

WHY WE'RE CATHOLIC

Summary & Discussion Questions

PART 4: SAINTS AND SINNERS

The Catholic faith is not built on perfect people—it is built on Jesus Christ. Through His Church, He continues to transform sinners into saints, strengthen us through grace, prepare us for heaven, and surround us with a family that includes the saints and His Blessed Mother.

Ch. 16 - Why We Believe in Spite of Scandal

The sins of members do not change the truth of what Christ taught or the Church He founded.

1. Jesus never promised that His followers would be perfect. In fact, among His own twelve Apostles was Judas, who betrayed Him.
2. The Church is holy because Christ is holy, but her members are sinners in need of God's mercy.
3. Scandal, abuse, and sin are real and must be confronted with truth, justice, and accountability. However, the failures of Christians do not disprove Christianity any more than a doctor's mistakes disprove medicine.

Questions & Application

- How do scandals affect faith?
- Why doesn't the sinfulness of members disprove the Church's claims?
- What promotes healing and renewal in the Church?

Ch. 17 - Why We Believe that Faith Works Through Love

We are not saved by our good works alone, but authentic faith is always expressed through love.

1. Catholics believe that salvation is a gift from God that cannot be earned.
2. However, true faith changes us. As St. James teaches, "Faith without works is dead."
3. We are saved by God's grace, but that grace transforms us so that we can love, serve, and follow Christ.
4. Faith and works are not opponents—they work together. A living faith naturally produces acts of charity, forgiveness, and service.

Questions & Application

- What is the relationship between faith and works?
- How is your faith expressed in action?
- How do your actions reflect the faith you profess?

Ch. 18 - Why We Believe in Purgatory

Purgatory is God's final act of purification for those destined for eternal life.

1. Scripture tells us that nothing unclean can enter heaven. Scripture also references praying for the souls of dead so they might be delivered from their sin.
2. Purgatory is not a second chance after death or a "mini-hell." It is the final purification of those who die in God's friendship but are not yet perfectly purified.
3. Think of it this way: if you were invited to meet God face-to-face, wouldn't you want every attachment to sin removed?
4. Purgatory is ultimately a sign of God's mercy and His desire to prepare us completely for heaven.

Questions & Application

- How does the idea of purification after death affect your understanding of God's mercy?
- What is purgatory—and what is it not?
- Why does purification after death make sense?
- How does belief in purgatory affect how we pray for the dead?

Ch. 19 - Why We Pray to the Saints

The saints point us to Jesus and accompany us as members of God's family.

1. Catholics do not worship the saints—we ask them to pray for us.
2. Just as we ask friends and family on earth to pray for us, we can ask the members of Christ's body in heaven to do the same.
3. The saints are examples of holiness who remind us that ordinary people can become extraordinary through God's grace.

Questions & Application

- Why ask saints to pray for us? How is this different from worship?
- Is there a saint whose witness inspires you?
- Is there a saint whose life particularly inspires or challenges you?

Ch. 20 - Why We Honor Mary

The more we understand Mary, the more we understand her Son.

1. Mary has a unique place in salvation history because she is the Mother of Jesus, who is God.
2. Catholics honor Mary not because she replaces Jesus, but because she always leads us to Him.
3. At the wedding at Cana, her final recorded words in Scripture are: "Do whatever He tells you."
4. Mary remains the perfect example of discipleship—one who trusted God completely.

Questions & Application

- Why does Mary hold a unique place in the Church?
- How does Mary lead us to Christ?
- What aspect of Mary's life speaks most powerfully to you?

Part 4 Applications

- Pray for healing and renewal within the Church.
- Perform one intentional act of charity as an expression of your faith.
- Pray for a loved one who has died.
- Ask a saint to intercede for you.
- Pray one Hail Mary and ask Our Lady to bring you closer to Jesus.