

# Present Truth

The *Bible alone* as the only rule of faith and practice; *faith alone* as the only means of acceptance with God; and *Christ alone* as the only mediator between God and men.

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*Present Truth* is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation. It is especially committed to upholding the truth of justification by faith in this time when it is being threatened by humanism, emotionalism, and ecumenism. Our publication is based on the principle of sola Scriptura – the Bible and the Bible only as a rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We desire to give the gospel trumpet a certain sound (1 Cor. 14:7-9), that through words easy to be understood (Hab. 2:2) people may “be established in the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12) and like Noah be proclaimers of the righteousness of Christ (2 Pet. 2:5).

**Editor:** Richard A. Marin

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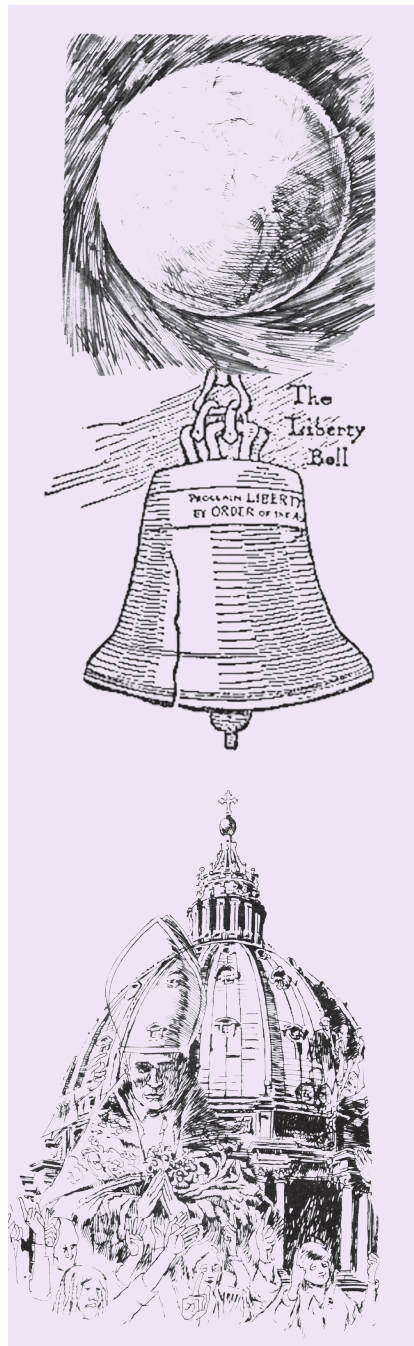
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## Schedule for Pope Francis'

September 2015

Apostolic Journey to USA

*Eastern Daylight Time*

### **Tue, Sep. 22 (Washington, DC)**

**4:00 p.m.** Arrival from Cuba at Joint Base Andrews

### **Wed, Sep. 23 (Washington, DC)**

**9:15 a.m.** Welcome ceremony and meeting with President Obama at the White House

**11:30 a.m.** Midday Prayer with bishops of the United States, St. Matthew's Cathedral

**4:15 p.m.** Mass of Canonization of Junipero Serra, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

### **Thu, Sep. 24 (Washington, DC, New York City)**

**9:20 a.m.** Address to Joint Meeting of the United States Congress

**11:15 a.m.** Visit to St. Patrick in the City and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington

**4:00 p.m.** Depart from Joint Base Andrews

**5:00 p.m.** Arrival at JFK Airport

**6:45 p.m.** Evening Prayer (Vespers) at St. Patrick's Cathedral

### **Fri, Sep. 25 (New York City)**

**8:30 a.m.** Visit to the United Nations and Address to the UN General Assembly

**11:30 a.m.** Multi-religious service at 9/11 Memorial & Museum, World Trade Center

**4:00 p.m.** Visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels School, East Harlem

**6:00 p.m.** Mass at Madison Square Garden

### **Sat, Sep. 26 (New York City, Philadelphia)**

**8:40 a.m.** Departure from JFK Airport

**9:30 a.m.** Arrival at Atlantic Aviation, Philadelphia

**10:30 a.m.** Mass at Cathedral Basilica of

Sts. Peter and Paul, Philadelphia

**4:45 p.m.** Visit to Independence Mall

**7:30 p.m.** Visit to the Festival of Families Benjamin Franklin Parkway

### **Sun, Sep. 27 (Philadelphia)**

**9:15 a.m.** Meeting with bishops at St. Martin's Chapel, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary

**11:00 a.m.** Visit to Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility

**4:00 p.m.** Mass for the conclusion of the *World Meeting of Families* (WMOF), Benjamin Franklin Parkway

**7:00 p.m.** Visit with organizers, volunteers and benefactors of the WMOF, Atlantic Aviation

**8:00 p.m.** Departure for Rome.

At least 1 million people are expected to make their way to the Philadelphia region for the 8th *World Meeting of Families* in September 2015, highlighted by Pope Francis' first visit to the United States and a Papal Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

The papal itinerary calls for Pope Francis to arrive the morning of Saturday, Sep. 26, followed by a series of closed or limited events. The public mass for the conclusion of the World Meeting of Families will take place at 4 p.m. Sep. 27 on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Philadelphia will welcome numerous other dignitaries, pilgrims and others for the *WMOF* from Sep. 22-27.

Since its inception by John Paul II in 1994, the *World Meeting of Families* has sought to strengthen the sacred bonds of family across the globe. Each *World Meeting of Families* has a theme, which aims to emphasize the good news of the family and highlight its intrinsic value to the good of society. The theme for the *World Meeting of Families* – Philadelphia 2015 is "Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive," emphasizing the impact of the love and life of families in our society.



Editorial Introduction:

# Welcome the Pope

We welcome the Pope to America – not as “Holy Father” but as the head of earth’s largest church and sovereign of the Vatican State.

We pray that he will see that this nation, “under God” has been extremely blessed – that the freedoms enjoyed by the citizens of the United States of America far surpass those of other nations and are the reason for her prosperity. These blessings are not because of her massive natural resources – other nations have similar resources. Nor are they due to her multi-racial population – the whole world has that today. Not even her strategic location can account for the supernatural blessings enjoyed by the citizens of the United States.

In this land that provided asylum for those seeking freedom from royal oppression and priestly intolerance her founding fathers established a government that granted civil and religious liberty. Her Declaration of Independence states the great truth that “all men are created equal,” and endowed with the inalienable right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Her Constitution guarantees the right of self-government, with elected representatives who shall enact and administer her laws. Her citizens are allowed to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. Republicanism and Protestantism are the two-pronged secret of her power and prosperity. Heaven has blessed this nation because she was founded on Christian principles.

We welcome Pope Francis to Philadelphia where hangs the Liberty Bell – a city where he is free to express his ideas to the public. We welcome him



to the Congress of the United States in Washington, DC where its representatives are free to accept or reject his ideas so far as they conform to or oppose the Constitution.

We hope that the Pope recognizes God's blessing on this nation as he makes his first visit to the United States and that he appreciates the protections afforded him by its Constitution. It is our desire that he will encourage other nations around the world to adopt the freedoms that have made America great and that have permitted God to bless her above any other nation on the planet today.

This issue of Present Truth begins with two articles on Protestant/Catholic unity – the first by a Protestant; the second by a Catholic. It will be noted that there are many areas of agreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Then follows a reprint of “Justification – Catholicism versus Protestantism” that our former editor prepared for Pope Paul VI's visit to Australia in 1970. Next we include “What Divides Us Still,” a summary of what still prevents complete unity between Protestants and Catholics. We conclude this issue with a series of questions for the Pope and a peek at the current religious scene.

Inlight of these sentiments we welcome Pope Francis on his first visit to God-blessed America!

RAM



## Protestant / Catholic Unity

*Under this heading we include both a Protestant and a Catholic article on church unity.*

*There is a unity that has always existed between Protestant and Catholic thought. We both agree “that God created the heavens and the earth;” that Noah endured a literal, world-wide flood; that Abraham spoke with God and is the father of God’s chosen Hebrew people; that Moses was called of God to preserve God’s Ten Commandments which God desires all people to observe.*

*Catholics and Protestants both believe that the Old Testament prophets not only spoke to their generation but also foretold events taking place in our day.*

*We both believe in the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are united in understanding that he lived a sinless life entirely in harmony with God’s holy Law and that he died a most cruel death on Calvary’s cross in order to secure humanity’s salvation.*

*Together Protestants and Catholics believe that the Gospel of God’s grace is to be proclaimed to every nation, kindred, tongue, and*



*people with the intent that earth's inhabitants believe and join God's church in preparation for a future judgment. Jesus commanded his disciples to preach and admonish these things and they together with the seventy, the deacons, Paul, Silas, and Barnabas all participated in this work.*

*We all believe that Jesus abandoned the Jewish temple as God's designated place of worship and that he established the Christian church with 12 disciples, choosing Peter as leader of the twelve. That the church is to be a visible, organized system commissioned to evangelize the world in preparation for Christ's soon return is obvious.*

*It is also clear from the books of the New Testament and subsequent church history that the church of Polycarp and Ignatius is a continuation of the one Jesus organized before his ascension to heaven's courts.*

*Together with Augustine and Catholic theologians we reject the Pelagian heresy as well as semi-Pelagianism. We agree that human beings are born sinful and, apart from divine grace, have no power for obedience or inward renewal. This is true even for initial conversion to God. We join Augustine in saying, "that God is the author of all good desires and deeds, of all efforts and virtues... it is through him that we begin both the will and the performance of any good work..." – D 141; TCT 542.*

*In his book, The Theology of Grace, Roman Catholic theologian Jean Daujat confirms that this is the Protestant position when he writes: "Luther and Calvin saw clearly, as against the Pelagians, that of ourselves we are incapable of any good, any merit: that left to our own strength we are irremediably sinners – fundamental truths expressed by the Church in her Lenten liturgy."*

*Together with Pope Francis we see the need for considering the subject of Christian unity. The Protestant Reformation left a deadly wound and in the Pope's video message, "Celebration of Christian Unity" shown May 23, 2015, in Phoenix, Arizona he said. "we do not want this wound to remain open."*

*Will this unity soon be complete? – the editor*

# Church Unity

by Joseph Mizzi\*

Christians are united and the church is one! Though it sounds incredible, that statement is gloriously true. We all have one God and Father, we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, and we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit. All Christians are brothers and sisters in God's family, members of Christ's mystical body, living stones built up into God's temple, the dwelling place of the Spirit.

This spiritual unity ought to be manifested in a common confession of faith and brotherly love. Thank God we do so, but only partially and imperfectly, given our many weaknesses and imperfections.

In the apostolic church, the apostle Paul complained about the divisions among the brethren in Corinth. In the early church, there was serious discord between the Catholics and the Donatists. Later on the tension and rivalry between the Greek and the Latin churches culminated in the great schism in 1054 that remains to this day. The sixteenth century saw the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, and Baptist churches. In subsequent centuries, Protestant churches fragmented into even smaller denominations.

Our Lord Jesus prayed to His Father for us all who believe in His name: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). My heart aches as I read Jesus' prayer. His desire is our *manifest* unity; but alas, the world looks upon those who call on the name of Christ and, instead of unity, the world sees divisions, confusion and strife. How can outsiders believe in our Divine Messiah if they cannot see His supernatural work of love and peace among His people?

## Concepts of Unity

Protestants as well as Catholics confess their belief in one church. But the two groups understand church unity differently.

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According to a document published by the Vatican<sup>1</sup>, the church of Jesus Christ is identified with the church “governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him.” Christian unity is conceived as a world-wide organized society under the leadership of Catholic bishops and headed by the bishop of Rome.

According to this theory, the Orthodox and Protestant churches “suffer from defects;” the latter are merely “ecclesial Communities” and not “churches in the proper sense” – primarily because they do not submit to the headship of the Pope, the bishop of Rome....

The bishops of the Council of Nicea believed in one church, as the Nicene Creed asserts, but they did not recognize the bishop of Rome as supreme head over them...

Protestants regard the church as the spiritual body of Christ, made up of every true believer, born by the Spirit of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ. Christians are united in Christ despite the diversity and differences between individual believers and their local congregations. Since we are spiritually united, Christians are called to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).”

We should pray and work towards the unity and peace of the church without compromising the truth of the Gospel. But we cannot



1. Congregation for the doctrine of the faith, Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine on the church.

accept the papal claim to universal jurisdiction. That claim is neither biblical nor historical; it is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of unity.

### **Unity and Diversity**

How can the church manifest its spiritual unity? Well, let us state plainly that there is a form of unity that has nothing to do with the Spirit of God. It is a carnal unity, akin to the unity brought about by dictators, coercing people into submission and uniformity. This was the pathetic ideal of the Holy Roman Empire. The popes of Rome claimed supreme authority over all Christians and their governments, and subdued nonconformists by an iron fist. A similar approach was adopted for some decades after the Reformation. The people in a given region were forced to become either Catholics or Protestants according to the convictions of their Prince. The result was a form of unity; the price, bitter persecution of all who dared to differ.

Who is willing to pay for such unity by forfeiting his liberty? Who is willing to worship God contrary to his conscience? Why can't Christians group in different denominations according to their convictions and live in harmony with each other? This seems to be the lesser of two evils; denominations imply certain divisions, but they allow all Christian to practice their faith freely according to the dictates of their conscience.

We rejoice that there is substantial doctrinal unity among different denominations. All Christians agree on the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the virgin birth, His atoning death and bodily resurrection. Christians believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ, emphasizing the necessity of godly living and brotherly love. Christians also believe in the resurrection, judgement, heaven and hell.

Moreover there is a genuine sense of respect and love among Christians, no matter what our denominational label might be. We are Christians before we are Baptists, Presbyterians, Brethren, Methodists and so on, and we enjoy an immediate and spiritual sense of brotherhood.

The distinctives of the various denominations relate mainly to the following theological areas: the doctrines of grace, church

government, the administration of the sacraments, the charismatic gifts, and eschatology (prophecy). We cannot minimize the importance of these doctrines or their significant practical and spiritual implications. However, the belief or otherwise in an earthly millennial kingdom does not exclude anyone from the universal church of Jesus Christ. After all both views were prevalent in the early church too.

Quite frankly we should add that many divisions among Christians have little or nothing to do with doctrine. Divisions between members of local churches, and between different churches, arise from sinful pique, rebellion and a fighting spirit. James asks, “Where do wars and fights come from among you?” We have to admit that disagreements and schisms often arise from our sinful lusts, carnal envying and strife rather than for our zeal for the truth of the Gospel. This is a sad reality and there is no excuse for it. In such situations, Christians show themselves to be genuine or hypocrites if and when they forgive one another from the heart.

### **Protestant Denominations**

Catholic apologists often write about the *thousands* of Protestant denominations; the number varies from 20,000 to 30,000 and more! This assertion is simply untrue. The original source of these figures is the World Christian Encyclopaedia (David A. Barrett, Oxford University Press, 1982). Barrett cites a figure of 20,780 “denominations”. However not all of them are Protestants. According to Barrett, Protestants account for 8,196 (incidentally, Roman Catholics account for 223).

However, even this figure of eight thousand Protestant denominations is misleading, for Barrett defines “distinct denominations” as any group that might have a slightly different emphasis than another group. The distinction is made on the basis of jurisdiction, rather than differing beliefs and practices. Barrett breaks down the Protestant bloc into twenty-one major “traditions” which are much closer to what we usually mean by the word “denominations.” It is interesting that Roman Catholics are subdivided into sixteen such “traditions.”

Sadly some irresponsible authors continue to propagate gross exaggerations and untruths about the number of Christian denominations.

## **Apparent Catholic Unity**

At first glance the Roman Catholic Church seems to be united under the leadership of the Pope and the Vatican. There are official doctrines and positions on various issues, and uniformity in the liturgy in the Catholic churches worldwide. Is Rome the solution to the heterogeneity and doctrinal error in Christendom? Should all Christians submit to the authority of the Roman pontiff? ...

## **Relations with Apostates**

Divisions are always painful, but they are sometimes necessary. “For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you” (1 Corinthians 11:19). We are not called to maintain unity at any cost. The church is the pillar and ground of truth, and when false prophets and teachers bring in their damnable heresies, the Christian church is called to oppose error and take a stand for God’s truth. The apostle Paul was not afraid to expose some as “false brethren” since they were distorting the Gospel message (Galatians 2:4). Similarly, he calls on all Christians: “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). False doctrines cause divisions, and *the faithful are called to avoid those who claim to be Christians but deny the apostolic faith.*

It is perfectly right therefore for conservative Christians to disassociate themselves from the liberal Protestant churches and other apostates. The renegades deceptively call themselves Christian, Protestant and Evangelical, but they are illegitimate heirs of the historic Protestant faith as defined by the standards of faith (such as the Westminster, Belgic and Augsburg confessions). More importantly, they deny and distort the Gospel message. The liberals deny the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ, thereby robbing people of any hope of eternal life. Others openly promote immorality such as homosexuality and abortion. And yet others preach a “health, wealth and prosperity” gospel, which naturally appeals to the masses, and sadly thousands are deceived by charlatans posing as ministers of Christ. There is an urgent need in the modern Church for faithful pastors to speak out and warn against the false teachers and movements in our day.

What about the relation between Catholics and Protestants? Is it not high time for them to heal the wound in the body of Christ caused by the Reformation?

Well, what caused the division in the first place? Though there were political and other factors involved, the primary cause of the division was doctrinal. The Reformers had no intention to cause a split; they wanted to reform the church by calling her back to the simplicity of the Gospel. But Rome did not budge. And since they considered the doctrinal differences to be so crucial (especially the doctrine of justification), they were compelled to disassociate themselves from the Roman institution and form separate churches. Rome responded by calling a general council held in Trent, Italy (1545 - 1563). The council defined the Catholic Church's doctrinal position and condemned Protestant teaching. Scores of anathemas (curses) were directed towards Protestants for their understanding of the Gospel.

### **Ecumenism**

Though our forefathers disagreed on many issues, they were in agreement on this one: the Catholic and Protestant doctrinal positions are so divergent that they are irreconcilable. If Catholics were right, the Protestants' contrasting position must be wrong, and vice versa. If *sola fide* is the true Gospel, then Rome's works-merit message is a false gospel!

Over the past fifty years or so, massive efforts were made to re-unite Catholics and Protestants. Sadly, the doctrinal differences remain exactly the same as they were in the sixteenth century. Rome's teaching on justification has not changed. Should Protestants return to Rome for the sake of ecumenical unity, they would have to discard "Justification by Faith Alone" – the very same Gospel that gives them life and liberty.

The Second Vatican Council changed nothing except for the packaging. In the opening speech of the council, Pope John XXIII reaffirmed their "adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness, as it still shines forth in the Acts of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council." Their purpose was a new presentation of the same teaching. "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another," he said.

Furthermore, the Pope admitted that “The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity.” In other words, the tactics are changed to reach the same goal. Forget the anathemas; call the schismatics and heretics “separated brethren”; hide away the instruments of torture and let Rome present herself as “loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness.”

Evangelical Christians should realize that the purpose of the modern ecumenical movement is not the unity of Christians based on a shared faith in the Gospel of Christ. Ecumenism is Rome’s tool to absorb all Christian denominations under papal domination.

“[Ecumenical dialogue] serves to transform modes of thought and behaviour and the daily lives of those [non-Catholic] communities. In this way, it aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.”<sup>2</sup>

Rome’s stated purpose for ecumenism is to conform non-Catholic Christians to “the faith” – evidently the Vatican’s teaching – so that non-Catholics would be absorbed into the Roman Church, “the one and only Church.”

### **Faithful to the Gospel**

Christians who are evangelical at heart – who truly cherish the *evangel* as the most precious gift of God, the very life of the church – must strive to maintain the purity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must separate from those who preach “another gospel.” The Gospel is the banner under which all believers unite in a spiritual family to serve and worship God through Jesus Christ. We are responsible to proclaim the Gospel to all the world, including nominal Christians, for it is the only hope of reconciliation with God and spiritual unity of all people in the body of Christ.

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2. Secretariat for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue,” in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P.)



# Protestant Implications for Doctrine and Unity

by Wesley Hunt\*

In this article, I'd like to break from my normal genre and speak directly to our Protestant friends for a moment. Not about any particular point of dogma, but about the concept of dogma itself, and how this relates to the question of Christian unity. What, for a Protestant, is dogma? How do you Protestants define it? For a Catholic, a dogma is a teaching that has been revealed by God and must be believed with the assent of faith that is due to God, who cannot lie and whose teaching is sure – and what falls into this category is defined by the Church's Magisterium. But for a Protestant, what is dogma? And how does it relate to the concept of Christian unity?

Let us start from a point of agreement. You Protestants, like us Catholics, assert that the Church is one. Our Lord prays in John 17 “that they all may be one, even as we are one,” referring to Himself and God the Father. Moreover, this oneness Christ prays for is not a oneness that is not yet realized; in other words, we do not pray for oneness as if it is an attribute the Church does not already possess. The Scriptures are clear that the Church, in its very nature, is one. This is why St. Paul says, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:4-6). The oneness of the Church is one of its essential characteristics, what Catholics call one of its *marks*.

Here we agree; Protestants, like Catholics, teach that the Church is, *right now*, one. How could anyone say otherwise when St. Paul and Christ have declared it so? Thus, we see language about unity of doctrine and the oneness of the Church even in Protestant hymns. For example, consider the well-known classic Anglican hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” In the third verse of the famous hymn, we see these words:

*“Like a mighty army moves the church of God; brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod. **We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine,** one in charity.”*

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This classic hymn of traditional Protestantism proudly proclaims “we are not divided” and lauds Protestant Christianity as “one in hope and doctrine”, an example of how even Protestantism professes the oneness of the Church.

Now, it is not the purpose of this essay to point out that the concept of worldwide Protestantism united in hope and doctrine goes beyond exaggeration and hyperbole. Even you Protestants admit that there is no formal unity in the gaggle of Protestant denominations. But yet you admit that the Church is one. How to solve this dilemma?

I suppose, if I were Protestant, the only solution to reconcile the contradiction between the formal disunity of Protestant congregations and the unity that the Scriptures teach would be to assert that the unity the Church possesses is not the sort of formal, physical unity the Catholic Church believes in. The unity the Church possesses must be a different sort of unity, some kind of invisible unity that can subsist despite formal, physical disunion – a sort of “unity in disunity”, as one Protestant explained it to me.

But to have any meaning, to be anything other than a mere notion, this unity must have some objective signification. In the Catholic Church, the unity is manifested in a unity of worship, unity of doctrine, and apostolic succession. These signs of unity are guaranteed and protected by the Holy Spirit, who is the soul of the Church and by whom the Church participates in the very unity of the Trinity. They are also external signs that are tangible and objectively verifiable.

So, if Protestant unity is to be anything other than purely subjective, what sort of objective criteria of unity can you propose to give substance to the claim that Christians are “one”?

Because there is such diversity of opinion in Protestant sects about who Christ is and how He is to be worshiped, the most that can be said about unity of worship is a vague conception that “we all worship the same God.” This ambiguous formula is useless, however, because since not all Protestants are Trinitarians (and not all Trinitarians are homoousians), the phrase “we all worship the same God” means nothing more specific than “we all believe in the Christian God”, which is so vague as to be practically useless. Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses use the same phraseology, and it is hard to argue that they should be excluded from this vague Protestant “unity” while Unitarians, Modalists (“Oneness” Christians) and Sabellians should be included.

Furthermore, unity based on apostolic succession is repudiated by Protestantism, so this cannot be a sign of unity, either.

Most of you Protestants, therefore, will rally around unity of dogma, asserting that “we all basically believe the same thing”, and while acknowledging your manifold differences, will say, “Well, we agree on the essential dogmas, and that is what is most important.” This collective sort of agreement on “essential dogmas” across denominational lines is the hook of unity upon which Protestantism will hang its hat.

I have to say, this is not an implausible argument outright. After all, many Catholics disagree on accidental or prudential matters and still remain in the unity of the Church, because as long as we can all agree on the dogmas

of the faith and remain in communion with Rome, then it can be said that we have unity. So, Protestants claim that their disagreements among themselves are of the same nature: accidental to the essence of Christianity, about non-important matters that do not effect salvation. Examples often cited are whether or not one should speak in tongues, whether women should have leadership roles within the Church, whether healing still occurs, and so on. “So you see,” they will say, “we may have denominations that disagree on these issues, but we all agree on the fundamentals. Herein we find the unity of the Church.”

But let us probe this a bit further. I ask



you, what are these essentials that all Protestants agree on? I ask you to reflect on this concept and see how problematic it is. The three big problems with the “we all agree on essentials” concept:

**1) Who decides what is an “essential” and what isn’t?** This argument implies that there is some body of essential doctrines that all Protestants already agree on, which essentially begs the question. So, all Protestants agree on essentials. What are essentials? Those things which all Protestants agree upon. See the problem here?

**2) Is anything pertaining to Revelation non-essential?** We also ought to ask ourselves, “Can anything that God revealed be considered accidental or non-essential to faith?” By saying, “We agree on essentials,” Protestants thereby imply that there are other matters of faith that are non-essential. But if it has been revealed by God, who are we to say, by our own authority, that it is non-essential? Neither Christ nor the Apostles make this distinction.

**3) Non-essentials are essential.** Following the last point, if we look at what it is exactly that Protestants cannot agree upon, we begin to see that they are no mere accidental issues, but things central to salvation. For example, what are some things that St. Paul says are the most basic doctrines of Christianity? “Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation of penance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and imposition of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1-2). Here the Apostle says that the doctrines of baptism, the resurrection of the dead, judgment, and faith and works are foundational, elementary teachings. Yet these are some of the most contested teachings in Protestantism! Nothing divides Protestants like arguments about the role of baptism, the relationship between faith and works; whole denominations have split over questions of the last judgment and the role of laying on of hands, whether it is a communication of office as historic Christianity has attested or rather of charisms, as the charismatics and Pentecostals assert. My friend, whatever sort of Protestant you are, I venture to say that there is no doctrine you profess that has not been contested by another Protestant sect, and that most of these doctrines have been quite central to the faith.

Now let us return to the original question: What is a dogma? In practice, dogma has come to mean less and less in the Protestant world, because in an ecclesiology in which the only thing that binds all Christians together is a vague agreement on “essentials”, a dogma

cannot be that which some authoritative body proclaims as revealed by God, since no such authority exists in Protestantism; rather, **dogma must become for you Protestants simply those things which the majority of you agree upon.**

Yet because of the principles of private interpretation that Protestantism is built upon, the body of teaching you all agree upon is constantly shrinking. There is no agreement on the issue of homosexual so-called marriage. There are many large churches openly questioning the teaching on hell. Some deny the unique mediation of the Person of Jesus Christ, others the universality of His call to all people to follow Him. Increasingly, the pool of commonly accepted Protestant “essential” doctrines gets smaller and smaller.

This being the case, my Protestant friend, how can you preserve the notion that this invisible Church has any sort of unity? Well, if there is no agreement on the questions of, say, hell, or the sanctity of marriage, these things by definition must not be essential, since you do not all agree upon them? In essence, anything Protestants cannot agree upon is relegated to the realm of a non-essential, though some of these issues are anything but.

The answer to our original question is this: If you are a Protestant, the concept of “dogma” increasingly has no place. You have long ago rejected the idea of authoritative teaching, and simply going “back to the Bible” yields the Babel of confusion we are currently witnessing. Dogma must mean vaguely those teachings that all Protestants agree upon, which is increasingly shrinking as more Protestant churches challenge traditional Christian beliefs in an attempt to stay relevant.

In the end, you have no authoritative dogma because you have no real unity. The concept of an invisible Church united by an amorphous agreement on “essentials” is farcical. It is an imaginary construct invented to explain away the contradiction of maintaining the facade of Protestant Christian “unity” in spite of the practical fact of over twenty-thousand distinct denominations who all disagree on everything.

My Protestant friend, is this the unity Jesus Christ envisioned for the Church when He prayed that we all might be one? Not a “unity in disunity”, but a unity that flows from the very unity of the Trinitarian life itself. Is this gaggle the sort of oneness of faith St. Paul boasted about in Ephesians 4? If you can honestly say yes, then words no longer have meaning.

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*<PresentTruth@LifeResearchInternational.org> invites a Protestant response.*



# Justification

## Catholicism vs Protestantism

Several hundred years ago the religious world was involved in the greatest religious conflict that this world has ever witnessed. A tremendous amount of literature has recorded a blow-by-blow account of the epic Catholic-Protestant struggle. Yet, after 400 years have gone by, the professed sons of the Reformation generally have very little idea of the real issues of the conflict. If you ask a Protestant what Roman Catholics teach concerning justification, you will most likely be told that Catholics believe that a sinner may be justified by his own works of merit. But listen to what an authoritative Catholic catechism teaches:

“Q: What is Justification?

A: it is a grace which makes us friends of God.

Q: Can a sinner merit this justifying grace?

A: No, he cannot; because all the good works which the sinner performs whilst he is in a state of mortal sin, are dead works, which have no merit sufficient to justify.

Q: Is it an article of Catholic faith, that the sinner, in mortal sin, cannot merit the grace of justification?

A: Yes; it is decreed in the seventh chap. of the sixth sess. of the Council of Trent, that neither faith, nor good works, preceding justification, can merit the grace of justification.

Q: How then is the sinner justified?

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*This article was prepared for the visit of Pope Paul VI to Australia in 1970. See also Present Truth vol. 1 #2; vol. 4 #5, & Vol. 8 #1; & <LifeResearchInternational.org>.*



A: He is justified gratuitously by the pure mercy of God, not on account of his own or any human merit, but purely through the merits of Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ is our only mediator of redemption, who alone, by his passion and death, has reconciled us to his Father.

Q: Why then do the Protestants charge us with believing, that the sinner can merit the remission of his sins?

A: Their ignorance of the Catholic doctrine is the cause of this, as well as many other false charges.” – Rev. Steven Keenan, *Doctrinal Catechism*, pp. 138, 139.

Many Protestants are awakening to the fact that Catholics do teach a doctrine of justification by faith. With surprise they are saying, “I always thought that Catholics taught that a sinner could be justified by his own works of merit. But they do not teach this. I have been subjected to some uncharitable Protestant propaganda about Catholic doctrine. Why, they believe in the saving grace of God the same way as we do!”

There is no question but that Catholic doctrine has always taught that a sinner is justified by a grace that comes from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then what was the doctrinal bone of contention between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation?

### **Two Aspects of Redemption**

There are two great aspects of redemption:

1. Christ’s work *for* us.
2. The Holy Spirit’s work *in* us.

**Christ’s work for us.** We may call this God’s work in Christ. This work of redemption was done entirely apart from us and without our assistance. Jesus lived a perfect life *for* us. He “died *for* our sins according to the Scriptures.” 1 Cor. 15:3. He was “delivered *for* our offences.” Rom. 4:25. He entered the sanctuary, “having obtained eternal redemption *for* us.” Heb.9:12. “He ever liveth to make intercession *for* them.” Heb.7:25. He appears “in the presence of God *for* us.” Heb.9:24.

**The Spirit’s work in us.** Without the work of the Holy Spirit working in the believer, the sacrifice of Jesus would be of no avail. The Spirit works *in* what Christ has worked *out*. The Holy Spirit carries out God’s work of grace *in* us.

These two aspects of redemption are illustrated by the two streams of blood and water which flowed from the pierced side of Jesus. Jesus offers His blood for us in the sanctuary above. The Spirit – represented by the water – sanctifies the heart of the believer in Jesus.

Thus far all Christians should be agreed, whether they be Catholics or Protestants. Now we must define the great dividing of the way which separates the streams of the Catholic and Protestant thought.

## **The Catholics Concept of Justification**

Roman Catholics do not teach that a sinner can be justified by his own works of merit. Briefly, their position on justification is this: Christ's work for us has made the gift of the Holy Spirit available to believers. (They are right thus far.) Men must first receive an *infusion* of righteousness by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit must work repentance and charity in the believer. God then pronounces the believer just because of the work that the Holy Spirit has done in him.

Or to express it in a different way: Catholics teach that a man is justified before God only when the Holy Spirit has given that man a just nature. God merely ratifies the work which the Holy Spirit has done in the heart of the believer.

## **The Birth of Protestantism**

The Reformers were led to abandon the idea that the Holy Spirit's work in them could make them righteous in the sight of God. These were men who experienced, as few men have ever experienced, the power of sin in their lives. They knew what it was to struggle for holiness of heart. Never were there more earnest Roman Catholics than Luther, Calvin, Farrel, Melancthon and Tyndale. They believed that holiness came only from God and they tried to apprehend enough holiness in their lives in order that they could be accepted before God.

Yet, being honest men, they could never see enough of God's grace in their experience to give them any confidence towards God. Indeed, as they looked deep within their poor hearts, they saw sin in the form of pride, selfishness, unbelief, unresponsiveness to God's love, and egotism. They despaired of ever being justified by virtue of God's given work of grace in them.

Then came their enlightenment in the evangelical faith. They rediscovered Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. In the book of Romans the apostle sets forth the gospel truth that the sinner is not justified by an infused righteousness but by an *imputed* righteousness – meaning a righteousness that is found wholly in Another. A believer is *not* justified by virtue of what God has wrought out in him but by virtue of what God has wrought out in Jesus Christ.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the



remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is the boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” – Rom.3: 21-28.

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for as we say that the faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” – Romans 4:4-11.

In these words of the apostle Paul, the Reformers found a certain ground of hope. They saw that men need not look within their own experience to find something that will give them any assurance that they may stand acceptable before God. The Reformers were confronted with the great gospel truth that God had already provided forgiveness and acceptance for them in Jesus Christ, that justification was theirs in and through Christ, that God had already reached down and made the human family the friends and children of God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:10,18). And by faith in God’s perfect work, faith *alone* in God’s finished work

in Jesus Christ, they could now rejoice that the righteousness of Jesus was freely imputed to them.

### **Good Works and Justifying Merit**

We must never charge Catholics with teaching that a sinner, in his unregenerate state, can do any good works that have merit in God's sight. But they do teach that there is merit in the good works wrought out in the life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice:

“Q: Must we then concluded, that the sinner cannot, by good works, obtain the grace of justification?

A: The sinner may obtain the grace of justification by good works proceeding from a broken and penitent heart, because these are necessary predispositions and conditions , but no works of his own can ever MERIT the grace of justification....

Q: What is that which gives their value to good works?

A: Sanctifying grace, which is within us.

Q: Is this sanctifying grace our own, or is it from God?

A: It is the pure gift of God's liberality to us.

Q: How does St. Paul express himself on this subject? (Ro., chap. v, 5.)

A: “The charity of God,” he says, “is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”

Q: What are the effects of sanctifying grace?

A: It makes us the friends and children of God.” – *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 144, 145.

The Protestant Reformers utterly rejected the idea that there is justifying merit even in works wrought out by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although the Catholic position on good works was clothed with the appearance of sanctity, Luther discerned that it was the mind of the mystery of iniquity. In theory, Catholic doctrine teaches men to trust in God's work in them. In practice, it leads them to actually depend on their own works. Armed with the great teaching of the sinfulness of man's human nature, Luther was able to show that the good works of the best saints are defiled by the sinfulness and imperfection of human nature (Eccl. 7:20, etc.). Good works, declared the Reformers, can only be considered good if the merits of Jesus are added to them to make up for their deficiency and imperfection.

Wrote Luther, “No one can be certain that he is not continually committing mortal sin, because of the most secret vice of pride.” The pope condemned this statement in his bull excommunicating Luther, but the Reformer responded, “Therefore I must retract this article, and I say now that no one should doubt that all our good work are mortal sins, if they are judged according to God's judgment and severity and not accepted as good by grace alone.” Again he declared, “Every good work is sin unless it is forgiven by the mercy of God.” – Quoted in Paul

Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 149. In *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (pp. 176, 177), Luther thundered that the merits of all works, "before grace and after," should be thrown down to hell. Thus did this man of God teach that we can never look within us for any work of justifying merit.

Contrary to Roman Catholicism, the Protestants taught that while sanctifying grace within a believer enables him to do good works, only the merits of Christ can make those good works acceptable to God. Sanctifying does not make us the friends of God, they said, but it is rather the *fruit* of becoming God's children by faith in Christ's work done wholly outside of us.

### **The Freedom and Certainty of the Gospel**

Before his enlightenment, Luther vainly looked within his own heart for enough repentance or conversion to assure him of his acceptance with God.

"How dare I believe in the favor of God. While there is nothing in me like true conversion? I must be changed before he can receive me." Such was the Roman darkness that enveloped his soul. He dreaded those Scriptures that speak of repentance. But after his enlightenment in the Gospel, the passages so much dreaded became his delight – to use his own words, "an agreeable sport, and the most delightful recreation." All the passages of Scripture which frightened him seem now to rise up from all sides, smiling, and leaping, and sporting with him. – J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 130, 131.

Luther contemplated with great joy the words of Paul, "... [Christ] loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. While he was a wretched sinner in a state of rebellion against God, Luther perceived that the Lord of glory forgave him freely in Jesus Christ and bestowed upon him all the treasures of eternity. Luther saw that he could receive justification solely by believing in what Christ had done for him.

The Catholic Council of Trent decreed that God only justifies those who are born again. But Protestantism held to the great declarations of the apostle Paul:

"...but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly..." –Rom. 4:5.

"...God imputeth righteousness without works..." – Rom. 4:6.

"...faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness... not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." – Rom. 4:9, 10.

"...God would justify the heathen through faith..." – Gal. 3:8.

God justifies the *ungodly*, the *uncircumcised*, and the *heathen* through faith, without works. This doctrine is an offense to "good, clean Christian people." But to the Reformers who had struggled for years to

find favor with God through the work of the Holy Spirit in them, it was a message of unspeakable joy. God freely loves and forgives the vilest sinner and sets him free from all condemnation solely by means his faith in God's wonderful work in Jesus Christ.

Christ came to save sinners (Matt. 9:13; 1 Tim. 1:15), and because I am a sinner, I am entitled to come to Christ. I know of no better news given under heaven than that. In this word of truth I may have the greatest certainty, liberty, and boldness, whereby I may believe in God's work of grace for me in Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is that God loves sinners, that while they were in sin and rebellion, He earned the free gift of justification for all men (Rom. 5:18). In God's own purpose of love which He has purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, He has already accepted and forgiven the whole human race. The great question to be decided is not, "Will God forgive and accept me?" He has done this in Jesus Christ. If God could reconcile us to Himself when we were enemies (Rom. 5:10), how much more will He love and receive us and pronounce us righteous when we accept His great gift by faith! The great question to be decided is, "Will I accept God's adoption as His son by Jesus Christ unto Himself? Will I accept the free pardon, already given in Jesus Christ?"

In the truth of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the Reformers beheld the smiling face of the heavenly Father. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but to bestow His blessing of loving favor upon the children of men. The gospel is the good news of what God has done. In Jesus Christ the world has been accepted into the family of heaven.

The Protestants did not deny the reality or necessity of God's work of grace in the hearts of men by the power of the Holy Spirit. They did not make light of good works. But they placed truth in its right order. *They perceived that faith in Christ's work for us brings the Holy Spirit to work in us.* They accepted with joy the grand gospel message that God justifies freely, solely on the ground, the solid ground, of Christ's work for us. This blessed truth of justification by faith brought from their hearts such a response of love and gratitude to God that the windows of their souls were thrown open heavenward, and they experienced the renewing and sanctifying power of God's Spirit in their lives. The repentance and good works which they formerly tried to grind out of their own poor hearts sprang forth spontaneously. The whole of Europe shook with a might army of evangelicals on the march. Through their preaching of justification by faith, the papal power received a deadly wound.



# What Divides Us Still

by the editor

Today the same two things that divided Rome from the Reformation are what divide us still. The division is irreconcilable.

Protestantism would not be Protestantism if either of these two principles is relinquished.

Catholicism would not be Catholicism if either of these two principles is accepted.

Both principles are closely connected. It would be impossible to hold one and not the other. The reason is that the one supports the other, and vice versa.

## Two Principles that Divide

Protestants of the sixteenth century took their stand on the principle of “the Bible, and the Bible *alone*, as the only rule of faith and practice.” This forced them to adopt the principle of “faith *alone* as the only means of justification.” If they denied the first principle then there was plenty of room to change the second. If they denied the second principle they must of necessity abandon the first. Only the Bible and those who accept it alone as the arbiter of truth, teach justification by faith alone. To rely on faith alone for one’s acceptance with God would be ridiculous apart from believing that the Bible alone was the decider of truth.

The Roman Catholic Church held that the Bible was insufficient when trying to determine what is truth. She taught that tradition and the Magisterium of the Church were needed as supplements to the Word of God. This created a great divide between her and the Protestant Reformers.

Basing her doctrine on tradition, the Magisterium, and Scripture Rome saw no light in the idea that God would justify the ungodly solely by means of faith. She held that internal transformation was a necessary supplement to faith in order that God would justify a sinner. This created the second great divide between her and the Protestant reformers – justification by faith alone.

## Contemporary Efforts for Unity

In recent years a number of Protestant denominations have attempted reconciliation with Rome. Some have even issued joint statements of agreement. In none of these attempts has Rome compromised her basic beliefs. She has remained true to the principles she so clearly

defended in the sixteenth century. It remains with Protestants to determine whether unity with Rome is worth the surrender of “justification by faith *alone*” and “the Bible *alone*.”

There is, however, another area of unity that is fast gaining ground – that of unity on social issues. Here multitudes of Protestants are grasping the hand of Rome in an effort to turn the tide of social decadence. In an effort to restore law

and order to the world many believe that unity with Rome is a necessary prerequisite. Some have even felt that doctrine is irrelevant in light of the current world crises. Saving the planet is taking precedence over saving the souls residing on it.

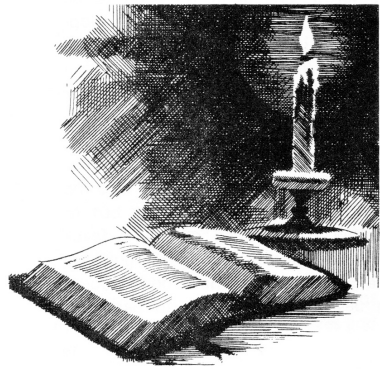
As pointed out in the first article of this issue, there are many areas of agreement between Catholics and Protestants. None of these divided the Christian world in the sixteenth century. The question before us is whether doctrine matters when considering God’s will for humanity. If not, then we may discard our Bibles, join hands together and sing “We Are One in the Spirit of World Restoration.”

### **Unity Realized**

Actually there is a large segment of the Protestant world that has already achieved full unity with Rome. As pointed out in early issues of **Present Truth**, this unity is doctrinal as well as social. The Pentecostal Charismatic movement is in complete harmony with the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. It believes that internal transformation is a necessary prerequisite for divine acceptance and this Spirit-centered movement has been embraced by Rome as a true expression of Catholic piety. Pope Francis, especially, has demonstrated Rome’s entire harmony with the Charismatic movement. Together Rome and the “Reformation” are united in the Charismatic renewal.

Many non-Charismatic Protestants are looking on with envy towards the Catholic/Charismatic unity and thinking they need to do more to erase the barriers that divide us.

Are Protestants ready to accept tradition and Rome’s Magisterium as necessary adjuncts to Holy Scripture? Are we ready to admit that Martin Luther and his cohorts were wrong in believing that God accepts anyone who solely looks to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as their hope of life eternal?



# Questions for the Pope

## **A) on God and Christ:**

1. Is the God of Muslims, Jews, and Jehovah's Witnesses the same as the one we Christians worship?
2. Was Christ's life on earth only an example for us to follow or was it also a substitute life designed to stand in place of our sinfulness?

## **B) on the blessed virgin:**

1. Do you plan to honor the worldwide movement among Catholics and designate Mary, our Lord's mother, as co-mediator with Jesus, her Son?
2. If David, Mary's great, great grandfather, confessed that he was conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5) how could it have been that Mary was conceived without sin (called the "Immaculate Conception")?

## **C) on the confessional**

1. Is not the Catholic confessional, where one's secret sins are revealed to a human priest, a major factor leading to the many widespread reports of sexual abuse committed by priests?
2. If the Roman Catholic confessional only began in the days of Constantine how were sins forgiven before the fourth century AD?

## **D) on the day of worship**

1. Since Rome advocates a weekly "rest day," is it celebrating a finished work or one of new achievements?
2. Is it true, as some have stated, that the change of the Sabbath to Sunday is the sign of authority of the Roman Catholic Church?

## **E) on Eucharistic unity**

1. The *Catholic Herald* on May 1, 2015 posted an article in which you, Pope Francis, state: "The cause of unity is not an optional undertaking... the differences that divide us must not be seen as inevitable." By what means could this unity be accomplished during your tenure without involving civil enforcement?
2. If you are considering making Martin Luther a saint will you also accept his view of justification by faith *alone*?

## **F) on the true church**

1. On what basis should a person determine which church is God's true church on earth – on the basis of its history or on the basis of its beliefs?
2. Do you believe it possible that God could reject the Roman Catholic Church should she teach a gospel differing from that presented by Peter in Acts 10?

## **G) on family values**

1. Might the Catholic Church be encouraging contemporaneous, multiple spouses by *not* recognizing adultery as sufficient grounds for divorce?
2. Is the Church's strong stand on the sacredness of human life eclipsed by her history of burning heretics?

## **H) on abortion**

1. If aborted babies go straight to heaven when they die why wouldn't taking their lives early be a blessing rather than a curse?
2. If you have declared "A Year of Mercy" granting forgiveness to women who undergo abortions, to whom should women go for forgiveness when that year is ended?

### **I) on infallibility**

1. If Rome is unwilling to admit doctrinal errors in her past decretals does that mean that any union with Protestants requires them to surrender their views on disputed items?
2. If the Roman Church believes in the infallibility of Holy Scripture why would it not be possible for laymen to understand truth by simply reading the Bible?

### **J) on climate change**

1. Is your concern about climate change due to personal study of environmental issues or does it come from divine revelation?
2. Is it true that you are advocating an enforced worldwide, weekly day of rest as a remedy for climate change?

## **On the Religious Front**

### **Pope's Protestant friend dies**

“The English surgeons who fought to save the life of a badly mangled motorcyclist on the morning of July 20, might have guessed he was someone unusual, since the hospital was receiving calls from Rome, from the pope himself, asking for updates.”

So begins Austen Ivereigh’s report on the death of Anglican cleric, Tony Palmer, in the Boston Globe of August 07, 2014. Ivereigh continues:

“The unlikely friendship of Palmer and Pope Francis was the catalyst of an extraordinary historic breakthrough in relations between the Catholic Church and the evangelical world...

...[In Italy] the Palmers encountered the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a movement within the Catholic Church which has absorbed the Pentecostal evangelical traditions of praise-style worship, healing, and an expectation of spiritual gifts. Through the charismatics,... the Palmers with their young children began attending Sunday Mass.... [Palmer together] with Matteo Calisi, head of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Italy... began doing joint missions around the world – which is what took him to Buenos Aires in 2006. Its archbishop, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, had overcome his reservations about the charismatic renewal and enthusiastically backed a 6,000-strong joint Catholic-evangelical gathering that year in Buenos Aires’ Luna Park stadium.

“Palmer and Calisi and four others went to meet the cardinal prior to beginning their mission in his diocese. When Palmer told Bergoglio that he was an Anglican evangelical with a Catholic wife and children, the cardinal was curious: how did they live that difference? Palmer told him that it worked very well, but that, since he led his family back to the Catholic Church, he was no longer allowed to take Communion with them.

“When Palmer told him that his children asked him why he would join a church that separated a family, he said that Bergoglio’s eyes filled with tears.

“‘His heart broke,’ Palmer recalled.

“... ‘Father Mario,’ acted as a spiritual father to the Protestant cleric, calming him (‘he wanted to make me a reformer, not a rebel,’ Palmer told me) and encouraging him in his mission to Christian unity.

“At one point, when Palmer was tired of living on the frontier and wanted to become Catholic, Bergoglio advised him against conversion for the sake of the mission.

“‘We need to have bridge-builders’, the cardinal told him.

“In 2012 Palmer’s family moved to England,... Palmer had little idea of Bergoglio’s rising star, but received an email three days before the conclave of March 2013 asking for his prayers. When he saw Pope Francis emerge on the balcony, Palmer was thrilled but assumed that their friendship would be over.

“Shortly after the New Year, however, he received a call. Francis wanted to know when he was next in Rome, could he come by? On January 14, Palmer spent the morning with Francis in the Vatican residence where he now lives, the Domus Santa Marta...

“Palmer told him that the following week he would be addressing 3,000 evangelicals at Kenneth Copeland’s international leaders’ conference in Fort Worth, Texas, and would he like to send a word of greeting?

“Let’s make a video,’ Francis replied.

“You want me to pull out my iPhone and record you?” asked Palmer, astonished.

“Yes, exactly,’ the pope answered.

When he presented the recording to the Pentecostals in Texas, Palmer said that few Protestants knew that the Catholic and Lutheran Churches had signed a historic declaration in 1999 settling the doctrinal issue of the Reformation.

“We preach the same Gospel now,’ Palmer told them. ‘The protest is over.’

“Then he played the video...

“The delegates reacted rapturously. After the video went viral Palmer began to be inundated by requests from evangelical leaders to be part of what was happening....

“On June 24, Palmer took a group of evangelical leaders who jointly reach more than 700 million people to meet and lunch with Francis, ... The delegates included Copeland, the televangelist James Robison, as well as Geoff Tunnicliffe, head of the Worldwide Evangelical Alliance. They told Francis they wanted to accept his invitation to seek visible unity with the Bishop of Rome.

“Palmer handed the pope a proposed Declaration of Faith in Unity for Mission the evangelicals had drawn up, which they proposed would be signed by both the Vatican and leaders of the major Protestant churches in Rome in 2017, on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

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*Austen Ivereigh is author of a new biography of Pope Francis, “The Great Reformer: Francis and the making of a radical pope” (Henry Holt, November 2014)*

### **Rick Warren: “Protestants, Catholics Must Unite”**

By Michael W. Chapman | February 4, 2015 | 4:03 PM EST  
<http://cnsnews.com/blog/michael-w-chapman/rick-warren-protestants-catholics-must-unite-defend-life-sex-marriage-we-re>

Evangelical pastor Rick Warren, who leads the eighth largest church in America, Saddleback Church, and is the author of the hugely popular book *The Purpose Driven Life*, said that Protestants and Catholics must form a “unity of missions” to defend the sanctity of life, sex, and the family, stressing that, “If you love Jesus, we’re on the same team.”

In terms of unity among Protestants and Catholics, Warren said, “Now, there’s still real differences, no doubt about that. But the most important thing is, if you love Jesus, we’re on the same team.”

“The unity that, I think, we would see, realistically, is not a structural unity but a unity of missions,” said Warren.

## Before Becoming Pope

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born to Italian parents in Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 17, 1936. His devoted Catholic Grandmother Rosa helped raise him while his parents worked. Her influence was formative for his world-view. She, both in Italy and Argentina, often lectured for Catholic Action arguing for protection of the poor. As a child Jorge attended a Catholic grade school of the Salesian order.

In his youth he worked as a janitor, bouncer at a local bar, and as a lab tech testing nutrients. One day walking past a church when he was 17 he entered the confessional where he was struck with the notion that he had to become a priest. This is the way he relates the incident: “Like somebody grabbed me from inside and took me to the confessional. While I was there, I felt I had to become a priest, and I didn’t doubt it.”

It was four years before he told anyone of this incident. Work and university studies kept him busy until at age 21, in 1958, he entered the Society of Jesus and enrolled in a Jesuit seminary where he studied to become a priest – contrary to his mother’s wishes. The next year he took a vow of poverty and after 13 years of Jesuit formation he was finally ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood. In 1973 he was named national leader of the Jesuits in Argentina. While serving in this capacity his country was experiencing chaotic post-Perón upheaval.

Bergoglio served his church in a variety of roles until becoming Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998. He served in that office until his election as Pope on March 13, 2013. While Spanish is his native tongue, he also speaks fluent Italian and German. “The pope also knows some English, French, Portuguese – and even a little Piedmontese, the language of his parents’ native region of Italy.” (*Pope Francis – Us Special Edition*, Albert H. Lee, editor, p. 39).

As a cardinal and Archbishop of Buenos Aires he journeyed to Rome in March 2013, to cast his vote for a replacement of Pope Benedict XVI, who requested retirement. After 24 hours and five ballots Jorge Mario Bergoglio, bypassing the papal throne, embraced his fellow cardinals, and emerged as the new pope to greet the 100,000 rain-soaked expectants outside the Sistine Chapel. He requested them to “pray to God so that he can bless me.”

Taking the name Francis, which no other pontiff has ever chosen, he became the first Latin American and the first Jesuit to be chosen Pope. – *the editor*

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