baptism as soon as possible.
4. From the earliest centuries, Christians baptized infants because God's grace is a gift meant for everyone.

Questions & Application

- What surprised you most about the Catholic understanding of Baptism? How has your understanding of infant Baptism changed?
- Why do you think Jesus made Baptism the ordinary way of entering His Church?
- What does it mean that Baptism is a gift from God rather than something we earn?

Part 3 Applications

- Pray for the Holy Father and for your parish priests.
- Choose one way to participate more fully at Mass next Sunday.
- Attend Mass with one new intention: pay special attention during the Eucharistic Prayer.
- Look up and pray with the Catholic baptismal promises and reflect on what they mean for your daily life.
- Read and pray with John Ch. 6.