

What Rome Teaches

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1. Introduction

In the move toward interspirituality (mixing all religions), it's kind of assumed that at least Catholics and Protestants could merge easily—having the same basic Christian foundation. In 2016, Pope Francis even proposed a new “beatitude,” blessing those who “work for full communion” between the two groups. But is that merge possible? ARE foundational teachings the same, with only trifling points of disagreement?

Catholics themselves don't always realize what Rome teaches. So for an objective assessment, we must lay aside individual ideas and look at Rome's official teaching. In the next points, I'll touch on several key/foundational teachings.

I'm drawing from former Catholics, who back their statements with quotes from official edicts of various Councils and the Magisterium (Rome's governing board of bishops), as well as from the Catechism. (The Catechism is available online—you can do your own searches there.) Other credible researchers are also referenced (whose statements have been double-checked). My goal is to be clear and concise so this starting outline can launch further private or small-group study. Hope you'll find it useful.

2. The Bible Plus

True Christianity relies on the Word of God as the final authority. On the surface, Rome seems to teach the same thing. But looking a bit deeper, we find an unusual definition of the term “Word of God”: “Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” (*The Gospel According to Rome*, James McCarthy, p 286). Catholic tradition and the Bible are to be treated with “equal feelings of devotion and reverence” (p 301; compare Rev 22:18, 19). Teachings that aren't in (or are at odds with) the Bible are justified because they're “sacred tradition.” Further, only Vatican high-ups are authorized—supposedly by God—to provide “authentic interpretation” of a teaching's meaning (p 283).

And when the Magisterium puts forth a new teaching, good Catholics are reminded that this board is “infallible” whenever it asserts an agreed-upon teaching (p 303). Official edicts include wording like “by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ...and by our own authority” (*Answers to Questions Catholics Are Asking*, Tony Coffey, p 218). And these declarations sometimes finish up with sinister words: anyone who doesn't accept/believe, who says differently...“Let him be anathema [cursed]” (*Another Jesus?*, Roger Oakland, p 21).

3. The Blood of Jesus Is Inadequate

Christianity teaches a salvation apart from one's own works. And this salvation is accomplished once for all through the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Hebrews 9:12).

Rome teaches that we must pay for some of our own sins (and can apply payments toward the sins of others). Atoning for sins is the purpose of praying the rosary X number of times when the priest hears a confession and prescribes such. (The priest judges the level of sin, applies the penalty, and forgives.) Atoning is also the purpose of certain works of service/restitution.

Upon dying, believers may be “in Christ but are not yet fully cleansed” (*The Gospel According to Rome*, James McCarthy, p 154; compare 1 John 4:17; 5:11–13). So Mass/prayers will be said to clear away any leftover sins that would keep the person in purgatory. (Interesting that the current pope says Mass for the two previous dead popes; McCarthy, p 114.)

No matter how you slice it, Rome teaches that the blood of Jesus isn't sufficient.

To peel back another layer, it's a bit baffling as to why people even need a Savior or personal works of salvation at all, given that the Catholic Catechism says, "Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself." And, "The Son of God became man so that we might become God."

4. The Eucharist

Part 3 named ways through which sins are forgiven, according to Rome. Participating in the Eucharist also is said to provide forgiveness/salvation. Jesus "offers himself daily for our redemption" (*Answers to Questions Catholics Are Asking*, Tony Coffey, p 162).

That purpose alone distinguishes the Eucharist from the Lord's Supper (which the Bible describes as an act of remembrance; see Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). But there are other concerns.

Rome teaches that the bread and wine become the "body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the whole Christ" (*Faith Undone*, Roger Oakland, p 123). To keep it simple, let's concede that if Jesus wanted to manifest in bread and wine, he certainly has the power to do so. But look at HOW Rome says this supposedly takes place. The bread and wine aren't Jesus until the priest does his thing. The priest is considered "alter christus" [another Christ] (*Another Jesus?*, Roger Oakland, p 35). And Mother Teresa said, "Without priests, we have no Jesus." I realize this next is a jolting statement, but it can't be helped: Anyone who has studied the occult will perceive that what happens in the Eucharist virtually places the priest in the role of a medium.

As far as the emblems, the bread is called the "host," which comes from the Latin word for "victim." Jesus is presented as an "unbloody" sacrifice (*The Gospel According to Rome*, James McCarthy, p 164). This is puzzling since the wine is supposed to have become real blood. But Catholic leaders say that Protestants just don't understand, that we misrepresent the teaching when we describe the Eucharist as a re-sacrificing (they say Jesus is immolated); or describe Jesus as physically present (they say he is continuously present); or call the Eucharist a repeat of the cross (they say it re-presents the cross). If the distinctions escape you, you're not alone. In the end, the Eucharist is just to be accepted as a "mystical reality" (p 168, 169).

Not only do the bread and wine become Jesus; Jesus also apparently becomes us—or vice versa.

Protestant-turned-Catholic Scott Hahn says he knew that Jesus wanted to be received "into my whole body and soul. This was what the Incarnation was all about" (*Another Jesus?*, Roger Oakland, p 102). And Rome declares that "partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ has no less an effect than to change us into what we have received" (McCarthy, p 130).

Rome's Eucharist is not the Lord's Supper. Former Catholic Tony Coffey said that the first time he actually read the book of Hebrews, he wondered how any Catholic priest could read that and continue saying Mass (Coffey, p 164).

5. Mary

In 1854, Rome formalized (as official doctrine) the belief in Immaculate Conception: that Mary was conceived "free from all stain of original sin" and remained sinless "her whole life long" (*The Gospel According to Rome*, James McCarthy, p 186; compare Romans 3:23).

She also, Rome teaches, never slept with Joseph or had other children. (compare Matthew 12:46) In 1950, Rome declared the "divinely revealed dogma" (p 188) that Mary didn't die. She "was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (p 283).

But Rome crosses an even bolder line: Mary is co-redeemer with Jesus; "she with Christ redeemed mankind." (p 202) Mary is the mediator—"nothing comes to us except through Mary's mediation" (p 204; compare 1 Timothy 2:5). She has "a place second only to her Son" (p 205). At the recent 100-year anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima, similar views were expressed. And Pope Francis said, "If we want to be Christian, we must be Marian."

To avoid being accused of worshipping Mary (though why would it be wrong to worship our “redeemer” and “mediator?”), Rome has come up with designations for degrees of “honor”: God alone deserves the highest form, Mary next, and saints and angels can be venerated by the lowest of the three forms (p 206).

What gets conveyed in Catholic writing is that God and Jesus can be a tad on the rigid side. Someone needs to soften them up. And so the popular Catholic phrase, “To Jesus through Mary.” We’re told that “God will at length let himself be moved” (p 214) by prayers that come through her. Fortunately, Rome provides a way for believers to contact Mary. Part 6 will explain.

6. Consulting the Dead

Occult practitioners employ various means to try and contact the dead: mediums, Ouija boards, trances... Scripture absolutely forbids practices in this general category of sorcery. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and Isaiah 8:19 particularly show that God’s people are not to engage in the “detestable” practice of attempting to call on the dead.

Rome encourages consulting the dead. Believers pray to “saints” (usually esteemed dead Catholics), who are said to major in certain areas of need: St. Anthony—lost items, St. Jude—hopeless cases, etc. But Mary is prayed to the most, via the rosary. The rosary contains 5 sets of beads, each set with 10 small beads (the Hail Mary said for each bead) and 1 large bead (when the Lord’s Prayer is said).

In fairness, we should acknowledge that Catholics would not consider Mary a dead person (see #5). Scripture does name a couple of people who never died (Enoch and Elijah), but there’s no evidence (scriptural or otherwise) to suggest that Mary bypassed death.

I’ve studied the occult for decades. Listen, it can’t be stated too strongly that attempting to communicate with/invoke the dead is a dangerous practice that opens doors to demonic mischief. That’s why the Lord forbids it! Hebrews 10:19 says that “we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus” (see also 4:14-16). We have direct access to the Lord himself—why go elsewhere?

And while we’re on the subject...Not only should we not attempt to consult the dead; we should destroy any “sacred objects” that have been used to try and make contact.

7. Conclusion

Read #1 through #6 again, to let things sink in. More could be said about any of these teachings (and other teachings could be examined). But this should be enough to show that Rome’s key doctrines don’t align with true Christianity.

That’s sad. I have deep sympathy for sincere Catholic believers who love Jesus and, in following Rome’s leading, assume that those teachings match Scripture. If I were Catholic and had doubts, I’d be afraid to challenge Rome for fear of being “cursed” (see #2). But Bible heroes like Moses and Jeremiah (not to mention many of us average believers!) have dared to question God himself, and were not cursed for it. It’s vital to know that what we’re being taught is “in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Doctrine that can’t survive investigation should be discarded.

Protestant teaching and Rome’s Catholicism can’t merge unless one side lays aside its key doctrines. Rome doesn’t seem likely to do that. So when there is talk of Catholics and Protestants “partnering,” a distinction is in order. It’s one thing for Catholic and Protestant friends to “partner” and run down the street to help a neighbor whose house is on fire. It’s another thing to join forces when it dishonestly conveys that we’re representing the same Christianity. That potentially steers people toward what Rome teaches.

May the Lord help us all to rely on him and his perfect, true, and powerful Word.