

A Biblical *Apologia* of Catholicism

First, I acknowledge that I am a sinner each and every day (1 Jn. 1:8). Not only that, but I fulfill the exhortation to “confess your sins to one another” (Jas. 5:16) in the Confiteor at each holy mass. If I sin seriously (1 John 5:16-17), I confess my sins to a priest with a sincerely repentant heart. The priest, who is the administrator of God’s mysteries (1 Cor. 4:1), also represents the Church (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore, I am reconciled with the Church, which is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18, Acts 9:4).

Next, do I accept Christ into my heart as my “personal savior?” I actually do much more than that. I accept Christ into my *entire being* (1 Thess. 5:23) at each Holy Communion. This acceptance is not mere intellectual assent, nor is it mindless mechanics. Rather, I freely unite my entire self (body, blood, and soul) with Christ and thus receive his entire self (body, blood, soul, and divinity) (Jn. 6:51, 1 Cor. 10:16, 1 Cor. 11:29). Therefore, Jesus is *really present* in the host at Communion. Christ is our priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:10), who therefore offers bread and wine (Gen. 14:18) to God on our behalf (Heb. 6:19-20). It is not ordinary bread and wine that he offers at mass, but rather his body and blood (Luke 22:19-20) as the Lamb of God (1 Pet. 1:18-19), sacrificed *once for all* on the cross yet *eternally before the Father* (Rev. 5:6). By virtue of this union with Christ, I become a temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22). Therefore, Christ lives within me (Gal. 2:20), and *I live and move and find my being in him* (Acts 17:28). However, also by virtue of this union, Christ is not only my personal savior but also our communal savior. Christians do not receive salvation in isolation. Rather, salvation is a gift we receive through the Church (which was defined above). In baptism, we are crucified with Christ, so that we too may share in his resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). This is no symbolic gesture; the waters of baptism truly effect the saving grace of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). But baptism can only be given through the community of faith that is the Church (Matt. 28:19). In the Church we are incorporated into his body (1 Cor. 12:13), built up by the sharing of the Word (Acts 2:42) and the Eucharist (1 Cor. 10:17).

I am now working out my salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), striving to never be disqualified from the prize (Phil. 3:10-14), yet unshaken in faith through love in the hope of heaven (Col. 1:4-5). My faith is in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which I received through his Church (Eph. 3:9-10); the pillar and bulwark of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15). This Church is the very same Church whose heavenly cornerstone is Christ (Acts 4:10-12), but was built on earth on the Rock of Peter (Matt. 16:18-19). It was entrusted via John to the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross (Jn. 19:26-27). This is the One Church (Eph. 4:5) that is united under the authority of the Holy Spirit, as transmitted through the union of the bishops (Phil. 1:1) as the successors of the Apostles. This is the One, Holy Church where the Saints in heaven are in union with the saints on earth (Rev. 6:9-10). This is the One, Holy, Catholic Church that unites the globe in its reach (Lk. 24:47). This is the *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church* that has faithfully handed down the Tradition of the Apostles (2 Thes. 2:15). This is the unchanging faith of the One Church that transcends space and time (Jn. 17:20-26), and this is the faith I profess.