

Apologetics

Objection raised by an Independent Protestant Friend

- The Catholic Church is a foul institution, unbiblical and wrong. Church Rituals don't lead you to Salvation
- Get "Baptised " like Christ did. Sprinkling of Holy water over an unconscious infant isn't Baptism. Baptism is for you to acknowledge Christ as your personal saviour and be Born Again
- How can a *parallel Christ* be able to forgive sins on Earth? (He's referring to Sacrament of Confession)
- The History of Catholic Church is all about Control game/political. I don't trust it.

My Dear Brother in Christ,

I am responding to your questions, concerns and arguments in the most charitable manner as possible. I do this out of love and concern for yours and your family's souls. Although you have directly made many contentions against the Catholic church recently including attacking the Vicar of Christ himself and Catholicism as a whole, I will refrain from using the same route as you, but instead gently attempt to reach your confused mind and misplaced heart in charity through clarity.

I comprehend your direct but naïve anti-Catholic opinions and empathise with you on the queer unheard of heretical self-professed Christian doctrines you have begun to embrace and encased yourself in. How can you be a church all by yourself? Is that even biblical? I'd be interested to learn from you where is it mentioned explicitly and unequivocally in the scriptures that a Christian is not required to or be obligated to owe allegiance to a church, especially the Catholic church? Please share the verses and other credible evidences to support your stance.

You further assert that one needs to be 'born again' for real salvation? How so? Show me the scriptures to support your view. And *explain to me in its full context* not only quoting John3:3. Cherry picking verses is a typical protestant trick to camouflage the real and entire meaning of all the verses preceding it and after it. That's an old trick and won't work now. So, approaching the scriptures with full honesty and sincerity is a sign of humility and understanding. Just so you know, I usually advocate to people that the *'Bible is not about*

verses, it is THE Scripture." (I hope you understand and grasp the difference and depth in that, it is one whole scripture, everything is connected from OT to NT).

The most accepted rationale exposition would be the premise that unless you read, research and give me apt references from the mammoth theological scholarly and scriptural-based works of St Ephrem the Syrian, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, St Cyril of Alexandria, St Peter Chrysologus, St Justin Martyr, Origen, St Polycarp of Smyrna, Papias of Hierapolis, St Jerome, St Ambrose, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, St John Chrysostom, the Cappadocian Fathers and so many more—then the objections you've raised are essentially void and you have nothing, absolutely nothing substantial to talk about to support your claims or your position from any direction in a rationale argument against the catholic church considering it as a foul institution, unbiblical and wrong. See, you need proof to back up your claim. A good narrative must be accompanied by facts and evidence. I don't see any. I only see complaints mostly.

So if you don't come up with proofs and evidences to back up your complaints or objections against Catholicism and the church, your words are all hearsay like an empty gong making needless noise. Be cautioned too, such unholy and naïve thoughts can be detrimental leading to poisoning of your own mind and heart, subliminally. Perhaps after you thoroughly read and research these stalwarts of the faith (as mentioned above and there are hundreds more which perhaps you will never accomplish reading them all in this lifetime—that is how rich and profound the Catholicism is), only then can we further talk on a similar frequency and expect a more fruitful discussion with desired fruits.

By the way, spewing out some out-of-context verses from the scripture doesn't impress or contextually validate one's position either. Anybody can do that. I could quote too quite effortlessly and contradict your otiose position. But wont since it'll be more of a verse versus verse. Rather let's approach this with some sound logic before diving into scriptures.

The fundamental question I ask you is- by what theological standard or authority do you measure or juxtapose your objections to Catholicism (including citing irrelevant cherry-picked verses to support your views)? Secondly, what authority do you use to interpret those or do you interpret those in your own personal way?

Just so you know, the doctrinal, dogmatic, moral and scriptural interpretations of the catholic church have been consistent, unwavering, infallible and edifying as was in the first century, it is as much, today. We're still the same church for 2020 years. People come and go, leaders come and go. But the church remains. That's the promise of Christ to Peter, the first Vicar of Christ.

Further to the point of church's authority on teachings, some of the Doctors of the Catholic church I have mentioned are only connected predominantly to the realms of deep and sound scriptural works while I haven't even touched upon the storehouse of spiritual doctors yet. These are luminous giants of the church whose saintly and holy lives have set such high benchmarks for the entire humanity, not only Catholics, that anyone with a sincere yearning to adore, worship, honour and love the Holy Trinity, would immediately seek their works in order to consume them to learn the secrets of their extraordinary spiritual devotions and exemplary saintly lives.

Thus, sow one's faith deeper and grow fruits of this faith wider and higher. If you are truly searching for a personal relationship with Christ, you can achieve faster and better results with these spiritual giants of the church. Why invent the wheel? What new revelation have you received so suddenly after you've left the catholic church that makes you think that you're better, greater and more knowledgeable than these saints or the church. But of course, if you're honest, you'd immediately confess that you are not claiming so. So you might conjure up another justified explanation alluding to your born-again association with some independent new found church, which by the way, I don't even consider a church actually, you should really look up the true theological understanding of what a real church is, you'll be surprised and better informed maybe. Many of these new so-called churches are propagating some new meaningless unheard of doctrine/s, dishing out a new elucidation of the bible based on sola fide or sola scriptura, all be it, they're all same eggs in the basket of partisan-theology and bunkum beliefs independently interpreted by these self-made or self-proclaimed pastors whose lack of sound catholic theology training and education coupled with extremely questionable knowledge of the faith, is leading sheep like you, astray. It is tragic. Open your eyes and see.

Please follow the saints, not these pastors, and you'll be safe. Let me explain through a simple analogy, let us say you decide to go on along hike into the mountains, an unknown territory and you are not quite sure of the route, wouldn't it be wise to seek or engage a local guide who is familiar and knows the environment better than you do to escort you or atleast guide you through a map or something lest you lose the way? So if you are approaching God in any other spiritual route apart from what these amazing spiritual giants have already laid out for us all, i.e. the blue print for everyone, then you without doubt be assured that you are heading in the right direction, isn't it? Would the saints mislead you? Instead, you are going in the opposite direction where you are determined to go because of your misplaced pride to remove yourself from the one body of Christ which is the Catholic Church. Lucifer's biggest downfall was not surrendering total obedience to Divine Authority because of his pride. His rebellious nature was his loss of heaven. So anyone who rebels against the church of Christ or his Mystical body on earth, then it's plain to tell what is and what is the origination of that repulsive spirit.

I reiterate that these saints are the true gems of the church who have embarked upon, discovered and revealed to us all the hidden secrets of the one apostolic church to attaining the only standard understanding of the Scriptures in its full conformity and uniformity. When you are with them you can't go wrong or lose the way. Obedience to the magisterium and in attaining the highest pinnacle of righteous-living is an unconditional sign of humility. The Catholic church is not an institution of control and of power as you naively reason. Perhaps you are not well informed that Catholics are free to stay in the catholic church or leave anytime. You left, right? Did anybody stop you? No. So there's no doctrine or by canon law that we are tethered to the church. So how does Church's power and control play a role here? Please be specific. We've all been endowed with the gift of free will. Am sure you know that scripture too. Yes, if you referring to history, the painful wars, the corruption, the inquisition etc, yes, it is all true. The church is run by lay people who are fallible and weak, just like you and me. But God's spirit hasn't left the church ever. Just like the Israelites that rebelled against god and turned away from him year after year, for centuries, but God never gave up on them. During the time of Jesus, deep corruption of mind, soul and body was rife amongst the Levis and priestly orders. Yet God was always present amidst them, so much so that He sent His only Son to draw them back to His love.

Yes, the Church has suffered and it is still suffering and will continue to suffer more. This is mostly with the deficit of morality within the church, than Faith. The Faith is intact as Christ is our witness. The clergy are humans and tragically many of them are anti-Gospel and anti-Christ agents who will continue to infect and bring dishonour to the body of Christ. But that shouldn't give us reason to leave or forsake the faith. The morality needs addressing. The Church had always had the faith and always will and not even the gates of hell will prevail against it, says the Lord. That's a Divine promise! Anyone who is weak in the faith and feels scandalised by the filth of the catholic echelons and some clergy that are attempting to destroy the church from inside, will be embarrassed to break away and are free to leave. But where can they really go? Everywhere else outside the church one can identify equal amount of corruption (even more), disgusting sin and debauchery and the likes. Please name me one place or institution anywhere in the world where its morality and integrity is intact and it is as immaculate as it can be. Not one you will find. The whole world is satanically corrupt, can it be any worse? Let us also include ourselves with the filth of immoral lives, endless lies, corruption of the soul, deception, jealousy, anger, dishonesty, adultery, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, cohabitation and pre-marital sex etc., the intense stench of sinful lives that we're leading is making heaven sick too. So where or what are you escaping from? Rather you just jumped from the hot pan into the fire. But you almost forgot, because we have the sacrament of confession to help us with the graces we need to live in a state of Grace. However, at the end Christ will triumph with his church, the Catholic Church that He founded.

You also asked me if I know my own church history. Well, I do know enough for now to be able to respond to your concerns, but I am still learning a lot more every day. It is massive. I feel like am a tiny grasshopper trying to eat up an entire football field. But the question is, have you honestly done the same yourself? Reading a few predisposed articles here and there written mostly by poorly trained, inadequately theologised, ill-formed independent protestant pastors and anti-Catholic rhetoric on the web and stuff, will do no good really. Go to the roots my friend. Go back to the early church fathers and Doctors of the church for a start. Do it yourself. I've put the links below for you at the end of this article. Their works are truly luminous and worth more than anything on this earth. These saints were deeply anointed and guided by the Holy Spirit whose fruits we know are unmistakably visible through the increasing number of protestant and non-believer conversions back to Catholicism in the recent decades and more today than ever before.

It is just not possible that you or anyone can ever convince me in the next 1000 years or more that Catholicism is wrong, and it is cult of sorts as you pronounce. And no amount of argument from your side will make me leave it. Not possible. My foundation and faith is as strong as the oak tree. On the contrary, I am more than 100% certain that I can guide you to the early Church Fathers/Doctors/theologians /Saints/ other Converts etc., whose scholarly works, lives, their works of faith, testimonies will generate a spark in your head and radiate your heart in such a way that you and your family will surely come back to the Catholic church someday soon. That is my prayer. Catholicism is sweet if only you dive deep and live the faith. You would be eternally thankful to the Fathers and doctors of the church for showing you your way home to Catholicism. But you must do this in all honesty, truthfulness and if you're really seeking the truth. Put vanity aside.

In the narrow milieu of sola fide, Sola Scriptura, Sola Deus, Sola Gratias, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria, these objections and fallacious doctrines have already been refuted and shunned in the last several centuries. It amazes me why do naïve protestants or anti-Catholics keep reinventing the wheel? There are basically two ways to answer their objections, today. First, if a Christian is seriously hampered by Catholicism, its rituals and sacraments whatever, and has difficulty accepting and being part of the true church of Christ (i.e. the body and bride of Christ the head and Groom respectively), then either he/she with all honesty and earnestly needs to dive deep into the writings and works of the early church fathers to find the roots and the fruits of the catholic church and understand why it does what it does. Or alternatively to save time, he/she can begin listening to the conversion testimonies of prominent protestant pastors or non-believer individuals or atheists, Muslims or Hindus, Jews who have found and many are still finding their way back home to Rome reuniting with the one body of Christ. In fact, the Blessed Virgin Mother prophesied to a church approved mystic centuries ago that the splinter churches will one day unite with the one holy catholic apostolic church.

With humility and patience, if one listens to the testimonies of these once stubborn attitudes and biased views about Catholicism and what ultimately led them to change their minds and hearts, will surely awaken your slumbering conscience too. It is indeed truly edifying for anyone with some basic working intelligence to garner what these converts found to be everything right with the catholic church, while what they believed was so wrong about in their previous positions as opposed to their constricted views and sifted-knowledge of Catholicism.

Here are some popular conversion testimonies stories that you may want to immediately start reading about or listening to. Almost all of them were, once upon a time, dead against Catholicism, they hated it.

So what changed these folks?

Refer: Malcolm Muggeridge, Walker Percy, Graham Greene, Karl Stern (a world-renowned psychoanalyst who was one of his professors in the 1940s at McGill University Medical College in Montreal), C. S. Lewis, Simone Weill, Richard Gilman, Blaise Pascal, and Cardinal Newman. Also read about Scott Hahn, Dr Brant Pitre, Dr Peter Kreeft, Steve Ray, Tim Staples, Fr John Corapi, Fr John Bartunek (Passion of Christ Movie- Spiritual Director), Marcus Brodi, Bernard Nathanson (famous Jewish abortionist-turned-atheistic-pro-lifer), Pentecostal minister Alex Jones, Eric Sammons, Keith Nester, Alexis Carrel (Medicine-Nobel Laureate), Takashi Nagai (was a Japanese doctor who survived the atomic bomb during World War II), Mortimer Adler (American philosopher and educator, he discovered St. Thomas Aquinas in his 20s and became a figure in the Neo-Thomist Movement), St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) (1891-1942): German-Jewish philosopher and Discalced Carmelite nun who died at Auschwitz. She was canonized by St. John Paul II in 1998, Israel Zolli (1881-1956): Italian Jewish scholar and the chief rabbi in Rome from 1940 to 1945. A friend of Pope Pius XII, he converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1945, Dale Ahlquist (renowned G.K. Chesterton scholar and speaker Dale Ahlquist shares how reading G.K. Chesterton started him on his journey home to the Catholic Church), Dr Francis Beckwith (hear the story of how the former president of the Evangelical Theological Society returned to the Catholic Church); Jeff Cavins, Creator, Great Adventure Bible Timeline, Former Protestant Minister.

All of these I have listed above at random had taken the same path to conversion because they earnestly sought the true church and the light of Christ, I pray that soon you will be considering the same path to return as well. I have hope you will. Candidly speaking, it is your own truthful demeanour that you must allow to be exquisitely sensitive to the struggling doubts and questions within you with how much intellectual space you allow for reason, how much grace you permit to turn over to faith. That is the key!

In the end, of course, they reach the same conclusion as another famous convert, Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman says: *“Regarding Christianity, 10,000 difficulties do not make one doubt.”*

These testimonies few of which I mentioned above (from the thousands of solid stories of other converts that I cannot cover here), should be able to draw you back to your senses and you will surely find your way home just like they all did. Be humble and pretend that you know nothing. Just read and absorb. But if you allow pride dressed in fancy erudition that covers the innerwear of preconceived notions of your inhibitions, you will have gain nothing. On the other hand, if you approach all of this with an open, truthful mind and heart, and if you're sincerely seeking the Truth with all of its graces and fruits, it is in the body of Christ, the only church that truly beckons you to return.

If you claim that your spiritual life is between you and God alone and there should be no in-betweens or institutions because they are corrupt, then what will you do with verses like?

John 6:53-54 - *(since this Eucharistic practice has been continuing from the apostle's time)*

Luke 24:30 – Many look at this as a simple apparition of the Lord at Emmaus, but it has deep theological meaning too. It is clear the Lord is articulating the significance of the Eucharist). It says that their eyes were opened! Jesus could've easily revealed himself to them before he entered the house and disappeared, but why did wait for the breaking of the bread? Because he wanted to them to know that importance of the Eucharist.

Just two chapters before in Luke 22:20 – Christ established a new covenant in and through the Eucharist. It was Important for Him to institute this new covenant as it is clearly explained by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:25-30. Read this carefully.

If Moses instituted the blood of the covenant on behalf of Yahweh with the Israelites in Exodus 24:8 which is a direct fore-shadowing of the new covenant that Christ would establish with his own blood at the cenacle, then why would any protestant denomination not consider or partake in this new covenant of the Eucharist? Basically, every protestant or independent or pseudo-Christian that rubbishes the Eucharist or thinks it is a pagan ritual, is an anti-Christ. It is that simple! Because who would hate Christ more than Satan and his followers.

And here is John 5:39-40 to kaput every Christian's hypocrisy that believes eternal life is in and through Sola Scriptura or Sola Fide. Jesus say's clearly that it's quite the contrary. Scripture is edifying but the Eucharist and sacraments are more important. In any case, the whole Holy sacrifice of the mass is Scriptural based. Know your catechism well, then you'll know.

With reference to Baptism and born again Christians. Let see.

Scripture does not specifically prohibit the baptism of Infants though scripture has many strong indications of Infant baptism. In Acts 2:38-39 Peter said to them, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”* This command is universal and not restricted to adults.

Lk 18:15-16 - People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.* Jesus asserted that the kingdom belonged to all even infants, not only to those who were capable of reason. If Jesus said *“let them come to me”*, So who are we to say no and withhold baptism to them.

Now let's correlate Old Testament (OT) practices of infant initiation with the New Testament (NT). The irony with most protestants is that they claim to be sola scriptura experts yet they are naively narrow minded and deliberately blind to the most glaring and obvious scriptural parallels throughout the bible.

Circumcision was the seal of the covenant God made with Abraham. In Genesis 17: 12-14 *Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised **when he is eight days** old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”* So Infants were as much a part of the covenant as adults.

Deuteronomy 29:10 -12 *“You stand assembled today, all of you, before the Lord your God—the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, **your children**, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water— to enter into the covenant of the Lord your God, sworn by an oath, which the Lord your God is making with you today”*

In the NT, Baptism is the seal of the New Covenant in Christ. It signifies cleansing from sin, just as circumcision did in the OT. Infants are wholly saved by God's grace just as adults are, only apart from their rational and wilful consent, their parents act in their behalf.

Saint Paul states that Baptism has replaced Circumcision. Colossians 2:11-12 *“11 In him also you **were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision**, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”*

Paul refers to baptism as the circumcision of Christ. Under the Old Law only infants were circumcised. Circumcision of adults was rare as there were few converts to Judaism. If Paul had meant to exclude infants, he would not have chosen circumcision as a parallel for baptism. If infants were not baptized, why are there no references in Scripture of Parents joining the Church only after the children have come of age. By referring to Baptism as **“the circumcision of Christ”** Paul equates Circumcision to Baptism.

Many biblical passages connect *household* and *children*

- **Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.
- **Genesis 31:41** It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters . . .
- **Genesis 36:6** Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, . . .
- **Genesis 47:12** Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.
- **Numbers 18:11** . . . I give this to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it.
- **1 Chronicles 10:6** So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.
- **Matthew 19:29** And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.
- **1 Timothy 3:12** deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well

Whole households” were baptized - Scriptural Evidence

- **Acts 2:38-39** Peter said to them, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”* This command is universal and not restricted to adults.
- **Acts 16:15**(NRSV) *“When she and her **household were baptized**, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.” And she prevailed upon us.”*

- **Acts 16:33** “At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his **entire family were baptized** without delay”
- **Acts 18:8** “Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with **all his household**; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and **were baptized**”
- **Acts 11:14** “he will give you a message by which you and **your entire household will be saved**”. **It would be hard to say this involved no small children**

Immersion or Sprinkling

Ez. 36:23-27, And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Church Fathers on Infant Baptism

Consider, too, that Fathers raised in Christian homes (such as Irenaeus) would hardly have upheld infant baptism as apostolic if their own baptisms had been deferred until the age of reason.

For example, infant baptism is assumed in Irenaeus’ writings below (since he affirms both that regeneration happens in baptism, and also that Jesus came so even infants could be regenerated). Since he was born in a Christian home in Smyrna around the year 140, this means he was probably baptized around 140. He was also probably baptized by the bishop of Smyrna at that time—Polycarp, a personal disciple of the apostle John, who had died only a few decades before.

Here are examples of what early Christian writers had to say on the subject of the infant baptism:

Irenaeus

“He [Jesus] came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore, he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not

only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age” (Against Heresies 2:22:4 [A.D. 189]).

Hippolytus

“Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them” (The Apostolic Tradition 21:16 [A.D. 215]).

Origen

“Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . In the Church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous” (Homilies on Leviticus 8:3 [A.D. 248]).

“The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine sacraments, knew there are in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit” (Commentaries on Romans 5:9 [A.D. 248]).

Cyprian of Carthage

“As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born” (Letters 64:2 [A.D. 253]).

“If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does he [an infant] approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another” (ibid., 64:5).

Gregory of Nazianz

“Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal [of baptism] because of the weakness of nature? Oh, what a pusillanimous mother and of how little faith!” (Oration on Holy Baptism 40:7 [A.D. 388]).

“‘Well enough,’ some will say, ‘for those who ask for baptism, but what do you have to say about those who are still children, and aware neither of loss nor of grace? Shall we baptize them too?’ Certainly [I respond], if there is any pressing danger. Better that they be sanctified unaware, than that they depart unsealed and uninitiated” (ibid., 40:28).

John Chrysostom

“You see how many are the benefits of baptism, and some think it’s heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins, but we have enumerated ten honours [it bestows]! For this reason, we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by [personal] sins, so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his [Christ’s] members” (Baptismal Catechesis in Augustine, Against Julian 1:6:21 [A.D. 388]).

Augustine 408 AD

Augustine also taught, "It is this one Spirit who makes it possible for an infant to be regenerated . . . when that infant is brought to baptism; and it is through this one Spirit that the infant so presented is reborn. For it is not written, ‘Unless a man be born again by the will of his parents’ or ‘by the faith of those presenting him or ministering to him,’ but, ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ [John 3:5]. The water, therefore, manifesting exteriorly the sacrament of grace, and the Spirit effecting interiorly the benefit of grace, both regenerate in one Christ that man who was generated in Adam" (Letters 98:2 [A.D. 408]).

Council of Carthage V

“Item: It seemed good that whenever there were not found reliable witnesses who could testify that without any doubt they [abandoned children] were baptized and when the children themselves were not, on account of their tender age, able to answer concerning the giving of the sacraments to them, all such children should be baptized without scruple, lest a hesitation should deprive them of the cleansing of the sacraments. This was urged by the [North African] legates, our brethren, since they redeem many such [abandoned children] from the barbarians” (Canon 7 [A.D. 401]).

Council of Mileum II

“Whoever says that infants fresh from their mothers’ wombs ought not to be baptized, or say that they are indeed baptized unto the remission of sins, but that they draw nothing of the original sin of Adam, which is expiated in the bath of regeneration . . . let him be anathema [excommunicated]. Since what the apostle [Paul] says, ‘Through one-man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so passed to all men, in whom all have sinned’ [Rom. 5:12], must not be understood otherwise than the Catholic Church spread everywhere has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who

in themselves thus far have not been able to commit any sin, are therefore truly baptized unto the remission of sins, so that that which they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them by regeneration” (Canon 3 [A.D. 416]).

Part II

Next the Sacrament of Forgiveness of sins. What you are going to do with John 20: 21-23? Was Jesus’ teaching and instruction confined only to the apostles in that period of time or was his teachings perennial until his return? If you agree with that later, which I think you’d wisely choose, then it requires no further exposition to surmise that the true apostolic teaching, blessings and pouring of graces from apostle to disciple to disciple right down the lineage of successors eventually passed down to our ordained priests who have this apostolic faculty to continue to forgive sins as *Alter Christus*.

Let’s go back to history of the church and see what it teaches:

THE DIDACHE

“Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. On the Lord’s Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure” (Didache 4:14, 14:1 [A.D. 70]).

THE LETTER OF BARNABAS

“You shall judge righteously. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify those that contend by bringing them together. You shall confess your sins. You shall not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light” (Letter of Barnabas 19 [A.D. 74]).

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

“For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ” (Letter to the Philadelphians 3 [A.D. 110]).

“For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop” (ibid., 8).

TERTULLIAN

“[Regarding confession, some] flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves, or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation, like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians; and thus they perish along with their own bashfulness” (Repentance 10:1 [A.D. 203]).

HIPPOLYTUS

“[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command” (Apostolic Tradition 3 [A.D. 215]).

ORIGEN

“[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, ‘I said, “To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity” (Homilies on Leviticus 2:4 [A.D. 248]).

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

“The apostle [Paul] likewise bears witness and says: ‘ . . . Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord’ [1 Cor. 11:27]. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings; before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the

ceremony and at the hand of the priest . . . they do violence to [the Lord's] body and blood, and with their hands and mouth they sin against the Lord more than when they denied him" (The Lapsed 15:1–3 [A.D. 251]).

"Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . . I beseech you, brethren, let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord" (ibid., 28).

"[S]inners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion. [But now some] with their time [of penance] still unfulfilled . . . they are admitted to Communion, and their name is presented; and while the penitence is not yet performed, confession is not yet made, the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the Eucharist is given to them; although it is written, 'Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [1 Cor. 11:27]" (Letters 9:2 [A.D. 253]).

"And do not think, dearest brother, that either the courage of the brethren will be lessened, or that martyrdoms will fail for this cause, that penance is relaxed to the lapsed, and that the hope of peace [i.e., absolution] is offered to the penitent. . . . For to adulterers even a time of repentance is granted by us, and peace is given" (ibid., 51[55]:20).

"But I wonder that some are so obstinate as to think that repentance is not to be granted to the lapsed, or to suppose that pardon is to be denied to the penitent, when it is written, 'Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works' [Rev. 2:5], which certainly is said to him who evidently has fallen, and whom the Lord exhorts to rise up again by his deeds [of penance], because it is written, 'Alms deliver from death' [Tob. 12:9]" (ibid., 51[55]:22).

BASIL THE GREAT

"It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God's mysteries is entrusted. Those doing penance of old are found to have done it before the saints. It is written in the Gospel that they confessed their sins to John the Baptist [Matt. 3:6], but in Acts [19:18] they confessed to the apostles" (Rules Briefly Treated 288 [A.D. 374]).

JEROME

“If the serpent, the devil, bites someone secretly, he infects that person with the venom of sin. And if the one who has been bitten keeps silence and does not do penance, and does not want to confess his wound . . . then his brother and his master, who have the word [of absolution] that will cure him, cannot very well assist him” (Commentary on Ecclesiastes 10:11 [A.D. 388]).

1. Why do I have to go to a priest for confession instead of going straight to God? After all, the Bible says that “there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Lord does want us to come to him when we fall into sin. He wants to bring us forgiveness so much that he gave the apostles the power to forgive sins. This power given to the apostles and their successors does not come from within them but from God. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus gave the apostles authority over unclean spirits, the authority to heal, the authority to raise people from the dead, et cetera. No Christian assumes that these powers came from the men themselves, since God is the one that has chosen to use them to manifest his power and mercy.

In the words of Paul, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). The apostles and their successors are merely ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), bringing his forgiveness to the world through the sacraments and the message of the gospel. If God has chosen to bring his message of forgiveness to the world by means of sinful, human ambassadors, why would he not be able to give these messengers the power to forgive and retain sins? And why would this not be a natural way for Jesus to extend his merciful presence on earth for all generations?

If Jesus has set up a way for us to draw near to him and receive his grace, why should we prefer another route? We would be like the three-year-old with his father who, in a rush to get home from the store, begins to run. “Let me pick you up,” the father offers. The child says, “No, Dad. I’m fast. Just watch me.” It takes them much longer to get home because the child’s pride prevents him from accepting his father’s help. Likewise, God does hear us when we ask for forgiveness, but it is dangerous and often prideful to stay away from what the saints call the “medicine box”—the confessional. Why would a person wish to overcome their sins alone when they have the God-given power of the apostles’ successors at their disposal?

2. Where is the sacrament of confession in the Bible?

As soon as Jesus rose from the dead and earned salvation for us, he brought his apostles a new gift. After speaking peace to them, he said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus was sent by the Father to reconcile the world to God, Jesus sent the apostles to continue his mission.

Jesus then breathed on the apostles. This is a verse that is often passed over, but it has extraordinary significance because it is only the second time in all of Scripture where God breathes on anyone. The other instance was at the moment of creation, when God breathed his own life into the nostrils of Adam. This should tell us that something of great importance is taking place. Upon doing this, Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

Notice that Jesus is not simply commissioning the apostles to preach about God's forgiveness. He is not saying, "Go tell everyone that when God forgives men's sins, they're forgiven." In using the second person plural you, Jesus is telling his apostles that by the power of the Holy Spirit he has given them the power to forgive and retain the sins of men. Having the power to forgive and to retain sins implies that the apostle knows what a person's sins are, which in turn implies oral confession. Otherwise, how is the apostle to know what to retain or forgive?

In the same way that Jesus gave his apostles other supernatural powers (such as raising men from the dead), he gave them power to absolve sins (raising them from spiritual death). In Matthew 9, we read that Jesus forgave a paralytic and then healed him so "that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6)

After he exercised this power as a man, the crowds glorified God for having given "such authority to men" (Matt. 9:8, emphasis added). Notice that Matthew indicates this power to forgive sins had been given to men, and not simply to a man.

3. Doesn't confession of one's sins imply that Christ's work was insufficient? The Bible says that if I believe that Jesus is Lord, I'll be saved.

The passage you referred to is Acts 16:31, which reads, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Sounds pretty simple. However, the Bible says much more about salvation and forgiveness. Jesus repeatedly affirmed that if we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven (Matt. 6:15). When Jesus breathed on the apostles in John 20, he gave them the power to retain sins. But if one's salvation is contingent upon nothing other than a verbal profession of faith, then there is no reason why Jesus would give any man the power to

retain sins. In the midst of all of these passages what we need to be careful of is that we do not camp out on one particular Bible passage without consulting the rest of Scripture.

It is because of the work of Christ that we obtain forgiveness. All Christians can agree on that. What needs to be discussed is how that forgiveness comes to mankind. When Ananias spoke to Paul in Acts 22:16, he said, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16). Later in the New Testament, the forgiveness of sins is tied to the sacrament of the anointing of the sick (James 5:13–15). Just as these Biblical practices are channels of God’s forgiving grace, the sacrament of confession does not add to or take away from the finished work of Christ. It is evidence of the finished work of Christ in our midst.

4. How can Catholics claim confession to a priest is an apostolic tradition? I heard it was invented in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.

What you heard probably came from the anti-Catholic book [Roman Catholicism by Loraine Boettner](#). This book is well known for its inaccurate history, and the reference cited is a primary example. During the Fourth Lateran Council, the Church reminded the faithful in an official way what had already been the ancient practice of the Church—to confess mortal sins at least once a year. In no way was this the initiation of a new sacrament or even a new way to celebrate an old sacrament. If the Church did initiate the sacrament of reconciliation in 1215, why were there no cries at the time of invention? The obvious answer is no one objected because they were aware that the sacrament was over a millennium old at the time of the Council.

You may learn more here;

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-confession-in-scripture>

Below are three reading spiritual memoirs, conversion stories, who sought entrance to the Catholic Church sometime in their maturity. Hope they stories will be an inspiration for you too.

Born in the raging Islamic desert of Iran, with its smell of “dust mingled with stale rosewater,” **Sohrab Ahmari**, as he relates in *From Fire, by Water*, escaped from the shadowy, bohemian life of his father, and the tyranny of the mullahs, to his émigré uncle’s home in Utah, in his early teens. There, he embraced the culture of the secular West, first in its self-loathing Marxist form, and then in the abstract but patriotic principles of neo-

conservatism. Christianity was to him in every sense alien; he knew almost nothing about it and viewed it with contempt; and yet, in December of 2016, he was received into the Catholic Church, "Christ's supreme revelation."

Abigail Rine Favale, raised in an Evangelical family, amid the enchanted hills of Utah, and later in the haunted, isolating mountains of Idaho, would also embrace a secular church. Western feminism would mingle with her evangelical sentimentalism and compose an attractive, intellectually exciting, if vague spirituality, before, as she tells us in *Into the Deep*, an instinctive, almost accidental conversion to the Church begins her journey into the fullness of faith and the complete transformation of the soul by its loving discipline.

Kenneth Garcia was raised in a religiously indifferent home, the son of an absconding alcoholic father, and grew up in the mountains and waste lands of Nevada. Where so much is open wilderness, unsettled, unoccupied, and untouched by human hands, a sort of formless, drifting freedom and the hollow coursing of the wind led him, by slow drift, into the Church. Hence, the title of his memoir, *Pilgrim River*.

As St Augustine's says so beautifully, "*we take joy in the conversion of the lost, not only because the lost have been found, but because our own life and love is enlarged by communion with them.*"

Some useful references:

<https://chnetwork.org/information/>

<https://patrickmadrid.com/>

<https://www.brantpitre.com/>

<https://catholicconvert.com/community/conversion-stories/>

<https://www.catholic.com/>

<https://www.churchfathers.org/>

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davearmstrong/2017/10/my-conversion-apathy-occult-evangelicalism-catholicism-pt-6.html>

God bless you on your journey back home to Rome,

Ronald JD.

Sept 21, 2020.