

A Letter by a Catholic Layman to an Anti-Catholic Friend

Dear friend in Christ,

I admire your devotion to Sacred Scripture, and your enthusiastic concern for the message of salvation. However, I have this concern. I am not at all sure that everyone who ever said, "Lord!" Lord!" at an altar call can be called Christian. Just as I am mortally concerned about many Catholic people and priests who are tinkling bells, so I am equally concerned about Evangelicals and Fundamentalists who are clanging cymbals. The road to hell is broad and many on the slide are playing salvation games, while putting down true Christians. There is a big difference between blessed assurance and presumption.

I'm sorry to be quite blunt, but there is a time for bluntness, as you well know. Jesus is the Truth and the Light. He cannot be a party to lies and falsehoods about other Christians no matter how well intended. You have the message of salvation in an active way, but it seems to me you do not follow the Holy Scriptures as well as you claim. You cling to a body of human falsehood and use Holy Scripture to support it. You rewrite history to fit your preconceived error. Worst of all, you grieve the Holy Spirit by putting a bit and bridle on Him. You do not allow the Holy Spirit to lead you out of the trap you are in. I am concerned about you. The Fruits of the Spirit seem to be missing. Please examine your position in the light of the truth that is Jesus. I do not see the work of the Holy Spirit in your hate for the ancient mother Church of Christianity; the Catholic Church.

In all charity, let me scrutinize you. How can you claim to know more about Catholic teaching than we do, or more about Catholic history than our best teachers? Do you think Protestants had an Angel Moroni who led them to the long lost Bible? Whom do you think hand copied the Bible for 1500 years before the printing press? Then why do you think your interpretations are right and ours are wrong? We have two thousand years experience as guardians and interpreters of the Bible. Contrary to what you may have been taught, Holy Scripture has always been at the heart of our Church teaching. It is a firm tenet, that nothing we teach about the Christian faith or morals can contradict the Bible. No pope, no church council, nor even an angel of light can ever change that.

In brotherly love, let me set you straight about who we are as Catholic Christians. We Catholics agree with other main line Christians on what is central.

1. We believe the Bible is God's word, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus handed on His Message, the essentials of which are recorded in the New Testament.
2. The Bible has everything necessary for the salvation that comes from Jesus. There is no secret doctrine beyond the Bible. (however, neither the early Church, nor the Bible itself claims that scripture is the only record of the message, nor that everything Jesus revealed was written down.)
3. Salvation is a free gift of God, through faith in Christ.
4. The revelation of God is complete in Jesus Christ.(again, this does not mean that God quit talking to us, only that we have had no, and expect no new public universal revelation; At least not until the Kingdom.)
5. We believe, on faith, the unfathomable mystery of God as Trinity, and Jesus as truly 100% God and 100% truly human among us.

Catholics, orthodox, and other ancient Christians disagree with Protestants and evangelicals on some key issues.

1. The Church does not owe its existence to the Bible. (The idea of "Bible only," is not found in the Bible) Jesus founded His Church Directly with the Apostles. He commissioned the Church to guard the message of salvation and to preach it to all peoples. Jesus didn't give that commission to the Bible, nor even through the Bible. He gave it to the Church. Later the Church wrote it in the Bible under the inspiration of God The Holy Spirit. This is the same Holy Spirit that Jesus gave to the church to guarantee the preservation of the message down through the ages. "I will be with you, even to the end of the world." In the above concept lies the key difference between the ancient Churches, and the many modern attempts to re-found the church.
2. So, then, instead of the Church of the Bible, we have the Bible of the Church. The Bible is the precious family record of our ancient Church. The Bible is a Catholic book. It came to us through the Church. It was gathered into the canon by the Catholic Church under the leadership of popes. It was carefully preserved from change and error by the Church. If it weren't for the Catholic and the Orthodox Church you wouldn't have a copy of the New Testament at all. Salvation doesn't depend on the Bible, but on faith in God's message as recorded there by the Church. The Church, in the light of its commission from Jesus Himself, is the only authentic authority for the interpretation of this message. All else is born of prideful rebellion.
3. The Apostolic Church instituted by Christ never died out. There is no historical evidence of a continuous, "faithful remnant," hostile to the Bishop of Rome, as some Evangelicals claim. The Holy Spirit guaranteed the Church and protected Her precious message through all generations to our day within the one mother Church. In spite of times of glaring human sins the message of the Church concerning essential faith and morals remains pure.

The Catholic Church is without doubt, the most direct and continuous link with the Church Jesus commissioned. There are more Catholics in the world than all other Christians and Jews combined. We are not all in the best spiritual shape, and I personally welcome the concern for the salvation of my brothers displayed by evangelicals. We are not doing a good job of evangelizing our own people and we can only grow stronger by the challenge. I would just like you to realize that evangelization by turning people against the authentic faith of their fathers is hardly evangelization at all. God's word is not spread by lies, nor is truth nurtured by fostering misunderstanding.

Evangelicals and Pentecostals have some great things going for them and I admire them, but I've never found anything I couldn't also find somewhere in the Catholic Church. I want you to know that in spite of some of the problems in our Church, There are, and always have been many beautiful works of God alive among us. Come and see. There are some real live parishes among us. Unfortunately, there are also some parishes where little or nothing seems to be happening. Pray for us. There is so much work to be done among unevangelized Catholics as well as with under fed sheep in our fold.

Nothing said here is meant to belittle you or any other Christian Church. Protestantism is not ready to go away and the Lord is obviously blessing these fellowships and using them for His work. Protestantism adds a dimension of challenge, and balance to world Christianity that I think we all need.

We need to learn from each other. we need to work together to bring the saving Word of God to all people. We need to love one another as brothers in Christ. We don't need to immediately agree on all the details, but we do need to be frank enough so we can understand honestly where the other is coming from. We need to search out our hatreds, lies and misinformation about each other and repent of these for the sake of our common Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the Joy of Jesus,