



SESSION NINE

The

CHURCH

Lord Jesus, you prayed that your people would be one; forgive us Lord and take away the pride and arrogance which divides your Church. Break down the walls which separate us; unite us with your bonds of love and accomplish your will. I pray that by the power of your Spirit your healing would work in the body of your Church and through me, to bring about the purpose of your will. Amen.

— Author Unknown —

WHEN YOU DON'T SHOW UP, SOMETHING IS MISSING.

Romans 12:5

KNOW IT: We are one body.

THINK ABOUT IT: We are all in this together. It is not every man and every woman for him- or herself.

LIVE IT: What gifts has God given you to contribute to the rest of the body? How do you need the rest of the Church to help you grow?



What would it have been like to be at Mary's side during those first days of the Church?

9. THE CHURCH

What is your image of the Church? When you think about the Church, what comes to mind? The building. The Pope. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Your parish. A place to pray. A place of healing. A community.

I like to think of the Catholic Church as a big family—a family of faith; the biggest family in the world. There are more than 1.2 billion Catholics in the world, and more than eighty million Catholics in the United States alone. That's a big family!

This family—the Church—is made up of people like you and me. We are pilgrims on a journey together. When we are at our best, we form dynamic communities. People need community. We need people to do life with, others who can encourage and challenge us. We need others to live for so we don't get swallowed up by our own selfishness.

Paul tells us in Romans 12:5 that we are all one body. The right hand cannot leave the body. It needs the body and the body needs it. Without the body, it is useless. In the same way, we need each other.

We need the Church — and the Church needs us.

We are the Church. So when you don't show up, something is missing. When you don't show up, the Church can't fulfill its mission. So I hope you will continue to show up or start showing up. And more than just showing up, I hope you will get involved by sharing your talents, your energy, and your compassion with your spiritual family – the Church.

9.1 THE FIRST CHRISTIANS & THE EARLY CHURCH

On any Sunday you can just wander into your local church for Mass, but the first Christians didn't have it so easy. The early Christians were persecuted by both the Jews and the Roman Empire. From the earliest times, Christians have been discriminated against, tortured, and murdered for their faith. You may be tempted to think that this is all behind us now, but that would be a mistake. This is still happening in many parts of the world today. Google "persecution of Christians today" and what you discover will surprise and sadden you.

That's right. More than two thousand years later, Christians are still being beaten and murdered because of their faith. And in modern nations, like America, that are becoming increasingly secular, public policy is being used to discriminate against Christians more with every passing day.

Life for the first Christians was not easy, so why were so many people attracted to their way of life?

The ancient world was brutal, cold, and impersonal. By contrast, Christianity was warm, caring, and deeply personal. The first Christians modeled a more humane, compassionate, noble, and loving way of life—and it was phenomenally attractive. This is why people were joining them a thousand at a time, even though joining meant risking their lives.

In the first century the Church was organized around agape love. What is agape love?

Agape love is a choice we make to love another person regardless of whether he loves us back or not. It means that you choose to love someone even if he is your enemy. Agape love is not based on emotion in any way. In fact, it may at times be contrary to every emotion you have. It is a choice, an act of the will. Agape love is unconditional love. It is the love that sets aside self-interest. It is the love that Jesus modeled for us and calls us to.

This kind of love was profound, revolutionary, countercultural, and attractive two thousand years ago, and it is profound, revolutionary, countercultural, and attractive today. In some way the Church has lost this, and we need to get this agape love back at the center of our communities. The Church needs your help to do that.

Life for the early Christians was not easy, and life for a modern Christian is not easy. It's difficult to love people who ridicule or hurt you. It's difficult to be discriminated against because of your beliefs. It's difficult to stand up for objective truth in a society that thinks truth is whatever the majority decides.

It's difficult to be a good Christian. But that shouldn't be a surprise. Jesus didn't say, "Follow me and you will have a comfortable life." He didn't teach, "Follow me and I will make things easy for you so you never have to worry about anything." No, he didn't mince his words; he made it very clear from the very beginning: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Matthew 6:24) He did, however, offer this path as a way to fullness of life now and for eternity – and promise to send us the Holy Spirit to guide, encourage, and inspire us.

The world needs more agape love. This is the love Jesus calls us to. Just as the ancient world of the first Christians was brutal, cold, distant, impersonal, and ruled by self-interest, so too is the modern world. As modern society abandons Christianity, the world becomes more and more like it was before the birth of Christianity. All around us there

Matthew 6:24

KNOW IT: Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Jesus.

THINK ABOUT IT: Believe it or not, this is the path to the happiness you have been seeking your whole life.

LIVE IT: Find three small ways to deny yourself today.

What is CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?

The act of harassing, annoying, bullying, torturing, excluding, or killing someone because he or she is Christian.





"GOD MADE ME TO KNOW HIM, TO LOVE HIM, AND TO SERVE HIM IN THIS WORLD, AND TO BE HAPPY WITH HIM FOREVER IN THE NEXT."

BALTIMORE CATECHISM, LESSON ONE, QUESTION 150.

is plenty of evidence that the harsh, impersonal, cold brutality of the pagan world is taking hold of modern society.

The rise of Christianity changed the world with agape love. When Christianity is truly lived it is warm, inviting, caring, deeply personal, and phenomenally attractive, and it sets self-interest aside. The world needs a new and massive wave of agape love. Are you willing to be part of that? We are at another decision point.

Agape loves was profound and revolutionary two thousand years ago and remains so today. How many of your peers are walking the halls lonely and depressed? How many don't feel loved? Where is their hope? What gets them through the day?

Agape love is not just a concept. It's a revolutionary invitation for you to reach out to others and share with them the love of God.



discussion questions

1. WHEN YOU THINK OF CHURCH, WHAT COMES TO MIND?

2. IF YOU COULD ASK A GROUP OF EARLY CHRISTIANS ONE QUESTION, WHAT WOULD YOU ASK?

3. WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE AGAPE LOVE?





I AM THE *daughter*
OF A GREAT **KING.**

He is my father
AND MY GOD.

**THE WORLD MAY PRAISE ME
OR CRITICIZE ME.**

IT MATTERS NOT.

HE IS WITH ME,
always at my side,
GUIDING AND PROTECTING ME.

I DO NOT FEAR
because
I AM HIS.



9.2 :One, Holy, Catholic, & Apostolic

At Mass on Sunday when we pray the Creed, we say, “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” What does that mean? These are known as the four marks of the Catholic Church and can be traced back to early Christian times. Let’s take a look at them one at a time, and explore what they mean for you.

What does it mean that the Church is “one”?

Jesus only started one Church. When we talk about the oneness of the Church we are talking about the unity of God’s people. The Church is often referred to as the Body of Christ. Paul speaks about this beautifully in 1 Corinthians 12. He speaks about how we are all given different gifts, but these gifts are given to us not for our own gratification but for “the common good.” And he speaks about how we are all part of one body, but each part of the body plays a unique and vital role.

What are your gifts? How is God calling you to use them for the common good? What unique and vital role is God calling you to play in the Church?

God’s vision for the Church is that all men and women be united in belief, agape love, and mission. God’s vision for the Church is that it be one. This is what Jesus prayed for right before he was arrested and crucified. He prayed for his disciples—and he prayed for you and me. We read about this in chapter seventeen of John’s Gospel. It is a beautiful prayer for unity, but Jesus also explains why he is praying for unity. In verse 13, he prays his reason: “so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.” He wants our joy to be complete. He wants your joy to be complete.

Then he prays to God the Father, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word that they may be one.” Let’s take one more look. Jesus prays, “I ask not only on behalf of these [the disciples], but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word [that’s you and me] that they may be one.” He wants there to be unity among every Christian—from the first disciples to the last believer at the end of the world.

This is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, and perhaps the greatest prayer in the New Testament. It is God praying to God. Jesus asks the Father to give us each perseverance, holiness, joy, and unity.

Over the centuries the oneness of the Church has been attacked, questioned, and undermined. As a result Christianity is massively

divided today—but the Catholic Church remains one. It is the one church that Jesus started.

People sometimes ask me, “Why should I stay in the Catholic Church?” There are lots of reasons you should stay Catholic and grow in your faith every day, but what is more compelling than to say, “You should stay because Jesus prayed you would”? There in the garden of Gethsemane two thousand years ago Jesus agonized over every person who would think about leaving his Church, and he prayed that they would remain one.

The Church is one—this is the first mark.

The second mark of the Church is “holy.” What does it this mean that the Church is “holy”?

One definition of the word *holy* is, “set apart for a special purpose by God and for God.”

When we speak about the Church being holy, it does not imply that the members of the Church are free from sin and selfishness. This is a common misconception. The holiness of the Church is not derived from the holiness of its members, but rather from the holiness of Jesus.

God created the Church for a reason. So, what is the purpose of the Church? Jesus founded his Church to continue his redemptive and sanctifying work in the world. You might be wondering what this means.

Jesus’ redemptive work liberates us from sin, puts us back in right relationship with God, and leads us to Heaven. His sanctifying work helps us to grow in holiness and become the best-version-of-ourselves by playing the unique role he calls us to play in his divine plan.

The Church is holy because Christ is holy—this is the second mark.

The third mark is “catholic.” Not big C Catholic, but little c catholic. What does it mean that the Church is “catholic”?

The word *catholic* with a small c means “universal.” In this sense the Church is for everyone, just as Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead for us all. The Church is also catholic (or universal) in the sense that she has been sent out by Jesus on a mission to the whole of the human race. This small c catholic is what we are speaking of in the Creed, and the third mark of the Church.

When we speak of someone being Catholic with a big C we are speaking of a baptized Christian who accepts and believes the teachings of the Church, strives to live in communion with the Church through the

≡ In Average ≡
YOU WILL LIVE FOR
ANOTHER
70 YEARS.
THAT MEANS YOU HAVE
3,640
SUNDAYS LEFT.
Don't
Waste
a single
ONE.

What is Baptism?
God rescues us from death through baptism and invites us to a new and vibrant life in him. Baptism is the first sacrament and a pre-requisite for all other sacraments. In baptism we become members of the Church, members of the one body of Christ. Through baptism we are liberated from sin and invited to live in the joy God created us for.

OUR HEARTS ARE
RESTLESS
UNTIL THEY
Rest in
you.
SAINT AUGUSTINE



CATHOLICS HAVE BEEN MAKING INCREDIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD FOR 2,000 YEARS. WHAT WILL YOUR CONTRIBUTION BE?

Matthew 16: 16-19

KNOW IT: Peter was the first pope, and the papacy is the rock that Jesus chose to build his Church upon.

THINK ABOUT IT: We can trace our spiritual heritage back through 265 popes. That is a beautiful thing.

LIVE IT: Being pope is difficult. Pray for the pope today.

Sacraments and her teachings, and embraces the life Christ calls them to. We are all called to catholic unity as God's children, but not everyone responds to this call. The call is small c catholic; the response is big C Catholic.

The fourth and final mark of the Church is "apostolic." What does it mean that the Church is "apostolic"?

On the day of your Confirmation the bishop will extend his hands over you, pray that you receive the Holy Spirit, and anoint you with the sacred oil (chrism) and the Sign of the Cross.

Why? What gives him the right? Who gives him the authority to do that?

This is one of the great questions of Christian history. If you can develop a clear understanding of this, a lot of other things will fall into place. Let's turn to the Scriptures for some insight.

Jesus was walking down the road one day, talking with his disciples, answering questions, and asking questions. Toward the end of these discussions he asks the disciples who they think he is. Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) What seemed like a very spontaneous conversation then turned into something very formal when Jesus said, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church." Jesus goes on to say, "I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19)

Jesus gave Peter the authority to lead the Church, and through Peter he gave the other apostles authority. As Catholics we can trace a direct line from your bishop back two thousand years to Peter. Pope Francis is the 265th successor of Peter.

This is what we mean when we say the Church is "apostolic." The apostles were the foundation that Jesus chose to build his Church upon. They were the witnesses whom Jesus chose to send out on a mission to the whole world. The Church celebrates and defends the teachings passed on by the apostles, continues to be guided by the apostles, and carries on the mission entrusted first to the apostles.

Your bishop is a successor to the apostles. That's profound and beautiful.

So at Mass next Sunday you will probably hear some people mindlessly mumbling the Creed. Don't be one of them. Say it loud and proud: "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. IF JESUS WANTED THE CHURCH TO BE ONE, WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT CHURCHES TODAY?

2. HOW MANY POPES HAVE THERE BEEN DURING YOUR LIFETIME? WHO WERE THEY? WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THEM?

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS JESUS' MAIN MESSAGE?





Psalm 16

Preserve me, O God, for in thee I take refuge.

² I say to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord;
I have no good apart from thee."

³ As for the saints in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their libations of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

⁵ The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
thou holdest my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
yea, I have a goodly heritage.

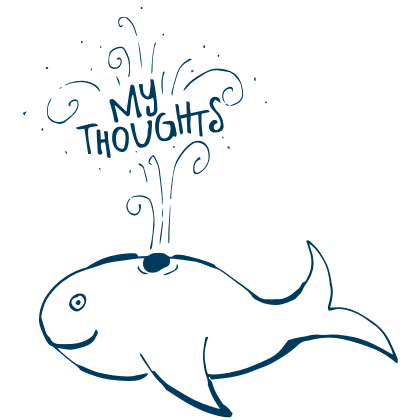
⁷ I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also dwells secure.

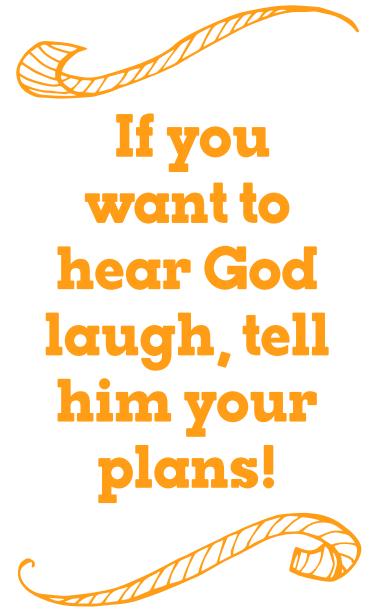
¹⁰ For thou dost not give me up to Sheol,
or let thy godly one see the Pit.

¹¹ Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence there is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.



“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”

—Henri J. M. Nouwen



If you want to hear God laugh, tell him your plans!

9.3 THE Good, THE BAD, THE Ugly & THE LIES

The Good

For two thousand years wherever you find Catholics you find a group of people making phenomenal contributions to their local, national, and international communities. Every single day the Catholic Church feeds more people, houses more people, clothes more people, visits more imprisoned, cares for more sick people, and educates more people than any other institution on the planet.

The Church gave birth to scientific method, which has been at the center of scientific discovery for hundreds of years. The Church gave birth to the first university. The early Church was the first to institutionalize the care of widows, orphans, and the sick. The Church has also made incredible contributions in music, art, medicine, architecture, language, and law. In the area of law, equality before the law, trial by jury, and proof beyond a reasonable doubt are all the fruit of Catholic thought.

And no other organization or institution has done more than the Catholic Church in defending human rights around the world. The Catholic idea of charity—that we help those in need, without the expectation of anything in return, whether they are Catholic or not, and even if they despise us—is the idea of charity that even our secular society today strives to achieve.

In fact, all of these Catholic contributions spring from the notion of agape love. For two thousand years the Catholic Church has been a force for tremendous good in the world.

The Bad

There have also been some dark moments in our story. Our past is not perfect. Pope John Paul II made more than one hundred public apologies during his papacy on behalf of Catholics for events reaching back as far as one thousand years.

He apologized to women, Jews, minorities, people convicted by the Inquisition, Muslims killed by the Crusaders, and almost everyone who had suffered at the hands of the Catholic Church throughout history. He apologized for Catholics’ involvement in the African slave trade, the Church’s role in religious wars and burnings at the stake, and the legal process Galileo suffered. He apologized for injustices committed against women and the inactivity and silence of many Catholics during the Holocaust.

Our past is not without blemish. There have been some horrible moments in Catholic history. But it is important to recognize that these moments are the result of individuals wandering away from the teachings of Christ and his Church.

Here we find one of the central mysteries of God’s plan: The Church is made up of human beings like you and me, who are in many ways weak and imperfect.

Some people look at the failings of the Church and use them as an excuse to leave. I see it very differently. All of the lowest moments in Church history are examples of what happens when we don’t live the Catholic faith authentically. I have studied these low moments, and what I’ve found is immorality and personal weakness, selfishness and abuse of power. I’ve found Christ’s teachings misunderstood and misrepresented. But the scandals that stain our history do not exist because we lived our Catholicism, but rather, because we *failed* to live it. And what I find most of all in the Church’s history is a reflection of my own fragile and broken humanity.

When we behave as-second-rate-versions-of-ourselves bad things happen. That’s true for us as individuals and it’s true for the Church.

The Ugly

One of the ugliest scandals surrounding the Catholic Church is also one of the most recent: the sexual abuse scandal among priests. There is never any excuse for the abuse of a child. It is not only immoral and unchristian, but it is criminal in every civilized society. The abuse and the scandal were also mishandled in some cases by Church officials.

Scandals like this rock people’s faith. When the Church fails to live up to her mission and the values she invites others to live by, the faith of millions of ordinary people is affected. Why? The Church is supposed to help people get closer to God. But when she gets caught up in a scandal it can stand as an obstacle between God and the people.

The first e-mail Pope John Paul II sent was an apology to everyone who had been abused by a priest or religious. Benedict XVI also apologized to the victims.

There have been some truly ugly moments in Catholic history. They are inexcusable. We should pray for the victims of these parts of our history.



Sometimes we have to suffer for the Church, just as Mary suffered watching her son being ridiculed and tortured.



Saint John Paul II (1920–2005) was born in Poland. In 1978 he was elected the 264th Bishop of Rome. For the next twenty years he traveled the world tirelessly, bringing the hope, peace, and joy of the Gospel to everyone who would listen. He had a deep love for young people and out of love instituted World Youth Day. In 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot in St. Peter’s Square. He survived the assassination attempt and visited his shooter in prison on Christmas in 1983. He is one of the modern giants of our faith. His story cannot be contained in a thousand pages. If you want to have a life-changing experience, read George Weigel’s biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*.





What would it be like if Mary was in your parish?



Faith·ful·ness

[feyth-fuh l-ness]

loyalty, constancy, and steadfastness

What are you faithful to?

Who is the most faithful person you know?

What can you do to increase your faith?

The Lies

History is also full of lies about the Catholic Church. These lies are often perpetuated by modern popular culture. Let's take a look at some.

One lie is the idea that the Church is against science and wants to keep everyone ignorant so they can be controlled. This is nonsense. Many of the great scientific discoveries were made by Catholic priests. And if the Church wanted to keep everyone ignorant why did it develop universities and become the champion of education for the common man?

Another lie that is perpetuated about the Church is that it is opposed to progress and is an obstacle to progress. This is also an absurd lie. The Church has been a champion of progress from the very beginning, and this is a tradition that has continued throughout our rich history of contribution. The Catholic Church has nurtured and encouraged progress in education, law, art, music, architecture, science, philosophy, theology, language, and human rights. In fact, many of the best minds of our times believe that Western civilization is almost completely indebted to the Catholic Church.

Today one of the biggest lies surrounds the priesthood. The media would have you believe that every priest sexually abuses children. In a recent poll, when asked what percentage of priests were pedophiles, respondents said between 33 and 50 percent. In fact, 1.8 percent of priests were involved in the scandal. The great majority of priests are good men who have given their lives to help you and me grow spiritually, become the-best-version-of-ourselves, and get to Heaven.

The world tends to ignore the goodness of the Church and blow our mistakes out of proportion to make them all-encompassing. At the beginning of this section we talked about some of the Church's great contributions—how many of those did you already know about? I've met many Catholics who didn't know any of those things.

The last lie I want to explore briefly with you is the idea that the Church is always behind the times. Not so. It is easy to present the Church as being old-fashioned and out of date, but this is a lie. The Church is a prophet and as such is ahead of the times.

One modern example of this can be found in the papal encyclical "Humanae Vitae." In it Pope Paul VI explained what would happen if artificial contraceptives became widely used in society. It was written in 1968, before you and I were born. It was written in a time very different from the world we live in today. But it is full of prophecy, and what Paul VI predicted would happen is exactly what has happened.

Pope Paul VI predicted artificial contraception would be bad for marriage, bad for families, and in particular, that it would lead to the objectification of women.

He was an unwelcome prophet of his times, and remains an unwelcome prophet in our times—but he is modern proof that the Church is ahead of the times, not behind the times.

The bottom line is this: Don't believe everything you hear about the Church. When someone criticizes the Church, ask them to prove it. If you have doubts about something, delve into the issue yourself so that you can really understand the great history of the Catholic Church. It is not a perfect history, but the Church has always been a force for incredible good in the world.

There have been some regrettable moments in the life of the Catholic Church, but a fair look at history demonstrates that violence and abuse are not the overarching story of Catholicism. Our story is primarily one of agape love, incredible contribution, and the relief of human suffering.

I'm proud to be Catholic, and the more I learn about our history, the prouder I become.



FREDERIC OZANAM (1813-1853) WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD AND STUDYING IN PARIS WHEN HE HE FELT CALLED TO HELP THE POOR. HE GOT SOME FRIENDS TOGETHER AND BEGAN TO SERVE THE POOR. THEY CALLED THEMSELVES "THE CONFERENCE OF CHARITY." THEY WERE SERVANTS AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR. LATER THEY BECAME KNOWN AS THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL. TODAY THE SOCIETY EXISTS IN DOZENS OF COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PARISHES HAVE A SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL GROUP. THEY FEED, CLOTHE, HOUSE, AND PROVIDE HEALING MEDICAL HELP FOR MILLIONS OF MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN EVERY DAY. THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IS JUST ONE OF HUNDREDS OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED OF THE WORLD. CATHOLICS HAVE A GREAT HISTORY OF CONTRIBUTION. FREDERIC WASN'T THAT MUCH OLDER THAN YOU WHEN HE BEGAN THIS GREAT WORK. HE COULD NOT HAVE ENVISIONED WHERE IT WOULD LEAD. BUT THAT'S HOW GOD WORKS.



D·I·S·C·U·S·S·I·O·N
QUESTIONS

1. WHAT MAKES YOU PROUDEST TO BE CATHOLIC?

2. IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE CHURCH DISAPPOINTED YOU?

3. WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES, AND WE ALL SIN AGAINST GOD. DO YOUR OWN FAILINGS HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHY THERE HAVE BEEN SCANDALS AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH?



The 7 SACRAMENTS ARE...

- Baptism
- EUCCHARIST
- CONFIRMATION
- Reconciliation
- ANOINTING OF THE SICK
- MARRIAGE
- Holy Orders

How many sacraments can one person receive?

9.4 Ten GREAT Reasons to be Catholic

I love being Catholic, and there are an infinite number of great reasons to be Catholic, but let's take a look at ten of them.

You can't put these things in order, and we could argue about the order until the end of the world. Be here they are:

- 10. This is the Church that Jesus Christ started and sent the Holy Spirit to guide. It is unique and original.
- 9. The Catholic Church has relieved more suffering than any other group of people in the history of the world. We care for the sick, the hungry, the lonely, the homeless, the uneducated, and the imprisoned. I love being part of that.
- 8. We have history and mystery. To really understand Christianity you need a historical perspective, and the history of Christianity is Catholic. For more than fifteen hundred years there were no Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Pentecostal Christians, Lutherans, Mormons, Evangelical Christians, Non-Denominational Christians. Today, there are more than twenty-five thousand different Christian denominations, but they all lack the rich and beautiful history we have as Catholics. We have history, and we have mystery. We know it's all right not to have the answer to everything. Some things are a mystery, and that's OK.
- 7. We have the Saints. These are the great heroes and heroines of Christianity. They are the most diverse group of people in history. Some were rich and some were poor; some were very well educated and some had no formal education; some were young and others were old. They have lived in every century, on every continent, in every country – and they all tried to be the-best-version-of-themselves. Now they are in Heaven, cheering you on.
- 6. We believe in the power of prayer. At every moment of every day Mass is being prayed in thousands of places around the world. That's our family praying for the whole world. We don't just pray for Catholics; we pray for everyone. Imagine how different the history of the world would have been if the Catholic Church had never offered a single prayer.
- 5. It's the same all around the world. I took a group on a pilgrimage a few years ago and we all went to Mass in Florence. That night I asked the group about the experience of attending Mass in Italian. They said, "Even though I don't speak Italian, I still knew what was going on." Catholicism is the same everywhere, and that's a beautiful thing.
- 4. The Catholic Church is the premier defender of human rights.

3. You need to be part of something bigger than yourself. Life is not about you. It's about laying down your life in the service of others out of love for God. You could lay down your life for a sport, a career, money, things . . . and people do. But what a waste! The Catholic Church has the most important mission in the world—and you are invited to get involved and be a part of that great mission!

2. The Eucharist. Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist.

1. You don't say no to God when he invites you. There are some invitations we don't turn down.

I can come up with great reasons to be Catholic all day long, but ultimately you need to come up with your own. I can't give you my love of the Church. I wish I could. In the end you have to make Catholicism your own.



GOD HAS A BETTER PLAN THAN ANY YOU CAN PUT TOGETHER FOR YOURSELF.

The SACRAMENTS are at the CENTER of the LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

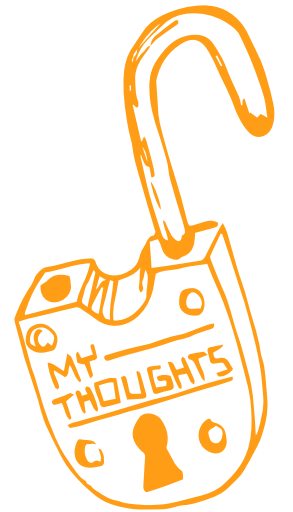


Discussion Questions

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST REASON TO BE CATHOLIC?

2. WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN THIS SESSION THAT REALLY MADE YOU STOP AND THINK?

3. HOW DID THE TOP TEN REASONS TO BE CATHOLIC CHANGE THE WAY YOU VIEW CATHOLICISM?



9.5 DECISION point

There are a lot of people who turn their backs on Catholicism simply because it is old. Catholicism is old; I admit it. But let me ask you a question: If you found an ancient treasure map, would you throw it away just because it was old? No. I don't think you would. You would go looking for the treasure. The age of a map doesn't determine its value of the map. It doesn't matter how old the map is. What matters is whether or not the map leads to treasure.

Catholicism is a treasure map. It may be old, but it still leads to treasure. I hope you have the courage and the wisdom to seek out the treasure that is Catholicism. And once you find it, I hope you spend the rest of your life marveling at its beauty and applying it to your life.

Do that and you will live an uncommon life filled with purpose and happiness.



If you could invite Mary to give a lecture at your school, what would you ask her to speak about?

YOU DON'T THROW AWAY
A Treasure MAP
JUST BECAUSE IT'S OLD.



JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE MIGHT BE BETTER IF YOU FOLLOWED THE MAP THE CHURCH INVITES US TO FOLLOW?

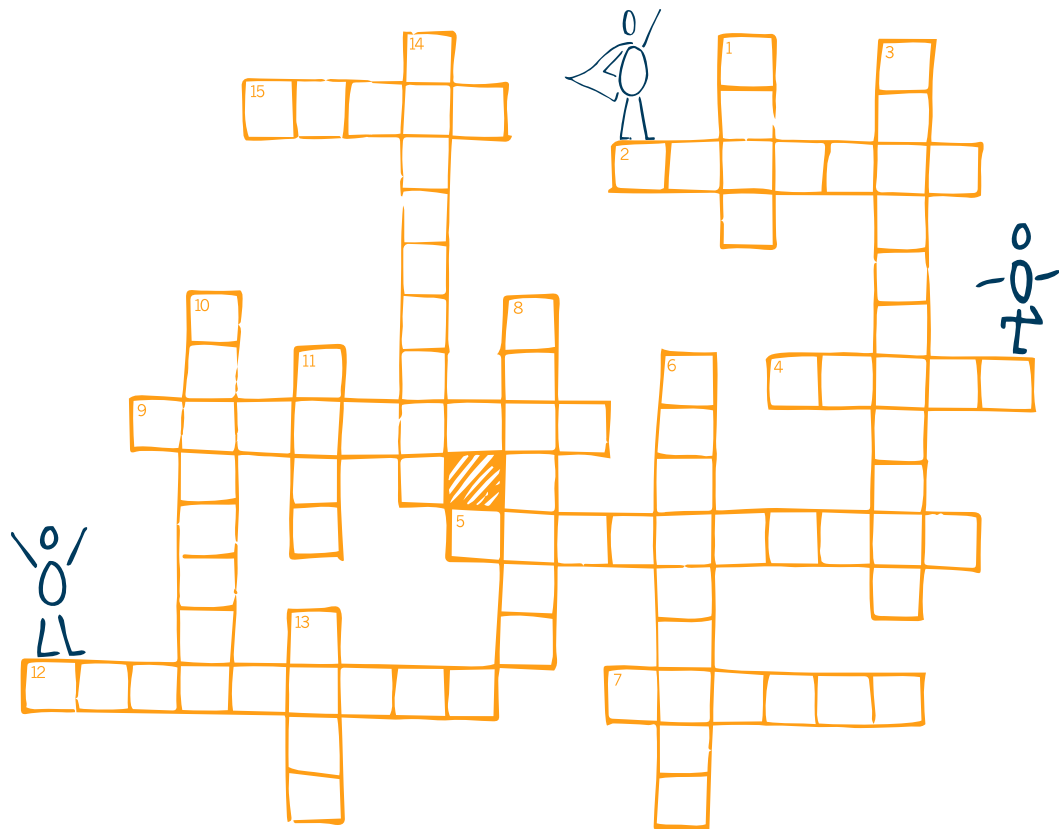
2. IN WHAT WAYS IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BE COUNTERCULTURAL LIKE THE FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE?

3. HOW PURPOSEFULLY ARE YOU LIVING YOUR LIFE? GIVE YOURSELF A SCORE BETWEEN ONE AND TEN.



THE CHURCH

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

2. The rich story of how our faith has been lived and passed along
4. The improper treatment of another human being
5. Liberation from sin that puts us back in right relationship with God
7. Successor of the Apostles
9. The killing of more than six million Jews and others by the Nazis during World War II
12. Of or relating to the succession of spiritual authority of the original Twelve Apostles
15. A man or woman of heroic virtue

DOWN

1. The celebration of the Eucharist
3. The act of harassing, annoying, and bullying someone because they are Christian
6. A group of people who support each other in living out their faith
8. A truth that can only be known by revelation and cannot be fully understood
10. The process of improving something
11. Set apart for a special purpose by God and for God
13. The Bishop of Rome
14. Not exclusive or elitist, but for everyone

