

## **I. Relating to Catholic Friends and Loved Ones**

- A. The apologetic enterprise among Catholics is fraught with challenge and opportunity.**
- B. White knuckles driving with the Bishop ... THIS IS WHERE OUR PEOPLE LIVE. We have the privilege of equipping them**
- C. HOW CAN WE EQUIP THE CHURCH TO ENGAGE IN APOLOGETICS AMONG CATHOLIC FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES?**

## **II. I have a few assumptions.**

- A. Gospel is who we are. Acts 1:8, Jesus said, “you will *be* my witnesses.”**
- B. Some Catholics know Jesus, some don’t (we must believe WITH faith alone, but we need not necessarily believe IN faith alone to be saved).**
- C. As church leaders, we have privilege and responsibility to equip God’s people for apologetic engagement among Catholics. Eph 4:12**
  - a. And because there are 10 million evangelicals raised Catholic, who are now Protestant, many of whom in OUR churches, we have a BIG job to do**

**(What is the apologetic encounter for which we equip our people?)**

## **III. Imagine a couple in your church, who are formerly Catholic, >> Christmas Dinner**

- A. Somewhere between the antipasto and the veal marsala, Aunt Marie asks why they no longer go to Mass. The conversation is off and running.**
  - a. How will give an answer for their hope, Attitude, how apply Scripture to the situation?**
  - b. When relatives drive home, and speak about the family from your church, what will they say?**
  - c. Will they be impressed with kindness, compassion, & conviction. Or will they find them to have been arrogant and condescending?**

**B. The answer to this question is largely influenced by the way we FRAME the apologetic enterprise as it relates to Catholics.**

**a. Curious to see the cover of William Lane Craig's recent book...  
"On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision"**

- 1. Can anyone tell me what image David C. Cook has used on the cover?  
(A fencer with outstretched sword)**
- 2. This is perfectly suited for Dr. Craig....I had privileged watch twice during college... God put the man on this earth for this purpose...**
- 3. [the outstretched sword posture] may also serve apologetic encounters in which two parties—who are capable of and committed to thinking objectively—wish to exchange ideas.**
- 4. But, if you take the posture of a fencer when you sit down to dinner with your Catholic family at Christmas, you are, in my humble opinion, setting yourself up for apologetic failure.**
- 5. To be sure, BOOKS like "On Guard," or Greg Koukl's "Tactics" or Strobel's "The Case for Christ" are profitable, indeed necessary, in order for us to be informed and prepared to give an answer.**
- 6. And our time will provide tools for offering Catholics a clear and persuasive answer.**
- 7. But in regular conversation with Catholic friends and family, we need a model that is more relational than it is adversarial, perhaps something better depicted by a basin-and-a-towel or an outreached arm holding a tray of Italian cookies, than a pointed sword.**
- 8. WHY IS THIS THE CASE? There is a real sense in which the remainder of our time is taken up with this question.**

**THAT IS, How do THE ASSUMPTIONS AND PRIORITIES of Catholics with reference to GOD AND THE CHURCH, present OPENINGS AND OBSTACLES for apologetic engagement?**

**C. And this is simply another way of asking our initial question: HOW CAN WE EQUIP THE CHURCH TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE THE APOLOGETIC ENTERPRISE AMONG CATHOLIC FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES?**

**(We need to learn FIVE things)**

- 1. We Need Overall Perspective**
- 2. We Need to Understand our Personal Assumptions vis-à-vis Catholicism**
- 3. We should be conversant with the basics of Catholic Doctrine**
- 4. We must recognize how Catholic Doctrine shapes the assumptions and priorities of Catholic faith**
- 5. We ought to be familiar with how to engage the three types of Catholics in American today**

**(1.) We Need Perspective**

- A. Two extremes prevail: We are either foaming at the mouth pit bulls, or we are so open-minded that our brains fall out of our heads.**
- B. What we need is grace and truth. It says in John 1;14, that Jesus came full of grace and truth.**

**(some of you might be wondering, IS THAT SUFFICIENTLY BOLD? We read Luther and Calvin, we see an AGGRESIVENESS; shouldn't we emulate)**

- C. I appreciate that question.**
  - a. When I sing Luther's Mighty Fortress, I feel nostalgia**
  - b. Not simply academic; It's personal. I still struggle with injurious forms of religious guilt.**
  - c. Finally, I am the guy who preached at Cardinal Berhdin's funeral...**
- D. But SUCH AN ASSERTIVE approach fails to serve gospel outreach.**
  - a. As a new Christian I read the books, which were purely polemical...**
  - b. I took the approach at Christmas dinner (tell them going to hell), failed...**

**E. We need balance grace and truth. Conviction and Resolve; Meekness and Humility.**

**2 Tim 2:24-25 “And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.”**

**1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”**

**Let’s remember the two occasions in the book of Acts where *apologia* is used:**

**Before the Jewish mob in Jerusalem: Acts 22: 1** "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."

**Paul before Agrippa and Bernice: Acts 25:16:**

**(2.) How do we think about the Catholic Church? (taken from Missiologist, James Hatcher)**

<p><b>1 – Actively anti-RC</b></p>	<p><b>Evangelicals with an actively “anti-RC approach” have a strong focus on the teaching and practices of the Catholic church which they feel are contrary to biblical teaching. The errors of these teachings and practices are felt to be so substantial and fundamental, that these individuals feel it is virtually impossible to be a born again Christian and also a practicing member of the RC church. Churches and individuals with this approach feel that it is important to regularly and decisively explain these differences. Contact with Roman Catholics is generally limited to evangelizing them and public polemic, in which the perceived errors of RC teaching and practice are exposed.</b></p>
<p><b>2 – Passively anti-RC</b></p>	<p><b>These folks are similar to the previous category. However, they generally do not express their critiques of Catholicism in the public square. While there tends to be a strong desire to clarify distinctives among themselves, contact with Roman Catholic institutions is avoided and contact with RC members is generally limited to evangelism.</b></p>

<p><b>3 – Co-existent</b></p>	<p>Those Evangelicals with a “co-existent” approach avoid critiquing the Catholic Church. They rarely concern themselves with doctrinal issues of any sort, including those that relate to Catholics. <i>When differences are evident, they are seldom addressed. Their posture is best described with the word “ambivalence.”</i></p>
<p><b>4 – Positive identity</b></p>	<p>Evangelicals with a “positive identity” approach are relatively open about distinctives, while avoiding unnecessary criticism of the RC church. Common ground is sought as well as positive contact with Catholics and Catholic institutions. While cautious, they are open to cooperating with Catholics in isolated social projects such as “pro-life” efforts and disaster relief. They would hesitate, however, to cooperate evangelistically since they reject the institution and authority of the RC church as well as certain central doctrines. Less central differences, as perceived by these Evangelicals, tend to be minimized.</p>
<p><b>5 – Symbiotic</b></p>	<p>Evangelicals with a “symbiotic” approach, while maintaining core distinctives, welcome and may even seek cooperation with Roman Catholics on multiple fronts. Resources and energy are expended to actively pursue positive points of contact, publicly underscoring common beliefs and practices and supporting common causes. This would include cooperation with “believing” Catholics in evangelistic efforts. Evangelicals with this approach do not want to be perceived as “competing” with RC institutions.</p>
<p><b>6 – Ecumenical</b></p>	<p>Evangelicals with an “ecumenical” approach actively seek to build bridges with Roman Catholics in pursuit of unity. Evangelism among active RCs is discouraged and common ground is the subject of both public proclamation and in-house teaching. Differences are generally perceived to be a matter of preference, historical and cultural, rather than theological and fundamental. Evangelicals with this approach make full use of RC institutions and other inter-confessional structures.</p>

7 – Internal renewal	This is a renewal-from-within approach in which the “evangelically oriented Catholic” focuses on evangelism and personal discipleship through Bible study, under the authority of a local Catholic priest and parish. Divisive distinctions in teaching or practice are avoided or minimized.
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### (3.) We should be conversant with the basics of Catholic Belief

1. Our fundamental Difference:

#### Authority: The Breakers of Palm Beach

**QUESTION > Where do we find Revelation and Authority of Jesus in world?**

**<< Continuous Incarnation >>**

Joseph Ratzinger

The notion of the body of Christ was developed in the Catholic Church to the effect that the Church designated as “**Christ living on earth**” came to mean that the Church was described as the Incarnation of the Son continuing until the end of time.<sup>1</sup>

Another way to describe the ecclesial incarnation of Christ is in terms of “prolongation,” as Hans Urs von Balthasar writes:

The Church is the prolongation of Christ’s mediatorial nature and work and possesses a knowledge that comes by faith; she lives objectively (in her institution and her sacraments) and subjectively (in her saints and, fundamentally, in all her members) in the interchange between heaven and earth. Her life comes from heaven and extends to earth, and extends from earth to heaven.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 1, *The Unity of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 73-74. Since Vatican II, the language of “Continuous Incarnation” has been eclipsed by the Council’s emphasis on “The Pilgrim People of God.” Nevertheless, the incarnation concept is so fundamental that it is still helpful for understanding how Catholic authority operates.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 131.

## Catholic Authority

This revelation consists of Scripture *and* Sacred Tradition, which together “make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God.”<sup>3</sup> While distinct, these modes are bound closely together, flowing out of the “same divine wellspring,” in the words of Vatican II. This Word of God—Scripture and Sacred Tradition together—is authentically interpreted by the Church (alone) in her teaching office, which is called the “magisterium,” that is, the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.<sup>4</sup>

*(What does this mean for the Catholic understanding of salvation?)*

### **Salvation: “Why I believe in purgatory” illustration**

The basis (formal cause) of justification for most Evangelical Protestants is the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, which is *extra nos*. For Catholicism, it is the infusion of righteousness into one’s soul.

*(What are implications of these differences upon our view of Catholicism?)*

2. “Another Gospel” or “Another Christian Tradition” (Geisler and MacKenzie)

## **(4.) How Catholic Doctrine shape the assumptions and priorities of Catholic faith**

1. Unity/Identity

**Question: Should Protestants receive communion in a Catholic parish?**

2. Teaching/Preaching

**Compare Curriculum of M.Div. at Weston Jesuit School of Theology.**

<b>Homiletics and teaching</b>	<b>//</b>	<b>liturgy</b>
<b>Greek &amp; Hebrew Exegesis</b>	<b>//</b>	<b>Philosophy</b>

**In the words of Catholic Journalist, Peter Feuerherd, “The message of most parish homilies scarcely rises above the level of, “Have a nice day.”**

3. Sacred Space/Aesthetics

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<sup>3</sup> Dei Verbum 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Par. 97.

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Par. 85-86.

## Driving by a church building? Before entering the pew of a parish?

### 4. Conversion

#### Evangelism Brochure at Holy Family in Inverness

...Invite to Church, introduce to priest or deacon, go on a retreat

### 5. Definition of "faithfulness"

## The Precepts

(The following quotations are from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in its section about the [Precepts of the Catholic Church](#) (#2041-3)

**2041** The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:

### **1) You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.**

We must "sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord" (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as [Catholic holy days of obligation](#). This requires attending Mass, "and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days."

### **2) You shall confess your sins at least once a year.**

We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament "continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness."

### **3) You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.**

This "guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy."

### **4) You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.**

"The fourth precept ensures the times of self denial and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart." *See below for more about fasting & abstinence.*

## 5) You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

"The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability."

6. Eternal Security

### Presumption

7. The Catholic view of Jesus

**How does one "receive" Christ?**

8. Role of Scripture

**Scripture is one of THREE sources of Catholic authority, alongside of Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium.**

Therefore, some Catholics don't feel qualified interpreting Scripture for themselves. It's something that one's local priest does on her behalf. The ordained minister.

### A. Understand the Caricatures of Protestantism that keep Catholics away

**1) Cheap grace.** (or prosperity gospel... this is what's on television)

**2) Intellectually shallow.** How many times have you heard Evangelicals hold up the untrained fisherman of Galilee as examples of why formal education undermines genuine spirituality?

**3) Hyper Spiritual.** The problem here is an Escapist posture that fails to embody the love of Christ in tangible ways. (e.g., Don't carry a loaf of bread...)

**4) Fragmented.** We see division as unfortunate. Catholics see it as a travesty that entirely undermines our legitimacy as orthodox Christian tradition.

### (5.) How to engage the three types of Catholics in America today (Traditional, Evangelical, Cultural)

At this point we want to peel back the curtain of underlying values and priorities that guide Catholic belief and various perceptions associated with it. We begin by looking at three main types of Catholics in America—Traditional, Evangelical, and Cultural—with reference to the forms of authority

on which each belief system is built. Once the salient features of these profiles are identified, we will then explore strategies for approaching Catholics of these different veins in conversation about the gospel. Finally, we will conclude with an exercise for evaluating our own assumptions about Catholic faith, particularly the extent to which we are prepared to embrace Catholics as brothers and sisters in Christ.

But first, we need to be reminded that the following categories of Catholicism are simply broad headings. The true shape of Catholicism is varied and complex, which is something Catholic author Peter Feuerherd explains in his book *Holyland USA*:

In reality, Catholicism includes those with disparate authority and opinions about almost everything under the sun. There are liberal bishops and conservative bishops. The pope sometimes differs with his own Curia. American Catholic voters are regularly viewed by experts as a crucial swing group in every national election, too diffuse to truly categorize. In fact, some scholars of religion refer to Catholicism as the Hinduism of Christianity, because it is infused with so many different schools of prayer, ritual, and perspective, much like the native and diverse religions of India now referred to under the single rubric of Hinduism.<sup>5</sup>

Let's face it: we can easily focus on the clerical attire of priests, the common liturgical forms, and the ecclesial symbols that comprise parish life and reach the conclusion that Catholic faith and practice is perfectly unified. This, however, would be a superficial observation. When one looks below the surface, whether it is at particular religious orders or at the difference between liberal and conservative priests, one finds profound variety within the Catholic Church.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Feuerherd, *Holyland USA: A Catholic Ride Through America's Evangelical Landscape* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing, 2006), 72.

## Traditional Catholics

One strain of contemporary Catholicism tends toward what we might think of as fundamentalism. This strain is “traditional” Catholicism. “Traditional” Catholics base their faith chiefly on the teaching of the Church and the authority of the Pope, eschewing a personal, emotional approach to belief for one that is largely dictated by Church hierarchy and tradition. In general, these Catholics have:

- Intolerance toward the personal and subjective dimensions of faith
- Esteem for Catholic clergy
- A private posture toward faith
- Antipathy toward the Protestant tradition
- An aversion to personal Bible study
- In some cases a Latin Mass

Effective communication with traditional Catholics requires us to understand their central values and to start the conversation accordingly. Here are a few suggestions for this communication:

- Abstain from unnecessary criticism of Catholic leaders.
- Slow and steady wins the race. The world needs prophets, and thankfully God uses such people. But when we engage traditional Catholics with our posture like that of John the Baptist yelling “repent!” we may find our Catholic loved ones taking a few steps back. Yes, we must speak with urgency, but such communication can and should be done in a way that reflects the patience and kindness of the Spirit.

- Scripture is the appointed means by which God extends redemption to the world (Rom 10:17). There are ways of applying Scripture that can heal like a physician or destroy like a weapon. We must promote the former and avoid the latter.
- Because some traditional Catholics regard Protestants as being off their nut, it's helpful to approach these loved ones with an emphasis on establishing credibility and rapport. Such a foundation goes a long toward supporting serious conversations about faith when they arise.
- Find areas of common ground. They exist, trust me. A prime example of this is the celebration of holidays. During Christmas we remember Jesus' incarnation, and on Easter we celebrate the resurrection. These are occasions when we can ask Catholic friends and family to tell us about their customs and traditions. Another example of common ground is prayer. While the forms and patterns of prayer may differ, Catholics and Evangelicals are alike in praying out of human finitude, to Almighty God, by faith and not by sight, in the name of Jesus.

### **The Evangelical Catholic**

*Many historians look to Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) as the Catholic leader most responsible for shaping the Evangelical Catholic identity, particularly in his exhortation titled *Evangelii nuntiandi*. The pontiff's statement emphasizes the lay-empowered impulse of Vatican II in terms of the role of every Catholic (not simply ordained priests) in spreading the message of Christian faith. Paul VI begins by discussing the role of Jesus Christ as the great Evangelizer, the One who proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God and testified to this reality through innumerable signs. Those who embrace Jesus and his message join the community of faith that dedicates itself to embodying and proclaiming the Christian message. This, according to Pope Paul, is the essential mission of the Church. In his words, "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and*

vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.”<sup>6</sup> In this way, the entire Church enjoys a ministry of evangelism.

The Pontiff’s statement echoes the heartbeat of Evangelical Catholic identity. If we were to enumerate that identity’s distinctives, they would look something like the following:

- An appreciation for the personal dimensions of faith
- A view of Jesus that is more personal than Sacramental
- A vibrant and charismatic experience of faith
- A willingness to relate to Protestants as brothers and sisters in Christ
- A routine of personal Bible study

In view of these qualities, here are some suggestions to keep in mind when relating to Evangelical Catholics:

- Unlike the “traditional” Catholic, the Evangelical Catholic is outspoken about his or her faith. Therefore, it is entirely possible that this believer will seek to convert *you* to Catholicism! Rejoice! This is a friend who believes that doctrinal truth is valuable enough to discuss. In this case, the stage is set for a fruitful conversation in which both parties share their faith in Christ. Enjoy and encourage the truth you hear in conversations with these friends, and when something sounds out of alignment with your convictions, don’t jump on it, but respond as instructed in 1 Peter 3, with “gentleness and respect.”
- Because the Bible is a common commitment for the two of you, there is every reason in the world to conduct an investigative Bible study with your Evangelical Catholic friend. These sorts of studies happen all the time through organizations such as Bible Study Fellowship, Neighborhood Bible Studies, and Q Place (Question Place). Invite your friend

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” *The Vatican*, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/index.htm).

to visit a nearby coffee shop once a week to look at the gospel of Mark or the book of Romans. You'll be amazed at how fruitful such discussions can be.

- The word “charismatic” in Catholic circles is closer to the adjective “Evangelical” in Protestantism. In other words, it underscores the Bible-centered, personal nature of faith, more than the exercise of a particular spiritual gift. Still, the charismatic gifts are sometimes part of the life of a Catholic parish. If you happen to be a charismatic Protestant, this may be a wonderful bridge by which to connect.
- I belong to a men’s group called New Canaan Society. Every week about fifty guys gather for coffee, to pray, and to hear a testimony from a Christian brother. Some of these men are Catholic. What binds us together? It is regard for God’s Word, prayer, and the belief in supernatural conversion—that God steps into human lives to bring about his new creation. This common bond is the essence of Evangelical Catholicism.

### **The Cultural Catholic**

When I think of a cultural Catholic, I think of someone like Ted Kennedy. After reading the late senator’s autobiography, *True Compass: A Memoir*, I was struck by how ardent one can be in his Catholic identity while having so little theological Catholic substance. For instance, Kennedy mentions his Catholicism hundreds of times in this book, but almost invariably he is referring to the cultural heritage of Catholicism rather than to its doctrinal content or its spiritual exercises. Nevertheless, he insists that his faith shaped his political outlook. In one of the book’s most revealing passages, he relates how his theological worldview matured as he entered adult life:

“My own center of belief, as I matured and grew curious about these things, moved toward the great Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25 especially, in which he calls us to care for the least of these among us, and feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, visit the imprisoned. It’s enormously significant to me that the only

description in the Bible about salvation is tied to one's willingness to act on behalf of one's fellow human beings."<sup>7</sup>

It is incredible to see a Catholic of so many years—who presumably heard the Scriptures read at every Sunday Mass over the course of decades—claim that there is only *one* passage in the Bible addressing the question of salvation. But the above quotation indicates something more profound—less obvious, but even more telling—of the author's detachment from his faith. When he says that “he calls us to care for the least of these among us,” Kennedy never identifies the subject of his pronoun, “he.” The name of Jesus is entirely absent from the memoir.

In light of the above, here is a list of how cultural Catholics, like Kennedy, compare to the other Catholic profiles:

- Faith is a private matter
- “Truth” lacks objective character and is relative to one's personal preferences
- Catholic “faith” may be mostly a product of one's ethnic or familial background
- Personal beliefs trump biblical or magisterial authority
- Evangelicals are generally considered to be hopelessly narrow and divisive

Taking into account these religious commitments, here are some suggestions to guide your conversations with cultural Catholics:

- Because cultural Catholics generally view faith as private and theology as largely irrelevant (unless it happens to be for priests and the religious class), attempts to explain doctrine to a cultural Catholic may make you feel like you are feeding steak to a

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<sup>7</sup> Ted Kennedy, *True Compass: A Memoir* (New York: Hachette, 2009), 29.

duck. For example, a recent survey by sociologists at Catholic University, led by William D’Antonio, reported that a whopping 88 percent of Catholics in America believe that "how a person lives is more important than whether he or she is Catholic."<sup>8</sup> This is the cultural Catholic impulse. Because personal belief is more significant than the teaching of Bishops, religious authority is disregarded. Therefore, when talking with a cultural Catholic, instead of presenting what sounds to you like scintillating doctrinal reflection and to your cultural Catholic friend like a pedantic lecture, it is valuable to think in terms of personal testimonies. By embedding doctrinal truth in your experiences of Christ (i.e., how the Lord answered prayer or provided comfort in time of need) you are helping your cultural Catholic friend develop mental categories for understanding the reality of Christian faith.

- Ted Kennedy is a good example of how Catholicism can be a function of one’s ethnic or familial heritage. For many cultural Catholics, religious heritage and ethnic heritage are indistinguishable. Kennedy was a Catholic because he was Irish. Other cultural Catholics may be so because they are Polish, Mexican, Italian, Filipino, or another ethnicity. For this reason, criticism of a cultural Catholic’s deficiency of faith—regardless of how infrequently that individual may participate in any aspect of that faith—may be interpreted not only as a critique of faith, but as an insult to one’s familial ethnic background. In order to keep from causing such offense, we must seek to demonstrate that the love of Christ is integral to every part of a believer’s life, and trust and pray that this example will encourage our cultural Catholic friends toward honest self-reflection and the eventual development of true faith out of what had once been simply a demographic allegiance.
- It is possible that our cultural Catholic friends, from their own anemic understanding of faith, may assert that truth is socially constructed and relative. But no one truly lives

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<sup>8</sup> William V. D’Antonio, “New Survey Offers Portrait of U.S. Catholics” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 24, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/news/catholics-america/persistence-and-change>.

that way; we all make it a habit to look both ways before crossing the street. Truth matters. If it didn't, life would be chaos. Sometimes we must allow circumstances to take their natural course until the day when one is confronted by a crisis. Hopefully, when the day of trial arrives and our cultural Catholic friend loses the luxury of hiding from God behind the pretense of relativism, he will consider the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.

## **We Must Understand Why Catholics Turn Toward Evangelical Protestantism?**

### **Two Years of Focus Groups across the Country When I Wrote Holy Ground**

- A. Full Time Faith:** The Catechism does in fact acknowledge a priesthood of believers; however, the parishioner's role in ministry receives far less attention that does that of the clergy and it is often considered to be on a lower spiritual plane. The result: many parishioners go unchallenged and their vocations go without validation.
- B. Relationship Over Rules:** The word "rules" is vague. The Bible has "rules." In view here are the various stipulations of church tradition which seem arbitrary at best.
- C. Direct Access to God:** Mortal sins must be confessed to a priest. After completing penance, the priest pronounces absolution and thus restores your relationship with God.
  - 1) Jesus is the One Great High Priest and in Christ we are a kingdom of priests. The veil was torn from top to bottom.
- D. Christ-centered devotion:** One strength of the Catholic tradition is the varied and complex shape of its spiritual life. There is desert spirituality, Benedictine spirituality, Franciscan spirituality, Dominican spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, Carmelite spirituality, Celtic spirituality, Opus Dei spirituality, and so on.
  - 1) On the popular level, it is not uncommon for a figure other than Jesus to be at the center of this devotion, usually Mary or one of the saints.
  - 2) Consider for instance, Pope Benedict's second encyclical titled "Spe Salvi." The climax is a protracted prayer to Mary, the "Star of Hope"

## E. Grace Over Guilt: The wonder of grace.

- 1) The reason why Martin Luther is so popular among ex-Catholics is that his experience is prototypical.
- 2) By the way, this is why doctrine of PURGATORY is so significant.
- 3) The image of Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, chapter 3.  
"Christian ran till he came to a hill; upon it stood a cross, and a little below was a tomb. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the tomb, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then said Christian with a happy heart, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the water down his cheeks."

## Appendix II

### How We Communicate: Terminological Considerations

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that because we employ the same terminology we share a common understanding of what such words mean. Following is a list of the slippery ones that regularly undermine our communication with Catholic friends and family:

**Anointing: Catholics** often associate "anointing" with the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is also a liturgical element of Baptism and Holy Orders (ordination). Many **Evangelicals**, particularly from the charismatic tradition, use the term "anointing" to describe spiritual empowerment that is possessed and expressed by one who serves the gospel.

**Baptism:** For **Catholics** this is the first of the seven sacraments. It is believed to remove guilt and impart spiritual life. Water is poured on the head while a minister pronounces the Trinitarian invocation: "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Most **Evangelicals** regard baptism to be a sacrament (or ordinance) which signifies identification with Christ without actually causing spiritual transformation.

**Body of Christ:** When **Catholics** speak of “Christ’s Body” they likely refer to the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine. **Evangelicals**, on the other hand, typically think of God’s people, the Church.

**Church:** **Catholics** recognize three inseparable uses of the word “Church:” The worldwide union of God’s people, a regional assembly (diocese), and a local parish (which gathers to celebrate the Eucharist). Very often Catholics will use the word church to describe the building or facility in which God’s people meet for worship. While agreeing with the three designations of God’s people (universal, regional, and local), **Evangelicals** are in principle reticent to use the word church in relation to the building.

**Communion:** Among **Catholics**, communion is the union of God’s people to Christ and to one another with its “source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist.”<sup>9</sup> The **Evangelical** view of Eucharist is different in that we don’t assign to it the same sacramental function vis-a-vis transubstantiation.

**Confession:** **Catholics** see confession as a critical element of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. It is associated with telling one’s sins to a priest, although it seems that few Catholics today maintain this routine. **Evangelicals** will tell their sins directly to God in prayer, or perhaps with a fellow believer in the context of an accountability relationship.

**Word of God:** **Catholics** understand God’s Word to be the revelation of Jesus Christ contained in Scripture *and* sacred Tradition. **Evangelicals** tend to think of the Bible when talking about the “word of God.”

**Gospel:** The gospel is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Often **Catholics** will think of the Apostolic Deposit of Faith or the four books of the New Testament called the “Gospels.” **Evangelicals** are more likely to use the word to describe the message that is preached or shared in the context of personal evangelism.

**Prayer:** Notwithstanding Evangelical Catholics, most **Catholic** prayers are usually written down in advance or read from a card or book. Furthermore, Catholic prayers could be directed at any number of saints. **Evangelicals** usually don’t read prayers. They tend to be spontaneous and directed to God alone in Jesus’ name.

**Religion:** For **Catholics** this is a positive word. It describes the tangible forms of faith in which God and humanity relate. Among **Evangelicals** it has the connotation of mechanic

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<sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Par. 871, Ed. 2 (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997).

rituals by which one attempts to merit salvation. In fact, it's common to hear Evangelicals promote "relationship" with God over and against "religion."<sup>10</sup>

**Repentance:** Catholics use this word as they do "contrition" and "reconciliation," as a necessary ingredient for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Instead of associating it with a sacrament, **Evangelicals** often see repentance as a component of conversion (as in "repentance and faith").

**Salvation:** The **Catholic** Church defines "salvation" as "the forgiveness of sins and restoration of friendship with God, which can be done by God alone."<sup>11</sup> The particular way God does this is through the sacramental system, which is what most Catholics think of when they hear the word "salvation" (the Evangelical Catholic will differ here). Thus, salvation is understood to span the entirety of life, from the infant's baptismal font to the grave. **Evangelicals**, on the other hand, commonly use "salvation" as a synonym for "justification," that is, the moment when one enters into favor with God. This difference is partly why Catholics are incredulous when we talk about "being saved." Since they regard salvation to happen over a lifetime they wonder, "How can anyone possibly know the answer before they die and undergo judgment?"

**Sin:** The **Catholic** Church teaches that sin is, "An offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God. In judging the gravity of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins."<sup>12</sup> As this definition emphasizes, when Catholics speak of sin they have in mind the wrong actions that one commits.

**Evangelicals** tend to stress the fallen nature which gives rise to these moral failures (i.e., "falling short of the glory of God;" Rom 3:23).

**Sunday School:** When **Catholics** hear this term they usually think of a class for children, not for adults. If you tell them about your experience in "Sunday school" (as an adult), don't be surprised if you see puzzled expressions.

Some Evangelical words are foreign to Catholic ears. Usually, Catholics don't talk about being "saved" or "born again" (notwithstanding the Evangelical Catholic). If a traditional or cultural Catholic speaks this way, he will likely have infant baptism in mind. Likewise, it's unlikely you'll hear the words, "witness," "devotions" (or "devotionals"), "fellowship," "believer," "small group," "evangelism," or "quiet time." In short, it's wise

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<sup>10</sup> Evangelicals would do well to remember however that Scripture uses the term "religion." As it says in James 1:27, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

<sup>11</sup> CCC, 898.

<sup>12</sup> CCC, 899.

to avoid tribal language that's unique to one's Evangelical circle but incomprehensible to outsiders.

*A. Most Commonly Asked Questions*

- 1. How would you counsel an engaged couple in which one is Catholic and the other Protestant?*
- 2. What can evangelicals learn from their conversations with Catholic friends and families?*
- 3. What can a Roman Catholic learn from an evangelical?*
- 4. "How do we juggle the importance of calling on our Roman Catholic friends to turn away from unbiblical tenets of Roman Catholic belief and practice with the reality that they believe in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit?"*
- 5. Do you think evangelicals should actively seek to evangelize Catholics?*
- 6. What do you miss most from the Roman Catholic tradition?*
- 7. How would you counsel Evangelical pastors and Christians in the care of persons leaving Roman Catholicism?*
- 8. In light of the Decrees of Trent, wouldn't we still have to say that official Catholic doctrine on the matter of justification rises to the level of error so serious that it amounts to 'another gospel' – thus warranting an apostolic anathema?*
- 9. It seems that most evangelicals believe the defining difference between Catholics and Protestants is on the doctrine of justification. You believe that the difference is in authority. Why is sola Scriptura the primary doctrine that divides us?*
- 10. How can Catholics and Protestant partner in the enterprise of cultural engagement without compromising their distinctive beliefs?*