B. If she were here, she would say as she already has, ***"Whatever HE says to you, do it."*** (John 2:5)

03-From Levitical Priesthood to a Nation of Priests

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Intro Catholicism is not the only denom with a separated clergy and a supreme head but it was the first to codify the system.

A. The origins of the Catholic priesthood and papacy are complex and historically debated.
   1. Catholic tradition traces its origins to Jesus Christ and the apostles in approximately 30 AD
   2. However, many of the distinctive features of Roman Catholicism, including the papacy, developed gradually over centuries rather than being present from the beginning.
      a. The idea of papal infallibility, for instance, was not officially defined until the First Vatican Council in 1870.

B. The Catholic hierarchy is basically simple:
   1. Priests (or pastors) are ordained by bishops and serve under their authority. They are responsible for the pastoral care of a specific parish.
      a. "The chosen people was constituted by God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."; But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance. A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." (CC, 1539)
   2. Bishops oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of their diocese, including the appointment of priests, the administration of sacraments, and the overall well-being of the community. They are also responsible for church property and finances within their jurisdiction.
      a. The Church teaches that "the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ." (CC, 862)
   3. Pope - The Catholic Church attributes to the Pope "full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church". This includes the power to make decisions on issues of faith and morality, which Catholics are expected to follow.
   a. The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." 402 "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered." (CC, 882)

C. Many people today view the Roman Catholic Church as the original expression of Christianity. However, when its doctrines are examined in light of Scripture, key differences arise—particularly regarding the priesthood and the papacy. This sermon will compare what Catholic doctrine teaches and what God's Word actually reveals.

I. The Roman Catholic Priesthood: Is It Biblical?

A. "The modern priesthood is based on and is a **continuance of the Levitical priesthood of the OT**. It is necessary for the ordained priests of this church to present the prayers and Eucharistic sacrifice to God on behalf of members of the church."
   1. As such, the Catholic Church teaches that priests mediate between God and man, offering sacrifice in the Mass.
      a. "The priests are appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." (CC, 1539)
      b. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders. (CC, 1547)
   2. Scripture says that ALL Christians are a holy priesthood
      a. **1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6**
   3. The N T knows nothing of a separate priestly class. All believers serve as priests through Christ.

B. Celibacy: No Marriage for Priests?
   1. Celibacy is "voluntary" but is enforced. You can't be a married priest.
      a. All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate "for the sake of the kingdom of

heaven." Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord,"71 they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated" (CC 1579)

b. Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry. (CC 1580)

2. God, who gave marriage to man, forbids its prohibition as devilish doctrine
   a. **1 Tim 4:1-5**
   b. In fact, church leaders are *required* to be married
      (1) **1 Tim 3:1-2**
3. Scripture teaches that church leaders may marry; forced celibacy contradicts biblical teaching.

C. Are Priests Sin-Forgivers?
1. I remember as a boy going to a little room and confessing my sins to a priest. He would give a list of prayers to recite then pronounce me forgiven.
   a. "By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance." (CC 986)
   b. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (CC 1461)
2. While we may forgive those who offend us, human forgiveness is subjective and can be influenced by personal biases. But because God is the One against Whom all sin is against (Psa 51), only He can truly forgive.
   a. **Mark 2:7; 1 John 1:9**
3. Christians should confess sins to one another (Jas 5:16) but only God can forgive sin.

D. "Catholics Have A Middleman Problem" A man was having trouble with his internet and called customer support. After waiting on hold for 45 minutes, he finally reached someone… who transferred him to someone else… who then transferred him again. Three hours later, still no internet, and now he had trust issues.
1. Some folks treat access to God the same way—like you've got to go through three heavenly customer service agents before you can talk to the Boss. But Scripture says Jesus tore the curtain and opened the way directly to the Father. Why use a middleman when the line to God is open 24/7—and there's no hold music?
2. Jesus is our direct High Priest—no earthly priest needed (**Hebrews 10:19–22; 4:14-16**).

Conc: Jesus is our High Priest but Xians are priests offering spiritual sacrifices.

A. We are offering sacrifices of obedience as we work out our salvation.
B. Reject the traditions of men and cling to the Word of God, which fully equips believers. The church does not need a pope, a priestly class, or human mediators. It needs Christ.