

Being a

**WITNESS**

to a Roman Catholic

## Understanding

# ROMAN CATHOLICISM

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The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) is said to be the largest organized body of any world religion. There are two main divisions of traditional Christianity: Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. A German monk named Martin Luther became the first to “protest” when he saw the errors of the Roman church, and thus he became the father of the Protestant church.

The Catholic Church traces its history back to the Church of the first century, and maintains that the true Church is built on Peter, whom they believe was the first “pope”. The Protestant Church asserts that Catholicism actually had a later beginning in the fourth century, when Constantine unified the Roman Empire by merging paganism with Christianity.

By the 12th century the Roman Catholic Church had become the world’s most powerful and financially prosperous institution in the world.

# Understanding THEIR BELIEFS

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## CONCEPT OF GOD

Generally the same as biblical Christians.

## SOURCE OF WRITTEN REVELATION

The Douay-Rheims version of the Bible, which includes the Apocryphal books. However, they also believe that the RCC is their authority. Ultimately, their authority comes from Scripture, Tradition, and the pope.

## JESUS CHRIST

The doctrines of purgatory, Mary as co-redemptrix, and the sacraments deny the sufficiency of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin.

## SIN

St. Augustine said that it is a word, deed, or desire that is contrary to the eternal Law of God.

## REPENTANCE

Included is not only remorse for sin and turning from it, but also “satisfaction”. Satisfaction can only be given in a confessional when the priest says, “I absolve thee.”

## FAITH

True faith can only come through the RCC, according to the Vatican.

## SALVATION

Pope John Paul II said that anyone who lives a just life can be saved, even if he is not Roman Catholic (Dallas Morning News, Dec. 9, 2000). Salvation is mediated through the sacraments (Baptism, Confession, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Extreme Unction).

## AFTERLIFE

Most people go to purgatory when they die, where they atone for venial sins. The only person who goes to heaven is the one who loves God perfectly at the time of death. The people who go to hell are those who don't love God at all.

## Referencing BIBLICAL PASSAGES

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### PROVERBS 30:5-6

A stern warning not to add to the Word of God.

### MARK 7:8

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for neglecting the Word of God for the sake of the commandment of men (cf. Mt. 15:6).

### LUKE 1:46-47

Mary evidently also needed a Savior and was, therefore, a sinner like all others who have fallen short of God's glory.

### LUKE 11:27-28

Jesus is given an ideal opportunity to extend veneration to Mary, but again He intentionally groups her in with the rest of humankind.

### ROMANS 5:8-9

We are justified by the blood of Christ alone and saved from the wrath to come.

ROMANS 5:10-11

The doctrine of purgatory does not line up with these verses, seeing that we have been fully reconciled with God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

God made Jesus “sin” in our place that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:11

Paul did not consider himself in any way inferior to the “chief apostles” (i.e. Peter). This is contrary to their doctrine of the pope.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Not saved by works, lest any man should boast.

1 TIMOTHY 2:5

There is only One Mediator between God and man; Jesus Christ (i.e. no need for priests).

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

Scripture is all we need as an authority.

TITUS 3:5

We are saved, “not by works of righteousness which we have done.”

HEBREWS 7:24-25

He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him.

HEBREWS 9:25-28

Christ was offered once for our sins, not repeatedly as the RCC teaches in its doctrine of the mass.

# Being a WITNESS

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The fact that salvation comes by grace through faith alone is wonderful news for both the Roman Catholic and traditional Protestant churches.

The key to understanding this truth is a right understanding of our state before God. If we think we are good people, then all we have to do is some good works and that will earn us eternal life. But if we are confronted by God's Law, it shows us that we are desperate criminals in God's sight, and that the only way we can possibly be saved is through His mercy.

Knowing your friend is a Roman Catholic doesn't change a thing about the truth of the Gospel. When witnessing to him, don't feel the need to have to deal with the doctrinal disputes of papal infallibility, Mariology, confession to the priest, etc. Rather, simply go straight for

the conscience by doing what Jesus did and going through the Ten Commandments. The Law, in the hand of the Spirit, addresses the conscience and shows the sinner that he's not good, and all the good works in the world cannot and will not bribe a holy God to pervert Eternal Justice.

But there is Good News! We broke God's Law (the Ten Commandments) but because Jesus paid our fine on the cross 2,000 years ago in His life's blood, God can now forgive us. He can dismiss your case. He can commute your death sentence. God proved His great love for you through the cross. Then Jesus rose from the dead, and defeated the power of the grave. If you repent and trust the Savior, God will forgive your sins and grant you everlasting life. Eternal life is a free gift. You can't earn it

## Additional RESOURCES

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by doing anything. The Scriptures say, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph.2:8-9). Does that make sense to you?

You can then follow up your conversation with an appropriate resource on Roman Catholicism.

### PRINT

*The School of Biblical Evangelism* by  
Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort

(Available at the Harvest London Resource Centre and online at [livingwaterscanada.com](http://livingwaterscanada.com))

### WEB

[www.carm.org/roman-catholicism](http://www.carm.org/roman-catholicism)

For more information on evangelism training with The Cross Current, visit:

[www.thecrosscurrent.com](http://www.thecrosscurrent.com)

About

# THE CROSS CURRENT

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The Cross Current is a local missions ministry and outreach broadcast bringing glory to God's Name by unifying His Church in His Gospel and helping pastors equip all Christians under their care to be Christ's witnesses everyday, everywhere, to everyone, as one body serving in accordance with the various gifts He has given each.



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