

LEARNING MADE EASY



4th Edition

Catholicism

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Make sense of the
sacraments and symbols

Know where the Church stands
today on social and moral issues

Discover the foundations
of the Catholic Church

**Rev. Fr. John Trigilio, Jr.,
PhD, ThD**

**Rev. Fr. Kenneth Brighenti,
PhD**

Catholicism

**for
dummies[®]**
A Wiley Brand



Catholicism

4th Edition

**by Rev. Fr. John Trigilio, Jr., PhD, ThD, and
Rev. Fr. Kenneth Brighenti, PhD**

Imprimatur: Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA,
Diocese of Metuchen, NJ

Nihil Obstat: Reverend John G. Hillier, PhD, Censor Librorum
November 22, 2021

The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who granted the Nihil Obstat and the Imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

^{for}
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Catholicism For Dummies®, 4th Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2022 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

The Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for use in the United States of America Copyright 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS WORK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS OR PROMOTIONAL STATEMENTS FOR THIS WORK. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS ENDORSE THE INFORMATION OR SERVICES THE ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A SPECIALIST WHERE APPROPRIATE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHORS SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022930209

ISBN 978-1-119-85571-2 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-85575-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-85576-7 (ebk)

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: What Do Catholics Believe?	5
CHAPTER 1: What It Means to Be Catholic	7
CHAPTER 2: Having Faith in God's Revealed Word	19
CHAPTER 3: In the Beginning: Catholic Teachings on Creation and Original Sin....	37
CHAPTER 4: Believing in Jesus.....	49
CHAPTER 5: Defining "The Church" and What Membership Means	69
CHAPTER 6: Organizing the Church.....	79
Part 2: Celebrating the Mysteries of Faith	103
CHAPTER 7: Body and Soul: Worshipping Catholic Style	105
CHAPTER 8: Entering the Church: Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation	117
CHAPTER 9: The Sacraments of Service and Healing	135
CHAPTER 10: Celebrating the Catholic Mass	157
Part 3: Living a Saintly Life	187
CHAPTER 11: Obeying the Rules: Catholic Law	189
CHAPTER 12: Loving and Honoring: The Ten Commandments	205
CHAPTER 13: Being Good When Sinning Is So Easy	221
CHAPTER 14: Standing Firm: The Church's Stance on Some Sticky Issues	239
Part 4: Praying and Using Devotions	269
CHAPTER 15: Growing in the Faith	271
CHAPTER 16: Showing Your Love for God.....	285
CHAPTER 17: Expressing Affection for Mary.....	301
CHAPTER 18: Honoring the Catholic Saints	319
CHAPTER 19: Practicing Catholic Traditions	341
Part 5: The Part of Tens	359
CHAPTER 20: Ten Famous Catholics	361
CHAPTER 21: Ten Popular Catholic Saints	371
CHAPTER 22: Ten Popular Catholic Places	383
CHAPTER 23: Ten Recent Beatifications and Canonizations by Pope Francis	395
CHAPTER 24: Ten Famous Papal Encyclicals.....	407

Part 6: Appendixes	417
APPENDIX A: A Brief History of Catholicism	419
APPENDIX B: Popular Catholic Prayers	449
APPENDIX C: Directory of Patron Saints	469
Index	483

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	3
Where to Go from Here	4
 PART 1: WHAT DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE?	 5
CHAPTER 1: What It Means to Be Catholic	7
What Exactly Is Catholicism Anyway?	7
Knowing What the Catholic Church Teaches	9
Grasping the basic beliefs	9
Respecting the role of the Church and its leaders	11
Worshipping as a Catholic: The Holy Mass	13
Bringing body and soul into the mix	14
Participating inside and out	14
Behaving Like a Catholic	15
Following the general ground rules	15
Avoiding sin	16
Heeding the Church's stance on tough issues	17
Praying as a Catholic: Showing Your Devotion	17
Praying and using devotions	18
Realizing the importance of Mary and the saints	18
Following traditions	18
 CHAPTER 2: Having Faith in God's Revealed Word	 19
How Do You Know If You Have Faith?	19
Having Faith in Revelation	20
Faith in the written word: The Bible	21
Faith in the spoken word: Sacred Tradition	26
Backing Up Your Faith with Reason: Summa Theologica	32
Through motion	33
Through causality	33
Through necessity	34
Through gradation	34
Through governance	35

CHAPTER 3:	In the Beginning: Catholic Teachings on Creation and Original Sin	37
	Making Something Out of Nothing	38
	Breathing Life into the World: Creationism or Evolution?	38
	Angels and Devils: Following God or Lucifer	40
	Infused knowledge, eternal decisions	40
	The angels' test and the devil's choice	41
	Witnessing the Original Sin	42
	Tempting our first parents	42
	Losing gifts	43
	Wounding our nature	43
	Being redeemed by God's grace	44
	Facing the four last things	44
	Anticipating What's to Come: Moving toward the End of Creation	45
	The Second Coming	45
	Resurrection of the dead	47
	General judgment	47
	The end of the world	47
CHAPTER 4:	Believing in Jesus	49
	Understanding Jesus, the God-Man	50
	The human nature of Jesus	50
	The divine nature of Jesus	53
	The Savior of our sins; the Redeemer of the World	54
	The obedient Son of God	55
	The Gospel Truth: Examining Four Written Records of Jesus	56
	Catholic beliefs about the Gospel	56
	How the Gospels came to be	57
	Comparing Gospels	58
	Dealing with Heresy and Some Other \$10 Words	63
	Gnosticism and Docetism	64
	Arianism	64
	Nestorianism	65
	Monophysitism	66
CHAPTER 5:	Defining "The Church" and What Membership Means	69
	Establishing a Foundation: Built on Rock	70
	Seeing the Church as the Body of Christ and Communion of Saints	71
	Understanding the Four Marks of the Church	72
	Fulfilling Its Mission	73
	The priestly office: Sanctifying through the sacraments	74
	The prophetic office: Teaching through the Magisterium	74

	The kingly office: Shepherding and governing through the hierarchy.	75
	Membership Has Its Benefits.	76
CHAPTER 6:	Organizing the Church	79
	Getting to Know the Pope	80
	How the pope gets his job	80
	Is he really infallible?	84
	Now that's job security	89
	Where the pope hangs his hat.	90
	Who's Next in the Ecclesiastical Scheme of Things.	92
	Cardinals	92
	Bishops and archbishops	93
	The vicar general	96
	The parish priest	96
	Deacons	99
	Monks and nuns, brothers and sisters.	100
	PART 2: CELEBRATING THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH	103
CHAPTER 7:	Body and Soul: Worshipping Catholic Style	105
	Getting Your Body and Soul into the Act	106
	Understanding Some Symbols and Gestures	107
	The sign of the cross.	107
	The genuflection	107
	The crucifix	108
	Holy water.	108
	Sensing God	109
	Through sight.	109
	Through touch	112
	Through smell	113
	Through sound	114
	Through taste.	115
CHAPTER 8:	Entering the Church: Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation	117
	Come On In — The Water's Fine	118
	Becoming Christ's kith and kin	118
	Washing away original sin	119
	Baptizing with water	120
	Receiving the sacrament of Baptism in other ways	126
	The Holy Eucharist.	128
	Understanding the consecrated host.	129
	Discovering who can receive Holy Communion	130
	Partaking of First Holy Communion	132
	Coming of Age: Confirmation	132

CHAPTER 9: The Sacraments of Service and Healing	135
The Sacraments of Service and Community	135
Marriage — Catholic style.	136
Holy Orders	143
The Sacraments of Mercy and Healing.	145
Penance	145
Anointing of the Sick	152
CHAPTER 10: Celebrating the Catholic Mass	157
What Exactly Is the Mass?	158
Honoring the Sabbath publicly	159
Participating fully.	159
Uniting past, present, and future	160
The Two Parts of the Mass	161
Beginning the Mass	161
Greeting (Introductory Rite)	162
Acknowledging sin (Penitential Act)	162
Gloria	163
Opening Prayer (Collect)	164
The Liturgy of the Word	164
The Liturgy of the Eucharist	168
Vatican II and the Celebration of Mass	177
Allowing worship in vernacular languages	178
Other changes resulting from Vatican II	179
Checking out the <i>Roman Missal, Third Edition</i>	179
Understanding the Latin roots	180
Seeing why change was necessary	180
Knowing what it means for you in the pew	181
Adjusting the Mass for the Occasion	181
Weekday and Sunday	182
Holy days of obligation	182
Simple and solemn celebrations	183
Spiritual Seasons of the Year	184
Christ Our Light: The first half of the liturgical year	184
Christ Our Life: The second half of the liturgical year	185
PART 3: LIVING A SAINTLY LIFE	187
CHAPTER 11: Obeying the Rules: Catholic Law	189
Following the Eternal Law of God	190
The divine positive law	190
The natural moral law	191
The human positive law	193

Playing by the Church's Rules	198
Attending Mass on all Sundays and holy days of obligation.	199
Receiving the Holy Eucharist during Easter season	199
Confessing your sins at least once a year	200
Fasting and abstaining on appointed days	200
Contributing to the support of the Church	201
Observing Church marriage laws	201
Supporting missionary work of the Church.	203
 CHAPTER 12: Loving and Honoring: The Ten Commandments	205
Demonstrating Love for God	206
I: Honor God	206
II: Honor God's name	208
III: Honor God's day.	209
Loving Your Neighbor	211
IV: Honor your parents	211
V: Honor human life	212
VI and IX: Honor human sexuality.	215
VII and X: Honor the property of others.	217
VIII: Honor the truth	218
Coming Out Even Steven	219
 CHAPTER 13: Being Good When Sinning Is So Easy	221
Cultivating Good Habits	222
Prudence: Knowing what, when, and how.	223
Justice: Treating others fairly	224
Temperance: Moderating pleasure	227
Fortitude: Doing what's right come hell or high water.	228
The Theological Virtues.	228
The Seven Deadly Sins	229
Pride goeth before the fall.	231
Envyng what others have or enjoy.	233
Lusting after fruit that's forbidden	234
Anger to the point of seeking revenge.	234
Gluttony: Too much food or firewater	235
Greed: The desire for more and more.	236
Sloth: Lazy as a lotus-eater.	237
 CHAPTER 14: Standing Firm: The Church's Stance on Some Sticky Issues.	239
Celibacy and the Male Priesthood	240
Flying solo for life.	240
No-woman's-land.	246

Matters of Life and Death	250
Abortion	250
Euthanasia	252
The death penalty	254
The Just War Doctrine	255
Planning Your Family Naturally	259
The moral argument against artificial contraception	259
The natural alternative to contraception	260
What if you can't conceive naturally?	262
Defending Traditional Family Life	264
The Economy and the Environment	267
Money, money, money	267
Ecology theology	267
PART 4: PRAYING AND USING DEVOTIONS	269
CHAPTER 15: Growing in the Faith	271
Having a Personal Relationship with God through Prayer	272
Practicing the four types of prayer	272
Getting to know spontaneous and formal prayer	274
Praying in Private and in a Community	275
Taking personal time with God: Private prayer	276
Joining others for communal prayer	277
Saying the Lord's Prayer	279
Taking It to the Next Level: The Stages of Spiritual Growth	281
Purgative: Practicing self-denial and sacrifice	281
Illuminative: Distinguishing good from evil	282
Unitive: Connecting with God	284
CHAPTER 16: Showing Your Love for God	285
Going Beyond Your Basic Duty	286
Knowing when and where to pray devotions	286
Separating devotions from Mass	286
Running the Gamut of Devotions	287
Praying novenas to the saints	287
Loving litanies	289
Looking at statues and icons	290
Making pilgrimages	291
Going on a retreat	291
Wearing sacred gear	292
Praying the Rosary	293
Saying the Divine Mercy Chaplet	297
The Way of the Cross	298

CHAPTER 17: Expressing Affection for Mary	301
No, Catholics Don't Worship Mary	301
What Catholics Believe about Mary	304
She's the Mother of God	304
She's the Mother of the Church	306
She's the Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ	306
She was conceived through Immaculate Conception	307
She went to heaven, body and soul	310
Her never-ending virginity	311
Up Close and Personal with Mary	312
May crowning	312
First Saturdays	313
Marian shrines and apparitions	314
CHAPTER 18: Honoring the Catholic Saints	319
Having a Place in the Hearts of Catholics	320
Honoring God's Good Friends	322
It's All about Intercession	322
Recognizing a Saint	324
Looking at the process to becoming a saint	325
Going through the investigations for sainthood	326
Experiencing the beatification and canonization Mass	331
A Saint for Every Day of the Year	331
Discovering the Communion of Saints	332
Saints in heaven	333
Believers on earth	335
Souls in purgatory	336
Limbo	338
CHAPTER 19: Practicing Catholic Traditions	341
Adoring the Blessed Sacrament	342
Participating in Benediction	343
Adoring at church during Perpetual Adoration or the 40-hour devotion	344
Representing Life's Journey: Other Religious Processions	346
Meatless Fridays	348
The tradition of abstaining	348
Substituting Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy for abstinence	349
Using Sacramentals	349
Catholic Funerals	350
Signifying death with ashes	351
Commemorating with blessed palms	351

Receiving the blessing of throats	352
Exorcising demons	352
Tolling bells.	353
Celebrating Year-Round	354
Feast of the Epiphany	356
Feast of Candlemas.	356
St. Patrick's Day	357
St. Joseph's Day	357
Marian Feasts in May	358
Feast of St. Anthony of Padua	358
Feast of St. Thérèse of Lisieux	358
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	358
PART 5: THE PART OF TENS	359
CHAPTER 20: Ten Famous Catholics	361
Dante Alighieri (1265–1321).	361
Father Gregor Mendel (1822–1884)	362
Emperor Karl I (1887–1922)	363
Monsignor Georges Lemaître (1894–1966)	364
Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty (1898–1963)	364
Father Patrick Peyton (1909–1992)	366
Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964)	367
Justice Antonin Scalia (1936–2016)	368
Sister Dolores (Hicks) Hart (1938–)	369
Bishop Robert Barron (1959–)	370
CHAPTER 21: Ten Popular Catholic Saints	371
St. Matthew	371
St. Mark	372
St. Luke	373
St. John	374
St. Teresa of Ávila	376
St. John of the Cross	377
St. Margaret Clitherow	379
St. Mary MacKillop.	380
St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross	380
St. Josemaría Escrivá	381
CHAPTER 22: Ten Popular Catholic Places	383
Duomo di Orvieto (Italy)	383
Einsiedeln Monastery (Switzerland)	384
Mont-Saint-Michel (France)	385
Notre Dame Cathedral (France)	387

	Oberammergau (Germany)	388
	Salzburg (Austria).	389
	Shrine of Our Lady of Le Puy (France)	390
	St. James of Compostela (Spain)	390
	The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham (England)	392
	The Shrine of St. Anthony (Portugal)	393
CHAPTER 23:	Ten Recent Beatifications and Canonizations by Pope Francis	395
	St. François-Xavier de Montmorency-Laval (1623–1708).	396
	St. Junipero Serra (1713–1784)	397
	Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin (19th Century).	398
	Blessed Father Michael Joseph McGivney (1852–1890).	399
	Blessed Solanus Casey (1870–1957).	400
	Pope St. Paul VI (1897–1978)	401
	Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich (1901–1927).	402
	Sts. Jacinta and Francisco Marto (Early 20th Century)	403
	Blessed Stanley Rother (1935–1981)	404
	Blessed Carlos Acutis (1991–2006)	405
CHAPTER 24:	Ten Famous Papal Encyclicals	407
	Rerum Novarum, Leo XIII (1891)	408
	Divino Afflante Spiritu, Pius XII (1943)	408
	Mystici Corporis Christi, Pius XII (1943)	409
	Mediator Dei, Pius XII (1947)	410
	Humani Generis, Pius XII (1950)	411
	Pacem in Terris, St. John XXIII (1963)	412
	Humanae Vitae, Paul VI (1968)	412
	Veritatis Splendor, St. John Paul II (1993).	414
	Evangelium Vitae, St. John Paul II (1995)	415
	Fides et Ratio, St. John Paul II (1998).	416
PART 6:	APPENDIXES	417
APPENDIX A:	A Brief History of Catholicism	419
	Ancient Times (A.D. 33–741)	419
	Non-Christian Rome (A.D. 33–312)	419
	Christian Rome (A.D. 313–475)	422
	Barbarian invasions and the fall of Rome (A.D. 476–570)	422
	Pope St. Gregory the Great to Charles Martel (590–741)	424
	The Middle Ages (A.D. 800–1500)	425
	Christendom: One big, mighty kingdom	425
	The Golden Age	427
	The downward spiral	428

The Reformation to the Modern Era (1517–Today)	431
The growing need for reform	432
The reformers	434
The Catholic Church’s response: The Counter Reformation	436
The Age of Reason	437
The Age of Revolution	439
The Modern Era	442
APPENDIX B: Popular Catholic Prayers	449
Western (Latin) Catholic Prayers	449
Our Father (Pater Noster)	450
Hail Mary (Ave Maria)	451
Glory Be	451
Salve Regina	452
Memorare	453
Act of Contrition	454
Prayer to Guardian Angel	455
Grace Before/After Meals	455
Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel	456
Act of Faith	457
Act of Hope	457
Act of Love (Charity)	457
Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary	458
Litany of Saint Joseph	460
Litany of the Saints	462
Eastern and Byzantine Catholic Prayers	467
Prayer before meals	467
Prayer after meals	467
Prayer of the Publican	468
Prayer of St. Ephraim of Syria	468
Prayer to St. Maron	468
APPENDIX C: Directory of Patron Saints	469
INDEX	483

Introduction

Three great religions trace their roots to the prophet Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And one of those religions, Christianity, is expressed in three different traditions: Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. You may already know that. You may also already know that currently, more than 1 billion Catholics occupy the earth. That's approximately one-fifth of the world's population.

Whether you're Catholic or not, you may be totally clueless about or just unaware of some aspects of Catholic tradition, history, doctrine, worship, devotion, or culture. No sweat. Regardless of whether you're engaged, married, or related to a Catholic; your neighbor or co-worker is a Catholic; or you're just curious about what Catholics really do believe, this book is for you.

Catholicism For Dummies, 4th Edition, realizes that you're smart and intelligent, but maybe you didn't attend Blessed Sacrament Grade School, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, or Catholic University of America. This book's goal is to give you a taste of Catholicism. It's not a Catechism or religion textbook but a casual, down-to-earth introduction for non-Catholics and a reintroduction for Catholics. It gives common-sense explanations about what Catholics believe and do in plain English, with just enough why and how thrown in to make solid sense.

Although *Catholicism For Dummies*, 4th Edition, is no substitute for the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, our hope is that it'll wet your whistle. We don't cover everything about Catholicism, but we do discuss the basic stuff so that the next time you're invited to a Catholic wedding, Baptism, funeral, Confirmation, or First Communion, you won't be totally confused. And you may have an edge on other people in your life who are less informed about Catholicism than you.

About This Book

This book covers plenty of material on Catholicism — from doctrine to morality and from worship and liturgy to devotions — but you don't need a degree in theology to comprehend it. Everything is presented in an informal, easy-to-understand way.

This book is also a reference, unlike the schoolbooks you had as a kid. You don't have to read the chapters in order, one after the other, from front cover to back cover. You can just pick the topic that interests you or find the page that addresses the specific question you have. Or you can indiscriminately open the book and pick a place to begin reading.

Throughout this book, if you see the word *orthodox* with a small letter *o*, it means correct or right believer. However, if you see the capital letter *O*, then *Orthodox* refers to the Eastern Orthodox Churches, such as the Greek, Russian, and Serbian Orthodox Churches. Also, if you see the word *church* with a small letter *c*, it refers to a church building or parish, but *Church* with a capital *C* refers to the universal Catholic Church.

Bible references in this book use the traditional chapter and verse designation of a chapter number followed by a colon and the verse number(s). For example, Deuteronomy 6:4–6 refers to the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy from verse 4 all the way to and including verse 6. Unless we tell you otherwise, our Scripture references are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

A quick note: Sidebars (shaded boxes of text) dig into the details of a given topic related to Catholicism, but they aren't crucial to understanding it. Feel free to read them or skip them. You can pass over the text accompanied by the Technical Stuff icon, too. The text marked with this icon gives some interesting but nonessential information about Catholicism.

One last thing: Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these webpages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an ebook, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the webpage.

Foolish Assumptions

While writing this book, we made some assumptions about you:

- » You have Catholic friends, neighbors, or relatives, and you're curious about Catholicism and want to know a little more about it.
- » You've heard or read something about Catholics or Catholicism, and you have questions about Catholic beliefs or practices.

- » You may or may not be Catholic. Perhaps you were baptized Catholic but not raised Catholic. Maybe you're committed to a different faith, still searching, or have no faith to speak of. Regardless, you do want to know something about Catholics.

Icons Used in This Book

This book uses icons to point out various types of information.



REMEMBER

Ummm, well, we can't remember what this icon's supposed to point out. Just kidding. This icon draws your attention to information that's worth remembering because it's basic to Catholicism.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

This icon alerts you to technical or historical background stuff that's not essential to know. Feel free to divert thine eyes whenever you see this icon.



TIP

This icon points out useful tidbits to help you make more sense out of something Catholic.



WARNING

This icon points out cautionary areas of Catholicism, such as the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday or Saturday evening. (Not doing so without a legitimate excuse, such as illness or severe weather, is a grave sin.)

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for "Catholicism For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the search box.

Where to Go from Here

Catholicism For Dummies, 4th Edition, is sort of like Sunday dinner at an Italian grandmother's home. Nonna brings everything to the table: bread, antipasto, cheese, olives, prosciutto and melon, tomatoes and mozzarella; then comes the pasta or macaroni in marinara or meat sauce with sausage and peppers, meatballs, and veal; then comes the chicken, the pork, or the beef; followed by salad; and topped off with fruit and cheese, spumoni, gelato, ricotta pie, zabaglione, and an espresso with a splash of sambucca.

Likewise, in this book, we've brought out a little bit of everything on Catholicism: doctrine, morality, history, theology, canon law, spirituality, and liturgy. You can go to any section to discover Catholicism. You can pick and choose what interests you the most, get answers to specific questions on your mind, or just randomly open this book anywhere and begin reading. On the other hand, you may want to start at the beginning and work your way to the end, going through each chapter one by one. We don't guarantee that you'll be full when you're finished, but we hope that you'll get a good taste of what Catholicism is really about.

1

What Do Catholics Believe?

IN THIS PART . . .

Find out what Catholics learn in religion class and what the Church teaches all its members. You'll look at the doctrines and beliefs every Catholic is expected to know and accept. The first pillar of faith of the Catechism is the creed, which is explained in this part.

Discover the revealed Word of God, including the Bible.

Explore Catholic beliefs about God as the Creator of everything.

Examine fundamental Christian teachings, such as the divinity of Christ and Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Understand the Church, its mission, and the means by which it fulfills that mission.

Get the rundown of the key figures in the Catholic hierarchy — the many, many people who make up the Church as an organization.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Getting a sense of the Catholic perspective
- » Introducing Church teachings
- » Participating in Catholic worship
- » Behaving and praying like a Catholic

Chapter 1

What It Means to Be Catholic

Being Catholic means more than attending parochial school or going to religion class once a week, owning some Rosary beads, and going to Mass every Saturday night or Sunday morning. It means more than getting ashes smeared on your forehead once a year, eating fish on Fridays, and giving up chocolate for Lent. Being Catholic means living a totally Christian life and having a Catholic perspective.

What is the Catholic perspective? In this chapter, you get a peek at what Catholicism is all about — the common buzzwords and beliefs — a big picture of the whole shebang. (The rest of this book gets into the nitty-gritty details.)

What Exactly Is Catholicism Anyway?

The cut-to-the-chase answer is that *Catholicism* is a Christian religion (just as are Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy). *Catholics* are members of the Roman Catholic Church (which means they follow the authority of the bishop of Rome, otherwise known as the pope), and they share various beliefs and ways of worship, as well as a distinct outlook on life. Catholics can be either Latin (Western) or

Eastern (Oriental) Catholic; both are equally in union with the bishop of Rome (the pope), but they retain their respective customs and traditions.

Catholics believe that all people are basically good, but sin is a spiritual disease that wounded humankind initially and can kill humankind spiritually if left unchecked. Divine grace is the only remedy for sin, and the best source of divine grace is from the *sacraments*, which are various rites that Catholics believe have been created by Jesus and entrusted by Him to His Church.

From the Catholic perspective, here are some of the bottom-line beliefs:

- » More than an intellectual assent to an idea, Catholicism involves a daily commitment to embrace the will of God — whatever it is and wherever it leads.
- » Catholicism means cooperation with God on the part of the believer. God offers His divine grace (His gift of unconditional love), and the Catholic must accept it and then cooperate with it.
- » Free will is sacred. God never forces you to do anything against your free will. Yet doing evil not only hurts you but also hurts others because a Catholic is never alone. Catholics are always part of a spiritual family called the *Church*.
- » More than a place to go on the weekend to worship, the Church is a mother who feeds spiritually, shares doctrine, heals and comforts, and disciplines when needed. Catholicism considers the Church as important to salvation as the sacraments because both were instituted by Christ.

The Catholic perspective sees everything as being intrinsically created good but with the potential of turning to darkness. It honors the individual intellect and well-formed conscience and encourages members to use their minds to think things through. In other words, instead of just giving a list of do's and don'ts, the Catholic Church educates its members to use their ability to reason and to apply laws of ethics and a natural moral law in many situations.

Catholicism doesn't see science or reason as enemies of faith but as cooperators in seeking the truth. Although Catholicism has an elaborate hierarchy to provide leadership in the Church (see Chapter 6), Catholicism also teaches individual responsibility and accountability. Education and the secular and sacred sciences are high priorities. Using logical and coherent arguments to explain and defend the Catholic faith is important.

Catholicism isn't a one-day-a-week enterprise. It doesn't segregate religious and moral dimensions of life from political, economic, personal, and familial dimensions. Catholicism tries to integrate faith into everything.



The general Catholic perspective is that because God created everything, *nothing* is outside God's jurisdiction, including your every thought, word, and deed — morning, noon, and night, 24/7.

Knowing What the Catholic Church Teaches

The Catholic religion is built (by Christ) on four pillars of faith: the creed (teachings), the sacraments (liturgical worship), the Ten Commandments (moral code), and the Lord's Prayer or Our Father (prayer and spirituality). Church doctrine and dogma can be very sophisticated, which may intimidate some people. But the fundamentals are rooted in the Church's creed: the first pillar of faith. Either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed (which we introduce in Chapter 2) is said every Sunday and holy day to reaffirm what the Church actually teaches and expects her members to believe and profess. Catholics read the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the definitive book explaining the official teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals.

In this section, we briefly overview the fundamental tenets of the Church, including what the Church is and who leads it.

Grasping the basic beliefs

Catholics are first and foremost *Christians*. Like Jews and Muslims, Catholics are *monotheistic*, which means that they believe in one God. But Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, which is unique to Christianity. Catholics also believe the following:

- » **The Bible is the inspired, error-free, and revealed word of God.** See Chapter 2 for an introduction to the Bible.
- » **Baptism, the rite of becoming a Christian, is necessary for salvation.** This is true whether the Baptism occurs by water, blood, or desire (see Chapter 8).
- » **God's Ten Commandments provide a moral compass — an ethical standard to live by.** We discuss the Ten Commandments in detail in Chapter 12.
- » **There is one God in three persons: the Holy Trinity.** In other words, Catholics embrace the belief that God, the one Supreme Being, is made up of three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (see Chapter 2).



TIP

Catholics recognize the unity of body and soul for each human being. So the whole religion centers on the truth that humankind stands between the two worlds of matter and spirit. The physical world is considered part of God's creation and is, therefore, inherently good until an individual misuses it.

The *seven sacraments* — Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick — are outward signs that Christ instituted to give grace. These Catholic rites marking the seven major stages of spiritual development are based on this same premise of the union of body and soul, matter and spirit, physical and spiritual. You find out more about the sacraments in this chapter's section "Worshipping as a Catholic: The Holy Mass," as well as in Chapters 8 and 9.



REMEMBER

Grace is a totally free, unmerited gift from God necessary for our salvation. Grace is a sharing in the divine; it's God's help — the inspiration that's needed to do His will. Grace inspired martyrs in the early days of Christianity to suffer death rather than deny Christ. Grace bolstered St. Bernadette Soubirous to sustain the derision of the locals who didn't believe she'd seen the Virgin Mary. You can't see, hear, feel, smell, or taste grace because it's invisible. Catholic belief, however, maintains that grace is the life force of the soul. Like a spiritual megavitamin, grace inspires a person to selflessly conform to God's will, and like the battery in the mechanical bunny, grace keeps the soul going, going, going, and going. Because grace is a gift, you can accept or reject it; if you reject it, you won't be saved, and if you accept it, you have to put it into action.

WHY IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S HOME IN ROME?

Saint Peter, the first pope, began his ministry in Jerusalem. Eventually, he ended up in Rome, where he was its first bishop and was then crucified and buried on Vatican Hill. That spot was imperial property, but in the fourth century, the Roman emperor donated the land and buildings to the pope in compensation for property and funds that were seized from Christians during years of Christian persecutions (a topic we discuss in Appendix A). It's important that the Church continues to have its home in the place where Saint Peter spent his final years and was bishop and pope.

Respecting the role of the Church and its leaders

Catholics firmly believe that Jesus Christ personally founded the Church and He entrusted it to the authority and administration of Saint Peter (the first pope) and his successors. In this section, we explain what Catholics believe the Church really is, as well as how its leadership is structured.

What “the Church” really is

The word *church* has many meanings. Most obviously, it can signify a building where sacred worship takes place. The Catholic Church is not one particular building even though the head of the Church (the pope) lives next to Saint Peter’s Basilica (the largest church in the world) in Rome. People who use the church building — the body or assembly of believers — are also known as the *church*. When that body is united under one tradition of worship, it is called a *liturgical church*, such as the Eastern Catholic Church, the Melkite Church, the Ruthenian Church, or the Latin or Roman Rite Church.



REMEMBER

Catholic Churches may differ liturgically, but they’re still Catholic. The two main lungs of the Church are the Latin (Western) Church and the Eastern Catholic Church. The *Latin (Western) Church* follows the ancient traditions of the Christian community in Rome since the time of St. Peter and St. Paul; most parishes in the United States, Canada, Central America, and South America celebrate this type of Mass, said in either the location’s common tongue or Latin. The *Eastern Catholic Church*, which includes the Byzantine Rite, celebrates its Mass like Greek or Russian Eastern Orthodox Churches. Both Masses are cool by the pope, though.

At an even more profound level, the entire *universal* Church (meaning the Catholic Church around the world) is theologically considered the Mystical Body of Christ. In other words, the Church sees herself as the living, unifying, sanctifying, governing presence of Jesus Christ on earth today. Not just an organization with members or an institution with departments, the Church is an organic entity; it is alive. Its members, as Saint Paul says in his epistle (1 Corinthians 12:12–31), are like parts in a body. Just as your body has feet, hands, arms, legs, and so on, the Church has many members (parts) but is also one complete and whole *body*. (See Chapter 5 for a complete discussion of this topic.)

Unlike a club or association you belong to, the Church is more than an informal gathering of like-minded people with similar goals and interests. The Church was founded by Christ for a specific purpose: to save us. The Church is an extension of Jesus and continues the work begun by Him. He came to teach, sanctify, and govern God’s people as the Anointed One (called *Messiah* in Hebrew and *Christ* in Greek).



REMEMBER

The Church is necessary for salvation because she is the Mystical Body of Christ, and Christ (being the Savior and Redeemer of the World) is necessary for salvation because He is the One Mediator between God and man. People who do not formally belong to the Church are not *de facto* lost, however, because the Church believes in the universal salvific will of God. In other words, God offers salvation to all men and women, yet it is up to them to accept, believe in, and cooperate with that divine grace.

Anyone who has not consciously and deliberately rejected Christ and the Catholic Church can still be saved. In other words, besides the formal members (baptized, registered parishioners), there are many anonymous and unofficial members of the Church who act in good faith and follow their conscience, living virtuous lives. Someone may be innocently ignorant of the necessity of Christ and His Church and still achieve salvation from both.

One body with many members: That is how the Church sees herself. Her mission is to provide everything her members need — spiritually, that is. From the seven sacraments that give us grace to the Magisterium that teaches essential truths to the hierarchy that brings order through laws and governance, the Church is there to give the soul what it needs on its journey to heaven. More than a convenient option, the Church is a necessary and essential society (community) where members help each other, motivated by the same love.

The Catholic chain of command

Every group of human beings needs a chain of command (authority) and a set of rules (laws), which enable the group to maintain security, provide identity, and promote unity. Families depend on parental authority over the children. Nations have constitutions that delineate and define powers. The Church has authority that she believes comes directly from God. For example, the Lord gave Moses not only the Ten Commandments (see Chapter 12) but also many other laws and rules to help govern God's people to keep them safe.

Canon law is the set of rules and regulations the Church enacted to protect the rights of persons and the common good of all the members. The word *hierarchy* means “leveled tier.” Like the Roman army of old, the Church adopted a chain of command. The highest authority resides in the person of the pope, who is always simultaneously the Bishop of Rome. He is the Successor of Saint Peter, the man to whom Christ entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

The pope is the Church's supreme lawmaker, judge, and visible leader. He is also called the Vicar of Christ on earth. As the Church's ambassador to the world, he possesses full, supreme, and universal power the moment he takes office. He is elected pope by the *college of cardinals*, which exists to elect a pope after the current