

7/12/06

THE JOY OF BEING CATHOLIC

A simple Scriptural Reference Guide

Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA

The Catholic Church – Pillar and Standard of Truth

What Jesus left behind was His Church as His Mystical Body. Only Christ could form a Church, for only Jesus as the God Man, could put His Spirit into His followers and work with them not only from without but also from within. Thus, Pentecost is the birthday of the Catholic Church. Jesus, because He is truth itself, gave to the head of that Church the same fallible, prophetic anointing that His Father had given to all the prophets so that whenever one of them said, “Thus said the Lord,” we can infallibly know that God had spoken in and through them.

When St. Peter confesses that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus answered by saying “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that whatsoever you shall be bound on earth shall be bound in heaven”. Thus, whenever Peter and one of his successors uses that infallible, prophetic anointing in the area of faith and morals, and in speaking for God, declares something to be true, we know that it is the very truth of God.

A sociological proof of this is that none of the 265 popes have ever spoken heresy. That in itself is a moral miracle.

The New Catechism

When John Paul II stated that the new Catechism is a sure and authentic guide to Catholic belief, worship, morals, and spirituality, you can be absolutely certain that God spoke through Him. Because of this, no follower of Christ need fall into confusion or doubt about matters of faith and morals.

The Catholic Church wrote the New Testament, just as our Jewish brothers and sisters wrote the Old Testament. But furthermore, the Catholic Church proclaimed them and canonized them at the Council of Hippo in 393 when the pope in solemn conclave with the bishops declared that the 45 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament of the Catholic Bible are truly the Word of God. Even Protestants are forced to use our Bible. No Protestant ever wrote one word of Scripture, and no Protestant ever canonized one book of the Bible – that is, put it in the Canon of Sacred Scripture. The Bible is the gift to the

world of the Catholic Church, and the canonization process was precisely because the Petrine Office had been given infallibility.

Two Sources of Revelations: Scripture and Tradition

The Catholic Church bases her teaching upon one source: The Word of God. This divine revelation is transmitted in two ways: through Scripture and apostolic tradition. Many assume that only the writings of the apostles are the word of God. However, their oral transmission of the faith is also considered the word of God (*1 Thess. 2:13*). Few Protestant groups today accept the validity, let alone the authority, of tradition. In fact, many believe that Scripture is the only definitive source of divine truth. For this reason, they are critical of certain doctrines of the Catholic Church, which, according to them, have no basis in Scripture. In fact, those who embrace the theory of *sola scriptura* attempt to use the bible to contradict, to prove baseless, certain Church teachings, such as the Real Presence and the existence of purgatory. However, these teachings are reflected in Scripture, as the passages we will look at illustrate.

The purpose here is not to dissect the opposition. Rather, the purpose is to provide a scriptural evidence for these doctrines. Under each Catholic doctrine in the list that follows are passages from Scripture that witness to the doctrine's divine origin. For the Catholic, what follows will make clear the harmony of Scripture and tradition; truth cannot contradict truth. Whether God speaks to us through the Bible or through the voice of tradition, the word spoken is always a true and steadfast guide.

Please note that all scripture citations are taken from the *Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* of the Holy Bible.

Scripture and Tradition

"I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2).

"Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus, guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15).

"You, then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

"First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

"Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete" (2 Jn. 12).

Faith and Works

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’, and not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46).

“For he will render every man according to his works” (Rom. 2:6-8).

“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom. 2:13).

“For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgments....” (Heb. 10:26-27).

“What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?” (Jas. 2:14).

“So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jas. 2:17).

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works’. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. Do you want to be show, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren?” (Jas. 2:18-20).

“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jas. 2:24).

The Trinity

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image after our likeness....’” (Gen. 1:26).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God’” (Acts 5:3-4).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

Christ's Divinity

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (Is. 9:6).

"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'. And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'" (Matt. 16:16-17).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am'" (John 10:30).

"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

"For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9).

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power..." (Heb. 1:1-3).

"But of the Son he says, 'Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom...And, 'Thou, Lord didst found the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the work of thy hand'" (Heb. 1:8, 10).

Real Presence in the Eucharist

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever, and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.' The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:47-55).

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:27).

The Papacy

“And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter...” (Matt. 10:1-2).

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19).

“Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).

“He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said ‘So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter)” (John 1:42).

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes Lord, you know that I love you’. He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs’. A second time he said to him, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep’. He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him ‘Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him ‘feed my sheep’” (John 21:15-17).

Purgatory

“For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (2 Macc. 12:44-45).

“Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny” (Matt. 5:25-26).

“Each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (1Cor. 3:13-15).

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey...” (1 Peter 3:18-20).

“But nothing unclean shall enter it [heaven]...” (Rev. 21:27).

Honor Due to the Virgin Mary

“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (Luke 1:41-43).

“And Mary said, ‘my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name’” (Luke 1:46-49).

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:26).

Mother of God: Lk 1:43, Mt 1:23, Lk 1:35, Gal 4:4

Assumption: Gn 5:24 (Hb 11:5), 2 Kg 2:11, Mt 27:52, 1 Thes 4:17, 1 Cor 15:52, Rom 6:23, Rev 11:19-12:1

Immaculate Conception: Lk 1:28, Lk 1:30, Lk 1:37, Gn 3:15, Ex 25:11-21, Rom 3:23, Lk 1:47

Perpetual Virginity: Lk 1:34, Lk 2:41-51, Mk 6:3, Mt 13:55-56, Mt 27:56, Jn 19:25, Jn 19:26, Jn 7:3-4, Mt 3:21, Mt 1:25, Mt 28:20, 1 Tim 4:13, 1 Cor 15:25, Lk 1:80, Ex 13:2, Nb 3:12, Ex 24:20

Praying to the Saints

“And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living...” (Mark 12: 26-27).

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely...” (Heb. 12:1).

“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Rev. 5:8).

Repetitious Prayer

It would seem that the Hail Mary said over and again is the kind of repetitious prayer that Jesus spoke against in Mt 6:7 when he said “do not babble on like the pagans who think they will gain a hearing with many words”. The point Jesus is making is not that certain prayers said over and again will gain God’s hearing but rather that God already knows

what we need and wants us to pray in faith even though we may repeat the prayer such as the saints did in Rev. 4:8 when they repeated over and over again day and night “holy, holy, holy is the Lord”. In Mt 26:44 Jesus himself prayed a third time saying the same thing over and over again and he commended the tax collector who kept beating his breast saying over and over again be merciful of me a sinner.

Call No Man Father (Mt 23:9)

It would seem that Jesus would not want us to call any human being father, teacher or rabbi so, therefore, he would be against father’s day, calling our own earthly parent father, honoring our teacher with the title of teacher or honoring a rabbi with the title of rabbi. But the context of Mt 23:9 is quite different. Jesus is preaching against the vainglory of the Pharisees who loved to stand on street corners wearing long tassels and receiving honorary titles only for vainglory. He himself and his apostles call human beings fathers. He called Abraham father. He reiterated that we should honor our fathers and our mothers and He spoke of fathers and mothers in Lu 14:26 when he said “if anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother hereto Jesus is not telling us to hate our fathers and mothers but to put him first in our lives which is the main point of his teaching against the Pharisees. In Acts 6 and 7 St. Steven called Jewish leaders fathers several times. St. Paul called Jewish leaders fathers in Act 21:40. He called Abraham “the father of us all” in Rom 4:16-17 and recalled that earthly fathers are there to discipline (Heb 12:7,9). Himself declared that he was the father “I became your father in Christ through the Gospel (1Cor4: 14-15) and called both Timothy and Titus my true child in faith (Conf. 1Tim:1-2 and Tit 1:4) and said to the Thessalonians “I treated you as a father treats his children (1Thes. 2:1) St, John also used the term when he said “I write to you fathers” (1 Jn. 2:13,14)

Acts 6:14, 7:2, Acts 21:40, 22:1, Rom 4:16-17, 1 Cor 4:14-15, 1 Tim 1:2, Tit 1:4, Heb 12:7-9, Lk 14:26, 1 Thess 2:3, Philem 10, 1 Jn 2:13,14

Scandals inn the Church

The greatest single objection to the Catholic Church is not the realization that the Catholic Church is the one true church founded by Jesus Christ, nor is it our doctrine, our moral teachings, our spirituality, our liturgies nor our sacraments. It is the fact that every single catholic with the exception of Jesus and Mary has been a sinner. Some speculate that if every catholic who ever lived had lived their lives as the canonized saints did the world would have been converted centuries ago. Historians state that history itself is far more the history of man’s inhumanity of man rather than his humanity to man. In the twentieth century alone, a hundred million people were murdered by the communist. Forty-five million died in the Second World War, millions were killed in China and in Africa. Nine billion babies have been destroyed by abortion making mothers and doctors the supreme child abusers. Through pagan education, billions of children have been spiritually, psychologically and physically abused. Sin and scandal have become the norm for our media so the average headlines emphasize bad news over good news. In the midst of all this, the Catholic Church stands out as the pillar of truth encouraging everyone to live holy lives. Most obviously not everyone responds. The call to sanctity is a call issued by every pope, bishop, priest, deacon and lay leader. We could add that every rabbi, minister, judge, doctor,

lawyer, and parent issues this call as well. The law of God is written into the hearts of all men, and everyone is called to follow it. Nevertheless, most children growing up have been spiritually, psychologically and even physically abused. From 1990 to 1999 there have been over 291,000 cases of sexual abuse in children by teachers. The highest majority of active homosexual have abused children under the age of 18. One out of every three girls in America have been sexually abused and one out of every six boys. Unfortunately, the abuse often happens by someone that a child trusts--a parent, an uncle, a grandfather, a teacher, a scout leader, a rabbi, a doctor, a minister, a lawyer, a judge or a priest. Newspapers in America have been calling for a "no tolerance, no cover-up program". What a lofty idea.. Would not that be wonderful if that were practiced not only throughout America but also throughout the world. Wouldn't it be wonderful if that policy were practiced concerning abortion where 250 million babies have been destroyed in our country alone. That would mean no tolerance and no cover-up concerning abortion by every parent, every politician, every doctor, every reporter. Abortion would dry up. This horrific abuse of children would cease. Wouldn't it be wonderful if that policy of no tolerance, no cover-up would equally be practiced concerning pagan sexual education, coed dorms, pornography, promiscuity, and sodomy. Our children are our greatest possession; we must stop using them. Jesus taught, "there will be scandals, but woe to the person that they will come". Judas betrayed Jesus (Matt 14:43) Peter denied Jesus (Mark 14:88) Thomas refused the ----(Jn. 20 24-) and all the apostles fled from him and left him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:50). Jesus taught that the weeds and the wheat would grow together to the end of the world.(Matt 24:48) Nevertheless, the lord always raises the faithful remnant--those few saintly people that are the leaven to the masses. Jesus foretold that the way that leads to salvation would be narrow and few would be who find it. If people allow the realization that certain catholics, laity or clergy have been unfaithful to be an excuse from their entering the church, then logically they would have to live in a bubble because everyone, every doctor, lawyer, or grocer is a sinner. In fact, their bubble would burst as soon as they looked in the mirror and realized that they themselves were sinners.

Jer 32:32-35, 2 Kgs 23:7, Jn 4:22, Mk 14:43-46, Mk 14:66-72, Jn 20:24-25, Mk 14:50, Rom 3:3-4, 2 Tim 2:13, Mt 13:24-30, Mt 13:47-48

Celibacy

No practice is so intriguing in the Catholic Church as the practice of celibacy. In fact, the CC encourages all priests, and sisters in consecrated life to practice the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. One of our great spiritual writers Fr. Gerald Vann stated that western civilization has fallen so low into materialism, promiscuity, and rebellion that it would only regain sanity by deep respect for and practice of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. The church calls these three eschatological signs of the holiness that we will all have in heaven where Jesus will become our treasure, our romance and our Lord. The church states that everyone must practice poverty of spirit, chastity of heart and humble obedience according to their state in life. The CC teaches clearly that marriage is good and holy and in fact an image of Christ loving His Bride, the church. (conf. Eh.5:21-33) Nevertheless because of the fallen state of the world, Jesus encourages certain of His followers to forsake marriage and live celibate life. He states, "let those take it in whose heart is large enough" (Matt 19:12) In 1Cor. 7:8 Paul states that he is celibate and recommends celibacy as a higher road to holiness. (1Cor7:33-35) He also encourages

widows to totally dedicate the rest of their lives by remaining celibate (1Tim 5:9-12) To modern man who often makes sexual pleasure the supreme good in his life, the purity of heart exhibited through the life of a consecrated person may be the only language that could penetrate their worldly view. Nevertheless, chaste marriage lived in the kingdom of God is an ordinary call to holiness held out by God to most of his followers. Every wholesome couple would truthfully concur that the greatest expressions of love were often spiritual and emotional..

Holy Orders

The one thing that stands out in the minds of most Catholics is the mass and the priesthood. In and through the priest and bishop the average catholic receives the sacraments of baptism, holy Eucharist, confession , confirmation, matrimony and anointing of the sick. The priesthood is central to the catholic way of thinking. So Christ appointed certain men to be priests and bishops and gave them the power to celebrate mass to forgive sins in confession, and to proclaim the news of the kingdom. In Act 20:28 the Holy Spirit appointed bishops to tend the churches. In Jn 20:22 Jesus gave his priests the power to forgive sins stating "As the father has sent me so I send you". Then he breathed on them saying "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained". In Acts 13:3 the apostles laid hands on others thus ordaining them. In Acts 14:22 they ordained priests in every church. St Paul asked Titus, his disciple priest, to "appoint presbyters (priests) in every town, as I directed you". (Tit 1:5) and admonished Timothy to not neglect the gift that he received through the laying on of hands (1Tim 4:14, 2; Tim 1:6).

Confession

The priest not only celebrates mass but has the power to forgive sins. Carl Young estimated that over 95% of all Americans walk around loaded with guilt and unforgiveness. If every catholic would go to confession he would receive three miracles of grace: First, every bit of sin and guilt would be cleansed through the blood of Jesus administered by Christ working through His priest; secondly, every bit of unforgiveness would be taken away as the penitent forgives; and, thirdly, every penitent could



Our Lord gave Peter charge of His sheep and said that Peter would die for them too.

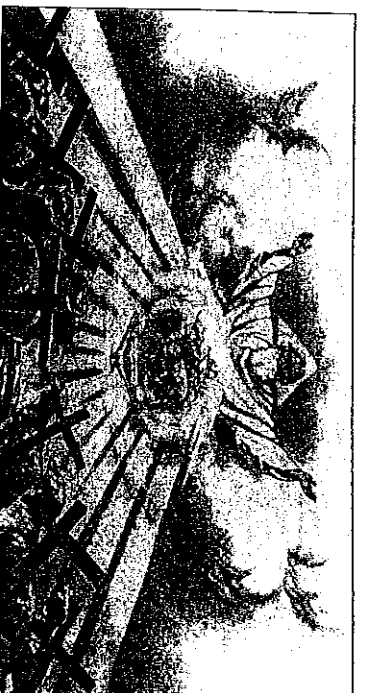
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS ONE

The Catholic Church is one because her source is one. Jesus said, in founding the Catholic Church upon Peter: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." The Church is one because Jesus, the word made flesh, reconciled all to God by the cross, restoring unity of all into one people and one body. The Church is one because unity of all into Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and dwelling over all the church, is one. The Church is one because Jesus prayed that we may be one: "As the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father" (cf Jn 17:20,21). The Church is one because Jesus is leading all Christians to be one so that soon, there will be but "one flock and one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).

THE JOY OF THE CATHOLIC VISION

Once one is a Catholic, they have at their disposal for knowing and loving, everything from the Blessed Mother in heaven, to the poor African leper who whispers the response to the Mass through a mouth half eaten away; everything that begets sanctity from the brilliant mind of Thomas to the burning prayers of the Poor Clares can be set in motion through our faith. It all belongs to us. Heaven and earth belong to us. It is our heritage. For we are the Church. It is no longer a question of faith or reason, but now faith seeking reason and reason seeking faith. It is no longer faith nor good works, but now faith and good works. Or even better, faith producing good works. It is no longer the Bible or the Church, but it is now the Bible and the Church.

- 16 -



The Holy Spirit gives the strength to carry our crosses

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS HOLY

The Catholic Church is Holy because Christ, to whom we are united, means to make us holy — the sacraments, the commandments, prayer, meditation, especially the Eucharist. "The Church is, therefore, though having sinners in her midst; because she herself has no other than the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified" (Pope Paul VI). The Church is holy because some of her faithful practice heroic virtue that they are now saints in heaven and model on earth.

IT IS ALL OURS

To be Catholic is to have at your disposal, for knowing and loving, wisdom of St. Thomas and St. Augustine, the love of Bonaventura Francis, and the zeal of St. Francis de Sales. To be Catholic is to have the power of the Spirit to bring about one family of man. To be Catholic is to realize that you are not alone, but that you are a member of the Church of Christ. To be Catholic is to know that baptism and immersion in the Church is the means that Christ established to make us holy. To be Catholic is to be able to pray and work side-by-side with your brothers and sisters and to accept responsibility that you too are called to be the salt of the World.

- 17 -