

## DID JESUS START THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

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- When you attack the Catholic Church, you are attacking Jesus Christ himself. Why? Because the Church is the body of Christ. Here's proof...

Acts 9: 1-5 (NAB) “Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

*Paul was going off to persecute the Church in Damascus, he was accused by the Lord of persecuting him (Acts 9:1-5), and actually, Paul never had any human contact with Jesus.*

Colossians 1:18 (NAB) “He is the head of the body, the church...”

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NAB) “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, “Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

One thing is certain: The idea of one divinely founded Church, possessing supernatural guidance, unity of doctrine, and authority of discipline, is wholly lost among Protestant denominations, and the term unity, as applied to Protestantism, has no significance.

## DO WE STILL CLAIM TO BE THE TRUE CHURCH? FACTS & EVIDENCE

Yes, we do!

- Cardinal Ratzinger, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Dominus Iesus paragraph 23 (August 2000): "...In treating the question of the true religion, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught: "We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all people. Thus, he said to the Apostles: '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' (*Mt* 28: 19-20). Especially in those things that concern God and his Church, all persons are required to seek the truth, and when they come to know it, to embrace it and hold fast to it".
  
  - CCC 2105 "The duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially. This is "the traditional Catholic teaching on the moral duty of individuals and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ...The social duty of Christians is to respect and awaken in each man the love of the true and the good. It requires them to make the worship of the one true religion which subsists<sup>1</sup> in the Catholic and apostolic Church."
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- Vatican II 'Decree on the Media of Social Communication' no.3 "The Catholic Church was found by Jesus Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel..."
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- Vatican II 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' no.3 "The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world."
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- Vatican II 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' no.8 "Christ, the one mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth his holy Church...This is the one Church of Christ which in the creed is professed...This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the bishops."
  - Vatican II 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' no 14 "Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved."

- Vatican II ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ no.1 “Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided (1 Corinthians 1:13) Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.”
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- Vatican II ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ no.2 “The Church, then, is God’s only flock.”
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- Vatican II ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ no.3. “Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly condemned. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church...Moreover, some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ.”
- Vatican II ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ no.24.“The Council moreover professes its awareness that human powers and capacities cannot achieve this holy objective - the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ.”
- Vatican II ‘Declaration on Religious Freedom’ no.1 “We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men...Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. Therefore it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.
- Vatican II ‘Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church no.1 “Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them "a universal sacrament of salvation,"(1) the Church, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (cf. Mark 16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men. The Apostles themselves, on whom the Church was founded, following in the footsteps of Christ, "preached the word of truth and begot churches."(2) It is the duty of their successors to make this task endure "so that the word of God may run and be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1) and the kingdom of God be proclaimed and established throughout the world.”
- Vatican II ‘Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church no.4 “The Church was publicly displayed to the multitude, the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching, and there was presaged that union of all peoples in the

catholicity of the faith by means of the Church of the New Covenant, a Church which speaks all tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the divisiveness of Babel...

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## DEFINITIONS

- Protestant defined ([dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)): 2. an adherent of any of those Christian bodies that separated from the Church of Rome during the Reformation, or of any group descended from them. *The word 'Protestant' was coined by the Lutherans at the Diet of Speyers in 1529.*
- Protestantism defined ([dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)): one of the 3 major branches of Christianity, originating in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, characterized by its doctrines of justification by grace through faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the authority of the Holy Scriptures.
- Evangelical defined ([dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)): belonging to...Christian churches that emphasize the teachings and authority of the Scriptures, especially of the new testament, in opposition to the institutional authority of the church itself, and that stress as paramount the tenet that salvation is achieved by personal conversion to faith in the atonement of Christ.  
2. designating Christians, especially of the late 1970s, avoiding the designation of fundamentalist but holding to a conservative interpretation of the Bible.  
3. pertaining to certain movements in the Protestant churches in the 18th and 19th centuries that stressed the importance of personal experience of guilt for sin, and of reconciliation to God through Christ.
- Roman Catholicism defined ([dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)): **The branch of Christianity headed by the Pope.** It has been the decisive spiritual force in the history of Western civilization. Along with Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, it is one of the three major branches of Christianity.
- Pope comes from the latin "Papa," *which is a term of endearment* for the Bishop of Rome, who is the successor of Peter.

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## LISTEN TO 24 WITNESSES TESTIFY

*In a court of law, a prosecutor only needs 2 witnesses to establish a fact and convict a defendant of a crime. The evidence that the Catholic Church is the true Church is overwhelming. Only someone who does not want to be confused with the facts will not the irrefutable evidence.*

1. John Henry Newman was an influential minister from the church of England, he was a writer and preacher of unparalleled intellect, he joined the Catholic Church. He wrote in Apologia Pro Vita Sua, (p.215). "I believe that the Catholic Roman

Church was ‘the Oracle of God.’” So what he is saying is that to ignore the Catholic church is to ignore the voice of the God. We must obey the Magisterium.

2. The Encyclopedia of Religion; volume 12 by Mircea Eliade pg. 430-431. “...Catholicism does begin at the beginning, that is, with Jesus gathering of his disciples and with his eventual commissioning...of Peter to be the chief Shepherd and foundation of the church. Therefore, it is not **Roman** primacy that gives Catholicism its distinctive identity within the community of Christian churches but the Petrine primacy. Peter is listed first among the twelve and is frequently their spokesman...there is increasing agreement that he did go to **Rome** and was martyred there...the conferral of the power of the keys (to Peter) clearly suggests an imposing measure of authority, given the symbolism of the keys as instruments for opening and shutting, the gates of the kingdom of heaven...there seems to be a trajectory of images relating to Peter and his ministry that sets him apart within the original company of disciples and explains his ascendancy and that of his successors throughout the early history of the church. Peter is portrayed as the fisherman...the shepherd...as an elder who addresses other elders, as proclaimer of faith in Jesus...as receiver of a special revelation, as one who can correct others for doctrinal misunderstanding (2 Peter 3:15-16), and as the rock on which the church is to be built (Matt 16:18)...the church adopted the organizational grid of the **Roman empire**: localities, dioceses, provinces. It also identified its own center with that of the empire, **Rome**. Moreover, there was attached to this city (**Rome**) the tradition that Peter and Paul had founded the church there and that he and Paul were martyred and buried there...During the first 5 centuries, the church of **Rome** gradually assumed preeminence among all the church’s. It (the church of **Rome**) intervened in the life of distant church’s, took sides in theological controversies, was consulted by other bishops on doctrinal and moral questions, and sent delegates to distant councils. The see of **Rome** came to be regarded as a kind of final court of appeal as well as a focus of unity for the worldwide communion of churches. The correlation between Peter and the bishop of **Rome** became full explicit during the Pontificate of Leo I (460-461), who claimed that Peter continued to speak to the whole church through the bishop of **Rome**.”
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3. Britannica Encyclopedia under ‘Roman Catholicism.’ Dates the “History of the church from its beginnings with the Apostle Peter’s identification with **Rome**...**Roman Catholicism** has been the decisive spiritual force in the history of Western Civilization...The papacy is the oldest continuing absolute monarchy in the world...**Roman Catholicism** began with the very beginnings of the Christian movement...the **Roman Catholic Church** has maintained an unbroken continuity

since the days of the Apostles, while all other denominations...are deviations from it.”<sup>ii</sup>

4. Handbook of Denominations: “For the 1<sup>st</sup> 1,500 years of Christianity’s history, the Western world was almost solidly **Roman Catholic**...The **Roman Catholic Church** dates its beginning from the moment of Christ selection of the apostle Peter as guardian of the keys of heaven and earth and chief of the apostles, and it claims the fisherman as its 1<sup>st</sup> Pope...The faith and doctrine of **Catholicism** are founded upon “that deposit of faith given to it by Christ and through his apostles, sustained by the Bible and by Tradition.”<sup>iii</sup>
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5. National Encyclopedia; published by Educational Enterprises, vol 8., pg. 514. “...the Church is the society founded by the God-Man Jesus Christ to carry on till the end of time his work for the salvation of mankind On the eve of his departure from this world Christ delegated to his apostles his own threefold office of priest, prophet and king (Matt 28:18-20. After his Ascension they and their successors were to teach, sanctify and guide mankind. He thus made the Church the ordinary medium of salvation for all men...Since the Church has been commissioned by Christ to teach all revealed truth, every **Catholic** considers it his duty to accept her teaching(s)...**Christ founded the Church** when, a year before his death, he said to Simon, the son of Jonas: ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ (Matthew 16:18). After his resurrection he confirmed Peter as the visible Supreme Head of this Church when he said to him: “Feed my lambs, feed my lambs, feed my sheep” (John 21:17).
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6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church): The **Roman Catholic Church** or **Catholic Church** ...”currently Pope Frances. It traces its origins to the original Christian community founded by Jesus, with its traditions first established by the Twelve Apostles and maintained through unbroken Apostolic Succession. Through apostolic succession, the Church believes itself to be the continuation of the Christian community founded by Jesus in his consecration of Saint Peter, a view shared by many historians.”
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7. The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations: Understanding the History, Beliefs, and Differences by Ron Rhodes: “**Roman Catholics** believe in an unbroken continuity from the early New Testament church to modern **Catholicism**...**Roman Catholic Church** founded – 1<sup>st</sup> century. The N.T. churches were governed by a plurality of elders (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1). One of these elders typically rose to a position of authority over the others. This individual

came to be known as a bishop, this hierarchy facilitated the practical running of the church (p.95). The bishop of the city exercised authority over all the congregational elders of the city...Some bishops attained greater authority than others...the bishop became prominent because the city in which the church was located was prominent. This was the case in Alexandria, Antioch, **Rome** and Carthage...The bishop of **Rome** eventually became the head of the entire church. A number of factors led to this development. First, as the capital of the empire, **Rome** was strategically located (“all roads lead to **Rome**”). Further, this was the only Western church to have received an epistle from the apostle Paul. Still further, Catholics believe Peter took up residence in **Rome** in A.D. 42, became its first bishop, and remained there until his martyrdom in A.D. 67. When Jerusalem fell and was decimated in A.D. 70, **Rome’s** authority was further enhanced. Add to this fact that the **Roman** church had attained significant wealth and great power, and one can easily perceive how **Rome’s** bishop was destined for greatness” (p.96).

8. Illustrated World Encyclopedia; published 1967, vol. 12, pg. 4147. “**The Roman Catholic Church** is the largest of all Christian Church’s. The Church is governed by a hierarchy...At the head of the hierarchy is the Pope, the leader of the Catholic Church on earth. Under him are the bishops. The Papacy (office of the Pope) and Episcopate (office of bishop) are considered to have been set up by Jesus, who appointed the Apostles as the first bishops and St Peter as the 1<sup>st</sup> Pope or head of the Church.”
9. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_popes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_popes): It has a list of all the Popes from Peter to Pope Francis (266 thus far).

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10. St. Irenaeus was bishop of Lyons (in France) from about 180-200 AD. He is considered one of the greatest theologians of the immediate post – Apostolic period. In his work *Against Heresies*, St Irenaeus makes the following statement about the Church of Rome and the successors of St Peter: “*But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a small volume as this the successions of all the Church’s, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self –satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the **successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith** which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. For **with this Church**, because of its superior origin, **all the Churches must agree**, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the **Apostolic tradition**” (3.3.2; Jurgens, vol.1, p.90). St Irenaeus then goes on to name all the Popes succeeding Peter up to his time – twelve in all.*

11. Readers Digest “Jesus & His Times” (1987): *“The Christian community in **Rome**, despite Nero’s persecutions and others that would follow, became even more important, since the city (of Rome) was the heart of the empire”* (p.297).
  12. World Christian Encyclopedia; put out by Oxford University Press (edited by David B. Barrett) has a graph in the introduction page, showing the years, 33 A.D. to 2000 A.D. It shows that the Catholic Church is the only one that goes all the way back to 33 A.D. All the other protestant denominations are shown in this graph to be splinter groups of the Catholic Church. **ADD GRAPHS**
  13. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church published by Oxford University Press, pg.1195. *“From an external point of view Roman Catholicism presents itself as an organized hierarchy of bishops and priests with the Pope at its head. This structure has been built up during a long history and rest its claims on the powers entrusted by Christ to His Apostles in general (John 20:23) and to St Peter in particular (Matthew 16:18; Luke 22:32; John 21:15-17), as whose successors the Popes are traditionally regarded.”*
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14. The Oxford Dictionary of Popes (1986) written by the noted Protestant historian, Anglican Canon Lawyer, fellow of the British Academy, fellow of the Academic Council of the Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem Professor J.N.D. Kelley. He states in his introduction: *“The **Papacy** is the oldest of all western institutions with an unbroken existence over almost 2,000 years. For much of its history, from the early struggles to establish the primacy of the See of Peter to the development of the modern **papacy** in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spiritual and temporal powers have been inextricably mingled in the person of the **Pope**.”*
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15. READERS DIGEST: Great People of the Bible & How they lived (1974), p.421 – article: *The Church at Rome*. *“By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the church at **Rome** had begun to assume preeminence over other churches. This development is easy to understand. **Rome** was the center of the empire, the city from which communication radiated to all parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. Moreover, Peter, upon whom Jesus had placed the responsibility of founding the Church, and Paul had both been martyred there. The **Roman Church** was led by influential and powerful bishops.”*
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16. Time Magazine: Papacy is of Divine origin. The established and universally accepted fact that the Papacy has endured from the first century until the twentieth is sufficient to establish its divine protection. There is a chart that was originally published in Time Magazine in 1947. It lists the origins and divisions of



- Protestantism. Up at the top of a flow chart, we see the first box labeled "Catholic Christendom." Beneath this box are flow lines showing each and every Protestant denomination that has splintered off from the Catholic Church. **ADD GRAPHS**
17. Life Magazine, December 1999, pg. 68. *There is a graph showing that Judaism is the seed of the true religion, and then the Roman Catholic Church stems from Judaism. The graph than shows the Eastern Orthodox break off in 1054 AD and the Protestant break off in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.* **ADD GRAPHS**
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18. Ann Landers (a once popular Syndicated Columnist) wrote an article that was printed all over the national press. She listed the founders of all the Major Religions in a single column, beneath the question: "Do you have any idea when your religion was founded and by whom?" She then lists the religion and its founder in chronological order, starting with Judaism in 2,000 BC, and ending with atheism. She writes, "If you are a Roman Catholic, Jesus Christ began your religion in the year 33 AD" (By the way: Ann Landers was Jewish). **ADD GRAPHS**
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19. Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts (1995) by J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White Jr write: "***The Roman Catholic Church traces the authority of the Pope back to Peter, for it is alleged that Peter was bishop of the Church at Rome when he died. Tradition says that the basilica of St. Peter in Rome is built over the spot where Peter was buried***" (p. 536). "A careful reading of the Gospels would tend to support the tradition that Peter was the leading figure of the early Church. The tradition that Peter was the leading figure of the apostolic Church has strong support" (p.537). "Yet the Holy Spirit would mold Peter into a stable, dynamic leader of the early church, a "rockman" (**Peter means 'rock'**) in every sense" (p.535).
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20. CRI Journal article 'What Think Ye Of Rome?', Spring 1993, part 4, by Ken Samples (Protestant Apologist): "***Catholicism, on the other hand, is the largest body within Christendom, having an almost 2000 year history (it has historical continuity with apostolic, 1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity), and is the ecclesiastical tree from which Protestantism originally splintered***" (p.35). "Those who classify **Roman Catholicism** as a cult (an inauthentic and invalid expression of Christianity) usually give the Eastern Orthodox church the same classification. What they do not realize...is that if both of these religious bodies are non-Christian, then there was no authentic Christian church during most of the medieval period. Contrary to what some Protestants think, there was no independent, nondenominational, bible believing church on the corner (or in caves) during most of the Middle Ages. Additionally, the schismatic groups who

were around at the time were grossly heretical. So much for the gates of hell not prevailing against the church (Matt 16:18). Some try to sidestep this argument by reasoning that as long as there were a few individuals who remained biblically orthodox apart from the institutional or organized church, then those select individuals constituted God's authentic church (a remnant) – thus the church was never truly overcome. This thinking, though containing an element of truth, is not completely correct. It is true that the church has an invisible and local dimension to it, but it also has a visible and organizational dimension (John 17:21). While the church is primarily a community of believers, it also functions as an institution through which believers encounter the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments...Scripture does not allow for the sharp distinction between the spiritual and organizational dimensions of the church that some would like to draw” (p.37).

21. Readers Digest ‘After Jesus, the Triumph of Christianity’ (1992): “Ignatius had been the bishop of church in Antioch for 40 years when he was denounced as a Christian during a short but intense period of persecution in the reign the Reign of Emperor Trajan...Ignatius was cross examined by the emperor himself and still refused to follow Trajan’s orders to worship roman deities. No doubt Trajan thought to make an example of this zealous Christian bishop, who was probably a converted pagan. Ignatius who was 70 years old, was given a brutal sentence: he was to be bound in chains and taken to **Rome**, where he would be devoured by beasts for the entertainment of the public. Unafraid, Ignatius regarded his punishment with joy...when he reached **Rome**, Ignatius was devoured by two ferocious lions in the Flavian Amphitheater” (p.112-3). “Looking at the Catholic, or universal, character of the Church as described by Ignatius, we find him remarking to the Ephesians that bishops continued to be ‘appointed the world over’ (3:2), as was true in the time of St Paul (cf. Colossians 1:6). In his letter to the Smyrnaeans (chapter 8), St Ignatius employed a phrase new to Christian writings up to that point, marking this letter as one of the most significant documents of the early Church.” He said: “Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

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22. ‘World Religions made Easy’ (Protestant author – John Hunt & Mark Water) pg. 36: “Through Peter, Jesus has started a chain of authority that has extended in an unbroken line to the present Pope.”

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23. Martin Luther (who started the protestant Reformation) admitted that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ in a sermon: "Accordingly, we concede to the **papacy** that they sit in the true Church, possessing the office instituted by

Christ and inherited from the apostles, to teach, baptize, administer the sacrament, absolve, ordain, etc., just as the Jews sat in their synagogues or assemblies and were the regularly established priesthood and authority of the Church. We admit all this and do not attack the office, although they are not willing to admit as much for us; yea, we confess that we have received these things from them, even as Christ by birth descended from the Jews and the apostles obtained the Scriptures from them." (2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon for the Sunday after Christ's Ascension; John 15:26-16:4. A Sermon by Martin Luther; taken from his Church Postil, 1522. This sermon is taken from volume III:254-271 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther*).

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24. Martin Luther remarked several years later: "We concede -- as we must -- that so much of what they [the **Catholic Church**] say is true: that the **papacy** has God's word and the office of the apostles, and that we have received Holy Scriptures, Baptism, the Sacrament, and the pulpit from them. What would we know of these if it were not for them?" [Sermon on the gospel of St. John, chaps. 14 - 16 (1537), in vol. 24 of LUTHER'S WORKS, St. Louis, Mo., Concordia, 1961, 304]
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## O.T. ISRAEL PREFIGURED THE N.T. CATHOLIC CHURCH

The word used in the Greek Old Testament for *Israel in the wilderness*, is "*ekklesia*," it is the same word the Gospels use for 'Church.' The greek word used for church in the New Testament is "*ekklesia*" as well. The word "*ekklesia*" used in both Testaments never describe an "invisible church" as is posited by some fundamentalist.

Forty seven times the word '*ekklesia*' (Church)' is found in the Old Testament, and in each passage it means but "one Church", one way of worshipping the Lord before the coming of Christ. That was the Jewish Church – the religion and the law of Moses established by God. In the N.T., Matthew mentions 'Church' twice, 24 times 'Church' is mentioned in the book of Acts, 68 times 'Church' is mentioned in the epistles, everywhere the meaning is but the one Church of God in Christ pastured by the Apostles. "Thus the Apostles were the first budding - forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy" (no.5 Ad Gentes; Vat II). "Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God. So likewise the new Israel which while living in this present age goes in search of a future and abiding city is called the Church of Christ" (no.9 Lumen Gentium; Vat II).

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## THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY & SCRIPTURE

The Vatican is the oldest continuous organization on earth, built literally on the tomb of St. Peter the apostle. Over the centuries it has witnessed the rise and fall of empires, philosophies, and scientific theories – and yet it still remains on the same spot, proclaiming the same gospel. Naturally there is much more. The life of the Church is more intriguing than any soap opera or novel you could read. It has saints and sinners. It has been heroic and cowardly. But, despite any human failings, the Church is still the bride of Christ. And, if anything is standing at the end of time when Jesus comes back, it will be the Church, because it alone has been given the gifts of infallibility, indefectibility and indestructibility. The proof of its indestructibility is that Roman Emperors, Attila the Hun, Martin Luther, Napoleon, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao have tried to destroyed the Church but couldn't. These my lie smoldering in graves and the Catholic Church lives on.

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Jesus is called the truth (John 14:6) and the Church is called the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Now remember, Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is His bride (Ephesians 5:21-33 & Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2-3). Christ and his Church are inseparable (Genesis 2:24 & Matthew 19:6). What God has Joined together, let no man separate (Matthew 19:6). God the Father has joined Jesus (his Son) to the Church (his bride).

The Church is the continuation of Jesus saving power throughout history. The fullness of gracious truth was given to his holy Catholic Church, and coming from that source, 'TRUTH' carries a built in gravitational pull back or towards the Church's unity. Christendom means Christ Kingdom, that is the Church. The Church is the navigator (the guide) the 'Word of God' is the map.

“Trust the Church of God implicitly even when your natural judgment would take a different course from Hers and would induce you to question Her prudence or correctness. Recollect what a hard task She has; how She is sure to be criticized and spoken against, whatever She does; recollect how much She needs your loyal and tender devotion; recollect, too, how long is the experience gained in 1,900 years; and what a right She has to claim your assent to principles which have had so extended and triumphant a trial. Thank Her that She has kept the Faith safe for so many generations and do your part in helping Her to transmit it to generations after you.” St. John Henry Cardinal Newman.

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### CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray, O God, in thy mercy pour out thy grace upon those who have gone astray and save those whom you have gathered together in thy Holy Catholic Church. We beseech you to pour upon all Christian people the grace of union with Thee and thy Church, so that putting aside disunion and attaching themselves to the true shepherd of thy Church, they may be able to serve thee humbly and lovingly – through Christ our Lord - Amen!

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ENDNOTES:

<sup>i</sup> Pope John Paul II: DOMINUM ET VIVIFICANTEM; ". . . nevertheless in the Old Testament context there is no suggestion of a distinction of subjects, or of the Divine Persons as they **subsist** in the mystery of the Trinity. . ."

Pius XII (1951) restated the Council of Chalcedon about Christ humanity. "They so elevate the status and qualities of Christ's human nature that it seems to become an autonomous subject all by itself, as though it did not **subsist** in the very person of the Word. But the Council of Chalcedon, in full agreement with that of Ephesus, clearly affirms that each nature of our Redeemer if joined 'in one person and **subsistence**' and it forbids postulating two individuals in Christ, as though some sort of 'assumed human being,' having his own autonomous individuality, existed side by side with the Word."

The word **subsist** means (Websters dictionary)-(1) to continue to be (in) or exist (in). (2) to continue to live (in); remain alive (in), be sustained. (3) to consist (in) or inhere (in).

<sup>ii</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan, et al. "Roman Catholicism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 29 Nov. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism>. online

<sup>iii</sup> Hill, Samuel S., and Frank S. Mead. *Handbook of Denominations*. 10th ed., Abingdon Press, 1995 p. 267.