

If you have any further questions please text them to 512-359-3400

WHO/WHAT HAS THE AUTHORITY?

Catholic

Catholicism teaches that God's revelation is passed down through **Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition**, and that the Church's teaching authority (the **Magisterium**) meaning that the Pope and Bishops are the only ones who can rightly interpret the Bible.

Protestant

Christians teach **Sola Scriptura**, meaning **Scripture alone is the highest and final authority for Christian doctrine**.

This doesn't mean Protestants believe the Church, pastors, or Christian tradition are worthless. It means they are subject to Scripture rather than equal to Scripture in authority.

THE BIBLE

2 Timothy 3:16–17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

WHAT ROLE DOES MY CHURCH PLAY?

Catholic

Catholicism has a **sacramental priesthood** and recognizes **seven sacraments**.

A **sacrament** is a visible sign instituted by Christ through which Catholics believe God's grace is given.

The 7 Sacraments:

Baptism

Confirmation

Eucharist — receiving Christ in the Eucharist; Catholics believe Christ is truly present

Reconciliation (Confession) — receiving God's forgiveness through the sacrament of reconciliation, with a Priest.

Anointing of the Sick — grace and strength for those who are seriously ill

Holy Orders — ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons

Matrimony — marriage as a covenant and sacramental vocation

What does "sacramental priesthood" mean?

Catholics believe that ordained bishops and priests receive a special sacramental ministry through **Holy Orders**. Priests have particular responsibilities within the Church, including celebrating the Eucharist and administering certain sacraments and handling confessions.

Protestant (Christian)

Most Protestants recognize **Baptism and the Lord's Supper** as the two practices specifically instituted by Jesus that the Church is commanded to observe. Many Protestant traditions call these **ordinances**, while some Protestant traditions also use the word **sacrament**.

Ordinance

An **ordinance** is a practice commanded by Jesus for His followers to observe as an act of obedience and remembrance.

Baptism

Baptism is a public expression of identification with Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection.

The Lord's Supper

WHO IS OUR MEDIATOR?

1 Timothy 2:3–6

3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. 5 For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.

Hebrews 4:14–16

14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Protestant understanding

Because Jesus is our mediator and High Priest, we as Christians do not need a human priest to have access to God.

What does “priesthood of the believer” mean?

It means that **every Christian who belongs to Jesus has direct access to God through Jesus Christ**. You don't need a human priest to stand between you and God.

In the Old Testament, priests had a unique role. They represented the people before God and offered sacrifices on their behalf. But when Jesus died and rose again, He became the **ultimate High Priest and ultimate sacrifice**.

HOW ARE PEOPLE MADE RIGHT WITH MY FATHER?

This is one of the biggest differences between Catholic and Protestant theology.

Catholic

Catholic teaching says that **salvation is entirely dependent upon God's grace**. Catholics do not teach that someone can earn salvation simply by doing enough good things.

Catholicism teaches that justification begins with God's grace and is received through faith and Baptism. Catholics also teach that the Christian must cooperate with God's grace through a life of faith, love, obedience, and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Catholic teaching also says that a person cannot have absolute certainty that they will persevere in grace until the end.

Protestant

Protestants who affirm **Sola Fide** teach that a person is **justified by grace through faith apart from works**.

Sola Fide = "faith alone."

This means that we are declared righteous before God because of what **Jesus has done**, received through faith—not because we have earned righteousness through our works.

Good works still matter. They are understood as the **fruit and evidence of genuine faith**, rather than the basis on which God declares someone righteous.

EPHESIANS 2:8–10

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

WHAT DOES "SALVIFIC" MEAN?

Salvific simply means:

Related to salvation or having a role in salvation.

So when someone says: "Catholics believe Baptism is salvific", they mean that Catholic theology understands Baptism as having a real role in God's saving work.

WHAT IS VENERATION?

This is a BIG one.

Catholics honor **Mary and the saints**, veneration is a form of worship for those who are dead, and have had a relationship with God. (really weird stuff)

Veneration

Veneration means **honoring someone because of their relationship with God and their example of faithfulness.**

Catholics may ask saints to pray for them, just as Christians might ask another Christian:

"Will you pray for me?"

Catholics believe the saints in heaven can intercede for Christians.

Mary

Catholicism gives Mary a unique level of honor because she is understood to be the mother of Jesus.

Catholic theology teaches several doctrines about Mary, including:

Perpetual virginity

Immaculate Conception

Assumption

Mary as Mother of God

Catholics do **not** officially teach that Mary is a goddess or that she is equal to God.

WHY DO PROTESTANTS HAVE A PROBLEM WITH VENERATION?

The Protestant concern is primarily that **Scripture draws the line between honoring people and directing prayer toward them.**

1 Timothy 2:5

"There is one God and one Mediator... Christ Jesus."

Protestants generally emphasize that believers can go directly to God through Jesus.

They also point to passages where believers are instructed to pray to God rather than being instructed to pray to departed Christians.

Revelation 22:8–9

When John falls before an angel, the angel redirects him:

"Worship God!"

The Protestant argument is:

Why ask saints to intercede when Christians can directly approach God through Jesus?

Catholic response

Catholics distinguish between:

Worshiping God and asking a saint to intercede.

The Catholic argument is that asking a saint to pray is not worshiping the saint. But it is worshiping someone who is dead.

WHY DO CATHOLICS ASK SAINTS TO PRAY?

The basic Catholic argument is:

"If Christians ask other Christians on earth to pray for them, why couldn't Christians in heaven pray for us?"

Catholics believe death does not destroy the unity of Christ's Church.

They therefore believe Christians on earth and Christians in heaven remain united in Christ.

Protestant response

Protestants agree that Christians should pray for one another.

The disagreement is that Scripture doesn't give Christians a basis for **addressing requests to departed saints**. Paul mentions that word "saints" in some of his letters, as he is talking to all of those who believe and have "bent the knee to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

PURGATORY

Catholicism teaches that some people who die in God's grace may still need purification before entering the fullness of heaven. It is perceived as a "holding place" for those that still need to be cleansed. Purgatory is NOT mentioned in the Bible, it is either Heaven or Hell.

This state is called **Purgatory**.

It is also not the same thing as hell.

Protestant response

Protestants reject Purgatory because Scripture teaches that Christ's sacrifice completely accomplishes the believer's justification and that there is no biblical basis for a post-death purification process.

