

Apologetics – Church Practices

Overview

We continue our study of Catholic Apologetics with a look at some of the practices of the church. As always I will provide a scripture reference along with a short discussion.

Where did the Institution of Mass come from?

Scripture reference: The Gospels contain several references which we call the Last Supper where the Mass was instituted. Paul in his letter 1 Corinthians, was admonishing them for the poor way in which the Eucharist celebration was carried out and said: See 1 Cor 11:23; *“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread”*; 1 Cor 11:24; *“and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*

Response: Many non Catholics view the Mass as a new sacrifice of Jesus and do not understand that it is a re-presentation – not a repeat. Vatican II puts the Catholic position quite well: "At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood.

He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47).

Why can't Catholic priests marry?

Scripture reference: 1 Corinthians 7:34; *“...and he is divided. An unmarried woman*

or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband”.

Response: Celibacy is not a popular subject – especially in our present society. Many of the first Apostles were married but this began to change in the centuries to come. Paul speaks of the virtues of celibacy often. Celibacy is not at odds with marriage as it is something created by God – and is good. Consecrated celibacy is giving of oneself completely to God. From a practical standpoint it allows the freedom of the priest, brother or nun to completely devote his/her life to God without other distractions.

What do we mean by Tradition?

Scripture reference: 1 Thessalonians 2:13; *“...and for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe”*.

Response: There are two types of Tradition. The Traditions – with a capital T – are those which come from God – not man - and form the church deposit of faith. These Traditions cannot be changed. An example is the Eucharist. The traditions – with a small t – are those which help us practice what the church teaches. These traditions can be modified to suit the time and cultures. An example is the rule Catholic followed before Vatican II of abstaining from meat on all Fridays – in a teaching for penance. This was changed to apply only during Lent.