

1. Sacraments and their meaning in our church
2. reverence and worship of Mary and saints
3. who were the church fathers
4. How many Gospels are there and who wrote them?

Sacraments and their meaning in our church

Please provide your understanding of each of the 7 sacraments.

Baptism is grace from the Lord to cleanse a child of original sin. I think this concept is hoey and archaic and I try very hard to not teach about original sin. To me that is meat-on-Friday. I concentrate on the helping people to receive the grace of the Lord; an action taken by parents to commit themselves to raising the child to walk with Jesus. As for baptism of adults, the same premise applies. God gives an adult grace at Baptism. In doing so it is a sacrament which strengthens faith and leads that person to confirmation of their faith and to demonstrate their intention to live a life with God.

Communion - taking the body and blood of Jesus into your body and heart. You cannot do better than that to become closer to God.

Confirmation - a child at the age of reasoning (or an recently-enlightened adult) promises to stay on the path and to love God.

Matrimony - the sacrament of joining and commitment of two people before God. I wish the rest of the world would get out of the dark ages and recognize same-sex marriages. God loves all of his children and would never deny the sacraments. Why do churches think they can speak for God and change it to suit their own ends? Love and marriage are statements of faith for children to see that love and not hate is a better choice.

Ordination - Priests are ordained to serve God and to serve the people. They bring the sacraments to the faithful as the Apostles were sent to do after the resurrection of Jesus. A priest takes sacred vows and is publicly proclaimed by a bishop. The priest's hands are anointed so she or he may bring the Eucharist to the faithful. Priests teach from the Gospel and give absolution from God. Priests may baptize and also anoint the sick, bringing symbolic grace to those given the sacraments.

Reconciliation - to confess one's sins and be forgiven. Whether by private confession or within Mass, the sacrament is the same. Since few enjoy or subscribe to private confession, I favor the Reconciliation Service. A person may speak out, whisper or speak only in their mind. Absolution is given and the soul is cleansed. A penance may be severe or light but the point should be

dramatic in order to keep one on the path. Confession and forgiveness is re-learned each time and that it should be applied in our life and relationships with others.

Anointing the Sick & Unction (last rite)

Once more to bring God's grace, this sacrament strengthens one's faith in God during a time that life is threatened or when one is preparing for death. Confession and absolution should be part of the sacrament to help the injured one feel that their heart is clean and they are ready for their judgment day. For the family, this sacrament is a reinforcement of faith in God and unites all present in prayer.

reverence and worship of Mary and saints

Mary is the mother of Jesus as we know from the New Testament, and so is the "first of all the blessed." The blessed, or holy ones, are the saints. Mary bore Jesus and was his first follower, as we see at the Wedding Feast at Cana and Jesus' first public miracle. She was with him at the foot of the Cross and with the disciples in the locked Room after His Resurrection. These are all examples that we can follow on our own to Jesus. Mary shows us in her life that following Jesus is not always easy and may include much pain (seeing her son crucified). She was a human being who was born of human parents; she was married (to Joseph, a worker) and had a son, Jesus who is true God and true human. Because of her relationship with her son we believe that she continues to have a special relationship with Jesus and we can call upon her for aid as we do with other saints.

does not declare Mary to be born without sin (the Immaculate Conception), perpetual virgin though with child (the Virgin Mary), to be taken and soul into heaven upon her death (the Assumption, or "Dormition of Mary" to our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters), or to share the redeeming act with her son Jesus the Christ (as Co-Redemptrix). These are later traditions, titles, and honors that developed over the centuries out of great veneration of Mary in the church, but none of them are necessary for redemption and many of them biblically elusive. Belief in Mary's powers through her historical and religious titles is not necessary for salvation, though because of tradition we may dedicate missions to her or use these titles and honoraries on special days called feast days to remind ourselves of Mary as a powerful role model and her position as the Mother of Jesus and therefore Mother of God

there is no tradition in the Eastern Churches for the belief that the Holy Mother was born without original sin, although the Eastern tradition tends to the belief that she committed no voluntary sin during her lifetime.

The bodily assumption of the Blessed Mother is a reverent and pious tradition which many in the orthodox catholic churches respect. However, neither the Immaculate Conception nor the Bodily Assumption are recognized as dogmas, that is, required to be believed for our salvation.

What role does Mary have in the life of the Church? In your answer reflect upon the teaching of Mary's perpetual virginity.

My answer is philosophical but contrary to previous Roman Catholic teaching. Certainly the mother of Jesus is important beyond words. As the mother who bore Jesus and watched him die, she exhibited enormous strength. I think if you asked her she would agree that God is the one to pray to; pray to the Father for all the things you may pray for. She would likely have prayed as Jesus did, to God. Bless, honor and venerate the saints and the martyrs through the centuries; and bless Mother Mary. I do not concur that so much emphasis and worship should be given to Mary and so many other saints. I believe that too much focus elsewhere detracts from the message I preach; that the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and we the Holy Spirit are united by so much, does not include saints and the mother of Christ. We should follow the light of Jesus who prayed to God. We should honor his mother and respect the teachings of the church fathers and the Gospels regarding her immaculate conception and the virgin birth as miracles.

Who were the Church Fathers?

I mentioned Origen but there are hundreds of them and the various catholic sister churches do not all agree, the same as they do not agree on theology and doctrine. So this questions cannot be answered exactly.

The Fathers of the Church are so called because of their leadership in the early Church, especially in defending, expounding, and developing Catholic doctrines. For the first two centuries, most of these men were bishops, although in later years certain priests and deacons were also recognized as Fathers. Why are there no Church Mothers?

The list includes such notables as: Clement of Rome (d. A.D. 97), Ignatius (d. 110), Polycarp (d. 155), Justin Martyr (the Church's first major lay apologist; d. 165), Irenaeus (d. 202), Cyprian (d. 258), Athanasius (d. 373), Basil (d. 379), Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), Ambrose (d. 397), John Chrysostom (d. 407), Jerome (d. 420), Augustine (d. 430), Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), Pope Leo the Great (d. 461), and Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). These royals and notables likely signed on to the movement or the group as they observed the popularity of ministers with "boots on the ground," to use a popular phrase.

The Church demands four major characteristics to be exhibited in the life and works of an early Church leader if he is to be considered a Father of the Church. These are antiquity, meaning that he lived before the eighth century (the death of St. John Damascene [cir. A.D. 750] is generally regarded as the close of the age of the Fathers); doctrinal orthodoxy; personal sanctity; and approval by the Church.

x.

Great Fathers[edit]

In each of Western and Eastern Christianity, four Fathers are called the "Great Church Fathers" as follows

Western Church: Ambrose (340-397), Jerome (347-420), Augustine (354-430) and Saint Gregory the Great (540-604)

Eastern Church: Basil (c.329-379), Athanasius (c.296-373), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-c.389) and John Chrysostom (347-407)

In the Roman Catholic Church these are also called the "Eight Doctors of the Church".

more:

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/fathers/>

Here is the good stuff

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It is more important to know what proceeded the formation of the Church Fathers

It was British-born Flavius Constantinus (Constantine, originally (272-337) who authorized the compilation of the writings now called the New Testament. After the death of his father in 306, Constantine became King of Britain, Gaul and Spain, and then, after a series of victorious battles, Emperor of the Roman Empire. Christian historians give little or no hint of the turmoil of the times and suspend Constantine in the air, free of all human events happening around him. In truth, one of Constantine's main problems was the uncontrollable disorder amongst presbyters and their belief in numerous gods.

The majority of modern-day Christian writers suppress the truth about the development of their religion and conceal Constantine's efforts to curb the disreputable character of the presbyters who are now called "Church Fathers" (Catholic Encyclopedia, Farley ed., vol. xiv, pp. 370-1). They were "maddened", he said (Life of Constantine, attributed to Eusebius Pamphilus of Caesarea, c. 335, vol. iii, p. 171; The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, cited as N&PNF, attributed to St Ambrose, Rev. Prof. Roberts, DD, and Principal James Donaldson, LLD, editors, 1891, vol. iv, p. 467).

Constantine saw in this confused system of fragmented dogmas the opportunity to create a new and combined State religion, neutral in concept, and to protect it by law. When he conquered the East in 324 he sent his Spanish religious adviser, Osius of Córdoba, to Alexandria with letters to several bishops exhorting them to make peace among themselves. The mission failed and Constantine, probably at the suggestion of Osius, then issued a decree commanding all presbyters and their subordinates "be mounted on asses, mules and horses belonging to the public, and travel to the city of Nicaea" in the Roman province of Bithynia in Asia Minor.

They were instructed to bring with them the testimonies they orated to the rabble, "bound in leather" for protection during the long journey, and surrender them to Constantine upon arrival in Nicaea.

Thus, the first ecclesiastical gathering in history was summoned and is today known as the Council of Nicaea. It was a bizarre event that provided many details of early clerical thinking and presents a clear picture of the intellectual climate prevailing at the time. It was at this gathering that Christianity was born, and the ramifications of decisions made at the time are difficult to calculate.

About four years prior to chairing the Council, Constantine had been initiated into the religious order of Sol Invictus, one of the two thriving cults that regarded the Sun as the one and only Supreme God (the other was Mithraism). Because of his Sun worship, he instructed Eusebius to convene the first of three sittings on the summer solstice, 21 June 325 (and it was "held in a hall in Osius's palace")

In an account of the proceedings of the conclave of presbyters gathered at Nicaea, Sabinus, Bishop of Hereclea, who was in attendance, said, "Excepting Constantine himself and Eusebius Pamphilius, they were a set of illiterate, simple creatures who understood nothing"

Oriental Orthodox - In 451 a number of the faithful rejected dogma adopted by the Council of Chalcedon, choosing another path. The churches within the Oriental Orthodox include six churches: Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Eritrean Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church) and the Armenian Apostolic churches.

The Second Council of Nicaea in 786-87 denounced the First Council of Nicaea as,

"a synod of fools and madmen" and sought to annul "decisions passed by men with troubled brains"

(History of the Christian Church, H. H. Milman, DD, 1871).

If one chooses to read the records of the Second Nicaean Council and notes references to "affrighted bishops" and the "soldiery" needed to "quell proceedings", the "fools and madmen" declaration is surely an example of the pot calling the kettle black.

Constantine died in 337 and his outgrowth of many now-called pagan beliefs into a new religious system brought many converts. Later Church writers made him "the great champion of Christianity" which he gave, "legal status as the religion of the Roman Empire"

DELAYED TO NEXT SESSION

How many Gospels are there and who wrote them?

Matthew, Mark, Luke & John and sometimes the Act of the Apostles which is the Book of Luke, continued

Bible scholars believe that the Gospels were written in the following order:
Mark - Matthew - Luke - John

Matthew was a hated tax collector

Mark was the travelmate of Peter and was not part of the original disciples of Jesus

Luke was the travelmate of Paul and was also not part of the original disciples.

In *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (1924), [Burnett Hillman Streeter](#) argued that a third source, referred to as *M* and also hypothetical, lies behind the material in Matthew that has no parallel in Mark or Luke.^[10] Furthermore, some material present only in Luke might have come from an also unknown *L* source. This Four Source Hypothesis posits that there were at least four sources to the *Gospel of Matthew* and the *Gospel of Luke*: the *Gospel of Mark*, and three lost sources: *Q*, *M*, and *L*

Canonical gospels

Gospel of Mark

Gospel of Matthew

Gospel of Luke

Gospel of John

The [gospels](#) of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), and [Luke](#) are referred to as the **Synoptic Gospels** because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar wording.

Controversial gospels

Gospel of Thomas (arguably a Gnostic or proto-Gnostic gospel) – 1st to mid 2nd century; collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus, 31 of them with no parallel in the canonical gospels

The Gospel of Peter

Apocrypha are statements or claims that are of dubious authenticity. The word's origin is the medieval Latin adjective *apocryphus*, "secret, or non-canonical"

- Luke and the Acts
- "At the earliest, Acts cannot have been written prior to the latest firm chronological marker recorded in the book—Festus's appointment as procurator (24:27), which, on the basis of independent sources, appears to have occurred between A.D. 55 and 59."

- "It is increasingly admitted that the Logia [Q] was very early, before 50 A.D., and Mark likewise if Luke wrote the Acts while Paul was still alive. Luke's Gospel comes before the Acts (Acts 1:1). The date of Acts is still in dispute, but the early date (about A.D. 63) is gaining support constantly."

For clarity, Q is supposedly one of the source documents used by both Matthew and Luke in writing their gospels. If Q actually existed then that would push the first writings of Christ's words and deeds back even further lessening the available time for myth to creep in and adding to the validity and accuracy of the gospel accounts. If what is said of Acts is true, this would mean that Luke was written at least before A.D. 63 and possibly before 55 - 59 since Acts is the second in the series of writings by Luke. This means that the gospel of Luke was written within 30 years of Jesus' death.

Matthew

The early church unanimously held that the gospel of Matthew was the first written gospel and was penned by the apostle of the same name. Lately, the priority of Matthew as the first written gospel has come under suspicion with Mark being considered by many to be the first written gospel. The debate is far from over.

The historian Papias mentions that the gospel of Matthew was originally in Aramaic or Hebrew and attributes the gospel to Matthew the apostle.⁵

"Irenaeus (ca. a.d. 180) continued Papias's views about Matthew and Mark and added his belief that Luke, the follower of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by that apostle, and that John, the Beloved Disciple, published his Gospel while residing in Asia. By the time of Irenaeus, Acts was also linked with Luke, the companion of Paul."⁶

This would mean that if Matthew did write in Aramaic originally, that he may have used Mark as a map, adding and clarifying certain events as he remembered them. But, this is not known for sure.

The earliest quotation of Matthew is found in Ignatius who died around 115 A.D. Therefore, Matthew was in circulation well before Ignatius came on the scene. The various dates most widely held as possible writing dates of the Gospel are between A.D. 40 - 140. But Ignatius died around 115 A.D. and he quoted Matthew. Therefore Matthew had to be written before he died. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that Matthew was written before A.D. 70 and as early as A.D. 50.

Mark

Mark was not an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life. He was a disciple of Peter and undoubtedly it was Peter who informed Mark of the life of Christ and guided him in writing the Gospel known by his name. "Papias claimed that Mark, the Evangelist, who had never heard Christ, was the interpreter of Peter, and that he carefully gave an account of everything he remembered from the

preaching of Peter."7 Generally, Mark is said to be the earliest gospel with an authorship of between A.D. 55 to A.D. 70.

John

The writer of the gospel of John was obviously an eyewitness of the events of Christ's life since he speaks from a perspective of having been there during many of the events of Jesus' ministry and displays a good knowledge of Israeli geography and customs.

The John Rylands papyrus fragment 52 of John's gospel dated in the year 125-135 contains portions of John 18, verses 31-33,37-38. This fragment was found in Egypt. It is the last of the gospels and appears to have been written in the 80's to 90's. Most scholars say it was written in the early 90's. This means that the time span between the original writing of John and its earliest copy (fragment) is approximately 35-45 years.

John does not mention the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D. Some say this is because John was not focusing on historical events. Instead, John focused on the theological aspect of the person of Christ and listed His miracles and words that affirmed Christ's deity. This is a possibility, but like the reasoning used regarding Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the lack of significant historical markers is also evidence that it was written early on.

Though there is still some debate on the dates of when the gospels were written, they were most assuredly completed before the close of the first century and written by eyewitnesses or under the direction of eyewitnesses.

NEXT WEEK

1. Definition of ESOTERIC
2. was Mary Magdalene the wife of Jesus?
3. why no more married priests?
4. historic purging of women from responsibilities and positions of leadership
5. Dec;aration of DOMINUS IESUS (JESUS) on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the church