

I'm not robot!

Use of water during Baptism. However, we can point out that they all believe that God can use their ministers as instruments in His physical healing. Why wouldn't God do the same with spiritual healing, which is more important? Finally, return to John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." "The Apostles are to continue the mission of Christ. The essence of that mission is THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Jesus knows our human nature. He provided sacraments to give us several important gifts: humility, the certainty of forgiveness, spiritual direction, and help to overcome self-deception and rationalization matters of sin. Clearly, Christ gave His disciples the power to forgive sin. This power was intended to be passed on, since Christ knew people would sin until the end of time. Early Church history confirms that Christians believed this power was passed on to the Apostles' successors (see Jurgens: #493, #553, #602, #637, and #855a). 25 SCANDALS IN THE CHURCH In the past several years, the Catholic Church in the United States has been hit with one scandal after another. Many of these crimes involve priests in acts of pedophilia. This is a hideous sin, and in priests it is truly an abomination. As a Catholic, you can be sure that you will be asked questions about this. How do you respond? Acknowledge the situation honestly. Don't try to explain it away. Tell people that scandals have badly wounded the Church in this country. Also, admit that many mistakes have been made by our Church leaders in handling this issue. Now they are dealing with this problem in a forthright way. In some cases, the Vatican is directly intervening. Many Fundamentalists will try to use these scandals to attack celibacy, and to challenge the claim that the Catholic Church is the true Church. You must be prepared to respond to both arguments. CELIBACY Celibacy has nothing to do with pedophilia or other sex scandals involving priests. Most pedophiles are married men. We are seeing pedophilia in major institutions everywhere, not just in the Catholic Church. Remind Fundamentalists that a few years ago we had one television evangelist after another involved in sex scandals, some involving perverted sex. All of these televangelists were married. Nobody blamed these scandals on the institution of marriage! Nobody demanded that Protestant ministers renounce marriage. People do not get involved in sex scandals because they are married or celibate. They commit these sins because they fail God as individuals. You don't judge marriage by those who break their marriage vows. Neither should you judge celibacy by those who break their celibacy vows. Marriage and celibacy should both be judged by those who are faithful to their vows. Remember, about one-half of marriages break up. Does this mean that we should get rid of marriage? Of course not! It means we should work to strengthen married couples in their vocation. Similarly, the Church is not going to get rid of celibacy because a very few priests break their vows. We know that marriage is a good thing because it was instituted by God, and made a sacrament by Christ. We know that celibacy is good because it was praised by Jesus (Mt 19:10-12), and strongly recommended by St. Paul for those who would devote themselves entirely to the ministry (1 Cor 7:32-35). We all know that millions of Christians have led saintly lives as both celibate and married people. THE TRUE CHURCH Scandals in the Church are not an argument against the Catholic claim to be the true Church. In the OT, we find baby sacrifice and temple prostitution involving leaders of the OT religion (Jer 32:32-35; 2 Kgs 23:7). Of the twelve Apostles, one betrayed Christ, one denied Him, one refused to believe in His Resurrection, and they all abandoned Him at the Garden of Gethsemani. 26 The Catholic Church is both human and divine. Because it is human, it will have scandals. Because it is divine, it will last forever. Scandals are found in all denominations; they have nothing to do with the Catholic Church being the true Church. What St. Paul wrote concerning the Jews applies also to Christians: "What if some were unfaithful? Will their infidelity nullify the fidelity of God? Of course not!" (Rom 3:3-4). Christ's faithfulness to His Church remains even when some of its members are unfaithful (see 2 Tim 2:13). Scandals do not prove that the Catholic Church is false. They only prove what is obvious: that the Church contains sinners as well as saints, tares along with the wheat. In the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Mt 13:24-30), Our Lord makes clear that good and evil will exist side by side until the end of time. Mt 13:47-48 also confirms that the Church contains good and bad members alike. 27 PRAYER TO THE SAINTS It is biblical to ask the saints in heaven to pray for us? Catholics say yes, since we are all part of the communion of saints. Most Protestants say no, even though many of them recite the Apostles' Creed. Thus, they profess to believe in the "communion of saints," but usually they cannot explain what this means. What does it mean to believe in the communion of saints? Does this belief give us the biblical foundations for the doctrine of intercessory prayer? COMMUNION OF SAINTS As the word suggests, the communion of saints refers to the bond of unity among all believers, both living and dead, who are committed followers of Christ. In Christ, we are made part of God's family (1 Tim 3:15), children of God (1 John 3:1), joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), and partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). This family communion of saints is known to Catholics as the Mystical Body of Christ.31 We are joined in a supernatural union as members of Christ's own body, and thus as members of one another. Each of us participates in the divine life of Christ Himself. Know the image of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-5). Remind nonCatholics that because we as branches are connected to Christ the vine, we are also connected to each other. It is the life and grace of Jesus that gives us life and unites us in our common pilgrimage to heaven. St. Paul emphasizes this unity in Christ's body in 1 Cor 12:12-27 (especially v. 25/27) and in Rom 12:4-16. Know these passages. INTERCESSORY PRAYER What we have said about the communion of saints gives us the biblical reasons why Catholics ask the saints to intercede for them: (1) All Christians are members of Christ's body and one another (Rom 12:5 and many others). (2) Jesus has only one body (Eph 4:4; Col 3:15). (3) Death cannot separate Christians from Christ or from one another (Rom 8:35-39). (4) Christians are bound in mutual love (Rom 12:10; 1 Th e s s 5 : 1 1 ; Gal 6:2). We are members of Christ's one body, united in His divine life even beyond the grave, and concerned with each other's salvation and growth in God's family. In that union, we call for help and support from our older brothers and sisters who have already won their crown of glory. Just as in our human families we naturally turn to our siblings for aid and example, how much more should we turn to our supernatural family for help and inspiration. Several objections are directed against the Catholic position on intercessory prayer. The saints are dead. Catholics practice necromancy, communication with the dead, which is condemned (Dt 18:10-11). OBJECTION 1 The teaching that the Church is the Body of Christ is found throughout the NT: 1 Cor 10:16; Gal 3:28; Eph 1:22-23, 4:4, 4:15-16, 5:21-32; Col 1:18, 3:15. 1: 28 Answer: Necromancy means summoning forth spirits from the shadowy underworld (OT "Sheol"), in order to converse with them. By asking the saints in heaven to intercede for us, Catholics are not conjuring roaming spirits or communicating in any "spiritualistic" way. So prayer to the saints has nothing to do with necromancy. Nor are the saints dead. The saints in heaven are alive and with God: "He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mk 12:26-27). In Mark 9:4, Jesus is seen conversing with Elijah and Moses. Jesus tells the Good Thief: "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43). In fact, the saints in heaven are more alive than we are. They are free from all sin. They enjoy the fullness of God's life-giving presence. Flooded with God's love, they care more about us now than they did on earth. Just as Paul asked fellow believers (saints) to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; Eph 6:18-19; 2 Thess 3:1), now we can ask Paul and the other saints in heaven to pray for us. We are not cut off from each other at their death, rather we are brought closer through the communion we share in Christ. We know that angels and saints place the prayers of the holy ones at God's feet (Tob 12:12; Rev 5:8; Rev 8:3-4), supporting those prayers with their intercessions. The martyrs underneath the heavenly altar cry out for their early vindication (Rev 6:9-11), showing they are aware of, and concerned with, earthly affairs. The angels and saints in heaven will intercede for us before the throne of God if they are petitioned in prayer. OBJECTION 2: 1 Tim 2:5 says there is one mediator between God and man. Isn't prayer to the saints in violation of 1 Tim 2:5? Answer: 1 Tim 2:5 must be understood in the light of 1 Peter 2:5: "Ietyourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." St. Peter says that Christians share in the one, eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. Jesus is mediator between God and man because of His priesthood. Therefore, to share in Christ's priesthood means to share in His mediatorship, both in heaven and on earth. 1 Tim 2:5 confirms that we share in Christ's mediation, when we read it in context. In verses 1-7, St. Paul asks Christians to participate in Christ's unique mediation by offering prayers and intercessions for all men: "This is good and pleasing to God." We are called to unite ourselves to the one mediator Christ, "who gave himself as a ransom for all" by praying "or all men, through Christ. Because Christians share in the priesthood of Christ, we share in a lesser and dependent way in His unique mediation, interceding for all men. Fellow Christians on earth intercede for each other in prayer without contradicting the unique mediation of Jesus Christ. Likewise, there is no contradiction of 1 Tim 2:5 if the saints in heaven intercede for us with their prayers. All prayer, whether in heaven or on earth, is in Christ and through Christ, our one mediator and high priest. The principle is this: although God alone possesses all perfections, we can participate in God's perfections by sharing in His divine life. For example, the Bible says only God is good (Mk 10:18). Yet we can share in that absolute Goodness: "Well done, my good and faithful servant" (Mt 25:23). 29 Jesus shares many of His unique roles with Christians in lesser ways. Jesus is the Creator of all things (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17), and yet He shares this role with men and women in procreation. Jesus is the only Shepherd (Jn 10:11-16), yet He delegates this role to St. Peter (Jn 21:15-16) and later to others (Eph 4:11). Jesus is the eternal High Priest, mediating His once-for-all sacrifice for our redemption (Heb 3:1, 7:24, 9:12, 10:12), and yet Christians are also called to join in Christ's priesthood, as we have seen (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6, 5:10). Obviously, Christ is the unique and primary Creator, Shepherd, and Priest, but each Christian participates in these roles in subordinate ways. By sharing Christ's divine life, Christians also share in Christ's role as the only mediator. OBJECTION 3: The saints in heaven can't hear us. Answer: Why not? Aren't they more alive now than when they were with us? The medium of communication is Christ himself—the vine between the branches. We and the saints form one communion, one body of Christ, being members of Him and members of one another. Heb 12:1 tells us that we are surrounded by "a cloud of witnesses." How could those watching be unconcerned about our welfare? Look at Rev 5:8 and Rev 8:3. The petitions offered as incense to God must be for those who still need help, the holy ones on earth. They are offered by those who can help the most, the holy members in heaven. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19-30), the departed rich man is able to pray to Abraham and intercede for his brothers. This implies that there can be communication across the abyss, and that paternal charity extends beyond the grave. We are certain that the saints in heaven enjoy the face to face vision of God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). It is in this vision that they are aware of our prayers to them. OBJECTION 4: How can saints hear all these prayers, from all different people, all the time? It must sound like a deafening babble. Answer: Heaven has no space or time. Everything appears to God as one eternal present. Like God, the saints are outside of the limitations of space and time. Our earthly way of knowing is limited and incomplete. "At present, we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially, then I shall know fully, as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12). Our heavenly way of knowing is full and perfect. 30 PURGATORY In order to defend the doctrine of Purgatory, you must explain two preliminary distinctions: (1) between guilt and punishment; and (2) between mortal and venial sin. Does God forgive the GUILT of sin and still require PUNISHMENT (reparation, atonement, expiation)? Ask King David. In 2 Sam 12:13-14 we read: "David said to Nathan, '7 have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan answered David, 'The Lord on His part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die.' God forgave the guilt of David's sin, but He still required reparation in the form of suffering. A man might forgive a teenager for breaking his window, but still insist that he repair the damages. Where does Scripture distinguish between MORTAL and VENIAL sin? 1 Jn 5:16-17 proves degrees of sin, distinguishing between deadly sin and sin that is not deadly. James 1:14-15 reads: "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death." St. James distinguishes desire from sin, and beginning sin from mature sin which brings death. Sin which brings death to the soul is mortal. Sin which only wounds and disfigures the soul is venial. What if you die with only venial sins? The souls of those who die in the perfect state of grace, without the least sin or reparation due to sin, go directly to heaven. The souls of those who die in the state of unrepented mortal [deadly] sin go directly to hell. What about the middle sort of people: those who die in the state of grace, but with venial sin or with unpaid reparation due to forgiven sin? They do not merit hell: they are still in the state of grace; yet they are not pure enough for heaven, where "nothing unclean will enter" (Rev 21:27). What does the Bible say about this? God is perfect holiness. Is 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" they [the Seraphim] cried one to the other "We are called to that same holiness. Mt 5:48: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." 1 Pet 1:15-16 "...as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, 'Be holy because I am holy.'" Without perfect holiness, we cannot see God in heaven. Heb 12:14: "Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Rev 21:27: "...nothing unclean will enter it [heaven]." What happens to the faithful who die without perfect holiness or with sin that is not deadly? The biblical, logical, and historical answer is Purgatory. 31 Purgatory comes from the verb "purge" meaning "to purify or cleanse." We should keep this notion of purification in mind when explaining this doctrine. What is the Catholic belief about Purgatory? Purgatory is a temporary state of purification for the imperfect saints. The souls of the just who have died in the state of grace but with venial sins and with reparation due for forgiven mortal and venial sins are fully cleansed in Purgatory so that they may enter heaven. In Purgatory all remaining reparation for sin is made; all remaining selflove is purged and purified until only love of God remains. Remember these three points: (1) Only imperfect saints in the state of grace enter Purgatory. It is not a "second chance" for those who die in unrepented mortal sin. (2) Purgatory exists for purification and reparation. The effects of sin are purged. The punishments due to sin are paid. (3) Purgatory is only temporary. Once the imperfect saints are purified they enter heaven. Everyone in Purgatory will then cease to exist. Only heaven and hell will remain eternally. Is Purgatory Scriptural? First, we should note that the word "purgatory" is not found in Sacred Scripture. This is not the point. The words "Trinity" and "Incarnation" are not found in Scripture, yet these doctrines are clearly taught there. Likewise, the Bible teaches that an intermediate state of purification exists. We call it Purgatory. What is important is the doctrine, not the name. Where is the doctrine of Purgatory referred to in the Bible? Mt 12:32: "And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Jesus implies that some sins can be forgiven in the next world. Sin cannot be forgiven in Hell. There is no sin to be forgiven in heaven. Any remission of sin in the next world can only occur in Purgatory. 1 Cor 3:15: "But if someone's work is burned up, that man will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire." This cannot refer to eternal loss in hell, for there no one is saved. Nor can it refer to heaven, for there no one suffers. It refers, then, to a middle state where the soul temporarily suffers loss so that it may gain heaven. This is essentially the definition of Purgatory. 1 Pet 3:18-20: "For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water" 1 Peter 4:6: "For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that, though condemned in the flesh in human estimation, they might live in the spirit in the estimation of God." Note that it is a prison for disobedient spirits, and yet they were saved when Jesus preached to them. This is not 32 hell, because no one is saved from hell. This is probably not the "limbo of the fathers," (often called "Abraham's bosom," [often called "the righteous souls of the OT waited until Christ opened the gates of heaven), because this is a place for disobedient spirits. One cannot imagine that St. Peter is describing the waiting place of such righteous OT saints as David and John the Baptist when he mentions disobedient spirits. St. Peter is describing a temporary state for disobedient souls who were eventually saved. At the very least, it proves that a third place can exist between heaven and hell. At the very most, it proves the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. The clearest affirmation of the existence of Purgatory comes from the Greek Septuagint; the Old Testament Scriptures used by Christ, all the NT writers, and the councils of Hippo and Carthage (which authoritatively determined the "canon" of inspired books of the Bible). 2 Maccabees 12:44-46: "...for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin." "It is impossible to aid souls in heaven (they have no need), and equally impossible to aid souls in hell (they have no hope). Praying for the dead presumes souls in a middle state where atonement for sin can be made. This passage from Maccabees is a PROOF text. It explicitly affirms an inter- mediate state where the faithful departed make atonement for their sins. 2 Maccabees was so contrary to the "justification by faith alone" theology of the Reformers that Martin Luther chose to remove it (along with six other books) from the Old Testament. This takes us back to the question of the canon of the Bible: How do you know which books really constitute the Bible? By whose authority do you trust that the books upon which you stake your eternal salvation really are inspired? Do you rely on the private judgment of a renegade priest, Luther, who also wanted to throw out Esther, James and Revelation, and thought nothing of adding a word to his translation of Romans? OR, do you accept the divinely-protected judgment of the Catholic Church who used her authority around the year 400 A.D. to determine the official canon of the Bible. This is the same Bible (less seven books) used by the Protestants to attack the very authority of the Church who gave it to them. Even if 2 Maccabees is rejected as Scripture, there can be no doubt that, as history, the book accurately reflects the religious character of the Jews of the second century BC. A little more than one hundred years before Christ, Jews prayed for their dead (and still do today). In fact, some of the earliest Christian liturgies (worship services) include prayers for the dead. Ancient Christian tomb inscriptions from the second and third centuries frequently contain an appeal for prayers for the dead.32 This practice is also mentioned in the writings of the Church Fathers. 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Are there any New Testament passages that refer to prayers and practices performed for the benefit of the deceased? 2 Tim 1:16-18: "May the Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus because he often gave me new heart and was not ashamed of my chains.... May the Lord grant him to find mercyfrom the Lord on that day." St. Paul prays for his departed friend Onesiphorus, which makes sense only if he can be helped by prayer. 1 Cor 15: 29-30: "Otherwise, what will people accomplish by having themselves baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they having themselves baptized for them?" In his argument for the resurrection of the body, St. Paul mentions (without condemning or approving) the practice of people having themselves baptized for the benefit of the dead, who cannot be helped if there is no intermediate state of purification. 34 32 The epitaph of Abercius [180 AD] reads: "The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius ordered this to be inscribed; truly I was in my seventy second year. May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius" (Jurgens , p. 78, #187). 33 THE CROWN, 3, 3, Jurgens, p. 151, #367. On the grounds of sola scriptura, Protestants have no way to refute the Mormon practice of baptism for the dead. They must have recourse to the Fathers and Church Tradition to prove that Christianity never endorsed this practice. 34 34 MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS / Why do Catholics call their priests "father," when Jesus commands us in Matthew 23:9 to "call no man father?" In Matthew 23:1-12, when Jesus tells us to call no man "father" or "teacher," He is using figurative language to emphasize that all legitimate authority and truth ultimately come from God. We are not to take these passages literally. Throughout the Bible men are called fathers and teachers. Both Catholics and Protestants call earthly men fathers and teachers. St. Stephen and St. Paul call the Jewish religious leaders "fathers" (Acts 7:2 and 22:1). St. Paul calls the Corinthians "my beloved children.... for I became yourfather in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (1 Cor 4:14-15; also see 1 Thess 2:11, 1 Tim 1:2, and Tit 1:4). St. Paul became their spiritual father because he cooperated with God in giving them spiritual life, just as biological fathers cooperate with God in giving physical life. Catholics call their priests "father" because, like St. Paul, priests cooperate with God in giving spiritual life to their flock by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. 2. Why do Catholics worship statues in violation of Exodus 20:4-5? Catholics certainly don't worship statues, or anything created. The Catholic Church teaches that only God is to be worshipped: to worship anything created is to commit the serious sin of idolatry. In Ex 20:4-5, God prohibits the making of images for the purpose of worshipping them. But God does not prohibit image-making altogether. In Ex 25:18-19, God commands Moses to make statues of angels (cherubim). In Num 21:8, God tells Moses to make a bronze serpent (seraph), which the Israelites had to look upon in order to be healed. The Jews also used many carved images in the Temple, including cherubim, oxen, lions, palm trees, and flowers (1 Kings 6 and 7). Catholics use statues and other images to call to mind the holy people they represent: Jesus, the angels, and the saints. For the same reason, Protestants use Christmas nativity scenes to depict the same holy people: Jesus, the angels, and the saints. Catholics simply use statues and images in devotions all year around. The rejection of statues and other images in Church devotional life is a heresy known as "iconoclasm." It was first seen in Christianity in the eighth century when the wicked Emperor Leo the Isaurian, influenced by the new religion of Islam (founded in 622 A.D.), began attacking the use of statues and icons in the Church. In the Second Council of Nicea in 787 A.D., the Church condemned this heresy. It did not renounce in Christianity until the Reformation. 3. Did 7 the Catholic Church become pagan after Constantine became emperor? Constantine's Christian mother, St. Helena, raised him with Christian beliefs (although he delayed baptism until his deathbed). He defeated the pagan general Maxentius under the standard of the Christian cross in 312 A.D. The next year Constantine signed the Edict of Milan which officially ended the Roman persecution of the Church. It is absurd to think he attempted to paganize the Church. In 361 A.D., the 35 emperor Julian the Apostate launched a persecution of the Church in an attempt to bring back paganism. This would not have been necessary if the Church had become pagan at the time of Constantine (312-337 A.D.). A careful study of the first 300 years of Christianity reveals that Catholic doctrines such as the Eucharist, Apostolic authority, and the Pope as the successor of St. Peter, were believed by Christians from the very beginning. They certainly did not arise after Constantine. 4. Is the Mass really a sacrifice? Fundamentalists reject the Catholic teaching on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for two reasons. They claim the Mass violates many passages in Hebrews which tell us Jesus was only sacrificed once, and that, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22-25, 10:10:11:2). They think Catholics teach Jesus is sacrificed again at every Mass. They cite Catholic catechisms which teach that in the Mass Jesus is offered in an unbloody manner. The Catholic Church teaches that the one, all-sufficient, bloody sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary is made present at each Mass in an unbloody manner. Christ is not re-sacrificed at each Mass; rather the Mass re-presents the one sacrifice of Calvary. Thus, the efficacy (effectiveness) of the Mass comes entirely from the one, bloody sacrifice of Calvary. The passages referred to in Hebrews compare the many sacrifices of the OT religion, which could not atone for sin nor reconcile mankind to God, with the one sacrifice of Jesus which did atone for all sins and reconcile mankind to God. Hebrews also stresses that the bloody sacrifice of animals in the OT prefigured the bloody sacrifice of Christ for the remission of sin. The Mass, also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, repeats what happened at the Last Supper. At the Last Supper Our Lord turned bread into His body, and said that this body would be offered up (sacrificed) for us. He turned wine into His blood, and said that this blood would be shed (sacrificed) for us. Clearly, at the Last Supper, Jesus made His future sacrifice at Calvary present. He then commanded His disciples to repeat this mystery. In 1 Cor 11:26, St. Paul tells us that in the celebration of the Eucharist we "proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes." Thus, the Last Supper, which made the sacrifice of Calvary present, will continue to be repeated in the Mass until the end of time. In this way, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice will be made present to the faithful until the end of time. 5. Does baptism regenerate, or is it only a symbolic washing? Most Fundamentalists believe that baptism is only a symbolic washing—an ordinance, not a sacrament. Catholics believe that baptism is a sacrament of the NT instituted by Christ. Catholics believe that through baptism all sin, original and actual, is wiped away. The life of God, called sanctifying grace, is infused into the soul, and a person is born again of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). Jesus made baptism a condition for entering heaven (Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16). In Acts 2:38, St. Peter says that through baptism our sins are forgiven and we receive the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says that we are given new life (regeneration) through baptism (Rom 6:4). Titus 3:5 tells us that we are saved "by" the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (RSVCE), which refers to baptism. 1 Peter 3:20-21 says that "baptism ... saves you now." 36 In essence, Fundamentalists confuse the baptism of Jesus with the baptism of John the Baptist. John's baptism was only a symbolic washing. However, John says that Jesus' baptism would give the Holy Spirit, whereas his own did not (Mt 3:11). At the time of the Reformation, many Protestants rejected baptism as a sacrament of regeneration because it did not fit with their new and unorthodox notion of justification by faith alone. Jesus would not have made baptism a condition for entering heaven if it were only symbolic. The writings of the early Church Fathers show that they all taught that water baptism regenerates. The idea that baptism is only a symbolic washing arose centuries later with the Reformation. 6. Why do Catholics baptize infants? Fundamentalists believe that baptism is only a symbolic washing signifying that a person has accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. According to them, since an infant cannot accept Jesus as Lord and Savior (because he does not have the use of reason), baptism is meaningless for him. However, Jesus requires baptism for entering heaven (Jn3:5; Mk 16:16). St. Paul tells us that all are born with Adam's sin and thus need baptism (Rom 5:18-19). Jesus makes clear that children are not to be kept away from Him (Mk 10:14). The Apostles baptized entire households (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16). This would include infants. No Bible passage prohibits infant baptism. The early Church Fathers were clear that the baptizing of infants was a practice that came from the Apostles themselves. That infants lack the use of reason does not prevent them from becoming part of the New Covenant through baptism. In the OT, a child became part of the Old Covenant through circumcision. This was done eight days after birth, long before the child could choose for himself whether or not to be part of the Chosen People. Just as parents in the OT supplied the decision for the child's circumcision until he could confirm this decision at the age of reason, so in the NT parents stand in for the child at his baptism until he can confirm this decision at the age of reason. 7. Aren V we saved by faith alone as St. Paul says in Romans 3:28? When St. Paul says, "For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law," he is teaching that the works of the OT Mosaic law, such as circumcision, could not bring salvation. In the NT, faith does bring salvation, provided it is made alive by charity. Saving faith is active: it is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). In 1 Cor 13:2, St. Paul tells us that faith without love (charity) is nothing (it cannot save). Charity means love of God, and Jesus says that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (Jn 14:21). When the rich man asks Jesus what he must do to be saved, Jesus answers: "keep the commandments" (Mt. 19:16-17). Thus it is clear from Scripture that faith alone is not enough for salvation. We must also have charity and keep God's commandments. St. James condemns the idea that we are saved by faith apart from good works: "See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.35... For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (Jam 2:24, 26). 37 The Catholic Church teaches that we are saved by God's grace alone. Grace enables us to have the saving faith that works in love (Eph. 2:8-10). All good works must be done in the grace of God to have any supernatural value. 8. If the redemptive work of Christ is all-sufficient, why do Catholics insist on various good works and penances? Fundamentalists think that because Catholics teach salvation depends on faith and good works, Catholics must not believe the redemptive work of Christ is sufficient. They see good works, penances, Purgatory, prayer to the saints, and the sacraments, as unnecessary additions to the completed work of Christ. Fundamentalists have this notion because they confuse salvation with redemption. Catholics firmly agree with Protestants that the redemptive work of Christ is complete and all-sufficient. Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus redeemed everyone: He paid for all sins and made it possible for anyone to be saved. However, we know that not everyone is automatically saved. All Christians admit that people can fail to be saved by refusing to repent, or by refusing to cooperate with God's grace in other areas. Although the redemptive work of Christ is complete, the merits of His redemption must still be applied to each 35Luther's battle cry, "Justification by faith alone," is expressly contradicted by Scripture, which explains why he called the book of James (a part of God's infallible Word) "an epistle of straw." person in order for him to be saved. Thus, a person must repent (Mt 4:17), believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31), keep the commandments (Mt 19:16-17), and live a life of charity (1 Cor 13:1-3), as Scripture plainly teaches. A Catholic who performs good works in Christ isn't denying the completed work of Christ's redemption; he is depending on it. 9. Can you lose your salvation once you are saved? Jesus as Lord and Savior? Most, though not all, Fundamentalists believe that once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, it is impossible to lose your salvation. This doctrine is known as "once saved, always saved." Like many other Protestant doctrines, this teaching was unheard of before the Reformation. Mt 24:13 tells us that we must "persevere to the end" in order to be saved. St. Paul says the same thing in 2 Tim 2:12: that we must hold out to the end if we want to reign with Christ. In Rom 11:22, Christians are warned that they will be cut off if they don't persevere in the kindness of God. Hebrews 6:4-6 describes people who are sharers in the Holy Spirit (born-again Christians) but then fall away from God. Remember St. Paul's advice: "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Who should have more assurance of salvation than St. Paul? Yet he says, "I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27). Scripture is very clear: Christians can lose their salvation. The Catholic Church teaches we must die in sanctifying grace in order to be saved. Any mortal sin leads to a loss of sanctifying grace 38 and the risk of eternal damnation if we should die in this state. 10. Why does the Catholic Church base some of its doctrines on tradition instead of basing them all on the Bible? Isn't tradition condemned in the Bible (Mt 15:3; Mk 7:9; Col2:8)? Fundamentalists think all tradition is condemned in Scripture. But the Bible speaks of two kinds of tradition: human and apostolic. Bad human tradition is condemned. In Mt 15:3 and Mk 7:9, Jesus clearly condemns human tradition that sets aside the commandments of God. In Col 2:8, St. Paul tells us to beware of false reasoning "according to human tradition." But in condemning erroneous human traditions (small "t"), neither Jesus nor St. Paul is condemning Apostolic Traditions (capital "T"), the deposit of divine truths that Jesus orally entrusted to the Apostles. The Bible actually commands following Apostolic Traditions. St. Paul commends the C o r i n t h i a n s f o r f o l l o w i n g a p o s t o l i c traditions (1 Cor 11:2). St. Paul commands the Thessalonians to keep them: "Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours" (2 Thess 2:15; see also 2 Thess 3:6). Obeying St. Paul, the Church bases its doctrines on Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. 11. Hasn't the Catholic Church changed its doctrines through the years? Fundamentalists often accuse the Catholic Church of changing its doctrines, or inventing new ones. Usually they are confusing Church doctrines with Church disciplines. A doctrine is an unchangeable truth revealed by God—such as the Virgin Birth, while a discipline is a changeable regulation—like the priest facing the people instead of the altar during the Mass. The Catholic Church teaches there can be no new doctrines since the death of the last apostle. The Apostolic deposit of faith was delivered once and for all (Jude 3). The eternal truths of God must be lived out in different times, cultures, and places. Church disciplines which help us live out these truths are therefore adapted as conditions in the Church change. We must also remember that doctrines can develop, in the sense of being understood more fully and made more explicit. These fuller insights are passed on by the Church through its teaching office (Magisterium). This is not invention, but proper growth. Whenever a Fundamentalist insists that the Catholic Church has changed its doctrines, you can be sure that he has either confused a discipline with a doctrine, or else mistaken true doctrinal development for a new invention. 12. Why does the Catholic Church forbid its priests to marry? Doesn't St. Paul call forbidding marriage a "doctrine of devils" (1 Tim 4:1-3)? The Catholic Church does not forbid marriage; the Church upholds the great dignity of marriage. Marriage is considered a holy sacrament that symbolizes the union of Christ with His Church (Eph 5:21-33). The Church only forbids marriage, as a matter of discipline, to those men who choose to become priests. No one is forced into the priesthood. Those who wish to become priests are asked to renounce sex for the sake of the kingdom of God. 39 Remember, Jesus prays those who would freely renounce sex for the kingdom of God (Mt 19:12). St. Paul's denunciation of those who forbid marriage applies to those who reject marriage entirely, as though it were an evil in itself. St. Paul is warning against a false spirituality which holds that any part of God's good creation (including marriage) is evil (1 Tim 4:3-4). St. Paul obviously is not condemning celibacy. St. Paul was himself single (1 Cor 7:8), just as Jesus was. St. Paul strongly recommends celibacy for those who would devote themselves entirely to the ministry (1 Cor 7:32-35). Since St. Paul does not absolutely command celibacy for all fulltime ministers, the Catholic Church teaches the requirement of celibacy is a discipline, not a doctrine. Thus, the Church allows certain exceptions to this requirement: for example, married Anglican priests who become Catholic can continue to be married even if they become Catholic priests. Ask Fundamentalists why they have so few, if any, celibate ministers, especially since St. Paul encourages it so strongly for full-time ministers of Christ. 13. Does it make any difference which Christian denomination I join? Although it is very clear in Scripture and early Church history that Christ left only one Church, today we have over 25,000 Christian denominations. Does it matter which of these you join? It most certainly does! If Christ founded only one Church, then all the other Christian churches were founded by men. Although they believe much that is true, and have many members who are sincere Christians, we simply cannot choose any of them over the Church founded by Christ. 14. How do we determine which is the Church founded by Christ? The Church founded by Christ must go back in history to the time of Christ; its doctrines must be the same as those of the Apostolic Church, and its leaders must be able to trace their authority back to the Apostles (see p. 14). Thus, history, Apostolic doctrine, and Apostolic authority are the sure guidelines for determining which Church Jesus founded. Only the Catholic Church meets these requirements. HISTORY. Any objective history book will show that only the Catholic Church has existed since the time of Christ. 3 6 No Protestant denomination found today existed before 1517 A.D. A P O S T O L I C D O C T R I N E S . The early Church Fathers are our indispensable link to Apostolic Christianity. Their writings tell us what the first Christians believed. A careful study of the early Church Fathers shows they all taught distinctively Catholic doctrines. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY. The Bible and Sacred Tradition are very clear that Christ left a Church that would be governed by a hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and deacons with the successor of St. Peter as the head. Only the Catholic Church has such a governing hierarchy that can trace its authority—in an unbroken succession—back to the Apostolic authority established by Christ Himself. 36 The word "Catholic" first appears in a letter of St. Ignatius of Antioch (110 A.D.) to distinguish Christ's Church from heretical groups (Jurgens, p. 25, #65). The word "Christian" also originated in Antioch (Acts 11:26). St. Ignatius' letter indicates that, by 110 A.D., the original Christian Church was already well known as the "Catholic Church." Can You Answer these Questions? • Why do you Catholics call your priests "father" when the Bible clearly says "call no man father" (Mt 23:9)? • Why do you Catholics stress good works when the Bible says salvation is by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9)? • Why do you Catholics pray to Mary and the Saints when the Bible says Jesus is the "one mediator between God and man" (1 Tim 2:5)? • Why do you Catholics believe in Purgatory when the word "purgatory" isn't found in the Bible? Most Catholics can't. But you don't have to tongue-tied the next time you nonCatholic friend asks one of these questions. Learn to explain your faith clearly, defend it charitably, and share it confidently with the help of these three booklets: BEGINNING APOLOGETICS 1: BEGINNING APOLOGETICS 2: APOLOGETICS BEGINNING APOLOGETICS 2.5: HOW HOW YES! TO EXPLAIN AND TO ANSWER DEFEND JEHOVAH'S TRUE YOU SHOULD CALL THE CATHOLIC FAITH WITNESSES AND BELIEVE IN HOW TO ANSWER JEHOVAH'S THE MORMONS TRINITY— WITNESSES These handbooks give simple, compelling answers to the most common objections Catholics get about their faith. Discover how easy it is to show the biblical basis for all these Catholic doctrines: the Eucharist, the papacy, Confession, Mary, purgatory, prayer to the saints, the Trinity, and many more. Isn't it time we Catholics stop scratching our heads and start standing up for the truth? SEE CATALOG AND ORDER FORM ON THE INSIDE ON BACK COVER I

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