

Seven Statements of Faith

Being an attempt to explain the distinctiveness of Catholic Christianity

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Seven Statements of Faith

We Catholics

We Catholics recognize that there is truth in the sincere opinion of everyone, and in the teachings of other religions, but we believe that God wants humanity to become one family in faith, and that He, through Jesus, established our Church for this purpose. Among the reasons we believe this: The Church alone has maintained from the time of Jesus the traditions and structures that are needed if indeed humanity is to be and function as one family in faith, and if our understanding of the truth is to grow as we do.

And there are other reasons we want to share with you our faith: Catholic Christian faith is:

- Simple. Though it offers a comprehensive explanation of life in terms of nothing more than heaven, love, and God's plan, it is still open-ended in the sense that it can respond to good questions at ever deeper levels right down to the inexplicable fact that God always was.
- Positive. Not only does it describe God and creation in terms that are unambiguously good, it offers every believer the gifts of faith, particularly peace, purpose, and joy, and nothing that should scare or sadden a person's spirit. Also, it is never a faith that needs to be explained in terms of who we are *not* and what we do *not* believe.
- Apologetic. It is a faith which can be explained so that a person can see it for him or herself. At no point does it require a person to submit to some-thing (or person, or book) *you just have to believe*.

We Believe...

We believe in God, and that God made us to live with Him forever in heaven.

We believe that we are here, in this world, to participate in our own creation. God is giving each of us the opportunity to become our own person. This is the reason that we are born unformed, unknowing, and utterly self-centered, and we are called to grow. We are called to grow in the faith

that inspires the love which makes us more like God, and prepares us to share God's life as richly as we might.

But, even though we are here to participate in our own creation, it is clear that we do not choose everything that forms us as the persons we will be. No one chooses their parents, their birthday, where they are born, and countless other things that affect mightily who they become. To us it is also obvious that God did not make us only to leave us at the mercy of what might happen. Rather, in the act of creation, God put into action a plan for everything that would ever happen, including all the events of all of our lives. He did this knowing how we would respond to these events. In this way, we become the people God wants us to be, while, in the process, each of us still becomes our own person.

And there is one more basic thing that we believe. God's plan is making us the people, the family He wants us to be. In heaven, we are going to be together. There, just as happens here, especially when people love one another, the goodness of one is going to bring good into the lives of others. In heaven, this means that all of us are going to be richer for the holiness of each of us. And each of us has our job in the formation of our family. This is what we think of when God's plan asks someone to live a short or faithless life. In the end, we will see what God was doing, and we will be glad.

I Believe...

I believe in God because everything in and around me says to me, "I must have come from somewhere."

I believe in heaven because I cannot imagine that God gave us life only to take it away.

I believe that love is the way to heaven because love is obviously the best thing that we can grow into, and it makes sense to me that God would give us an opportunity to be involved in our own creation—it's better for us if we are.

I believe that God has a plan for everything that happens because I cannot imagine a God who doesn't, and it looks like a brilliant way for God to make us the people He wants us to be while still involving us in our own creation.

I believe that we were made to be a family because I recognize that my life is owed to human history, and because believing that we are going to share God's life as a family makes sense of God's plan for human history.

I am a Christian because I believe that Jesus' teachings, and the story of Jesus' life, speak for God better than anything else I have ever heard—or expect to hear—and because I recognize that if God had not sent someone to speak for Him, there is no way we would ever feel called to be one family in faith.

I am a Catholic because I believe that the Church is the family in faith that Jesus called us to be, and I believe THAT because no other church sees our unity as essential, and no other church has a structure that allows it to provide teachings that make sense to our times.

Six Reasons I Am Catholic

These are six of the many reasons I could give for being a Catholic:

#1: I believe that what the Church teaches is true, in particular, that God wants humanity to be one family in faith, and the Church is this family. (I believe THIS because Church teaching offers, by far, the best understanding of God and life that I have ever heard, and this teaching contains within it a way to get even better.)

Allied to the above: It is great being a member of a Church that is already a truly world-wide family in faith.

#2: The Church has the most obvious connection to Jesus. (Through ordination it is actually a *physical* connection to Jesus.)

Implied by the above: The Church has been around from the beginning.

#3: No force has done more to make the world a more human place. (What modern governments now do or at least profess to do is, for the most part, a reflection of what peoples have learned from the Church.)

#4: What institution in this world has had a more remarkable history?

#5: Is there anything more inspiring than the Mass, and the Body of Christ? (Is it possible that a human institution has invented something that God Himself should have thought of?)

#6: Where is there a way of living faith which is so rich in traditions and teachings, and still so clear about the simple, essential basics?!

I might also mention: To me the Church has struck just the right balance between word and sacrament, head and heart....

Our God Has No But

Our God has no but.

We can't say that about other people's idea of God, even those who profess faith in a God of vast, even infinite, love. Yes, God loves you but, if you sin, there'll be hell to pay. Yes, God loves you, but you have to do what's right, and don't make excuses for how you grew up. Yes, God loves all His children, but some just happened to be born before or far from where they were going to hear about saving faith. Yes, God loves us, but He lets us be free, and if that means that some people's bad choices can destroy the lives of other people... well, that's why we call them bad choices. (As for earthquakes and cancer, not to mention death, these are Adam's fault.)

This has not been good enough for the Church. As the Church has deepened in its experience of God and His love, it has likewise been driven to make sense of this experience without the need of buts.

This is the reason that the Church has been open to see what was almost obvious—that God is good and He made us good, and we do the best we can with what we are given.

This the reason that the Church has come to deeper than ever understanding of the purpose of earthly life: We are here, not to save ourselves from a condemning God, but rather because God is giving us the chance to participate in our own creation. This is the reason we begin with almost nothing, very imperfect, and then are called to grow. (In His goodness, however, God works with us through everything He sends into our lives knowing how we will respond.)

This is the reason that the Church is built on the idea that we were made to be a family, that we are here to become the family we will be with

God, the family where all of us will be richer for the holiness of each of us. This is how the Church makes sense of the fact the God's plan gives some so much more than others, not just now but across the centuries.

Thus, the Church now presents to humanity every possible reason to give one's all to grow in faith and love and help others do the same, and at the same time leaves people in peace with whatever cannot be changed, peace with themselves, and a faith in a God whose love is qualified by no buts.

We Protest Too

We Catholics do *not* believe that our faith should be expressed in negative terms. It is *not* our way to distinguish ourselves by criticizing others. Nonetheless, our faith does represent our rejection of several ideas that are common among others who call themselves Christian. Here are a few:

We Catholics do *not* believe in a God who is going to condemn to hell the great majority of His children, none of whom asked for the privilege of being born and risking an eternity of torment.

Instead, we believe that all God's children are loved by Him, and are playing a role in making us the family best prepared to share His life forever.

We Catholics do *not* believe in misusing the Bible, in pretending it is what God never intended it to be—a handbook of truth dropped from heaven to spare us from thinking.

Instead, we see it for what it actually is—the record of the faith of the first Christians and Jews before them. We take it as our starting point, not our stopping point—something that it meant to stop our faith from getting deeper as we grow up as God's family. We understand that we need to bring our actual experience of God and His love, and the knowledge we have gained from every science, to our interpretation of the Scriptures.

We Catholics do *not* believe that God could have allowed His people to walk in error for the first one thousand five hundred years of their history.

Instead, we believe that God's plan has always had a special place for the Church, and in this way He has inspired its development of structures, doctrine, and sacred actions, a progress that is still going on.

We Catholics do *not* believe that any "pastor" has the right to speak in God's name on his own authority.

Instead, we believe that authority in the Church comes from Jesus whose chosen successors left a system that continues to ordain people to speak in his name.

We Catholics do *not* believe that God wants His family to be divided into countless little congregations, not committed to common faith and action.

Instead, we believe that God wants all His children to be one family in faith.

Five Reasons I Am Not a Moslem

#1: Islam does not strike me as a truer explanation of reality than I find in modern Christianity. Christianity offers an explanation which is more consistent with my experience that God is love.

#2: Islam extols justice. Christianity calls for love. But love surpasses justice. And so, even though Islam post-dates Christianity by some six hundred years, it does not represent an improvement.

#3: Islam does not have within it the spirit nor the structure to support the idea "we were made to be a family."

#4: The evidence that Mohammed was chosen by God to be His spokesman is not nearly so convincing as the evidence that this person was Jesus. Mohammed was the sole witness to his revelations, which made *him* the central human figure in his religion.

#5: It makes sense to me that if God were to send someone to speak for Him this person's life would itself be an instrument of teaching and inspiration. Jesus accepted the cross. He lived as poor and powerless as the people most in need of inspiration. Mohammed was rich and powerful; he was a military leader; he died in bed—surrounded by his many wives.