

# Returning to the Christian Faith of Our Fathers

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For just about all Evangelical Bible Believing Christian Protestants, the Christian Faith of Our Fathers is the Roman Catholic Church. There was an initial split with the Roman Catholic Church back at the time of the Protestant Reformation but for many, there have been so many additional splits that some do not understand their roots are in fact Roman Catholic.

To help with the understanding you both need to start at the end of the book of Acts and go forward in time and also start at the present and go backward in time.

Going forward from the end of Acts, we learn that the Apostle Peter was Bishop of Rome in about 67 AD when he was martyred there. He was succeeded by a new Bishop of Rome and that succession can be traced year by year right through the time of the Protestant Reformation through the present Bishop of Rome who is Pope John Paul II.

To go backwards from the present, look at your present pastor and see who ordained him, giving him the credentials to be pastor. For the Assembly of God denomination, they go back to about 1900 and not further. But the framers of the Assembly of God denomination were not Pagan but Christians of various other denominations.

Pagans do not beget Christians. Christians beget Christians. For a Pagan to become Christian it takes another Christian even if that Christian was himself previously a Pagan.

So we look at the denomination of the Christians to see where their roots came from. You may need to go backwards through any number of denomination startups to trace back but you do come to the Roman Catholic Church for virtually all Protestant denominations.

To return to this Christian Faith of our Fathers we need to answer the questions: What, Where, Why, When, Who, and How.

The "What" question is "What is a Church?"

The "Where" question is "Where is Jesus?"

The "Why" question is "Why baptize?"

The "When" question is "When is one dead?"

The "Who" question is "Who is Mary?"

The "How" question is "How and I return to a place I have never been?"

Rather than answer each question fully I will simply state what the question represents. A full discussion is available in a separate document.

### **What is a Church?**

Jesus used the term "My Church". He also said that ultimate authority to settle issues rests in "the Church".

Clearly the Church that Jesus founded was one Church and while Jesus is the ultimate authority of this church, he did leave the Apostles in charge of that Church when He ascended into Heaven.

Whether or not the Bishop of Rome held the position as the head of the entire Christian Church or not, He was clearly the head of the Church at Rome which is now unquestionably the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus the Bishop of Rome, which is the current Pope, is the head of all of the Protestant Churches except for those churches renouncing that authority.

But all of the current Evangelical Bible Believing Protestant Denominations did not break themselves from the Roman Catholic Church but broke from other Protestant denominations. This means that the present denominations are not responsible for the initial break from the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church considers these Christians as "separated brethren".

The Roman Catholic Church acknowledges the movement of the Holy Spirit in many of these churches. The Roman Catholic Church also acknowledged that certain representatives of the Church behaved inappropriately at the time of the Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church clearly wants to "mend fences" to regain fellowship with who they consider "separated brethren".

However, these "separated brethren" do not consider themselves "separated brethren" but just "Christians". The separation has been so great that there is little understanding and much mis-understanding. In fact, many of these "separated brethren" do not even consider Roman Catholics to be "Christians".

When you look at the book of Acts, you see that there was not an association of independent churches but there was one church that existed in numerous local churches. Thus came about the term of Catholic Church meaning one universal church existing as an hierarchal organization with the apostles at the top then bishops or elders followed lastly by individual Christians. In Acts 15 we see "apostles and elders" making decisions concerning doctrinal issues.

While some churches are congregational in regards to the selection of pastors for local churches, most if not all have the pastor in charge of the local church but responsible to the "home office" of the denomination that ordained him. Thus the same denominations that repudiate the hierarchal organization of the Roman Catholic Church actually follow the same form of authority in their own denomination.

While lip service is paid to the concept of an "invisible" church made up of all believers, you cannot speak in one of their denominational pulpits unless you "hold papers" from that denomination. The practical definition of church is "a member in good standing with that denomination".

### **Where is Jesus?**

God is everywhere so Jesus, being God, is everywhere. To some degree that is true.

Jesus is in the heart of all believers. That is also true and obviously to a greater degree than with Him being everywhere.

When two or three are gathered together in Jesus' name, he is there. This is true, again to a higher level.

When the words of Jesus are said at communion, "this is my body", the church has always taught that Jesus is present in those communion elements. This is true and held to be true at not just a higher level but at the highest level.

### **Why baptize?**

Jesus said the whoever "believes and is baptized will be saved". That seems like a good reason.

Somehow since the Protestant Reformation some Christian denominations have relegated it to be "optional" not considering it a "sacrament".

All Christians consider the command to believe and be baptized as valid for today. Some use this to promote the notion that infants should not be baptized. The early church always held infant baptism was equivalent to circumcision of infants.

### **When is one dead?**

The Apostle Paul said "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord". Jesus said to the thief on the cross: "Today you shall be with me in paradise." The world may consider a Christian dead but that is not what actually happens to Christians.

The Apostle John said at the end of Revelation that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire which is the second death". This seems to be when one is really dead. This of course never happens to Christians.

Thus it is not possible to "pray to a dead saint" because there are no "dead saints", they have just moved to a different place and are still very much alive.

### **Who is Mary?**

We are obviously talking about the mother of Jesus.

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was considered very holy. It was a wooden box covered with gold. Moses put into it the actual stone tablets on which were written the ten commandments. It also had some manna. It also had the staff of Aaron.

But the box was an inanimate object clearly made with human hands. If there was anything special of itself it would be what was put in it by Moses.

But God honored the holiness of the box itself to such a degree that when a priest touched it, he was instantly struck dead.

Mary had God inside her. Jesus is acknowledged as God. He was God from before the worlds were made so He was God from the instant of conception inside the womb of Mary.

Mary is no less holy than that wooden box holding objects that were clearly not as holy as what was inside Mary.

## **How and I return to a place I have never been?**

You, as an individual, have never been a Roman Catholic. So how can you return to the Roman Catholic Church?

As a baptized Bible Believing Christian you are just like any baptized Roman Catholic except for the separation that was not your fault. That separation is an imposed break in fellowship.

You have fellowship with other Christians so from a fellowship point of view, there is no reason not to have fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church.

It is a simple task to become in fellowship with the Roman catholic Church with two simple steps. First is that you request fellowship. Secondly, the Church accepts you into full fellowship.

Your commitment to the Roman Catholic Church is that you believe what the Apostles taught. This is what is included in Scripture. When there is any question as to the meaning of any particular Scriptural passage, you accept the interpretation of the early church over any "new" interpretation.

The Church is willing to receive you during an Easter vigil, a regular church service, or at a private closed ceremony; all at your option.