

IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH THE ONE TRUE CHURCH?

With one billion members, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the world. Since the Bible teaches that Jesus built only one church, we must learn if the Roman Catholic Church is the one mentioned in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 1:18).

Organization

The organization of the Lord's church is described in the Bible (Philippians 1:1). It is made up of saints {Christians}. Christian men who meet God's qualifications serve as bishops (also called elders and pastors). Deacons are servants who work under the elders (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Elders are to be appointed in each church (Acts 14:23). The Bible always speaks of a local assembly having two or more bishops (Acts 14:23). These bishops (elders) have the rule over the church (Hebrews 13:17). Their rule is limited to the church where they are members (1 Peter 5:1-3).

The Roman Catholic Church is a body with two heads! It claims Jesus is its head in Heaven and the Pope is its head on earth. The "college of cardinals" elects the Pope to office. Under the cardinals are the archbishops, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and finally "the laity" (ordinary members). Clearly, the organization of the Roman Catholic Church proves it is not the church of the Bible.

Salvation

The Bible teaches all are born sinless and pure (Matthew 18:1-5; 19:13-15). When we sin, we separate ourselves from God (Isaiah 59:1,2). The result of sin is spiritual death (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23). Salvation from sin is by the grace of God (Titus 2:11-14). This does not mean all will be saved. Christ "***became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him***" (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus is the Sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 9:24-28; 1 Peter 1:17-19). We receive His free gift of salvation by hearing His Word (Romans 10:17), believing in Him (John 8:24), repenting of our sins (Acts 17:30,31), confessing His name (Matthew 10:32,33), and being baptized in water for the remission of sins (Romans 6:1-4; Acts 2:38). When we show our faith in this way, God adds us to His church (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

In order to go to Heaven, we must serve God faithfully until death (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:4-8). When one sins after becoming a Christian, he can be forgiven. He must confess his sins, repent, and pray for forgiveness (James 5:16; Acts 8:13-24).

When a child is twelve years old, he must be confirmed, according to Roman Catholic teaching. The priest makes the sign of the cross on the child's forehead. This is supposed to give him the Holy Spirit.

When a Catholic sins, he must confess to a priest. The priest decides what act of penance the sinner must do. When this is done, the priest grants forgiveness. God's law of pardon for erring Christians is ignored. Priests who are weak, sinful men, like we are, are given the power to forgive sins by the Roman Catholic Church. The Bible teaches that only God has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-12). It is blasphemy for a man to claim to do this. It is clear the Roman Catholic Church is not the church of the Bible because it does not practice what the Bible teaches concerning salvation!

What Happens When We Die?

Luke 16:19-31 tells us that one's soul goes to Hades when he dies. Hades has a place of comfort for the righteous and a place of torment for the wicked. There is a great gulf between the two. One cannot cross from one to the other. Souls remain in Paradise until the Last Day. Then our bodies will be raised from the grave and changed into spiritual bodies (John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44). Each person will then stand before the Lord to be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10).

However, the Roman Catholic Church does not teach this. They believe souls go to a place called Purgatory. They are punished in order to be purified. How long one has to spend in Purgatory will depend upon how bad he was on earth, how much money he gave to the Roman Catholic Church to buy indulgences, and how much money his family and friends give to the Church on his behalf. The doctrine of Purgatory does not come from God. It was made an official doctrine of the Roman Church by the Council of Florence in 1439. The Roman Catholic Church is **not** the church of the Bible!

Moral Issues

The Bible teaches it is wrong to lie (Colossians 3:9; Revelation 21:8). It also teaches it is wrong to steal (Romans 2:21; 13:9,10; Ephesians 4:28). The Roman Catholic Church, however, teaches the doctrine of "mental reservation." This doctrine says that one can lie on certain occasions and not be guilty of sin. The Roman Church also teaches that in some cases one can steal and not be guilty of sin. This type of behaviour is not taught in the Word of God. It clearly shows that the Roman Catholic Church is not the one, true church we read about in the Bible.

Much more could be said. These examples are enough to show us that the Roman Catholic Church, even though very large, is not the Lord's church! Please study the Scriptures for yourself. Do not become a member of any church which is not found in the Word of God!

The Bible clearly sets forth the one, true church which was built by Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18,19). It was built long before the Roman Catholic Church began. Why not become a member of it today (Acts 2:36-47)?

How to Identify the One True Church:

1. Know what the One True Church is -

- A. The word "church" comes from the Greek word which means those who are "called out."
- B. The church is the Body of Christ (Colossians 1:18)
- C. The church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-27)
- D. The church is the Family of God (I Timothy 3:15)
- E. The church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth (I Timothy 3:15)

2. Know the Founder of the One True Church -

- A. Jesus promised to build HIS church Matthew 16:18)
- B. Jesus purchased the church with HIS blood (Acts 20:28)
- C. Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18)
- D. The church is His spiritual body (Colossians 1:18)

3. Know when the One True Church began -

- A. It was promised in the last days of Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4)
- B. The church was near in John's day (Matthew 3:1,2)
- C. Jesus told His disciples that they should not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1)

D. They were told that they would receive that power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8)

E. All these things came to pass on Pentecost (Acts 2)

4. Know how the One True Church is described -

A. The church of the Lord (Acts 20:28)

B. The church of God (I Corinthians 1:1,2)

C. The body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)

D. The church of Christ (Romans 16:16)

5. Know what God offers in the One True Church -

A. Forgiveness of sins is in the church (Ephesians 1:17)

B. Salvation is in the church (2 Timothy 2:10)

C. Redemption is in the church (Colossians 1:14)

D. All spiritual blessings are in the church (Ephesians 1:3)

E. The saved are in the church (Acts 2:47)