

- 2,000 years of wisdom and reflection on how the Teachings of Christ and the Apostles relate to us in our current age.
- The guarantee of Objective Truth
- Theological and Philosophical Rigor in the reflection on the Faith.
- Traditions and Devotions that reach back to the Ages.
- The guarantee of infallible teaching from Christ himself to His Apostles and their successors.
- The Catholic Mystical Tradition of the Saints, discerned and approved by Apostolic Authority in the light of the Apostolic Tradition.

With all The Catholic Church's Treasures in the Deposit of Faith, it is rather sad that people leave the Catholic Faith behind. Everything they can find in other ecclesial communions that is the Truth can be found in the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, people choose to leave our Church because their ignorance of the Catholic Faith is exploited by well-meaning but deluded friends.



Saint Peter's Catholic Church

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St. Peter's Catholic
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The Four Marks of the Church: The Apostolic Church



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How you can return to the Church: actions and resources

1) Resources to counter the arguments of Fundamentalist Christians:

- Karl Keating; Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on Roman Catholicism by "Bible Christians". (c 1988 Ignatius Press, ISBN 089870-177-5).
- The Encyclicals Dominus Iesus & The Splendor of Truth by John Paul II
- The Website of Catholic Answers at [www.http://www.catholic.com/](http://www.catholic.com/)

2) How to return to the Catholic Church:

- Contact parish priest at the local Catholic Church and begin discussions about how you can return. In addition to counseling you regarding past hurts you may have experienced, he may give you some reading or introduce you to a process called Remembering Church or some other process for exploring the Catholic Faith.
- The final act of reconciling yourself to the Church will likely be confession and making a ritualized Profession of Faith.

It is really quite simple in most cases to return to the Catholic Church, but you may want to take adequate care to be sure you have no qualms of conscience or reason before you make a step to return to the Church. We welcome your return, but want to respect your inner processes and disposition toward the Church. This move must have integrity for both you and the Church so that it is a lasting embrace of the Catholic Faith..

Sometimes Catholics who have broken some Commandment of Christ or Law of the Church feel they cannot come back to the Church. Let's just say that all Catholics must attend weekly Eucharist on Sunday (or an anticipated Saturday night Mass) whether or not they can receive Communion that day. For those who have gotten married outside the Church for whatever reason, you are certainly welcome and invited to come to Mass. Indeed you have a right to come to Mass. If, in order to return to the sacraments, you need to **get your marriage blessed**, your pastor is very disposed to help you to do that, whether there is a matter of a prior marriage that needs to be cleared for you to be married in the Catholic Church, or simply to make your marriage sacramental in accord with the Catholic Church's laws.

**What does it mean to be
Apostolic and
why is it so Important?**

In the Apostle's Creed and in the Nicene Creed, we say that we believe in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Why do we assert being Apostolic (apostolicity) as part of this Creed? We have had a great bleeding-off of Catholics in the past 50 years, due in part to the ignorance of Catholics as to why apostolicity is important.

History of The Early Church

Early Church history begins with the time of the Apostles (called the Apostolic period), the period directly after the Apostles (Sub-Apostolic) and the next 300-400 years in which the Church Fathers wrote about the Church (called the Patristic period).

The earliest records of the Apostolic Period that we have are contained in the New Testament which date from roughly 50 to 95 AD. In the recollections of the life of the Apostolic period found in the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters, we find testimony about the importance of the Apostolic Teaching and preaching as remembered by the communities to which the writers belonged. Acts 2:42 ff. puts in order of importance the four things that were important to the first converts: the Teaching of the Apostles, the communal life, the prayers and the Breaking of the Bread (which developed into the Mass). Notice that nowhere does it say "Bible Study", or reading the New Testament. One has to wonder "why?" This Church, though aware of the Hebrew Scriptures, paid great attention to these four things, the first of which was the Teaching of the Apostles. Indeed, we know from studies and traditions of Judaism that sacred scripture was used for prayer at the Temple, and for house-worship. Study took place in a synagogue, with an authoritative teacher. It can be presumed that the Apostles teaching was in part interpretive of Biblical texts that they memorized. Still it was only part of the whole complex of worship, community, learning and works of

mercy. It should be pointed out that Pope Benedict repeatedly has said that scripture and the Church's Tradition can only be understood rightly and interpreted authentically from within the community that it came from, that is—the Church.

The next testimony in Acts, actually precedes this text. It is the speech of St. Peter, who is throughout the Gospels and Acts, the spokesman for the Apostolic Twelve (cf. Acts chs. 2-9, Matthew 16, John chs. 20-21). As head of the Church, he functions as the Authentic Interpreter of the Tradition. Because of this, Acts stresses the necessity of being in union with the Apostolic Twelve and in particular, Peter, in order that the Holy Spirit be poured out on the converts in Samaria (Acts 8). In all of these texts, Peter is the most important character. The books of the New Testament repeatedly mention Peter, James and John, in that order and show how the Apostles waited in respect for Peter to act or speak, to judge and make decisions for them all.

The Sub-Apostolic Age writers also attest to the need for unity by referring to the priestly prayer of Christ in John 17. By the Patristic age the Primacy of Peter and the unity of all the Bishops in the world would be sorely tested by heresies. The Church so closely guarded the Apostolic Tradition that when Bishops deviated from that Faith, they were deposed in Church Councils and banished from their dioceses.

Papal Primacy As A Doctrine

The Successors of Peter, or in other words, the Popes were considered by the Churches of the East and the West as the first among equals. In other words, though Popes are mere men, and thus show equality, the other Patriarchs (heads of national churches in the East,) and all the Latin Rite Bishops (Roman Catholic) have looked to Rome for leadership. This manner of Church governance persisted until the Great Schism of the XI Century when a final and full break caused the East to definitively exclude the Roman Pontiff (Pope). Despite this break, the Eastern Churches have maintained the Apostolic Faith insofar as their Doctrines and Sacraments are preserved. The two churches have worked sporadically over the past thousand years to heal the breach, and

more consistently since The Council of Vatican II where the Patriarchs and Hierarchs of the East were invited.

A Definition of What is a Church

A Church as understood by the Roman Catholic Church must maintain the Apostolic Succession and maintain the Sacraments—especially Eucharist (cf. *Dominus Iesus*, para. 17). Strangely enough, a Church need not be in union with the Pope in order to maintain its status as a Church. Thus the Russian Orthodox Church is a Church, although it is not in union with the Pope. It fulfills all the other requirements and so can properly be called a Church, whereas the Anglican Church is not. Why? Because the Anglican Church abandoned the Apostolic Succession of priestly ministry by changing the rite of ordination sufficiently to render it invalid, both for priests and bishops. Therefore, because the Anglican Church stopped ordaining its priests according to the Ancient Apostolic Tradition, the Apostolic Authority died out when the last validly ordained bishops and priests died. Later, they resumed the practice, but by then the succession was broken.

Attempts To Re-unify the Churches

Another oblique witness to the importance of Apostolicity lies in the efforts to bring the Churches back into the common union that existed before the Great Schism. Ecumenical dialogues (dialogues with Churches and Christian Ecclesial Communion) between some 22 Eastern Churches has yielded reconciliation between 21 Churches and the Latin Rite Church and so Roman Catholics who travel and lack the presence of a Latin Rite (Roman Catholic) Church can receive sacraments by these Eastern Catholic Churches in the name of the Roman Catholic Church. This goes both ways: a Maronite (Lebanese) Catholic can be baptized in a Roman Catholic Church by a Catholic ordained deacon or priest, and when they return to a place where there is a Maronite Church, their Sacraments go with them, without question. This is only possible because they are in union with the Apostolic See (the Pope).



What Is Lost When Apostolicity is abandoned?

With the exception of some mainline Churches, when someone becomes a Protestant or joins a cult like the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, they must repudiate their Catholic sacraments. With this formal act all their ties with the Roman Catholic Church must be broken. They will have to deny either totally or parts of the Apostolic Tradition. This is the mortal sin of Apostasy. Often times, the only thing that is preserved in these protestant Churches is the Bible, and as in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Bible has been changed to support their way of believing. In the Case of the Mormons, it is relegated a distantly secondary place and largely unused.

Here is a short list of the riches that are cast aside by those who leave the Catholic Church:

- First and foremost: the Holy Eucharist—the REAL PRESENCE of the True Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.
- The Apostolic Succession and a validly ordained Priesthood (which includes the Hierarchy of bishops and the Pope.
- The Intercession of the Saints
- The consolation of Sacramental Reconciliation—hearing the words of absolution.



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