

Dear Family:

Given the deep and sincere feelings we all have about our faiths, and the volume of information I want to share, I felt this was the best way to express what I would like to tell you.

For the past two years, I've thoroughly reviewed Scripture, dedicated hours listening to debates/podcasts and read many books about Christianity. After reflecting on what I've learned and examining my conscience, I've come to the conclusion the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ founded on earth.

To be clear, this is my decision. I actually began this journey to prove the validity of my Protestant beliefs and disprove Catholicism. However, now that I understand Scripture in its proper context and have studied the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers; the first generation of Christians who learned the faith from the Apostles themselves, it has left me with no doubt as to the truth of the Church.

I want to preface the following message by saying it is not meant to be critical of anyone's beliefs. I respect and admire each of you for your dedication to Christ, and I am grateful that I was raised in a family that loves our Lord. Ultimately, what I came to realize is that becoming Catholic isn't the rejection of how I was raised or what I was taught, but rather the fulfillment of it.

At the end of the day, everything good that Protestants have comes from the Catholic Church, and this is the perfect segue to the first topic I want to reference.

The Bible

Protestants contend the Bible is the divine Word of God and sole source of authority.

While I've always believed the Bible was divinely inspired, I never knew the history of how the book itself came to be. To show my ignorance on this issue, I was under the impression Christ came to earth and within a few decades of his Resurrection, the Bible was organized by the Apostles. This would have established the Bible as divinely inspired and the sole source of authority.

To my shock, I learned the Bible wasn't canonized until 397 A.D. This realization begged a question; who/what entity had the authority to determine which books were divinely inspired? I learned the Bible was canonized by Catholic Bishops at the Councils of Hippo and Carthage. If an individual is willing to accept the Bible as perfect and divinely inspired, then how can the institution that made these determinations be wrong?

Also, one must ask, if the Bible alone is the sole authority, how could anyone until 397 A.D have come to know Christ and be saved? To apply this time frame to today; 400 years ago the Pilgrims arrived in North America on the Mayflower. This is a very long period of time for there to be no valid source of Christian authority. How did the Church spread? How did people learn about the Gospel? How did people understand and know what it meant to be a Christian and how to live a Christian life?

To dig even deeper into this concept, even when the Bible was canonized, it would have cost three years wages to buy one and up until the early 19th century the overwhelming majority of the world population was illiterate; so how could the Bible be the sole authority? It certainly doesn't seem like the most effective way for Christ to convey his message and teachings, and, as I have learned; it wasn't.

This leads to an inevitable and obvious truth, the Bible is the product of Sacred Tradition, an authority which was given to the Apostles and handed down to their successors through Apostolic Succession. This very concept is specifically referenced in Scripture. [2 Thessalonians 2:15](#) reads,

“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.”

This verse clearly states that not everything the Apostles taught (nor what their followers were expected to do/believe) was written down in order to be canonized in a Bible 400 years later. [1 Corinthians 11:2](#) makes this same point;

“Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.”

Without Sacred Tradition (and the authority of the Church) the Bible would never exist. This fact is reinforced in that when Jesus ascended into Heaven; he did not leave us a book, but rather, he left us twelve men who then grew His Church. As a Protestant, I thought the pillar and foundation of truth was the Bible. What’s fascinating is that the Bible states the pillar and foundation of truth is actually the Church. I Timothy 3:15 states,

“In case I am delayed, so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

The Church is the pillar and foundation of truth, and this authority was passed down from the Apostles. This begs another question; which Church? History is clear in that the Church which claims (and has) Apostolic Authority is the Catholic Church. As such, it was this institution that canonized the Bible (and had the authority to do so). The problem with all other Christian denominations is they reject the Catholic Church, but believe every word of the book the Catholic Church compiled for them. You simply cannot accept the divine inspiration of the Bible while simultaneously rejecting Sacred Tradition and the institution that canonized it.

Upon further research, I examined why the Bishops canonized a Bible in the first place, since it was nearly 400 years after Christ’s presence on earth. What I learned stunned me. The purpose of canonizing a Bible

was to determine which writings were deemed authoritative and sacred to be proclaimed at Mass.

The Bible is liturgical and a product of the Catholic Church.

The problems that have risen from modern Christians interpreting the Bible as they see fit and rejecting centuries of Church teachings is evident. Common errors in Protestant teaching takes one verse out of context and applies it universally. For example, the Bible says call no man Father; so the conclusion is Catholics are obviously wrong because priests are called Father.

When in reality; this is taken out of context. Saint Stephen in Acts 7:2 refers to “our father Abraham”. St. Paul in Romans 9:10 refers to “our father Isaac”. One could argue that was referring to figures in the Old Testament and it was changed once Christ made the New Covenant. However, in 1 Corinthians 4:15, Saint Paul refers to himself as a “father in Christ Jesus” to his followers.

Taking one verse from Scripture out of context and trying to understand it as a 21st Century American (in a different language, governmental system, culture and centuries removed from the Apostles) puts us at a significant disadvantage in understanding the Bible as it was intended. Jesus calls for all Christians to be unified and be one. John 17:20-23 states;

“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in my through their word, that they may all be one...The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou has sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.”

If the Bible is so clear, easy to understand and is the only necessary source of authority (and Catholics have so grievously gone against the Bible’s teachings); how come there are tens of thousands of different

Protestant denominations? Furthermore, when brothers and sisters in Christ have a disagreement over an issue; how is it commanded to be resolved? Matthew's Gospel states that disputes between Christians should be resolved by the Church. Again, what Church? Cornwall Baptist Church? Utica Lutheran Church? Los Angeles Presbyterian Church? A non-denominational Church with a convincing Pastor? In order to truly understand what the Bible means; it must be read through the lens of a 1st Century Jew (which the Church does for us). Once we see Scripture in this light, all the teachings of the Church become crystal clear.

As a Protestant, I believed the Church added books to the Bible to fit its beliefs, and the Protestant Reformation restored the “true” Bible. I have since learned this is not true. The original canonized Bible had 73 books (46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament). It was the Protestant leaders in the 16th Century who removed the 7 deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament (conveniently one of these books references purgatory and prayers for the deceased).

Did you know Martin Luther contemplated also removing James from the Bible? Did you know the original King James Bible in 1611 included all the deuterocanonical books but questioned whether it was inspired? Under what authority does King James, Martin Luther (or anyone for that matter) have to remove books from the Canon? Revelation 22:18-19 states,

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.”

If Protestantism is correct, that means for over 1,500 years there was either no source of valid authority or every Christian in the world was taught (and learned from) the wrong Bible. It seems highly unlikely this was Christ's intention.

Here is a link to a video which highlights the “Bible verses most Protestants don’t see” because it either contradicts Protestant teaching or strongly affirms Catholic theology;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJDVKSF7Hjo&t=1630s>.

Before diving into some of the most notable doctrinal differences; one of the key aspects that opened my mind and heart to the Church was the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers. If we knew what they believed, they could serve as the bridge between Christ (and the Apostles) and us.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch was a Bishop who learned the faith from the Apostles themselves and was appointed Bishop by Saint Peter (from the very beginning the structure of the Church consisted of the offices of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, a fact I never knew as a Protestant). Saint Ignatius was martyred for the faith in 107 A.D. In one of his writings to a Church on his way to martyrdom he stated,

“Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church”.

In the year 107 A.D., a proclaimed Bishop, who learned the faith from the Apostles, stated that wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. Is he wrong? Should we claim to know more than a man who learned about the faith from Saint Peter himself?

Here is a powerful link that highlights many writings of the Church Fathers that made me realize the historic origins of the Church (most of whom I had never heard of as a Protestant).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgOfN1f_gpY.

I was always taught that pure Christianity was corrupted and tainted by the Catholic Church. When reading from the horse’s mouth, the original Church was clearly Catholic. One other item I found fascinating when examining the early Church (and one of the factors that convinced me of

the Church's authority) is that everything we as a modern society view as "weird" or "odd" about the Church (such as the robes a priest wears and swinging a censer with smoke at Mass) almost always stems from ancient Judaism. When reflecting on this, it makes perfect sense. Christianity is not the abandonment of Judaism, but rather the fulfillment of it.

Below are some other topics I had to learn a great deal about in order to understand the Church's teachings.

Papacy

"You can't find the word Pope in the Bible, therefore the Church is wrong/evil". You also can't find the word Trinity in the Bible, yet we share that doctrinal belief (ironically, the Trinity was established by the Catholic Church so once again Protestant theology is based on picking and choosing what one wants to believe and what one wants to reject from the Catholic Church).

If you understand the Bible as a 1st Century Jew, Jesus establishes his Church on Peter.

Matthew 16: 17-19 states,

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

I was taught that Jesus was referring to Peter's faith or that since the word "Rock" and "Peter" are not the same, Jesus was establishing the Church on himself. First and foremost, this doesn't make any sense as what would be the purpose of Jesus changing Simon's name to Peter if there was no significance (name changes are very significant in the Bible

like with Abraham and Paul). Who did Jesus give the keys of the Kingdom too? Peter. Who did he give the power to bind and loose too? Peter. When translating this verse in the original language (Aramaic), the verse reads you are “Kefa” and on this “Kefa” I will build my Church. The word is the same because Peter means rock, and he is the rock of Christ’s Church.

Jesus establishes his Church on Peter and the connection between Matthew’s Gospel and Isaiah 22:22 is clear because any 1st Century Jew would have recognized that the Kings of Israel had a Chief Steward who literally carried the keys of the Kingdom and had the authority to act on the King’s behalf. It was an official office, and Jesus (King) establishes this office upon Peter, granting him authority as Chief Steward over his Church and flock. Isaiah 22:22 states,

“Key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so, he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

Another argument I’ve heard against the papacy is that there have been bad Popes; some of which have even committed murder. There were also bad and murderous Kings of Israel, but were they any less anointed to their positions of authority? King David essentially had a soldier killed to cover up his adultery, yet he was loved by God. Peter himself committed an awful sin in denying Christ three times, was he any less of the leader of the Church after Christ’s ascension into Heaven?

Two great videos that articulate the validity of the Church and the Papacy are here;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dpJxXEWmwo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xl3pD4l0K5U&t=12s>

Along the lines of the Papacy is the Priesthood, and the role of priests in the forgiveness of sins. Catholic teaching states that the priest does not

forgive sins, but rather sins are forgiven by Christ through his priests. John 20:19–23 states,

“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

As Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, he gives the power to forgive or retain sins to all the Apostles. An authority which is passed down through Apostolic Succession. If Jesus’ intent wasn’t for there to be a succession, why did the Apostles immediately replace Judas with Matthias after Judas killed himself? Furthermore, why did Peter appoint his own successors, both as the first Bishop of Antioch and as the first Bishop of Rome?

It's clear that Jesus gave authority to men (Peter and the Apostles) and it was intended for that authority to be handed down throughout the ages.

Eucharist

John 6 is clear. Jesus actually lost followers because he declared they would have to eat his flesh and drink his blood. If Jesus was only talking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood symbolically or metaphorically (as many Protestants claim), then why wouldn't he have clarified that when followers were leaving him? Not only did he not back away from this claim, he doubled down on it declaring that (Jn 6: 53-59);

“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

Scripture also tells us we cannot take communion in an “unworthy manner”. If it’s just a symbol, what difference does it make? The reason we cannot take communion in an unworthy manner is because it is the bread from Heaven; the Body of Christ. With that said, the Eucharist is not the re-crucifixion of Christ as many Protestants falsely claim, but rather the representation of the one, eternal sacrifice.

Again, don’t take the “Gospel according to Charlie or some Pope”, but go back to the Apostolic Fathers to see what they believed. They are the link between Christ, the Apostles and us. So rather than us having an argument or debate 21 centuries removed, let’s examine what they said;

St. Ignatius in 105 A.D. stated,

“They (early heretics) abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again. Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, incur death in the midst of their disputes. But it were better for them to treat it with respect, that they also might rise again.”

In my Protestant life, I would be considered a heretic according to St. Ignatius.

St. Ignatius also stated,

“Obey the Bishop and the priests with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote to prevent us from dying.”

Lastly from St. Ignatius,

“Have only one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup of the unity of His blood; one altar, as there is one Bishop, along with the priests and deacons, my fellow-servants; that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to God.”

Also in the second century, St. Irenaeus stated,

“He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life—flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?”

Still in the second century, St. Justin Martyr stated,

“We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood

for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.”

Cyprian of Carthage in the third century stated,

“He Himself warns us, saying, "unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."
Therefore, do we ask that our Bread, which is Christ, be given to us daily, so that we who abide and live in Christ may not withdraw from His sanctification and from His Body.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century stated,

“For just as the bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the Body of Christ and the wine the Blood of Christ.”

All of these early Church Fathers learned the faith either directly from the Apostles or within a few generations of those the Apostles taught. Are they all wrong?

The teaching of the Eucharist is explicitly taught in Scripture and affirmed by the Church Fathers. A brilliant presentation on the Eucharist (and connecting the Church’s teaching to the Old Testament and its Jewish roots) is here,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P45BHDRA7pU&t=10s>.

Mary

This was the hardest teaching for me to recognize as truth given the level of suspicion (and in some contexts animosity) Protestants have towards

Mary. However, seeing Mary in her role through the lens of the Old and New Testaments was revealing.

Adam and Eve were created without sin, but they were tested and failed. As such, they brought sin into the world. As a man and woman brought sin into the world; a man and woman had to untie the knot of sin. This is the role Mary plays in salvation history.

The Ark of the Covenant held the word of God in stone (10 commandments), the Manna from Heaven and Aaron's rod symbolizing the priesthood. What is in Mary's womb? The Word of God (not in stone but in flesh), the new Manna from Heaven and not the symbol of the Priesthood, but the High Priest himself. Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant.

When the angel Gabriel came to Mary he said, "Hail Mary, full of Grace." The actual translation is "Hail Mary, one who was made full of Grace." When describing what will happen to her, Gabriel said, "the Holy Spirit will overshadow you". The only other time the word "overshadow" is used in the Bible is when it describes God's presence "overshadowing" the Ark. I don't believe that is a coincidence. As the Church has taught for centuries, Mary is the "woman" in Genesis and the "woman" in Revelation.

In ancient Israel, who was the queen of the Kingdom? It was never the King's wife, but always the mother. As such, who is the queen of the Kingdom of Heaven? Who's the mother of the King? Revelation 11:19-12:2 states,

"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth."

The Ark and the Woman are the same; its Mary, crowned as the Queen of Heaven.

A powerful example of Mary's stature is examining how Gabriel treats her compared to Zechariah. In Luke's Gospel, when Zechariah questions Gabriel, Gabriel punishes him by rendering him mute. However, when Mary questions Gabriel, he does not punish her, but rather shows her homage as he recognizes she is not just an ordinary woman.

To be clear, Catholics don't worship Mary as many falsely claim. They honor and venerate her. As the Jews did not worship the Ark; but rather revered it, the same can be said for Mary. If Jesus was perfect, he certainly would have obeyed all the 10 commandments; one of which is to honor his mother and father. Why shouldn't we? On the cross, Jesus entrusts his mother to John's care, but also gives his mother to John (who represents all of mankind) as a gift. Scripture tells us that all nations will call Mary "blessed" (Luke 1: 46-49). What Church today still calls Mary blessed?

Marian doctrines are oftentimes misrepresented as proclaiming Mary as a mediator between God and man. Here is an article that explains the Catholic teaching (which affirms Christ to be the one and mediator between God and man),

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/one-mediator-between-god-and-men>.

A great video describing Mary and her role in salvation history is here,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmii0zRKP5A&t=3113s>.

Another great video from a former Baptist who describes his journey converting to the Church and talks about Mary in the proper Biblical context is here,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXslk2pl6Fk&t=231s>.

Salvation

We are saved by God's Grace, through our faith and obedience. The idea that simply saying the sinner's prayer and asking Jesus to come into our heart and to become our Lord and Savior merits salvation and that we can never "lose" our salvation regardless of what we do or how we act or how we live our life is simply not Biblical. The only time the words "faith" and "alone" are in the Bible the word "not" is in front of it (James 2:24). James 2 also states that faith without works is dead so how can simply believing Jesus died for our sins merit salvation? This is one of the biggest reasons Luther contemplated removing James from the Bible because it so clearly contradicted his doctrinal argument of sola fide (saved by faith alone).

Even the devil believes that Jesus is the Son of God and died for the sins of the world, but what separated him from Grace (and removed him from Heaven) was his refusal to obey and serve God. Salvation is possible through God's Grace; and while there is nothing we can do to "earn" salvation, our lack of works and obedience to God's command amounts to a rejection of God's Grace, which warrants death.

Ultimately, salvation encompass' the following;

By believing in Christ (Jn. 3:16; Acts 16:31)

By repentance (Acts 2:38; 2 Peter 3:9)

By Baptism (Jn. 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5)

By eating His flesh and drinking his blood (Jn 6)

By the work of the Spirit (Jn 3:5, 2 Cor. 3:6)

By declaring with our mouths (Lk. 12:8; Romans 10:9)

By coming to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4; Hebrews 10:26)

By works (Romans 2: 6-7; James 2:24)

By Grace (Acts 15:11; Eph 2:8)

By His blood (Romans 5:9; Hebrews 9:22)

By His righteousness (Romans 5:17; 2 Peter 1:1)

By keeping the commandments (Matt 19:17)

By our words (Matthew 12:37)

Here are some videos that explain salvation in more detail;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYAdaG60k10>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpUHJSzvDkw>

I'll leave it here for now. I know this is a lot of information, but I wanted to make sure you knew how seriously I've studied and examined this matter in order to come to these conclusions. One thing I was always told growing up is that there is no explanation or justification for what Catholics believe. I now know this is not true. One may deny or choose not to believe the explanations, but the teachings are consistent and supported by Scripture and history.

While I certainly respect everyone's faith, the idea of the "Bible alone" as the sole source of authority is actually the one doctrine that cannot be explained or justified because the Bible itself does not claim this and actually declares (as previously stated) the Church as the pillar and foundation of truth.

I want to be on the side of Christ, the side of the Apostles and the side of those who learned the faith from the Apostles. That is where the truth is. If someone wants to argue the Church had valid authority at one time but lost its credibility somewhere along the way; I would respectfully refer to Matthew's Gospel which assures us the "gates of hell won't prevail against it". However, it is indisputable that the Church Christ founded on Peter; and that the Apostles handed to their successors, is the Catholic Church.

In the 19th century, John Henry Newman, a prominent Protestant theologian, converted to Catholicism. Upon his conversion, he famously stated, "To be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant." As I have learned, all roads of Christian history lead home; to the Catholic Church.

Regardless of doctrinal differences, I love you all and I'm blessed and grateful to have you as my family. I've found peace in what I believe is the truth. I wish that same peace for you.