

Session Two

One Church

Welcome back everyone. Would someone like to open us in prayer?

Tonight we're going to talk about one church. The church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But first did everyone have a chance to reflect on your Witness Statement?

Would anyone care to share theirs with us?

Thank you all. If you haven't done yours yet, I strongly urge you all to do so. It is quite self illuminating, and it's a primary way to share your faith with others.

Now who remembers John Martignoni's rules of apologetics?

1. Be secure in the knowledge that you are backed by two thousand years of Church history, led by wise and holy men.
2. There is not a question that can be asked about the Catholic Church that cannot be answered with authority, and with support of the scriptures. (We covered those first two above.)
3. Never be afraid to say "I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you."
4. ALWAYS FIND OUT and get back to them.
5. Learn to be on the offensive without being offensive.
6. Never say "You are wrong"
7. Ask the other person to explain their beliefs, and ask them to quote the scripture that supports them.
8. Always tell the person that you are in 100% agreement with the Bible and you believe every word, but let them know that your interpretation may be different than theirs and be ready to explain yourself.

Ok, let's get into the nuts and bolts for tonight.

First, you may have heard it said that there are somewhere around forty five to fifty thousand separate Protestant, Christian Denominations outside of the Catholic Church. I've been guilty of this myself. While researching for this evening I looked it up and the number varies on multiple lists as from 31,000 to 52,000. It seems that this alone should be a great argument in favor of a unified church and on the face of it, if there are more than a handful, it is. But along the way, I found an interesting article in the National Catholic Register by a scholar named Scott Eric Alt that headlines; **We Need to Stop Saying That There Are 33,000 Protestant Denominations**. So of course, I had to read it. It can be found here;

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/scottericalt/we-need-to-stop-saying-that-there-are-33000-protestant-denominations>

Mr. Alt lays out facts and figures quite convincingly that the number is far less than any of these estimates. Chief among his arguments is that most lists count as separate denominations those churches of each country. In other words, the Anglican Church of England and the Anglican Church in the United States are separate denominations. Also, they separate independent Baptist churches as individual denominations, even if the one down the street is preaching the same doctrine.

More importantly, they count organizations such as Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Masons, Christian Scientists, Scientology and many others as Christian Denominations when some are clearly not scripturally Christian at all.

The article is fascinating, and I won't be using that inflated number any more, and unfortunately for my "Facts and Figures" mind Mr. Alt did not provide a revised number, but suffice it to say there are a large number of Christian churches on earth with large doctrinal differences from the Catholic church and from each other.

St. Paul has several things to say about that.

1 Corinthians 1:10

¹⁰ I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

Romans 15:5-6

⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But let's start with this:

Church Must Be One

Some anti-Catholic pundits claim that the Catholic Church is a Church of man, not of Christ, but it's interesting to look at it through a different lens.

In 1954, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon founded the Unification Church in South Korea, as the sole authority on matters of faith and morals, in order to unify all of mankind to one faith in the world. Moon gathered many disciples and his congregation grew steadily under his leadership.

As he grew older and it was difficult for him to continue with the same vigor he turned leadership of the Church over to his daughter In Jin Moon who radically changed the teachings and doctrines of the Church and greatly reduced its membership to a current skeleton of its former self.

In 1933, Herbert W. Armstrong founded the Radio Church of God in Oregon, renaming it the Worldwide Church of God in 1968. He preached a combination of New Covenant and Old Covenant laws and

espoused strict adherence to Sabbath traditions and dietary law. Upon his death in 1986, the Church continued under the leadership of a council of elders but has diminished in popularity ever since.

- In the year 1900, Charles Parham founded the Pentecostal Church in Southern California.
- In the year 1879 Mary Baker Eddy founded Christian Science.
- In the year 1870 Charles Russell founded Jehovah's witnesses
- In the year 1865 William Booth founded the Salvation Army
- In the year 1860 Ellen White founded the Seventh Day Adventists
- In the year 1830 Joseph Smith founded the Church of Latter-day Saints. He was twenty four when he published the Book of Mormon
- In the year 1828 John Darby Founded the Exclusive Brethren Church
- In the year 1747 Emanuel Swedenborg Founded The New Church (or Swedenborgianism)
- In the year 1744 John & Charles Wesley Founded the Methodist Church
- In the year 1727 Count Zinendorf Founded the Moravians
- In the year 1693 Jakob Ammann Founded the Amish Church
- In the year 1647 George Fox Founded the Quakers
- In the year 1605 John Smyth Founded the Baptist Churches
- In the year 1560 John Knox Founded the Presbyterian Church
- In the year 1536 John Calvin Founded Calvinism
- In the year 1534 King Henry VIII Founded the Anglican Communion
- In the year 1523 Huldrych Zwingli Founded Swiss Reformed Church
- In the year 1517 Martin Luther Founded the Lutheran Church
- In the year 33 Jesus Christ Founded His ONE True Christian Church

Protestant (n., adj.)

from German or French protestant, from Latin protestantem (nominative protestans), present participle of protestari (see protest (n.))

Denomination (n.)

"a naming, act of giving a name to," from Old French denominacion "nominating, naming," from Latin denominationem (nominative denominatio) "a calling by anything other than the proper name" to denominate, or distance from.

Matthew 16:15-19

*¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. ¹⁸ And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my **Church, (Singular)** and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

In those brief exchanges, Jesus founded His Church and firmly handed over all control of it to Peter, the Apostles and their successors. Some may say that all of that power ended with the death of the Apostles and therefore Apostolic succession is non biblical.

But logically, if ALL power is given to Peter, and WHATEVER he binds on earth will be recognized by God in Heaven, then by passing that power to a successor, or instructing the other Apostles to elect replacements, God in Heaven will honor Peter and his successor's action until the **end of the age**.

A Common Argument Against Peter

The earliest scriptures were first written down in Greek. The translators either worked from Hebrew texts or from the word of mouth stories handed down for generations. When translating from one language to another, it is sometimes necessary to modify the actual text to fit the proper grammar and rules of the new language.

In the early Greek, when Jesus speaks of Peter as the rock the proper grammar would be: "You are Petros (masculine gender) and upon this Petra (Feminine gender) I will build my Church."

In Modern Greek, the feminine and masculine have morphed into big rock and little rock, so the reading in Modern Greek would be "You are Petros (Pebble or small stone) and upon this Petra (Large unmovable boulder) I will build my Church."

A common argument is that the Catholic Church uses the English translation which has only one word for rock, big or small, that we fail to see that the word used for Peter is the diminutive, small, insignificant stone so obviously he is not the mighty rock that Christ built His Church upon.

The problem with this argument is twofold. First, in the ancient Greek, the two words were not exclusive in describing a rock, but rather were simply the correct Greek grammar attached to the masculine and the feminine.

Second, if we dig a little deeper we can see from scripture itself that Jesus spoke Aramaic, the common language of the region at that time.

We know this for instance because the Greek translators left in a little Farsi at the crucifixion.

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

And what is the Aramaic word for rock? Kefa, which has no gender and is the only Farsi word for a rock of any size. So in the ancient Aramaic, Christ said "And so I say to you, you are **Kefa, (Rock)** and upon this **Kefa (rock)** I will build my Church"

This is an illustration of the dangers of individually interpreting scripture without the aid of those more knowledgeable than ourselves. Those with 2,000 years of experience to back them up. A further indication of Peter's station in the Church is his name change. God changed the names of his servants who had great importance in His plan.

Genesis 17:5

⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations

Abram demonstrated his great faith in the Lord by his willingness to sacrifice his son to the will of God. For his great faith, God renamed him **Abraham** and made a covenant that he would be the father of a great nation, of many nations.

Matthew 16:17-18

*¹⁷ Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, **Simon** son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. ¹⁸ And so I say to you, you are **Peter**, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.*

With the full measure of the truth, we can see that Christ clearly built His One True Church upon the Rock of Peter. We could spend several sessions on Apostolic Authority.

What does the Bible say?

Jesus teaching His disciples says:

John 10:16

*¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be **one** flock, **one** shepherd.*

Or when praying to the Father before His betrayal:

John 17:17-23

*¹⁷ Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. ²⁰ I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ so that they may **all be one**, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. ²² And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be **one, as we are one**, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as **one**, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.*

And as Paul writes to the Romans:

Romans 15:5-6

⁵ *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think **in harmony with one another**, in keeping with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that with **one accord** you may with **one voice** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Or in First Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 1:10

¹⁰ *I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **agree in what you say**, and that there be **no divisions among you**, but that you **be united in the same mind and in the same purpose**.*

1 Corinthians 12:13

¹³ *For in **one Spirit** we were all baptized into **one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of **one Spirit**.*

And Ephesians

Ephesians 4:3-6

³ *striving to preserve the **unity of the spirit** through the bond of peace: ⁴ **one body and one Spirit**, as you were also called to the **one hope** of your call; ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; ⁶ **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.*

And Colossians

Colossians 3:15

¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in **one body**. And be thankful*

Clearly, Christ wanted one Unified Church for all, Which He Himself founded, and entrusted to Peter and the Apostles.

Some anti-Catholic pundits claim that the Catholic Church is a Church of man, not of Christ, citing the Pope and the Bishops as objects of control and worship. But it's interesting to turn that around. All non-Catholic Churches are in fact, the Churches of men or women who decided for themselves that the One true Church that lasted fifteen hundred years was suddenly somehow wrong in their teaching and that they as individuals had discovered the real truth about the scriptures through their own interpretations.

...and what does the Bible say about that?

Romans 16:17

¹⁷ *I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, **in opposition to the teaching that you learned**; avoid them.*

2 Peter 3:16:17

¹⁶ *speaking of these things as he does in all his letters. In them there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the*

other scriptures. ¹⁷ Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, **be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability.**

2 Peter 1:20

²⁰ Know this first of all, that there is **no prophecy of scripture** that is a matter of personal interpretation

This last passage is an interesting one to consider. Many Protestants believe that each individual should read the bible, pray and discern for themselves that truth of the scriptures. That every person, through prayer and contemplation will be led by the Holy Spirit to the truth of the scriptures. The very fact that there is division among the denominations should by itself reveal this as untrue. So, if each person is to find his own truth in the bible, how do we interpret this passage? "...there is **no prophecy of scripture** that is a matter of personal interpretation

So how do we know how to interpret the scriptures? Who is given the authority to interpret them for us?

Luke 24:44-45

⁴⁴ He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.**

Acts 8:27-31

²⁷ ...Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join up with that chariot." ³⁰ Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ He replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.

1 Timothy 3:15

¹⁵ But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, **the pillar and foundation of the truth.**

Now here is a very interesting verse. **The Church, is the pillar and foundation of the truth.**

Let's tie that statement together with this one;

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. ¹⁶ If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.'
¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.

Now let's consider this. Christ himself tells his apostles to go to the church as the final arbiter in a dispute with your brother (fellow Christian).

Now, where on earth does that authority come from? The pastor down the street? Or from 2000 years of Church authority given the church by Christ himself? If the Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, it MUST be one unified church with one doctrine of faith.

And if it is the Church that is the pillar and foundation of truth, then where does that leave the Bible? Most Protestants believe that the Bible is the authoritative document. That all truth comes from the Bible. But remember, the Bible is of the Church, the Church is not of the Bible. The early Christians compiled the books of the bible from the writings of the time, combining the Hebrew bible including the Tora into the books we now call the Old Testament. To them it was simply the Scriptures. But it was Catholic Bishops and Scholars that decided finally at the council of Hippo in 393 and confirmed at the council of Carthage in 397 that the current 73 books of the bible, 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New testament were affirmed as Holy Scripture, written by men, inspired entirely by God.

Now, there is no table of contents, or index or instruction in the scriptures themselves that describe which books and how many should be contained in the Bible. It is historically accurate to state that the Catholic Church compiled and confirmed the canon of scripture that we now know as the Bible.

So here is a conundrum for a Protestant Bible Scholar who generally do not believe in the authority of the Catholic Church and it's Pope, Bishops and priests. By accepting the canon of the Bible as the holy inerrant word God, by extension, you have accepted the authority of the Church to define the contents of the Bible.

Logically then, wouldn't it follow that if the church gave us the Bible, should we not listen and understand their interpretation of the book that they gave us through the Holy Spirit?

Remember this again; There is nothing in the Bible that contradicts any teaching of the Catholic Church and there is nothing in the teachings of the Church that contradicts anything in the Bible.

I'd like to break into small groups here and have some discussion about what we've talked about and what might have stood out to you.

Just gather into groups of 4 to 6 people for about ten minutes.

Questions?

So, all that we have talked about is going to require some study and contemplation. Which means I'm going to give you homework.

For next week, do a little study of Catholic Teaching on a subject of your choice. Google is your friend, but beware the devil is literally in the details. For every legitimate Catholic web site out there, you will find ten, twenty or thirty non-Catholic, even anti-Catholic web sites.

Check out Catholic Answers at www.catholic.com. At one time catholicanswers.com was a blatant anti-Catholic site It seems to be gone now but that's the kind of thing you will find regularly. Another good Catholic site is the national Catholic Register at www.ncregister.com as well as The Bible Christian Society at www.biblechristiansociety.com, and www.catholicculture.org. And don't forget www.usccb.org for our own United States Bishops web site with a complete New American Bible Revised Edition and a word searchable Catechism at <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism>.

Come back next week and if you are comfortable, be ready to give a brief report on what you've found.

There will be no grades, extra credit, or penalties. I won't even check to see if you've done the work. I will ask if anyone would like to share what they found out and believe me, there is some amazing information out there and in my experience, cradle Catholics are often surprised at what they discover when they go beyond their standard catechesis.

I was studying and learning the Ave Maria to sing at a wedding. My cradle Catholic wife came in and looked over my shoulder and asked "Why do you have Ave Maria and Hail Mary up on the computer?"

I said, "I need to learn the Ave Maria for the wedding on Saturday."

She said, "I know that, but what does that have to do with the Hail Mary?"

"I'm just trying to understand the translation."

"I don't understand." She said

"Well, Ave Maria is the Hail Mary in Latin so I'm trying to understand it."

She said, "I never knew that. I always thought Ave Maria was some really beautiful song we sang at church sometimes."

There is a lot we don't know or understand. If you're serious about evangelization and sharing your faith, do the homework.

Who would like to pray us out this week?

Amen

"The sacred mystery of the Church's unity" (UR 2)

813 *The Church is one because of her source:* "the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit."²⁵⁹ The Church is one *because of her founder:* for "the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body."²⁶⁰ The Church is one *because of her "soul":* "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity."²⁶¹ Unity is of the essence of the Church:

What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."²⁶²

814 From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great *diversity* which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life. "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions."²⁶³ The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. And so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."²⁶⁴

815 What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony."²⁶⁵ But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
- apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family.²⁶⁶

816 "The sole Church of Christ [is that] which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it. . . . This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him."²⁶⁷

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: "For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the People of God."²⁶⁸

Wounds to unity

817 In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame."²⁶⁹ The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body - here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism²⁷⁰ - do not occur without human sin:

Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.²⁷¹

818 "However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church."²⁷²

819 "Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth"²⁷³ are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements."²⁷⁴ Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him,²⁷⁵ and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity."²⁷⁶

Toward unity

820 "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time."²⁷⁷ Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me."²⁷⁸ The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁹

821 Certain things are required in order to respond adequately to this call:

- a permanent renewal of the Church in greater fidelity to her vocation; such renewal is the driving-force of the movement toward unity;²⁸⁰
- conversion of heart as the faithful "try to live holier lives according to the Gospel";²⁸¹ for it is the unfaithfulness of the members to Christ's gift which causes divisions;
- prayer in common, because "change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism;'"²⁸²
- fraternal knowledge of each other;²⁸³
- ecumenical formation of the faithful and especially of priests;²⁸⁴
- dialogue among theologians and meetings among Christians of the different Churches and communities;²⁸⁵
- collaboration among Christians in various areas of service to mankind.²⁸⁶ "Human service" is the idiomatic phrase.

822 Concern for achieving unity "involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike."²⁸⁷ But we must realize "that this holy objective - the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ - transcends human powers and gifts." That is why we place all our hope "in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit."²⁸⁸