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2nd Edition

# Catholicism

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Rev. John Trigilio, Jr,  
PhD, ThD, et al.





# Catholicism

ALL-IN-ONE

2nd Edition

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## Catholicism All-in-One For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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# Introduction

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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 1.3 billion Catholics occupy the earth. That's almost 18 percent 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 All-In-One For Dummies* realizes that you're smart and intelligent, but maybe you didn't attend St. Pius X for grade school, Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School for high school, or Marquette University for college. 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.

This book doesn't cover everything about Catholicism, but you do get all 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

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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 from the Table of Contents at the front of the book, or find the page that addresses the specific question you have from the Index at the back of the book. Or you can indiscriminately open the book and pick a place to begin reading.

You'll notice a few things as you read this book:

- » We quote from the Bible throughout; that's the book that contains all the sacred Scriptures. However, you may come across different wording elsewhere. This is due to different translations and because other sects use different wording.
- » To help locate a verse in the Bible, we cite it by first noting the name of the book in the Bible it comes from, like Genesis, Job, or Matthew (though some book titles may be abbreviated). After the book title, you'll see the chapter number in that book followed by the verse number. John 3:16 is an example.
- » While not mandated by the Catholic Church, we've chosen to capitalize the pronouns related to Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit as a sign of respect (more on them in Book 1, Chapter 1). However, these are often not capitalized in the Bible itself, so you may not see them capitalized in Bible quotes.
- » Speaking of capitalization, when you see the word Church capitalized (except maybe at the start of a sentence), it's referring to the universal Catholic Church as a whole — or if it's the name of a specific church, like St. Maria Goretti Church.

To make the content more accessible, we divided it into five minibooks or parts:

- » Book 1: What Do Catholics Believe?
- » Book 2: Living the Catholic Faith
- » Book 3: Making Sense of the Catholic Mass
- » Book 4: Meeting Saints and Other Important Figures
- » Book 5: All About His Holiness, the Pope



# Foolish Assumptions

While we couldn't possibly include everything there is to know about Catholicism in this book (our fingers would hurt from typing, and your eyes would probably hurt from reading. . . although St. Lucy could help with that), this *All-in-One* provides an expanded look at the largest Christian denomination in the world. We made the following assumptions about your level of knowledge going into this book, dear reader, as we compiled this insightful guide for you:

- » You may be a practicing member of the church or someone who's affiliated with the religion through family ties.
- » You're involved in the Catholic faith, either as a practicing Catholic or a convert seeking a deeper understanding of Catholic traditions.
- » You're interested in learning about the foundations of the Catholic religion and why Catholics believe what they do.
- » Or perhaps you're simply interested in learning more about religion in general.

Whatever the case, we're just happy you're here! But we'd be even happier if you left with more Catholic knowledge than you started. Who knows — "Catholic saints who can bilocate" (or appear in two places at one time) may be the topic of a question at your next trivia night — and we've got some possible answers for you!

## Icons Used in This Book

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



REMEMBER

This icon draws your attention to information that's worth remembering because it's basic to Catholicism.



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.)



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.



FROM  
THE BIBLE

This icon points out references to the topic in the Good Book.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance related to Catholicism that we provide in this book, you get access to even more help and information online at [Dummies.com](http://Dummies.com). Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet. Just go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for "Catholicism All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet."

## Where to Go from Here

*Catholicism All-In-One For Dummies* 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 sambuca.

Likewise, in this book, you find 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 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. You'll get a good taste of what Catholicism is really about.

# 1

## **What Do Catholics Believe?**

# Contents at a Glance

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#### IN THIS CHAPTER

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

## Chapter 1

# Catholicism 101

**W**hile Catholicism is a *monotheistic* (one God) religion, it is also *triune* (one God in three divine Persons) and Christ-centered. We'll get into the basics of what that means in this chapter as we meet several key figures referenced throughout this book — figures who will help you understand why Catholics behave the way they do, study the Bible (the Catholic holy book), and strive to live a Christ-centered life. So on that note, let's get to it so you can get the fundamentals of what Catholics believe and understand what we even mean by "Christ-centered."

## Heavenly Roll Call: Getting Acquainted with the Blessed Trinity

While Catholics believe in one God, that one God is actually made up of three parts:

- » Father
- » Son
- » Holy Spirit

These three divine Persons make up the Blessed Trinity. Each Person is God, but there are not three Gods. They are unique and yet united as one, which is why it is considered a mystery in the Church because it's nearly impossible to wrap our human heads around the complexities involved in that arrangement. However, we can help you learn about Them individually so you see how They interact as one.

## God, the Father

Catholics believe there is one God (yes, they capitalize His name and pronouns). He is the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, of everything visible and invisible. He is the father of Jesus Christ, who He sent to earth to redeem all humans for their sins. (*Sins* are immoral and offensive acts that go against the will and laws of God.)

While various names are used for God in the Bible (some of which are considered unpronounceable), in today's world, other common names for God that Catholics use include:

- » Father
- » Yahweh
- » the Lord
- » Lord God

Catholics treat the name of God with reverence and never take it in vain, meaning in any perverse or dishonorable way.

## Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth, lived and taught among human-kind, and died by crucifixion (being nailed to a cross). After being placed in a tomb, He (yes, He is also referenced with capitalization of His name and pronouns) rose from the dead, thereby saving humanity from their sins. But don't worry; we'll get into the specifics of all that in Book 1, Chapter 4. For now, just keep in mind that Catholics recognize the fully human and fully divine nature of Jesus. This means that while still maintaining His divine nature, He took on our humanity in order to bridge the gap sin (Book 1, Chapter 3) created between humans and God.

In Hebrew, *Jesus* means 'God saves,' while *Christ* is derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word that means 'anointed.' These names are no mere