

next. Without our faith, without the Church, we would give up on this understanding of the meaning of life that God has shared with us. And we would attempt to solve alone what we can never do without his grace.



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The Church is home to heroic witnesses of the Faith

Within the Body of Christ, we have the numerous witness of many holy women and men throughout the history of the Church. In these saints, we find hearts in which the Gospel has taken root in unique and different ways, in unique and different circumstances. It is helpful to remember, too, that saints had their own difficulties, even within the Church. Some were ostracized for their own piety, and others were marginalized for speaking truth to power. These holy men and women model what it means to grow in virtue. They model what it means to be faithful to the Church, even when leaders in the Church may have behaved badly.

The Church has Mary as heavenly mother
Mary, mother of Jesus Christ and mother of the Church, is the first Christian. She is the first to love, follow, and proclaim the good news of her Son. As Mother of the Church, she is mother of the Body of Christ — all of us. Through her example, she teaches us what it means to have a deep and abiding faith and trust in God. She inspires us to submit openly and unhesitatingly to his will, even if we may not fully understand it. She points us to Christ, instructing us, as she told the servants at the wedding at Cana, to “do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). Through her example, we are reminded that, even during times of trial, the answer lies in Jesus alone, and we must constantly keep our gaze focused on him rather than on the things of this world.

The Church is a witness to hope
Every time we attend Mass and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, we get a glimpse of the heaven that each of us desires. We are formed by the Word, which is proclaimed to us, and we receive the Eucharist that strengthens us. We gather in community to pray with and for one another. We are shaped by the liturgical seasons, and we celebrate the feasts of the saints, who inspire us by their holy witness. As such, the sacred mysteries prepare us to meet the Lord — thereby enabling us to live as people of hope. By attending Mass each week, we allow our lives to be transformed in new and different ways, and God makes each of us a new creation. Rather than allowing ourselves to be overcome by fear and pain, we recognize that, as St. Paul says, all things work for the good for “those who love [God]” (Rom 8:28). We are filled with hope. And as Pope Benedict XVI said in his encyclical *Spe Salvi* (“Saved in Hope”), people who have hope live differently (see 2). This is especially important to remember in times of difficulty in the Church.

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Why Stay Catholic?



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This is a time of great challenge for the Church, in the United States and around the world. The suffering caused by the clergy sexual abuse crisis is experienced first and foremost by the victims. But the effects of the crisis are rippling through the whole Church, leaving some to seek compelling reasons to remain in the Catholic Church. During times of trial, however, it's more important than ever to stay close to Christ and his Church. With that in mind, here are eight reasons to stay Catholic.

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ

One of the most convincing things about being Catholic is the knowledge that the Church was not created by man, but was instituted by Christ himself. Jesus says to Simon Peter, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Christ also gave Peter and the apostles the authority to carry on his work, and instructed them on how to do it. By establishing the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,



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Christ gave us the means to enter into God's plan for humanity. What a blessing and a gift!

The Church leads us to Jesus Christ

Speaking to the Twelve Apostles at the Last Supper, Jesus revealed that he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), thereby showing himself to be what each of us longs for the most. By telling us that he is "the truth" — something naturally sought by each of us — Christ makes clear that, when it comes down to it, all of life's big questions can find their answers in and through him. As "the way," Christ gives us the model for how to live our lives. In fact, God sent us his only Son to show us the way back to God after humanity separated itself from him throughout the course of history, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As Jesus himself adds in that same discourse, Christ is the surest path for us to get to heaven: "No one comes to the Father, but by me." Finally, Jesus is "the life" because by his life we find life's true meaning and goal. Through him, we are able to share in God's own life — which is what we were created for. Should we separate ourselves from the Church, we separate ourselves from Christ, "the way, and the truth, and the life."



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The Church brings us into communion with Christ and his body

By nature of our baptism, we enter into communion with Christ and those who are members of his body in the Church. And as participants in this communion, we are part of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pt 2:9). What a blessing, and what a responsibility! As members of the Body of Christ, we belong to a community of believers that can be a rich source of blessings and consolation during times of struggle. By praying and worshiping, serving, and studying the Faith together, we grow closer to one another and closer to Jesus. Similar to family life, the Body of Christ shares in each other's joys and successes, and we support one another through trials and hardships. Fundamentally, as members of Christ's body, we also are brought into personal relationship with him. If we were to cut ourselves off from this body by separating from the Church, we then risk damaging this important and special relationship.

The Church is the source of the sacraments

Jesus Christ has called us to follow him and to evangelize the world, and he gives us help to do so. Through the Church, Christ provides us with seven sacraments to "give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of

faith" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1210). Through baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, we receive the foundation of Christian life. This is especially true regarding the Eucharist — the "source and summit of the Christian life" (1324). The Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders are "directed towards



the salvation of others," and "serve to build up the People of God" (1534). Finally, the sacraments of healing (penance and the anointing of the sick) also allows the Church to continue Christ's mission of "healing

and salvation" (1421). Sacraments are especially powerful during times of struggle. We need the sacraments to give us God's grace. They fortify us in our Christian life, and they help to heal and restore our brokenness.

The Church helps us to make sense of life

We all wonder at some point or another: What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? What is my purpose? These enduring questions only begin to make sense when approached through the lens of faith. Through Scripture and Tradition, God has revealed to us what he wants us to know about himself and the world he has created. Our faith allows us to know that God is the source of all that is and that he created all things out of love. He made each of us in his own image and likeness, and he desires us to share his divine life. And while we each have a unique purpose, we also share a common one: to know, love, and serve God in this life, and to be with him forever in the

