

# Salvation and the Sacraments

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Quite a number of people have become Roman Catholics because of the appeal of the Catholic Sacraments. It is necessary therefore to see just what is attractive in these seven signs of Catholicism and to analyze the same in the light of Biblical truth.

The most important difference between Biblical faith and Roman Catholicism is the issue of what is necessary for an individual's salvation before God. Right through the Scriptures justification is seen to be necessary for salvation and in the New Testament it is the major theme of the Apostles. The Church of Rome proclaims her seven sacraments as necessary for salvation and that justification before God is given through the sacrament of Baptism. Thus she officially teaches,

“Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.”<sup>1</sup> And “The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

To be inwardly just by the power of God's mercy is what many people would greatly desire. To believe that this is given to you in Baptism is quite attractive. First because if this were done to you, you might think that you have great hope that you have become pleasing to God. Secondly because as parent you might have hope for your children, since the Roman Catholic Church teaches that children are the first candidates for new birth in Baptism. To understand therefore, what the Lord says about justification in His Word, is of uttermost importance. It is necessary to see if it is by Baptism that someone is born again, or if it is simply a question of believing on the Lord Christ Jesus by grace through faith. It is necessary therefore to define justification biblically, and to determine its location.

The teaching of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is an example which gives the exact meaning of justification. “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*” Christ Jesus was not “*made sin*” by the infusion of vice or sin, nor is the believer “*made righteous*” by the infusion of holiness. The Lord was personally All Holy; yet as the substitute for the believer's sin, He rendered Himself legally responsible to the wrath of God. The consequence of Christ's faithfulness in all that He did, culminating in His death on the cross, is that His righteousness is credited to the believer. It was God who legally constituted Christ to be “*sin for us.*” He was “*made sin*” because the sins of all of His people were transferred to Him, and in like manner, the believer is made “*the righteousness of God in Him*” by God's reckoning to the believer Christ's faithfulness to the precepts of the law. Quite clearly, therefore justification is a judicial and gracious act of God whereby a believing sinner has legal right standing in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), Para. 1992. Hereafter referred to as the *Catechism*.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism*, Para. 1266.

### **Justification is taught by contrast**

The precise import of the term “to justify” is also seen in that it is the exact opposite or contrast to the term “to condemn.” *“It is God that justifieth who is he that condemneth?”* (Romans 8:33-34)<sup>3</sup> Condemnation is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but rather is the verdict of a judge declaring a man blameworthy. Now just as to condemn a man is not to infuse evil into him, but declares him guilty, so justification does not infuse goodness into a man, but declares that he has right standing. Justification is that formal sentence of the Divine Judge whereby He pronounces the believer before Him righteous. This contrast of justification to condemnation is plainly taught in Romans 5:18, 19, *“Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* In this passage the “disobedience” of Adam is set over against the “obedience” of Christ. Adam’s disobedience brought condemnation; Christ’s obedience brings justification. Both are quite real legal declarations either in Adam or in Christ. Justification is right standing in Christ wherein His righteousness is credited to the believer. The consequence of Christ’s obedience is so great that the Apostle Paul declares that such righteousness is manifested and that it is *“upon all them that believe.”* Romans 3:21-24

<sup>21</sup> *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;* <sup>22</sup> *even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference:* <sup>23</sup> *for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* <sup>24</sup> *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

### **Purpose of the Justification: to reveal Christ’s righteousness**

What is declared is not human works righteousness of any kind, but rather it is God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed. The Gospel is the demonstration, in concrete historical fact, of the perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered to all the demands of the law, and which God places to the credit of every true believer in Him. Before God’s all Holy nature, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. This has been accomplished in the faithful obedience of the Lord Christ Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice. Thus Christ’s faithfulness is proclaimed in v. 22, *“even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.* When the Bible declares that justification is God’s gift to the believer, it also shows in few words what this justification is. Justification is found in and of Christ. It is the demonstration of the faithfulness<sup>4</sup> of Jesus Christ, even unto death. Such perfect rectitude is of God, and from God, *“even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ”* (v. 22). The great news is that this absolute righteousness is *“unto all and upon all them that believe.”*

Legally what is shown is the true believer’s identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided Christ’s righteousness to sinners who believe. There are several passages in which the faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, the name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality that He possesses. Galatians 2:16

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed study of the term see texts such as Deuteronomy 25:1, Job 9:20, Job 32:2, Proverbs 17:15, Matthew 12:37, Luke 7:29, 1 Timothy 3:16 Psalm 143:2. Isaiah 50:7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Greek *pistis*. There are many contexts where this is necessarily translated faithfulness Matthew 23:23, Romans 3:3, Galatians 5:22, Titus 2:10, etc. There are several passages in which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality which He possesses (Galatians 2:16, 3:22; Ephesians 3:12, Philippians 3:9).

is an example of the contrast between man's attempted faithfulness in the works of the law and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ that justifies, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.*" Knowing that the law must be fulfilled for God to declare a person righteous, the faithfulness of Christ must be understood as applying specifically to this context.

### **Grace freely and directly given**

According to verse 23, "*for all have sinned, [past tense] and come short [present continuous tense] of the glory of God.*" The human predicament is precisely that no one has rendered an obedience that would make him worthy of justification. Because of man's sinful nature, no one will ever be acceptable to God on the basis of his performance. Being justified is in no sense a human attainment; it is not a reward for a sanctified life nor is it through anything that man does. God is shown to work directly in verse 24, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"

The design of God is highlighted by the adverb "freely". This excludes all consideration of anything in man or from man that could be the cause or condition of justification. "*The redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" was the ransom paid by Christ Jesus by which God is able in true justice to justify the believing sinner. The Word of God is the instrument of the Spirit, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" The believer's right standing before God is in the ransom paid, the everlasting righteousness brought in by the Christ Jesus. In this verse, as continually repeated by the Apostle Paul, a person's right standing with God and all the blessedness of grace comes to him is because he has been placed in Christ. The hallmark of Biblical truth, is that the righteousness of God that is credited to the believer is in Christ and not in himself and not in any man made ritual. Thus "*being justified freely by his grace*" is through the sacrificial payment made by Christ Jesus alone and nothing contributed by the believer or anything or anyone else. Only the Lord Christ Jesus is declared to be, and actually is the Righteousness of God. God's grace is in found in Him and in Him alone. The Romans 3: 21-24 passage completely negates the whole teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that God's grace is in her sacraments that she proclaims are necessary for salvation.

### **Rome's necessary physical Sacraments**

In spite of clear Biblical teaching, the Catholic Church claims that the actions and rituals of men are the effective means of grace. The sacraments are declared to be **necessary for salvation and the means of grace**. This teaching is so emphatic that Sacramental grace through their physical sacraments is declared to be the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church of Rome officially teaches,

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant **are necessary for salvation. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit**, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament."<sup>5</sup>

"The whole liturgical life of the [Roman Catholic] Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Catechism* Para 1129

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism*, Para 1113.

## The Lord's Grace

In Scripture, however, “*the God of all grace*”<sup>7</sup> by means of His Word directly and personally, seeks, finds, and saves His people. Salvation is God’s gift to the believer. It is credited to him based on Christ’s finished work on the cross,<sup>8</sup> “*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”<sup>9</sup> God’s direct action shows His Graciousness to us, so that our eyes of faith are fixed on Him. “*For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*”<sup>10</sup> Looking to physical signs to give “sacramental grace” and calling that “the grace of the Holy Spirit” is literally a blasphemy against the all Holy God. It not only denigrates the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, but it presupposes that His power can be controlled and confined within in the Church of Rome’s seven sacraments.

## The claimed Sacramental System

The format of Rome’s sacraments is sevenfold; she calls them, Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

### 1. Baptism

The Roman Catholic teaching on Baptism is given in her *Code of Canon Law* and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (1994). Rome officially declares in Canon 849,

“Baptism, the gate to the sacraments, necessary for salvation in fact or at least in intention, by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated in the [Roman Catholic] Church, is validly conferred only by washing with true water together with the required form of words.”<sup>11</sup>

In her *Catechism*, she states,

“...The [Roman Catholic] Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude...” (Para. 1257)

“By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin.” (Para. 1263)

“...The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.” (Para. 1250)

“The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the [Roman Catholic] Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole ‘households’ received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.” (Para. 1252)

## Biblical Response

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 5:10.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:21-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 3:24.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 5:17.

<sup>11</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Canon 849. All canons are taken from this work unless otherwise stated. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

In contrast to the statements of Rome, the words of the Risen Christ in giving the Gospel are crystal clear. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*<sup>12</sup> Faith is the key of saving grace, and unbelief is the chief damning sin. Faith is what is absolutely necessary for salvation, baptism is an ordinance that follows faith and testifies simply to it. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is not “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but rather *“he that believeth not.”* Faith is so indispensable that though one be baptized yet believes not, he shall be damned. The sinner is condemned because of his sin nature and his personal sin. God’s divine justice is upon him, nothing can propitiate God’s justice but saving faith in Christ. This faith by God grace brings instantly God’s act of justification. The sacramental power promises of Rome only deceive people and mock the justice and grace of the Lord God. According to the Bible, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.<sup>13</sup> The household of the jail keeper had the Word of the Lord spoken to them first, in order that they might believe and be baptized, *“And they [Paul and Silas] spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.”*<sup>14</sup> Clearly, the official teaching of Rome on baptism is a spurious counterfeit of true saving faith.

## 2. Confirmation

The Roman Catholic teaching on “Confirmation” is given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Rome officially declares,

“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, **strengthen our bond with the [Roman Catholic] Church.**” (Para. 1316)

“...For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized]’<sup>15</sup> **are more perfectly bound to the Church.**” (Para. 1285)

“The imposition of hands is **rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation**, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.” (Para. 1288)

## Biblical Response

The idea of using a ritualistic physical sacrament, such as confirmation, to complete Baptism and to seal the individual with the Holy Spirit is a deceitful tradition in conflict with the Lord’s written Word. It is through hearing, understanding and responding to the Gospel that an individual is incorporated or sealed into Christ and becomes a true Christian. Once the believer trusts on the Lord, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit. *“In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”*<sup>16</sup> The simplicity of this truth is such that the Scripture proclaims, *“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*<sup>17</sup>

The intent of Rome as stated in her teaching, is to make people “more perfectly bound to the Church”. The claim to perpetuate the grace of Pentecost is an offence against the divine Holy Spirit. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 16:16.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 10:17.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 16:32.

<sup>15</sup> Square brackets are in the original text.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 1:13.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 8:9.

<sup>18</sup> John 3:6.

### 3 Eucharist

True believers have the New Testament ordinance called “The Lord’s Supper” or “Communion”. This ordinance is the pledge to all the blessings of Christ confirmed to them by His blood. As His words declare, *“This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”*<sup>19</sup> The purpose is clearly given: it is to show forth Christ’s death, to proclaim and publish it. It is not merely a remembrance of Christ, of what He has done and suffered, but also a time of deep living active fellowship between the Lord and the believer. *“The communion of the blood of Christ”*<sup>20</sup> is that real togetherness that the believers have with the Lord in the celebration of His Supper. The Lord introduced the meal with His longing expressed as follows; *“With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you... This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”*<sup>21</sup> Likewise with desire ought the believers to desire to share this meal with Him. This communion with Him is of the essence of the New Covenant, in His declaration it is the New Testament in His blood. In the context of true and false worship the Lord teaches of those one to whom He looks, *“to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*<sup>22</sup> To truly wish to worship Him worthily the believer ought to thirst for His communion at the table of the Lord. When he does, he will by grace realize ever more deeply the words of the Lord, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*<sup>23</sup>

#### Rome’s Eucharist

In sharp contrast to the ordinance the Lord left His People, the Church of Rome portrays the dying Christ, “the sacred victim” in her Eucharist. Using as her center of worship the ritual of the Mass, which all the faithful on pain of mortal sin are required to attend, Rome teaches and dramatizes the claim that the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of her Eucharist are one single sacrifice. Moreover she teaches that in the round white wafer is contained the physical Christ, including His soul and divinity. Thus she states her *Catechism*,

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: ‘The victim<sup>24</sup> 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.’ ‘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.’” (Para. 1367)

Since the Eucharist is central to Catholicism, Bible believers ought to have real compassion for Catholics who are taught the doctrine documented here. To try to appease God with an ongoing sacrifice is *de facto* a denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross. The Lord Jesus is the sole sacrificial Priest of the New Testament. He finished the work of our salvation by one sole offering. The Scriptures repeatedly establish this truth. The substance of this is found in the

<sup>19</sup> I Corinthians 11:25-26.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16.

<sup>21</sup> Luke 22:15, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 66:2.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:6.

<sup>24</sup> Christ was never a victim and the idea of His being victimized is nowhere in Scripture. Rather it was of His own free will that He chose to go to the cross. See John 10:15, 18 and elsewhere. The use of the term, victim, in this context makes clear the erroneous doctrinal base from which the Roman Catholic theology proceeds.

Lord's declaration from the Cross, "*It is finished.*"<sup>25</sup> The unique oneness of Christ's sacrifice is in this very fact, that it was one offering, once made. The truth of the excellence of Christ's sacrifice is highlighted by the word "once", as for example when the Scripture declares, "*For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*"<sup>26</sup> and "*Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*"<sup>27</sup>

The Church of Rome does more than claim His Sacrifice to be hers. She also teaches that in her "blessed sacrament" is contained the physical Christ and His soul and divinity. Thus she states,

"In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist 'the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*" (Para. 1374)

Catholics are thus taught that in the bread the whole Christ is present. Catholics look to this Christ, "*substantially contained*", they are told, in the bread. This is flagrantly deceitful and culminates in idolatry. From this, causative effects are claimed from the bread. Thus Rome teaches,

"*Holy Communion separates us from sin.* The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is 'given up for us,' and the blood we drink 'shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.' For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins;..." (Para. 1393)

"By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins.*" (Para. 1395)

In these teachings the "Eucharist" is looked upon as uniting a person to Christ and at the same time cleansing from sin. To attempt to claim causative effects for that which was given to testify to the Lord' Himself is divination, as one's hope centers on the physical object. The official rite of the Mass shows such divination at each Mass the priest does and says the following.

"The priest genuflects. Holding the host elevated slightly above the paten the Priest says: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper."<sup>28</sup>

The people are to look to the actual physical substance as if it were indeed the Lamb of God. This is both gross idolatry and a false gospel.

Such teachings as these come under the eternal curse of perverting the Gospel of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Christ's words are spirit and life, "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth.*"<sup>30</sup> To propose an oral ingesting of Christ's flesh is bad enough, what is asserted is much more. As seen in her official teaching, Rome holds that "*the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins.*"<sup>31</sup> These are enticing words of human philosophy teaching the age-old worship of an idol in order to procure life. What makes the doctrine all the more repulsive is that the very teaching that speaks of

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<sup>25</sup> John 19:30.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 6:10.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrews 7:27.

<sup>28</sup> *New Saint Joseph People's Prayer Book*, Rev. Francis Evans, Ed. (New York: Catholic Book Publ. Co., 1980) Page 104.

<sup>29</sup> Galatians 1:6-9.

<sup>30</sup> John 6:63.

<sup>31</sup> *Catechism*, Para 1395, italic in the original.

preserving from serious sin, is itself a gross sin against the All Holy God and Christ's perfect sacrifice and this ordinance to be carried out in remembrance of Him.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. Penance (Confession)

Sins are forgiven, as souls believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."<sup>33</sup> In believing on the finished work of the Lord Christ Jesus, one has one hundred percent right standing with God credited to him and the forgiveness of sins. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested."<sup>34</sup> "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."<sup>35</sup> Thus the Gospel is the power of God to salvation as the Apostle Paul proclaimed. If one does sin after salvation, it is a relationship problem with the Father in heaven to be resolved, as one directly confesses his sin to God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."<sup>36</sup>

#### Rome's confession

The Roman Catholic Church has a totally different way of defining forgiveness of sins. Her doctrine on this topic is seen in her *Catechism*,

"One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, **must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins** he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience." (Para. 1493)

"Like all the sacraments, Penance is a liturgical action. The elements of the celebration are ordinarily these: a greeting and blessing from the priest, reading the word of God to illuminate the conscience and elicit contrition, and an exhortation to repentance; the confession, **which acknowledges sins and makes them known to the priest**; the imposition and acceptance of a penance; the priest's absolution; a prayer of thanksgiving and praise and dismissal with the blessing of the priest." (Para. 1480)

"The formula of absolution used...God, the Father of mercies, /through the death and the resurrection of his Son/has reconciled the world to himself/ and sent the Holy Spirit among us/ for the forgiveness of sins;/ through the ministry of the Church/ may God give you pardon and peace,/ and **I absolve you from your sins/in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**" (Para. 1449)

The Scriptural backing claimed by Rome for the priest purportedly being able to absolve others of sin is found in Para. 1485 of her *Catechism*,

"'On the evening of that day, the first day of the week,' Jesus showed himself to his apostles. '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.' (John 20:19, 22-23)."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> A fuller study of this topic is done in our paper, *Communion: Spiritual Fellowship with the Lord, And the Roman Catholic Mass*. (This is on [www.bereanbeacon.org](http://www.bereanbeacon.org))

<sup>33</sup> Acts 13:38-39

<sup>34</sup> Rom3:21

<sup>35</sup> Eph 1:7

<sup>36</sup> I John 1:9

<sup>37</sup> The present day Roman Catholic *New American Bible* does not make such a glaring mistranslation of the John 20:23 passage as Para 1485 of the *Catechism*. In the *NAB*, while the "if" clause is missing, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained", the footnote on the verse states "The Council of Trent

### **Biblical Response**

A study of the actual words of John 20:23, “*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,*” confirms that rather than anything judicially enacted through any “sacrament”, the forgiveness spoken of is that which is proclaimed by the Gospel. Here, unquestionably, the Lord has declared, in a few words, the sum of the Gospel. The Lord gave authority to his disciples to declare forgiveness to those whom God had already forgiven. The commission given in this passage in John is a parallel to similar passages such as Luke 24:47, Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-16. This is the way the apostles understood and obeyed the commission, as evidenced throughout the Acts of the Apostles, for Christ did not appoint confessors to probe intimately into each sin of people in whispers. Rather He commissioned preachers of his Gospel and He shall cause their voice to be heard. He through the Holy Spirit shall seal on the hearts of believers the grace of the atonement obtained through Him alone. The manner of forgiving sins in Scripture is the proclamation of the Gospel, not the whispering of sins committed, into the ear of a man in a confession box.

### **5. Anointing of the Sick**

The Roman Catholic teaching on Anointing of the Sick is given in her *Catechism*. There Rome officially declares,

“The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects: the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church; the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age; the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance; the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul; the preparation for passing over to eternal life.” (Para. 1532)

“***Union with the passion of Christ.*** By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ’s passion:...Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes **a participation in the saving work of Jesus.**” (Para. 1521)

“In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of ‘passing over’ to the Father, has a particular significance and importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection....” (Para. 1524)

### **Biblical Response**

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded two ordinances for His people. The essential ingredient of these is that they are from Him and testify to Him. The prayer and anointing recommended in the letter of James 5:14-16 is just that, “the prayer of faith”. The conclusion in verse 16 summarizes the passage, “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” Rome takes this recommended prayer for elders and weaves it into her Sacrament to be performed by her sacrificial Priest. She ends up by deceiving the elderly, those in great pain, and the dying. Her accursed message is that their suffering can be a union with the passion of Christ as stated in paragraph 1521 of her Catechism. This message of “a participation in the saving

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defined that this power to forgive sins is exercised in the sacrament of penance.” *New American Bible*, The Catholic Study Bible Edition, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

work of Jesus” is a damnable lie to be spoken into the ears of those who are sick and dying. Christ’s redemptive work is His and His alone. The doctrine of “a participation in the saving work of Jesus” is utterly perverse in that it holds out a false hope to trust in one’s own suffering as adding something to that of the Lord. Such a concept is an utter lie as it denies the repeated statements of God’s truth in Scripture. The work of redemption is “*by Himself*,”<sup>38</sup> “*without the deeds of the law*,”<sup>39</sup> “*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*,”<sup>40</sup> “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*”<sup>41</sup> To teach Satan’s lie to those that are dying, that you can cooperate in saving yourself, is truly an abomination.

Rome claims also in her sacrament, “the forgiveness of sins.” The priest in performing the ritual says, “May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.” Forgiveness of sin is the graciousness of God for those who look to Christ in faith and for the believer who directly confesses his sins unto the Lord. The addition that the Church of Rome makes to this ritual, is to declare that the Eucharist given with this sacrament, is a “viaticum” for the dying.<sup>42</sup> She declares that this special Eucharist is “the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection”. Again, this is a damnable lie in the ears of those who are about to pass over into the next life. Such a horror is hard even to visualize, as the daily performances of this so-called sacrament are a curse on those who are dying. To claim that there is a special Eucharist for the dying as “the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection” is to speak against the very Person of Christ. He is the Seed of Life and the Power of the Resurrection to the believer. Christ Jesus alone is the One who perfects an individual’s faith. Instead of looking to a piece of bread, the believer is “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”<sup>43</sup>

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has always delighted in the twisting of God’s Word. Praying for the sick is indeed something to be commended and upheld. Rome has taken James 5:14 and turned it into a dramatized curse on the sick and the dying. The compassion of Christ is needed for those who dwell under the cruelty of this so-called sacrament. May the true Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, be delivered in the compassion of Christ both to sick and elderly Catholics. For it is only by this means they will find eternal life in Christ alone.

## 6. Matrimony

Marriage is a creation ordinance of God and not a Christian ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The Roman Catholic Church, because of a mistranslation of Ephesians 5:32, holds that marriage is a great sacrament. The words in Ephesians 5:32 read, “*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church...*” The Latin Vulgate translated the word “mystery” as “sacrament”. This is the origin of Roman Catholic tradition. As a consequence of this erroneous translation, the Church of Rome has attempted to control everything pertaining to marriage. It gives her great power over the lives of her faithful. The Church of Rome dictates just what makes a marriage, what breaks a marriage and how a marriage can be annulled. The celibate clergy of Rome shape the conscience of the laity on just

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<sup>38</sup> Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>39</sup> Romans 3:28.

<sup>40</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>42</sup> *Catechism*, Para. 1524.

<sup>43</sup> Hebrews 12:2.

what marriage sexuality is to be, and what it is not to be. All of this is totally contrary to the Word of God. A couple ought to live their marriage in the Lord and according to His written Word. A pastor or elder can counsel according to the Word of God, but there is no church system that can take absolute authority over the marriage bed. Rome claims such authority deciding whether or not the marriage is “valid”, and claiming to herself the power to declare a marriage null and void. This is seen in her procedural laws, beginning in Canon 1671 of the *Code of Canon Law*, “Marriage cases of the baptized belong to the ecclesiastical judge by proper right.” All of this is done because Rome claims in Canon 1055, “...this covenant between the baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”

On the assumption that Christ made a sacrament out of the creation ordinance, Rome claims power over the most intimate aspect of humanity human life. Here again, the true compassion of Christ is needed for those who dwell under this terrible system. In this context also, true Bible-believers must be warned regarding marriage with Roman Catholics. In marriages between Catholics and others, the Roman Church claims the right that all children born of the marriage must be brought up in the faith and practice of the Roman Church. This is declared emphatically in her *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1124 and 1125. In this way Rome increases in numbers, both because of the multitude of people inside her own system and the fact that in her strict application of her law, she demands that all children born of the union of a Catholic and another person, must be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. The Bible-believer is to be conscious of the warning in the Lord’s Word not to be unequally yoked. “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*”<sup>44</sup>

## 7. Holy Orders

The Catholic Church claims for her Bishops and Priests a sacramental identification with Christ Himself. The Catholic priest, it is claimed, is truly made like unto Christ the High Priest, possessing His authority and power. Catholics are taught that the Bishop is the living image of God the Father. Both priest and bishop, it is claimed, share in the **one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ**. These assertions are proclaimed in Rome’s official teaching in her Vatican Council II Documents,

“The priest offers the Holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*; this means more than offering ‘in the name of’ or ‘in the place of’ Christ. *In persona* means in specific **sacramental identification with ‘the eternal High Priest’...**”<sup>45</sup>

“In fact, from tradition, which is expressed especially in the liturgical rites and in the customs of both the Eastern and Western Church, it is abundantly clear that by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that **bishops, in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself**, teacher, shepherd and priest, and act as his representatives (*in eius persona*) [i.e., in His person].”<sup>46</sup>

“All priests share with bishops **the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ**. Consequently the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical union with the order of bishops.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> II Corinthians 6:14.

<sup>45</sup> No. 77, *Dominicae Cenaes*, 24 February 1980, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., Editor (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) Vol. II, Sec. 8, p. 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 28, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, Vol. I, Sec. 21, pp. 373-374.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 63, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, Vol. I, Sec. 7, p. 875.

In a similar way Rome teaches in her *Catechism*,

“Now the minister, **by reason of the sacerdotal consecration** which he has received, **is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself** (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*). Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.” (Para. 1548)

“Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers. In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: **he is like the living image of God the Father.**” (Para. 1549)

### **Biblical response**

In contrast, the Scripture teaches that no elder takes Christ’s place as priest. All believers have immediate access to God in the Lord Christ Jesus; all share in the royal priesthood of praise.<sup>48</sup> Rome’s sacrament of “Holy Orders”, which claims to pass on Christ’s sacrificial priesthood by “sacerdotal consecration”, is a tradition of men that contradicts Scriptural truth. In the Bible, Christ’s unending priesthood cannot be transferred to any other person, as stated in Hebrews 7:24, “*But this man [Jesus Christ], because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable<sup>49</sup> priesthood.*” Rome does not have Christ’s New Testament sacrificial priesthood<sup>50</sup>, let alone any higher grade of Bishop, yet she claims her priesthood to maintain her seven physical sacraments. The whole life of the Church of Rome revolves around her Bishops and Priests and the sacraments that they perform.

Even a leading Catholic Biblical scholar, Raymond E. Brown clearly admitted the lack of any Biblical teaching to support Rome’s position when he wrote,

“When we move from the OT to the NT, it is striking that while there are pagan priests and Jewish priests on the scene, no individual Christian is every specifically identified as a priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the high priesthood of Jesus by comparing his death and entry into heaven with the actions of the Jewish high priest who went into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle once a year with a blood offering for himself and for the sins of his people (Heb. 9:6-7). But it is noteworthy that the author of Hebrews does not associate the priesthood of Jesus with the Eucharist or the Last Supper; neither does he suggest that other Christians are priests in the likeness of Jesus. In fact, the once-for-all atmosphere that surrounds the priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews (10:12-14) has been offered as an explanation of why there are no Christian priests in the NT period....”<sup>51</sup>

Later in the same chapter, Brown argues for a priesthood in Christian ministry from tradition when he states,

“In fact, one may doubt that the theology of Hebrews had much influence even in the late NT period; for, as we shall see, shortly after Hebrews was written we begin to find in the sub-apostolic literature our first instances of the term ‘priest’ and of the imagery of priesthood being applied to the Christian ministry.”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> I Peter 2:9.

<sup>49</sup> Aparabatos (Greek) meaning: not transferable, not passing on to others. In the New Testament, no sacrificial priests are mentioned, only elders and pastors. In Christ Jesus, all believers are part of the royal priesthood.

<sup>50</sup> See our article on the “The Priesthood” on our WebPage.

<sup>51</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York, NY 10019: Paulist Press, 1970) p.13.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.14

The biblical organizational structure of the bride of Christ is utterly different. In the true body of Christ, those ordained as elders and deacons are still only brothers within the same body and there is only One Master, One Priest, and One Lord, “*For one is your master even Christ and ye are all brethren.*”<sup>53</sup> From a sub-apostolic tradition the Roman Priestly class claim an identical priesthood with Christ. Christ’s priesthood, like His offices of Prophet and King, are uniquely his own “*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*”<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless Rome entices young men with an idealism and zeal to be partakers of the Priesthood of Christ. The power and the privileges of the priesthood are put before them. Some of these are hearing confessions, forgiving sins, and bringing Christ down as a sacred victim on the altar at Mass. This temptation is like unto that of Satan in the Garden of Eden when he said, “*ye shall be as gods*” (Gen 3:5). The Scripture speaks of such haughtiness as being a mark of “*false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*”<sup>55</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Biblically, the believer’s salvation is in Christ and His righteousness alone.<sup>56</sup> An individual’s faith begins and ends in Christ himself and not in the ordinances that He has given. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper bear witness to the Lord’s finished work of salvation but these ordinances are neither the Lord Himself nor His power. As an individual believes on “*the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,*”<sup>57</sup> he knows that “*of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*”<sup>58</sup> Such fullness of grace is Who he is. It is not delegated to any church or any ceremony of a church. The Roman Catholic Church’s teaching of physical signs as necessary for salvation is a futile exchange of her sacraments for Him, the Lord and giver of life, and at the same time a blasphemous denial of Him and His perfect finished sacrifice. Calling “*sacramental grace*”, the “*the grace of the Holy Spirit*”, is soul damning and a sacrilege against the All Holy God. What is declared in Scripture is not rituals as power sources, but rather God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is justification, necessary for salvation in God’s plan and purpose. Because God is a Spirit, so worship of Him, including the Lord’s two ordinances, must be in spirit and in truth. “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*”<sup>59</sup>

The merchandise of Rome in her sacramental system is of a most serious matter on two counts. First “*our God is a consuming fire*”<sup>60</sup> and second it involves commerce with the souls of men.<sup>61</sup> The Holiness of God demanded the perfect satisfaction of Christ Jesus in His absolute faithfulness and His perfect blood sacrifice. The Gospel in which finished work of the Lord is

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<sup>53</sup> Matthew 23:8.

<sup>54</sup> Hebrews 7:24

<sup>55</sup> 2 Cor 11:13-15

<sup>56</sup> Psalm 32:2, 71:15-16, 130:3; Isaiah 45:24-25, 54:17, 61:10; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, 51:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 18:14; Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, and elsewhere.

<sup>57</sup> John 1:14

<sup>58</sup> John 1:16

<sup>59</sup> John 4:24

<sup>60</sup> Heb 12:29

<sup>61</sup> Rev 18:12-13

proclaimed is such as not to be spoken against without dreadful consequences.<sup>62</sup> Both Christ's perfect sacrifice and His gospel are manifestly and blasphemously denied in Rome's teaching and practice. His Divine Person is denigrated in Rome's purporting to offer His sacrifice daily, and, the Grace of God in Christ made a means of human power by presuming to absolve sins in His name.

All this divination of the flesh is contrary to the Word of the Living God; *"I am the LORD thy God, Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*<sup>63</sup> No one can take the Lord's power and authority onto himself. *"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another."*<sup>64</sup> The Church of Rome masquerades herself as a personification of Christ in His Priesthood and in His sacrifice. Both are flagrant lies and worthless substitutes.

In Rome's ritually usurping His place and sacrifice, she has become His greatest contradiction. The supreme enemy of Christ and His Gospel is not the materialism, lust, and pride of men, but this monstrous spiritual apostasy that pretends to stand in His place. *"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God."*<sup>65</sup> As we fear the All Holy God, so we should fear His final judgment on this system of Rome. *"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."*<sup>66</sup>

Secondly the merchandise of Rome in her sacramental system is with the souls of men. Men, women, and children are made to believe that salvation begins in Baptism and is sealed in Confirmation. The souls of men are told to desire a Priest's absolution after grave sin, and crave for "Holy oils" at the very gates of death. Young men are lured and enticed into a counterfeit "priesthood" through excitation of spiritual pride and flattery of the flesh. They vainly aspire to be clothed with Christ priestly robes in an unnatural celibate state that soils the very raiment of the soul with presumption and vainglory. The intimacy and wonder of marriage is bound to the control of celibate Bishops under the absurd pretence of it being a sacrament of the Roman Church.

All these unholy lying rituals are substituted for the simple act of faith in the Lord of glory. So the Apostle Paul described the performance of the Man of Sin in II Thessalonians 2:9 *"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. Satan's design is to replace Christ and His gospel with man's efforts to save himself with rituals and devotion. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."*<sup>67</sup> So momentous is this merchandise in the souls of men that the Lord commandment in Revelation 18:4 must be solemnly repeated, *"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."*

Richard Bennett of "Berean Beacon" WebPage: <http://www.bereanbeacon.org>

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<sup>62</sup> Rev 21:8

<sup>63</sup> Exodus 20:2

<sup>64</sup> Isa 42:8

<sup>65</sup> Exod 20:5

<sup>66</sup> Rev 19:2

<sup>67</sup> 2 Tim 3:5