

## Catholic Verses: Top Ten Catholic Bible Verses

By Graham Osborne

When sharing the Catholic faith with other Christians, it is critical that we speak their “language” – Sacred Scripture. Every verse of Scripture supports Catholic teaching, but some are particularly clear and powerful. Here are 10 key verses of Scripture that every Catholic should be able to share, confidently and knowledgeably, to help work towards that Christian unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17 below.

### 1) Jesus Prays for Perfect Christian unity, so That the World Will Know God Sent Him

**John 17:17-23:** “I pray... that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you... that the world may believe that you sent me... so that they may be one, as we are one, 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.”

There are few things more important than Christian unity. The last thing Jesus prays for before he’s arrested is the “perfect” unity of his followers. Why? Jesus tells us: “that the world may believe that you sent me”.

This is not piecemeal unity, with thousands of different Christian denominations teaching different things on very important topics like divorce and remarriage, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, baptism or the Eucharist. Jesus twice calls it “perfect” unity – unity that will tell the world that the Father so loved it that he sent his only son [cf John 3:16]. This is the heart of evangelization. And it’s also why Catholics *must* be able to share their faith with other Christians. To do this we must speak their language. That language is Scripture.

### 2) Jesus Builds His Church on Peter and It Will Never Fall

**Matthew 16:16-19:** “*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*”

Jesus didn’t first write the Bible [though he wanted it written and inspired it of course!], he first came to found his Church. In time, he also inspired the New Testament to be written, assembled into the Bible, and interpreted by this same Church. But Jesus didn’t found thousands of different denominations. He founded one Church. It is an unarguable fact of history that this Church is the Catholic Church.

Now some will reply that this Church must have fallen away at some point – apostacized. But this is not possible. Jesus is the wisest of builders. When he builds his house [and St Paul tells us in 1 Tim 3:15 that “the house of God” is the church], it will never fall, no matter the storms [cf. Matthew 7:24-25]. He builds his house – his church – on Peter, Petros [Greek for rock], and promises, “the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.”

### **3) We Do Not Follow the Bible Alone [Sola Scriptura]**

**2 Thessalonians 2:15** “stand firm and hold to the *traditions* you were taught by us, whether *by word of mouth or by letter*” [similarly, 1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3].

The early Christian Church absolutely did not follow the Bible alone, but primarily followed the oral teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Here, St Paul clearly exhorts us to follow *both* the spoken [Sacred Tradition] and written [Sacred Scripture] sources of Divine Revelation God has given to us.

And as the New Testament was written, again, Christians relied primarily on the Church that Jesus founded to properly interpret it. Following “Scripture alone” through private interpretation of the Bible was unheard of. For starters, stunningly, this teaching is found nowhere in Scripture. It is unscriptural itself, and so, it is self refuting!

Additionally, we cannot even know which books belong in the Bible from Sola Scriptura. There is *no inspired table of contents* to tell us which books actually belong in the Bible in the first place. It was the Church in the late 300’s that discerned which books were truly inspired by God and belonged in Scripture. So for the first almost 400 years of Christianity, Christians did not even have the Bible! To be a “Bible Alone” Christian like most Protestants today was a total impossibility. On top of this, before the printing press in the 1500’s, all Bibles were hand copied and prohibitively expensive. Very few could afford their own private copy, and either way, most could not read!

But perhaps the most compelling reason to reject Sola Scriptura is that it simply does not work! If Scripture alone was really what God had intended – individuals reading the Bible and asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the truths of Scripture to them – then everyone should be coming up with basically the same interpretations for the same passages of Scripture. At the very least, their understandings should not be contradictory. But this is absolutely not what we see.

What we *do* see is unending disagreement and division. If there is one Holy Spirit, one Bible, and one set of unchanging, universal truths, how is it that we now have thousands of different Protestant denominations [some estimate well over 30,000!], each with very contradictory teachings on some very important doctrines. And this all stems from radically different interpretations of the same Sacred Scriptures – so different and contradictory that they can no longer have fellowship together. The fruit of Sola Scriptura has been utter Christian disunity, in total opposition to the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17.

### **4) The Church is the “Pillar and Foundation of Truth”**

**1 Tim 3:15** “the household of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.”

How can we know truth? How can we know and properly understand all that Jesus and his Apostles taught? How can we know how to properly interpret the Bible? If you asked a “Bible Christian” what the pillar and foundation of truth was, they would almost certainly say, “the Bible”. But the Bible clearly says it’s the Church!

## 5) The Church Is Protected From Doctrinal Error by the Holy Spirit

I am going to cheat a bit here and include two verses, because they are both so good, and this is such an incredibly important point!:

**2 Tim 1:13-14, 2:2:** “Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me... guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us... what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others”.

Did you catch that? Guard the truth by the Holy Spirit! Entrust it to faithful men who will teach others. That’s how the truths that Jesus left his Church can be passed on through the Apostles and their successors – in a living way, but protected from error by a charism or gift of the Holy Spirit. That’s how the Church can be infallible in teaching doctrine. This doesn’t mean the Pope will be sinless. But it does mean that when he teaches officially on faith and morals for all the faithful, he will *never* teach error.

**John 14:26** and **16:13** are similar. As Jesus celebrates the Last Supper with the Apostles in the upper room, he promises to send them “the spirit of truth” who will lead the Church into “all truth”: “*the Holy Spirit... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you... the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all the truth... and he will declare to you the things that are to come*”

## 6) The Church Is Authoritative

**John 20:21-23** “As the Father has sent me, *so I send you...* Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them”.

What profound authority: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you”! Over and over again, we see Jesus giving *his* authority to his Church.

For example, in Mark 6:7-13, Jesus sent the twelve out “and *gave them authority* over unclean spirits”, and to heal. In Luke 10:16, he confirms that, “he who hears you hears me”. In Matthew 16:17-19 and 18:18, Jesus promises that “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” He also gives Peter, the first Pope, “the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven”. Incredible!

## 7) The Christian Church is Apostolic!

**Acts 14:23** “They appointed presbyters [Greek root for the English word, “priest”] for them in each church”.

There is no question that the early Church was Apostolic – founded on the Apostles and their successors [see Ephesians 2:20]. The office of Apostle was clearly passed on, and in particular, Peter’s office as head of the Church – the Pope. We can trace an unbroken line right from the very first Popes to our present day: Peter, Linus, Clement, Sixtus... Benedict XVI, Francis. And accordingly, *every* bishop, priest and deacon in the Catholic Church today can trace their ordination back in an unbroken line to one of the Apostles. Awesome!

One of the first things Peter would do as the head of the Church would be to fill Judas’ vacant office of Apostle: “His office let another take”... to take the place in this ministry and

apostleship from which Judas turned aside” [Acts 1:16-26] In 1 Tim 3:1, St Paul writes that “If any one aspires to the *office* of bishop, he desires a noble task.”

If someone is in a denomination that does not have validly ordained Bishops, Priests and Deacons that succeed directly from the Apostles [and no Protestant denomination does], you have to ask yourself, “*why not*”? The early Church did – and still does today!

Writing on this exact subject in 110AD, St Ignatius, [Bishop of Antioch, and taught by St John himself!) would exhort: “*In the same way all should respect the deacons as they would Jesus Christ, just as they respect the bishop as representing the Father and the priests as the council of God and the college of the Apostles. Apart from these there is nothing that can be called a Church.*”

## **8) We Are Not Saved by Faith Alone**

**James 2:24** “You see that a man is *justified by works and not by faith alone.*”

The second pillar of the Reformation was the doctrine that a person is saved by their faith alone, apart from any good works. But the only place in all of Scripture where the words, “faith” and “alone”, come together is James 2:24, which unequivocally refutes this novel teaching of the Reformation, confirming that we are, in fact, NOT justified “*by faith alone*”!

## **9) Grace-Inspired Good Works Are Necessary For Salvation**

**Romans 2:6-10:** “God... will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek... immortality through perseverance in good works”

This verse clearly shows the necessity of good works for salvation as well. But to be clear, Catholics don’t actually believe in salvation solely by good works alone either. We believe that we are saved by the grace of God [cf. Acts 15:11], and that both faith and good works come primarily through God’s grace: faith working in love [grace-inspired good works], as Galatians 5:6 puts it.

And similarly when Jesus is *specifically asked*: “*What good deed must I do, to have eternal life*”, he replies, “if you would enter life, keep the commandments” [Matt 19:16-17]. We are not saved by faith alone. Grace-inspired good works are needed too. But they all come from the grace of God!

## **10) You Cannot Have Eternal Life Without the Eucharist!**

**John 6:47-58** “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”

Here is one of the most foundational teachings in the New Testament. Thirteen times in nine verses, Jesus repeatedly insists, in one form or another, that if we eat his body and drink his blood, we will have eternal life. Stunning!

But some insist this whole teaching is symbolic. But this can’t possibly be, and for several reasons.

First, the context. Jesus has just fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, and then walked on water. But the Jews want more. “What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you... Our ancestors ate manna in the desert”

Jesus answers them: “Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

The Jews want a sign to confirm that he is the Messiah. Over a million of their ancestors ate miraculous manna in the desert for decades. You fed 5,000. Not bad. But we want more....

If Jesus’ answer is a nice symbolic talk about his body being the bread from Heaven, it’s a pretty poor response. But that is *not* his answer. His answer is that he will feed billions of people with his flesh every day – and they will live forever!

The Eucharist is the summit of the Christian life, and every single Church Father in the first 1500 years of Christianity taught that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharist. Even Martin Luther believed this!

Secondly, the Jews completely understand what Jesus is saying and grumble: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”. Jesus knows they are taking him literally and knows they’re upset. Rather than saying, “don’t worry, I am only talking figuratively”, he intensifies his teaching, using very graphic Greek words like “sarx”, which means physical flesh, and “trogon”, that literally means to gnaw or chew. Not a hint of symbolism here!

But the key here is that in John 6:66, many of his disciples leave: “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” They have understood him literally and they leave. And Jesus let’s them go – because he was speaking literally! But Peter’s understanding of this teaching? “You have the words of eternal life”!

Speaking on “the body and blood of the Lord” in 1 Corinthians, St Paul further confirms that this teaching is not just symbolism, but of profound importance: “any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.” This is clearly not symbolism!

On another occasion where Jesus actually does use bread symbolism, the disciples truly do misunderstand him – and Jesus immediately and firmly corrects them: “How is it that you fail to perceive that I did not speak about bread?... Then they understood... beware of the... teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” [Matthew 16:11-12].

For our Protestant brothers and sisters who truly love God and desire a “personal relationship” with Jesus, nothing could be more personal than receiving Jesus’ Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist.