



# 9 | 5 Tools For Conversing With Roman Catholics



For additional guidance,  
please refer to these  
resources in Section II

*For by one offering he hath perfected  
for ever them that are sanctified. - He-  
brews 10:14*

The more acquainted we are with Catholics the more important it is to know and understand their background. If you are new to our study, please take the time to read our Background footnote now<sup>1</sup>. We placed some emphasis on understanding Catholics in Section I. We now discuss the things Catholics need to better understand about us. Catholicism may rightfully be called a mystery religion with a complexity and language so expansive that few Catholics themselves have a grasp on it. For this reason, it is important to keep our focus on *root issues* when talking with Catholics, and not to be caught up in esoteric, non productive, philosophical or historical issues.

## 1.) Catholics Need to Understand the Biblical words Justification and Righteousness.

Catholics often refer to their own term “Catholic guilt,” as a hint to the role guilt plays in their system. This is not to say that Catholics own “the guilt business,” but it does point to an underlying condition. No Catholic may have assurance of eternal life and the Catholic is completely dependent upon the church for resolving his ongoing guilt issue and for any hope of future salvation. Unlike the Catholic, the saved non catholic believes that Christ has, through His grace, freely given us eternal life and that our heavenly Father now lovingly disciplines us as Children.

No one needs to confront the discussion of the righteousness of God more than the Catholic. While many Catholics have already heard the question “*If you were to die today do you know where you would go?*” it still serves as a good starting point. When the Catholic gives his usual ambivalent answer, it is important for us to follow through with a second similar question, “*Just how good do you feel you have to*

*be in order for God to accept you into His sinless heaven?"*

These leading questions open up the discussion of the righteousness of God which is freely available to all, and there are two points you will want to drive home carefully:

**1. God gives His righteousness, *once and for all*, to any who will receive it by faith.** Romanism teaches *infused* righteousness, based on the idea that the believer lives in an ongoing pursuit of salvation, based on his submission to the sacraments. He does not see salvation as a permanent state. This means the non Catholic will want to be very familiar with the book of Romans, the Bible's great thesis on God's righteousness.

**Romans 4:1-8** is a good starting place. Verse 5 warns us that we add debt to our account when we try to please God with our works.

**Romans 5:1** tells us that we have been (the aorist tense here means that this action happened once and for all) justified by faith. We are presently being justified (enjoying the benefits of our justification) because we were justified once and for all when we came to Christ.

**Romans 10:1-13** explains that just as the early Jews were ignorant of God's righteousness and tried to establish their own righteousness, so many today have not submitted to the righteousness of God which is *by faith*, freely available in Christ.

**2. When God gives us His righteousness, He places us in Christ and makes us a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).**

This is no small matter. It unveils a wide range of positional truth arising from this initial fact that we are new creations in Christ with new life because we have been born again (born from above).

The Catholic believes that he is “born again” as the result of his sacramental baptism as an infant. Non Catholics can overlook the point that Catholicism *still requires a personal decision* on the part of Catholics when they are mature enough to exercise their own “free will” and “come to faith.” That time of coming to faith is when Catholics would use the terms repentance and justification. However, the Catholic *does not see this as a one time, once for all event*. His justification is seen as an ongoing matter, subject to his sacramental obedience<sup>2</sup>.

The biblical term “born again” or “born from above” is important. The believer’s new life and new position in Christ is a result of his *once-for-all* justification. Far more than justification is involved. As a result of being born again we become new persons in Christ. Our *regeneration* is the result of our justification (Romans 4:24-25). God commands us to appropriate and apply this truth to our daily lives (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). We are justified (made righteous) once and for all (Galatians 2:16-17; 3:24, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 8:30). Each of the above references speak of justification in the

Greek aorist tense, teaching that our justification is once and for all.

## 2.) Understand Their Eucharist Does Not Save Men

Unlike the non Catholic who celebrates the Lord's Table or Communion in remembrance of Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7, Greek aorist tense: once for all), the Roman Catholic also observes the Eucharist during the second liturgy of the Mass. In this priestly celebration, Catholics believe the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ based on their interpretations of John 6:32-58; Matthew 26:26; Luke 22:17-23; and 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. In this respect, Catholics make some assumptions simply not found in the Bible.

a. Catholics *presume* a priest can actually offer a prayer which will turn physical bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a concept not found anywhere in God's Word.

b. While acknowledging that Christ died on the cross only once, Catholics believe that His sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one and the same sacrifice*, thus Christ is being *perpetually* sacrificed. Even if we could follow the mental gymnastics required to see the sacrifice of Christ continuing perpetually through the Mass, we would be faced with the flat contradiction of the Bible which declares "*For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*" Hebrews 10:14. The Bible, without exception, speaks

of the offering of Christ in the past tense and in the context of one expression of one event. This is in contrast to the multiple sacrifices which were required to atone the consciences of Israel under Moses' law. Hebrews further argues that if that one sacrifice was inefficient, Christ would have had to offer Himself continually from the foundation of the world. Instead, He offered Himself once for all (Hebrews 9:24-28).

c. The Bible is clear that a non-bloody sacrifice would not be efficacious (Hebrews 9:22). When it is suggested that Christ is being crucified 24 hours a day 365 days a year in the Catholic Mass, her priests remind us that His blood is not flowing all that time, because the mass is non-bloody. Still, Catholic dogma insists the mass is propitiatory because it is the sacrifice of Christ, but without blood<sup>3</sup>.

The simple truth is that we partake of the elements of the Lord's Table in remembrance of Christ, looking forward to the day when all of His own will eat it again in His presence.

### 3.) Catholics Need to Understand Their Priestly Order is Unnecessary

Even a first time Bible reader recognizes that the Bible did not establish any priestly orders, qualifications, or rites in the New Testament. This is not only because we are all kingly priests (1 Peter 2:5,9), but because there is no priestly sacrifice over which to officiate. Because

the Catholic Church believes it is the true Israel, it has also sought to impose the Old Testament priesthood model. In an effort to further justify a priesthood not found in the Bible, Catholics went so far as to exchange the word elder (presbetuteros) for priest (hiererus). The Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible, for example, changes Titus 1:5, and James 5:14-15 from elder to priest.

#### 4.) Catholics Need to Understand that Christ Alone is our Mediator

In the world of the Catholic, Jesus Christ is their mediator. Priests are their mediators, and Mary claims to be their mediator. A mediator is not merely one who prays to God for us, a mediator is one through whom we access God, particularly through prayer. There are two reasons why we need no other mediator than Christ.

**a.** Christ claims to be the only mediator. Jesus not only claimed to be the only way to the Father, He gave us specific instructions that we were to pray to and through Him (John 14:6-13). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit assists us in our prayers (Romans 8:26).

**b.** Any other mediator would be superfluous. Paul adamantly declared that all men everywhere were to pray to the Father and that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). Neither Mary no any other saint could hear our prayers, and even if they could, they could only hear one prayer

at a time. They are not God.

*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. 1 John 5:14-15.*

## 5.) Catholics Need to Understand They Can Know They Are Saved

We end where we began. Above all, our dear Catholic friends need to know that they can have eternal life and know it, in spite of a church which openly declares they cannot. The Bible says:

*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. -1 John 5:9-13*

1. We must not take the witness of men over God's witness.
2. God's witness was the testimony of His Son.
3. To have the Son is to have life. To deny this is to make God a liar.
4. We can know that we have eternal life by believing on the Son.

<sup>1</sup> **Background.** As noted in section I, chapter 4, Roman Catholicism, openly challenges the idea that the Bible alone is sufficient and that faith alone in Christ's work is adequate for salvation. The Catholic church is the composite of its longstanding traditions, ancient pagan (creation based) religious practices, and Greek philosophy. **The reader will want to study:** Section II, chapter 8, Five Things About Works Based Systems, Section II, chapter 7, Five Things About Multiple Authorities, and Section II, chapter 5, Five Things About Creator Worship for a fuller treatment of these broad issues.

<sup>2</sup> The following is a quote from Fr. Michael Garry in our personal correspondence. It clarifies the essential Catholic position: *"...So, if things go as they ought, when the time comes this baptized person will choose to receive more deeply and personally the seed of faith that was infused in his soul at baptism. He will make it his own and thereby come to a personal faith, which is often (but not necessarily) marked by a dramatic experience of repentance from sin and trust in God. So, in the ordinary course of things (infant baptism, followed by growth to maturity) there always comes a point when a personal decision is necessitated. Keep in mind here that the Catholic understanding of justification is an ongoing process, not a single once for all event. Baptism is only the beginning and the simple fact that a Catholic was baptized will not save him any more than being a son of Abraham saves a Jew."*

<sup>3</sup> Page 1367 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: *"The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different."* *"And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner . . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."* Cited from: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Holy-Eucharist.html>.

### Additional Resources

*Note: These are resources, not cart blanc endorsements*

done. by Cary Schmidt, StrivingTogether.com

Talking with Catholic Friends and Family, James G. McCarthy, Harvest House. This book addresses the commonly found, every day Catholic.