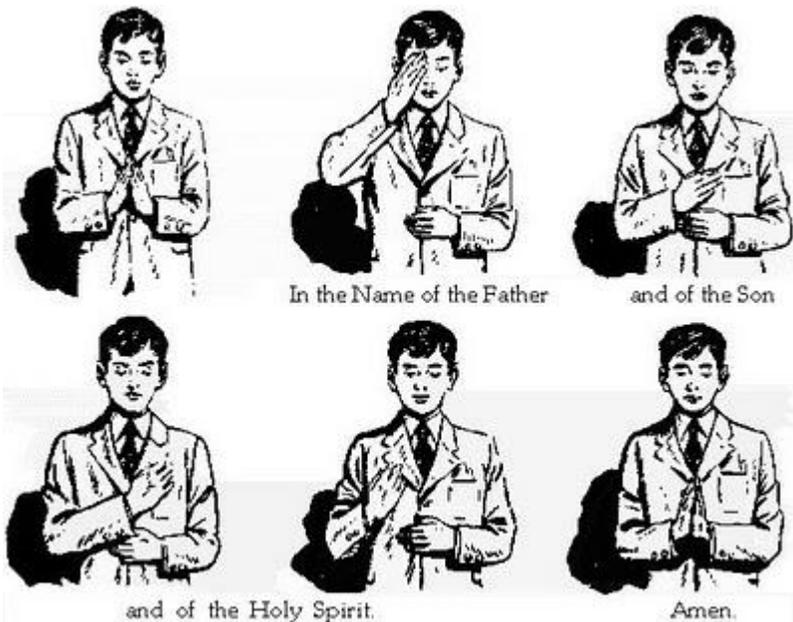


Catholic Practices



1. The Sign of the Cross.

- It calls to mind the Trinitarian formula, said by Christ himself.
- It's all over the writings of the Church Fathers, such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil, and St. Athanasius. Even Martin Luther prescribed it in his 1529 catechism.

2. Priestly celibacy. (handout)

- It's discipline, not dogma.
- It is very different in the Eastern rite, and there are exceptions in the Roman rite.
- St. Paul prescribes it: 1 Cor. 7:32-35
- Jesus endorses it: Matt. 19:9-12

3. Calling priests “Father” in spite of Matt. 23:9

- It’s obvious that Jesus wasn’t forbidding a child to call his father by that title.
- In the Bible the concept of fatherhood is not restricted to earthly fathers and God. It is a title of respect.
- Joseph tells his brothers of a special fatherly relationship God had given him with the king of Egypt: “So it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 45:8)

- Job indicates he played a fatherly role with the less fortunate: “I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know” (Job 29:16). And God himself declares that he will give a fatherly role to Eliakim, the steward of the house of David: “In that day I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah . . . and I will clothe him with [a] robe, and will bind [a] girdle on him, and will commit . . . authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah” (Is. 22:20–21)

- Elisha cries, “My father, my father!” to Elijah as the latter is carried up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kgs. 2:12). Later, Elisha himself is called a father by the king of Israel (2 Kgs. 6:21).
- The whole passage in Matthew: “But you are not to be called ‘rabbi,’ for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called ‘masters,’ for you have one master, the Christ” (Matt. 23:8–10)

- Paul says: “For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. 2:7)
- “For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher” (2 Tim. 1:11). He also reminds us that the Church has an office of teacher: “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers” (1 Cor. 12:28); and “his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). There is no doubt that Paul was not violating Christ’s teaching in Matthew 23 by referring so often to others as “teachers.”

- Jesus was using hyperbole (exaggeration to make a point) to show the scribes and Pharisees how sinful and proud they were for not looking humbly to God as the source of all authority and fatherhood and teaching, and instead setting themselves up as the ultimate authorities, father figures, and teachers.
- Other examples of hyperbole: “if your right hand causes you to sin” (Mt. 5:30) “the eye of a needle” (Lk. 18:25) “you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move” (Mt. 17:20)
- Matt. 23:8-10 is sandwiched between two long denunciations of the Pharisees.

- The common temptation to put all one's faith in a "guru" was present in the Jewish world of Jesus' day.
- Famous rabbinical leaders, especially those who had founded important schools, such as Hillel and Shammai, were highly exalted by their disciples.
- It is this elevation of an individual man—the formation of a "cult of personality" around him—of which Jesus is speaking when he warns against attributing to someone an undue role as master, father, or teacher.

- Paul regularly referred to Timothy as his child: “Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ” (1 Cor. 4:17); “To Timothy, my true child in the faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim. 1:2); “To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:2).
- He also referred to Timothy as his son: “This charge I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophetic utterances which pointed to you, that inspired by them you may wage the good warfare” (1 Tim 1:18); “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1); “But Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel” (Phil. 2:22).

- Paul also referred to other converts in this way: “To Titus, my true child in a common faith: grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (Titus 1:4); “I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment” (Philem. 10). None of these men was Paul’s literal, biological son. Rather, Paul is emphasizing his spiritual fatherhood with them.
- Perhaps the clearest New Testament reference to the theology of the spiritual fatherhood of priests is Paul’s statement, “I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:14–15).

- “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark” (1 Pet. 5:13)
- John said, “My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1); “No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth” (3 John 4). In fact, John also addresses men in his congregations as “fathers” (1 John 2:13–14).
- Clearly there is no authentic scriptural or logical reason not to call priests “Father.”

4. Catholics worship “graven images” forbidden by Ex. 20:2-5.

- The Protestant interpretation of Ex. 20: “We are not to have ‘graven images,’ or statues, yet what do you see in almost every Catholic Church around the world? Statues and crucifixes! This is the definition of idolatry. And please, do not give me any of this nonsense about equating the statues in your churches to carrying a photograph of a loved one in your wallet. In Exodus 20, as well as in Deuteronomy 5:7–8, God specifically says we are not to make statues in the shape of anything in the sky above, the earth below or the waters beneath the earth.”

- Iconoclasm nearly tore apart the Church in two separate waves of persecutions during the 8th and 9th centuries.
- The Second Council of Nicaea (787) ended the first wave. St. John Damascene's argument was instrumental.
- Colossians 1:15 tells us that Christ is "the image of the invisible God." Christ is the ultimate icon!
- Ex. 20:5 prohibits the adoration of statues, not the statues themselves.
- Ex. 25:18-19 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends.

- In Numbers 21:8–9, not only did our Lord order Moses to make another statue in the form of a bronze serpent, he commanded the children of Israel to look to it in order to be healed. The context of the passage is one where Israel had rebelled against God, and a plague of deadly snakes was sent as a just punishment. This statue of a snake had no power of itself—we know from John 3:14 it was merely a type of Christ—but God used this image of a snake as an instrument to effect healing in his people.

-1 Kgs. 6:23, 27, 29, 31, 32 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. . . . He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house. . . . He carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. . . . For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood. . . . He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold.

- After the completion of the temple, God declared he was pleased with its construction (1 Kgs. 9:3)
- Catholics venerate images because we venerate or adore what those images represent.

5. The College of Cardinals is nowhere in the Bible.

- Answer: Not explicitly. But Acts 1:15-26, when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, is a scriptural precedent for a replacement bishop being chosen by a group of men.
- The Church has never claimed that the College of Cardinals is a perfect system, nor that it guarantees the elected Pope will be the “Holy Spirit’s choice.”

Papal Elections

- From Linus to Miltiades (67-314), a council of 24 elected the Pope.
- From Sylvester I to Stephen IX (314-1058), the Emperors (often swayed by the nobility or by popular acclaim) would appoint the Pope.
- From Nicholas II to Innocent II (1059-1143), the Pope was elected by simple majority of cardinals, whose choice was confirmed by the Emperor.
- From Celestine II to Gregory X (1143-1276), Pope was elected by 2/3 majority of cardinals.
- From Innocent V to the present (1276-2019), the Pope is elected by conclave (2/3 majority).

6. The canonization of saints is a fallible invention of the Church.

- Answer: the veneration of saints goes back to the earliest years of the Church, beginning with St. Stephen.
- In the first centuries, popular fame or *vox populi* represented the only criterion by which a person's holiness was ascertained. The people would visit the tomb, invoke the person's intercession, and report miracles. Later, the process became official.
- The local bishop would investigate. If approved, the body was exhumed and transferred to an altar. A feast day was assigned within the diocese.

- Eventually the process fell under the Pope's jurisdiction.
First papal canonization: St. Ulrich of Augsburg, 993.
- Local canonizations continued until 1234.
- The process is very thorough:
 1. Five-year waiting period
 2. Servant of God (*promotor fidei, advocatus diaboli*)
 3. Venerable (heroic virtue)
 4. Blessed (first miracle)
 5. Saint (second miracle)
- Canonization is considered infallible, but the Church never says that our salvation is somehow dependent on our veneration of saints.

7. The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are just “vain repetitions,” condemned by Christ in Matt. 6:7.

- Answer: Let’s examine the actual text, as well as its context.
- “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases (‘vain repetitions’ in KJV) as the pagans do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words.”
- The Greek word is *battalagesete* (babble or mindless repetition), which is how the pagans would pray to pagan gods.
- The main idea of prayer and sacrifice among the pagans was to appease the gods so that you could go on with your own life. You had to be careful to “take care of” all of the gods by mentioning them, and saying all the right words, lest you bring a curse upon yourself.

- But where in the Bible is there repetitious prayer?
- Rev. 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”
- Psalm 136
- Mark 14:32-39 The Agony in the Garden
- Luke 18:1-8 The dishonest judge
- Do non-Catholics use repetition in prayer?
- “Father God, we just ask you to ...”
 - “And Father God, we just ask you to ...”
 - “And Father God, we just ask you to ...”
- The Hail Mary is part scriptural, part theological. It took over a thousand years to fully develop:

Early years: “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”

Ca. 1050: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

1261 (Urban IV): “Jesus.”

1555 (Catechism): “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners.”

1566 (Trent): “Now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

- The Rosary builds on the precedent of pre-Christian prayer beads and monks who used prayer ropes with knots to pray 150 Psalms.
- Mary revealed the essence of the Rosary to St. Dominic (150 short Hail Marys), and he turned it into a tool of catechesis while preaching to convert Albigensians.

8. The doctrine of Purgatory is nowhere in the Bible. After death, there are only two possibilities: Heaven or Hell.

- Answer: There are only two *eternal* possibilities. And Purgatory *is* in the Bible.
- 1 Pet. 3:18-20 Is it purgatory? Is it some kind of limbo? Either way, an intermediate state can exist.
- Matt. 12:32 Forgiveness in the age to come.
- 1 Cor. 3:10-15 Purification “as through fire.”
- 2 Macc. 12:38-46 Clearly refers to Purgatory, which is why Luther had to find an excuse to get rid of it.
- The notion of Purgatory started with the Jews! Even today, Orthodox Jews recite a prayer known as the Mourner’s Kaddish for eleven months after the death of a loved one, so that the loved one may be purified.

- But why is Purgatory necessary?
- Although a person may die with all mortal sins forgiven, there may still be habitual venial sins, strong self-love, and the damage done by sin. (Rev. 21:22-27)
- Of course Christ's redemption was perfect, but our sufferings are part of that redemption: 1 Col. 24

9. Indulgences are a Catholic invention that places undue emphasis on man's efforts, as opposed to Christ's grace, as the cause of salvation.

- Answer: Pope Paul VI: "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 defined conditions through the Church's help when, as a minister of redemption, she dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions won by Christ and the saints" (*Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1).

- Temporal punishment is biblical: Gen. 3:16-19, 2 Sam. 12:7-12, and death itself.
- Temporal punishment is common sense: reparation must be done if one is truly sorry.
- Temporal punishment can be lessened: parents do it, and so do prisons. Why can't the Church?
- "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18)
- Proverbs 16:6: "By loving kindness and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil."