

“Why Catholic?” Mini-course – Week 2 Summary

Jesus chose to remain with the Church in a unique way through the Apostles and their successors as the Shepherd, Teacher and Life Giver

This is the meaning of Tradition

In the living river of Tradition, Christ is not 2000 years away but is really present among us and gives us the truth and the grace that makes us live forever
(Benedict XVI Audience May 3, 2006)

Jesus gave the Church **a living body of teachers** endowed with a special gift of the Spirit to guard and hand on the Word of God. This is the Magisterium of the Church from the Latin word for teacher or *magister*.

The Apostles in turn hand on not only the Gospel (Deposit of Faith) but their own position of teaching authority to their successors, the Pope and bishops in union with him

1 Timothy 3:15 says, the pillar and bulwark of truth is the Church

Sacred Scripture is the same teaching of the Apostles committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

St. Ignatius of Antioch: **You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the priest as you would the Apostles...Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Wherever the bishops appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church...but whatever he (the bishop) approves, this too is pleasing to God, so that whatever is done will be secure and valid.**
(letter to the Smyrneans)

The explicit desire of Jesus was that there would be only one Church – one united family

John 17:20, I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one...

Yet, there have always been disagreements and divisions

1 John 2:18-19, Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us.

Bishops, Priests and Laity who fail to teach or live the Gospel are never good reason to leave the Catholic Church.

Indulgences

An indulgence is a remission before God of

- the **temporal punishment** due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven,
- which the faithful Christian who is **duly disposed** gains under certain **prescribed conditions** through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the **treasury** of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. Ccc 1471

Sin has a double consequence

1. Eternal Punishment (consequences)
 - Hell
2. Temporal Punishment (consequences)
 - A disordered attachment to some thing in the world (vice)

Temporal consequences (disordered attachments or vice) prevent us from love of God and neighbor

- We must be purified of these vices and disordered attachments in order to be perfectly united with God
- To be perfectly united with God is Heaven

To reach heaven one must be purified of all disordered attachments

- Either here on earth
- Or after death in a state called purgatory

When God forgives our sin and restores our union with Him

- He removes the eternal consequences of sin (Hell)

But the temporal consequences of sin remain

- We still carry with us the bad habits, the disordered attachments of which must be purified by grace and virtue

Treasury of Grace

The treasury of grace is all of the grace Jesus won for us by his death and resurrection. This treasury includes the prayers, acts of charity, joy and patient suffering of all the faithful who have ever lived.

By receiving this grace and practicing virtue, we may be purified of the temporal punishment of sin

The Church dispenses this saving grace through the sacraments

- But also through an indulgence

The gaining of indulgences requires certain prescribed conditions and the performance of certain prescribed works

Conditions:

To gain indulgences it is necessary that the faithful be

- in the state of grace
- have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin;
- have sacramentally confessed their sins;
- receive the Holy Eucharist
- pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff

Work – we must put our faith into action

- There are prescribed penitential practices that go with the Indulgence
- Actions along the lines of prayer, fasting, almsgiving or a pilgrimage

Abuse - Cardinals, bishops and priests were selling the grace of the indulgence without requiring the necessary conditions or the work

- This is the sin of Simony
- Simon the Magician tried to purchase the gifts of the Holy Spirit from Peter (Acts 8)
- Also included the selling of the office of bishop

Martin Luther (1483 -1546) taught that as a consequence of original sin, human nature was totally corrupted, human free will had been destroyed, and every good thought or action is really a grave sin. Therefore, Luther concluded we are saved by faith alone.

Luther stated

“Be a sinner and sin on bravely, but have stronger faith and rejoice in Christ, who is the victor of sin, death, and the world. Do not for a moment imagine that this life is the abiding place of justice: sin must be committed. To you it ought to be sufficient that you acknowledge the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world, the sin cannot tear you away from him, even though you commit adultery a hundred times a day and commit as many murders.”

Contrary to the words of Jesus himself

Matthew 7:21-27

Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.' "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The starting point in the teaching of [Luther](#) and [Calvin](#), was the denial of free will. The human will, instead of being master of its own acts, is rigidly predetermined in all its choices throughout life. **As a consequence,**

- man is predestined before his birth to eternal punishment or reward
- Man can never have had any real free power over his own fate.

In his controversy with Erasmus, who defended free will, Luther frankly stated that free will is a fiction, a name which covers no reality, for it is not in man's power to think well or ill, since all events occur by necessity.

In reply to Erasmus's "The Free Choice of the Will," Luther published his own work, "The Bondage of the Will,"

In which Luther teaches everything is predestined; man can only do what God pre-ordains. Man is a slave of God. Man is predestined before his birth to eternal punishment or reward. Man can never have had any real free power over his own fate. If man cannot cooperate with God's grace, then all good that is done is accomplished by God alone.

If original sin has destroyed his freedom

- Then man cannot cooperate with God's grace
- either for his salvation
- or to resist grace if he chooses

John Calvin was the French reformer who organized Luther's thought into a system

This idea is the origin of Calvin's TULIP

- Total depravity
 - We do not have free will
- Unconditional election
 - God chooses to save a person from all eternity and there is nothing that person can do for or against his own salvation
- Limited atonement
 - Christ died only for those predestined for heaven
- Irresistible grace
 - When God calls his elect, they cannot resist
- Perseverance in grace
 - The people whom God chooses cannot lose their salvation

The fundamental principle of the Reformation

- Human free will is destroyed
- Therefore we cannot cooperate with God
- Or to resist God and his grace

This principle necessitated the rejection of the Catholic doctrines of: Mary, the saints, the teaching authority of the Church, the Mass, the priesthood, the sacraments as something more than mere ritual, purgatory and others that were eventually thrown out because all of these doctrines presume that, as humans, we have free will. For if man cannot cooperate with God's grace, then all of these are useless and even harmful.

In condemnation of these views, the Council of Trent declared that

- the free will of man, moved and excited by God, can by its consent cooperate with God, Who excites and invites its action; and that it can thereby dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification.
- The will can resist grace if it chooses. It is not like a lifeless thing, which remains purely passive.
- Weakened and diminished by Adam's fall, free will is yet not destroyed in the race
- (Council of Trent Sess. VI, cap. i and v).

Shattering of the Body of Christ

From the Original four who broke from the Catholic Church, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Henry VIII, we now have more than 34,000 separate Christian groups world wide; all with a different interpretation of the teachings of Jesus.