

01-Truth Or Tradition?

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Intro *What are the things most unique to the Catholic church?*

- A. There are several things to name:
 1. The pope would be one of the first things that would come to mind.
 2. However, many denoms have some type of head honcho whether he's called the pope, the pastor general, the prophet, or the archbishop.
 3. Perhaps, you thought of Infant Baptism, Transubstantiation; Degrees of Sins; Mass; The Eucharist; Purgatory; Prayers to the Saints; The Rosary; Penance; The Confessional; Praying for the Dead; Indulgences; Celibacy; and the Last Rites.
- B. There are some unique and crucial doctrines of Catholicism.
 1. Most are based on church tradition which is viewed as authoritative as Scripture. Sometimes more so.
 2. These "legs of Catholicism" support the entire denomination and without them, it would fall. Like legs under a table, kick them out & the table falls.
 3. Let's look at these legs and see if Catholicism can stand without them.

I. Leg #1 - Authoritative Tradition

- A. For some 400 years, the early church used no book but the Bible but as Catholicism grew, it was decided that Scripture wasn't enough.
 1. *"There is nowhere in the New Testament a clear, methodical statement of the teaching of Christ It was never intended as such."* (Rev. Bertrand Conway, The Question Box, p 66)
 2. Further, Catholicism teaches that only the Church can rightly interpret for the masses.
 - a. *The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.* (Cath Cat. ¶85)
- B. For the Catholic Church, tradition is as authoritative as Scripture.
 1. *"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal."* (1994 Cath, Catech.¶80)
 2. *"The church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truth from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."* (1994 Catholic Catechism, ¶82)
 3. Most Catholic teaching is based on tradition.
 - a. Majority (80%) of priests polled said they would look to church teaching rather than Scripture for guidance

C. Catholic doctrines stemmed from tradition:

1.
 - The Mass [394 A.D.]
 - Veneration of saints and images [375 A.D.]
 - Veneration of Mary; "Mother of God" [431 A.D.]
 - Extreme Unction (Last rights) [526 A.D.]
 - Purgatory [593 A.D.; pronounced as a dogma in 1439 A.D.]
 - Worship Of Relics [786 A.D.]
 - Holy water [850 A.D.]
 - College of Cardinals established [927 A.D.]
 - Canonization of "saints" [995 A.D.]
 - Celibacy Of The Priesthood [Decreed by Gregory VII in 1079, and adopted at the Second Lateran Council 1139 A.D.]
 - The Rosary [1090 A.D.]
 - Indulgences [1190 A.D.]
 - Transubstantiation [1215 A.D.]
 - Church tradition equal to Bible authority [1545 A.D. Council of Trent]
 - Prayer To Saints [1594 A.D.]
 - Immaculate Conception of Mary [Defined as a doctrine of the church in the 8th century, but not defined as official dogma until December 8, 1854 and pope Pius IX]
 - Papal Infallibility [1870]
 - The Bodily Assumption of Mary [1950 A.D.]
2. Catholics defend tradition by saying it is revelation that was subsequently delivered to early church "fathers."

3. Again, the Bible says differently. It tells us that the faith is complete, once delivered.
 - a. **Jude: 3**
4. The Spirit guided into ALL truth
 - a. **John 16:13**
5. The Bible itself declares that there will be no “subsequent” revelation.
 - a. **1 Cor 13:8-10**

II. The Bible is clear about the need for authority.

- A. It is also clear that authority comes from two sources.
 1. **Matt 21:23-27**
 2. If Catholic tradition were truth, then logically, it would never contradict Scripture.
- B. Paul claimed to teach the Ephesian elders EVERYTHING they needed to know.
 1. **Acts 20:27**
- C. What can we conclude?

III. Tradition Isn't Truth – Jesus rejected man-made religion as authority in religion.

- A. If we can claim that the traditions of the church are inspired because the church teaches God's word, the same claim can be made on behalf of the Pharisees.
 1. **Mark 7:5-13, Matt 15:3**
 2. Jesus said the Pharisees sat “in Moses' seat” (Matthew 23:2-3), meaning they were teachers of the Law. However, the tradition of the Pharisees was condemned by Jesus as insufficient to produce acceptable service to God.

IV. The Messengers Were Inspired, Not the Church – God spoke through men, not an organization.

- A. On one hand, the church exists to uphold the inspired message
 1. **1 Tim 3:15**
- B. But again, it's the *message* that's inspired. The NT church is not inspired.
 1. Men spoke by inspiration in the New Testament, the church did not
 - a. **2 Pet 1:20-21; Eph 3:3-5; Gal 2:11-12; 1 Cor 2:10**
 - b. The only organization of the church of our Lord is local organization with saints, elders, and deacons. In order for there to be an “official church voice” which teaches by inspiration, there would need to be some aggregate organization on earth, with an earthly head who could declare divinely inspired oracles. However, we will see that the hierarchical structure of Catholicism is unbiblical.

V. Scripture Stands Alone – The Word is fully sufficient to save man's soul and to direct our work.

- A. Consider what Scripture says about itself:
 1. **2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3**
 2. In these verses there is no hint that God's word needs any assistance from latter-day revelation through the church. Claims of latter-day revelation is the folly of Mormonism and of Catholicism as well!
- B. If God were still revealing His will through the church, separate and apart from the Bible, that would mean the Bible is incomplete. However, Jude speaks of the faith (the gospel) which has been once and for all time delivered to the saints (Jude 3).
- C. Since we have “all truth” as delivered once for all, why would we need anything else? No promise of continuing revelation was made by God, so no promise exists to be fulfilled in the Catholic Church.

Conc: Authoritative tradition is one leg on which the table of Catholicism cannot stand. But we *do* have something which will never fail” The inspired word of God.