

The Catholic Church: Means of Salvation

Q. 169. What do we believe about the Catholic Church and salvation?

We firmly believe that Jesus Christ made His Catholic Church the ordinary means of salvation. We should desire to share the Church's fullness with all mankind.

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ placed the work of salvation in the care of His Church. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16). Not to the individual, but to the Church, was the promise made by Christ: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever" (John 14:16).

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in tongues of fire and transformed those men into the strong foundation upon which Christ's Church was to be built. The once ignorant, weak, and timid Apostles now went bravely forward to confront the world and to save it for their Master.

Catholics believe that only through the Church can we find full security and certainty about the meaning and destiny of human life, and know fully what God wills us to believe and do, thus attaining salvation. Without the Church, religion becomes merely a matter of opinion and conjecture, and we have no assurance as to what is true or false.

Our lives as Catholic Christians are not meaningless. We are not at the mercy of a blind, unreasonable fate. We know that we are walking in the sunlight of truth, under the loving care of our heavenly Father and with the guidance of the Church, our spiritual mother upon earth. As we recognize the unique fullness of the Catholic Church, we should thank our Lord for this great gift, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Sacred Scripture

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you... I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture... I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me." *John 10:7, 9, 14*

God our Savior... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
1 Timothy 2:3, 4

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

“Outside the Church there is no salvation”

846 How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers?⁷¹ Reformulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body: “Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.”⁷²

847 This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation.”⁷¹

#C15-45

***Splendor of Truth***

Precisely on the questions frequently debated in moral theology today and with regard to which new tendencies and theories have developed, the Magisterium, in fidelity to Jesus Christ and in continuity with the Church’s tradition, senses more urgently the duty to offer its own discernment and teaching, in order to help man in his journey towards truth and freedom. (*section 27*)

Vatican Council II

The Church is... a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ (Jn. 10:1-10). It is also a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd (cf. Is. 40:11; Ex. 34:11 f), and whose sheep, although watched over by human shepherds, are nevertheless at all

times led and brought to pasture by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and prince of shepherds (cf. Jn. 10:11; 1 Pet. 5:4), who gave his life for his sheep (cf. Jn. 10:11-16). *The Church*, 6

All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of this saving unity. *The Church*, 9

It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. *Ecumenism*, 3

Whether it aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the Church has but one sole purpose – that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished. Every benefit the people of God can confer on mankind during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the Church's being "the universal sacrament of salvation," at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for men. *Modern World*, 45

Summary Prayer

Lord God, guide us with Your love through the Church. Keep us faithful, that we may be helped through life and be brought to salvation through its teaching and sacraments. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Q. 170. How do the laity share in Christ's mission?

As Christ sent His Apostles to teach and to be witnesses to Him in the world, so too, He wants the laity to share in this mission.

The duty of proclaiming the Gospel and of making its power felt in the lives of men belongs not only to bishops, priests, deacons, and religious, but also to the laity in the Church.



Saint Juan Diego — A True Lay Witness

"Behold, the sacred image of the true Mother of God, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He, through her, implores our repentance and conversion."

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

The laity are called to be Christ's witnesses in the world of social, economic, and political activity. They must contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of God by bringing the love and truth of Christ to the world.

In the small circle of their families and neighborhoods, the Catholic laity are called to help guide the world heavenward. They must work in the making of laws and in the shaping of social doctrines and practice, contribute to their country's development, and minister to the spiritual and material needs of the poor.

The vocation of the laity is to continue Christ's work of transforming the kingdom of the world into the Kingdom of God, consecrating the world for Christ. By living truly Christ-centered lives of generous service to others, they can help bring about the unity of all men under God.

As our Lord sent His Apostles to teach and be His witnesses in the world, so too He would have the Catholic laity participate in this mission of living and proclaiming the Gospel. This mission can only be accomplished in and through love. As our Lord said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Sacred Scripture

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world... As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. *John 17:16, 18*

Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ. *Colossians 3:23-24*



#C15-46

Bulletin Announcement

**Parish Pastoral Council Meeting
Saturday, 1:30-3:30PM**

**Be Not Afraid Family Hours
and Confessions
Wednesdays, 7-8PM**

Catechism of the Catholic Church

900 Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.¹

Splendor of Truth

Evangelization—and therefore the “new evangelization”—also involves the proclamation and presentation of morality. Jesus himself, even as he preached the Kingdom of God and its saving love, called people to faith and conversion (cf. Mk 1:15). And when Peter, with the other Apostles, proclaimed the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, he held out a new life to be lived, a “way” to be followed, for those who would be disciples of the Risen One (cf. Acts 2:37-41; 3:17-20).

The life of holiness which is resplendent in so many members of the People of God, humble and often unseen, constitutes the simplest and most attractive way to perceive at once the beauty of truth, the liberating force of God’s love, and the value of unconditional fidelity to all the demands of the Lord’s law, even in the most difficult situations. (*section 107*)

Vatican Council II

The holy People of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips praising his name (cf. Heb. 13:15). *The Church, 12*

The term “laity” is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God and, in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity. *The Church, 31*

Although by Christ’s will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for the others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ. The distinction which the Lord has made between the sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God involves union, for the pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship: the pastors of the Church—following the example of the Lord—should minister to each other and to the rest of the faithful; the latter should eagerly collaborate with the pastors and teachers. And so amid variety all will bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ: this very diversity of graces, of ministries and of works gathers the sons of God into one, for “all these things are the work of the one and the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11).” *The Church, 32*

Gathered together in the People of God and established in the one Body of Christ under one head, the laity—no matter who they are—have, as living members, the vocation of applying to the building up of the Church and to its continual sanctification all the powers which they have received from the goodness of the Creator and from the grace of the Redeemer. *The Church, 33*

The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, and especially by the Eucharist, that love of God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. *The Church, 33*

Each individual layman must be a witness before the world to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God. All together, and each one to the best of his ability, must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (cf. Gal. 5:22). They must diffuse in the world the spirit which animates those poor, meek and peace-makers whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed blessed (cf. Mt. 5:3-9). In a word: “what the soul is in the body, let Christians be in the world.” *The Church, 38*

The Church can never be without the lay apostolate; it is something that derives from the layman’s very vocation as a Christian. *Lay People, 1*

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. *Lay People, 2*



The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of “apostolate”; the Church exercises it through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well. *Lay People, 2*

The hierarchy entrusts the laity with certain charges more closely connected with the duties of pastors: in the teaching of Christian doctrine, for example, in certain liturgical actions, in the care of souls. In virtue of this mission the laity are fully subject to superior ecclesiastical control in regard to the exercise of these charges. *Lay People, 24*

Summary Prayer

God our Father, inspire the hearts of all Your people to continue the saving work of Christ everywhere until the end of the world. The suffering and death of Christ Your Son won Your salvation for all the world. May the suffering and death of Your Son sanctify the Church so that it can be an instrument of salvation for the world. May the prayers and the Eucharistic sacrifice of Your Church come to You and be pleasing in Your sight. Make us holy by the Eucharist we share at Your table. Through the sacraments of Your Church, may all people receive the salvation Your Son brought us through His suffering and death on the Cross. We ask this through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Q. 171. How is the Catholic Church an institution of salvation?

The Catholic Church is an institution for salvation since (1) it is a community of the faithful with our Savior Jesus Christ as its Head, and (2) it has been given the mission of communicating the Good News of salvation to all mankind.

1. The Catholic Church is an institution of salvation because it is a community of the faithful with our Savior Jesus Christ as its Head.

The Church is a fellowship of life, charity and truth. Through Jesus Christ, we have become members of the family of God, the People of God. We are intimately united to Christ and to one another in a union which our Lord compared to the sublime union of the Blessed Trinity: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

We are one with Christ and with one another in the union of the Mystical Body of Christ here on earth. So close is this union that Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

#C11-111



We should have special love for our fellow members in the Mystical Body of Christ, because in loving the members of His Body we are loving Christ. We must treat all men as we would treat Christ Himself since Christ died for them.

2. The Catholic Church is an institution of salvation since it has been given the mission of communicating the Good News of salvation to all mankind.

The Church is also a structured institution. There are two kinds of authority in the Church: the ordinary authority which every society has to organize and direct its own affairs, and the special authority given by Jesus Christ to teach and act in His name. The Church exercises her ordinary authority by enacting laws to regulate her internal affairs, to promote the good of all, and to fulfill the purposes of the Church. The Church exercises the special authority that is given by Jesus

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through her teaching, worship, and all service done in the name of Jesus. His person and power are present in her when she acts under this authority.

The Pope and the bishops exercise authority for the Church. Priests and laity also share in the exercise of the Church's authority in different degrees.

The Church speaks the Good News of our salvation in the world through her teaching and preaching, through her life and worship, through her Bible and the writings of her saints, and sometimes through the words of a single Christian expressing his hopes. The mission of the Church is to bring this message of salvation to all men.

Sacred Scripture

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." *Matthew 28:18-20*

#R4_3-11



Catechism of the Catholic Church

849 *The missionary mandate.* "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men":¹ "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age."²

Splendor of Truth

In order to make this "encounter" with Christ possible, God willed his Church. Indeed, the Church "wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life." (*section 7*)

Christ reveals, first and foremost, that the frank and open acceptance of truth is the condition for authentic freedom: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32)...Worship of God and a relationship with truth are revealed in Jesus Christ as the deepest foundation of freedom. (*section 87*)

Vatican Council II

That messianic people has as its head Christ, “who was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25), and now, having acquired the name which is above all names, reigns gloriously in heaven. The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us (cf. Jn. 13:34). Its destiny is the kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it is brought to perfection by him at the end of time when Christ our life (cf. Col. 3:4), will appear and “creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:21). Hence that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth, it is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all; as the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Mt. 5:13-16) it is sent forth into the whole world. *The Church, 9*

Later, before he was assumed into heaven (cf. Acts 1:11), after he had fulfilled in himself the mysteries of our salvation and the renewal of all things by his death and resurrection, the Lord, who had received all power in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt. 28:18), founded his Church as the sacrament of salvation; and just as he had been sent by the Father (cf. Jn 20:21), so he sent the apostles into the whole world. *Missionary Activity, 5*

#H5-25



Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Who belongs to the laity? What is the vocation of lay persons?
2. As members of the laity, how can you and your family proclaim the Gospel (in word and deed) to others in your school, office, workplace, neighborhood, or community?
3. During the Mass, offer yourself to God the Father, in union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, as an instrument to help bring the message of salvation to all people, beginning with those around you.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Father, You will that Your Church be the sacrament of salvation for all people. Make us feel more urgently the call to work for the salvation of all men, until You have made us all one people.

God of unchanging power and might, look with mercy and favor on Your entire Church. Bring lasting salvation to mankind, so that the world may see the fallen lifted up, the old made new, and all things brought to perfection, through Him Who is their origin, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord God, guide us with Your love in Your Church. Keep us faithful that we may be helped through life and brought to salvation through her teaching and sacraments.

When Jesus, Your Son, humbled Himself to come among us as man, He fulfilled the plan You had formed long ago, and so opened for us the way to salvation, especially through the Church He founded. Now we watch for the day when we hope that the salvation He promises us will be ours when He will come again in glory. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 48

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 169. What do we believe about the Catholic Church and salvation?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 5, 8, 9, 14;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 25-26, 64;
On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 51;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 18;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 2, 3.

Q. 170. How do the laity share in Christ's mission?

Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II, sect. 10, 14, 18;
Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10-12, 30-38;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 27, 30;
On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 2, 3, 14, 21, 27, 41, 70;
The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 2-3, 15, 34-36, 45-52;
On Reconciliation and Penance, John Paul II, sect. 12;
The Role of Christian Family in the Modern World, John Paul II, sect. 44, 47, 49-53;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 26, 101, 109.

Q. 171. How is the Catholic Church an institution of salvation?

Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II, sect. 18, 24;
Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Vatican II, sect. 7, 21-26;
Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 32-36, 44;
Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 5, 9, 11-14, 18-21, 33-38, 49;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 22;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 27;
On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 9, 13-14;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 25-26, 63-64;
On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 51;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 18;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 2.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 169: In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII, clearly taught in a document concerning the Catholic Church entitled *Unam Sanctum*, that “Outside this Church there is no salvation and no remission of sins...Further, We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” This being true, how can non-Catholics be saved?
- Q. 170: Please think for a moment. In your own family, in your neighborhood, in your school, in your work place, do you know people who are leading immoral lives, who are not regular Sunday church-goers, or who see no need for organized religion?
- You can be certain that these people lack the fullness of Truth in their lives. And to the degree that this is so, they lack the peace and happiness that could otherwise be theirs as believing Catholics living according to the Church’s teaching. They need God and His Church as much as we do. What steps, if any, have you taken to help give them only that which Christ can give in and through His Catholic Church?
- Is it reasonable to say, without firm evidence to the contrary, that we should not try to evangelize these people since it will do no good? What does such an attitude say about our trust in God to help us, even in difficult situations? If he wants these people evangelized (and he does), isn’t he sure to help us, if we ask Him?
- Q. 171: The term “salvation” may be rightly understood in a negative sense. That is, when a person receives the gift of salvation at Baptism, for instance, he is said to be saved from sin and eternal punishment. But can salvation also have a positive meaning?
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