



Study 4: Catholicism & Why it All Matters

Personal Preparation

1. Read Chapter 7 & 8 of 'Nothing in my hand I bring'.

Group Discussion Questions

Over the last few weeks we've been reading chapters 1-6 of 'Nothing in my hand I bring' and discussing it in growth group. From these chapters, what are some things you've learnt about Roman Catholicism that you didn't know before?

In chapter 7, Ray Galea outlines official Roman Catholic teaching on Mary and talks about how this teaching is in a sense a case study of all the key problems with Catholicism. Let's think about this.

1. From the bible what can we learn about Mary? **Read Luke 1:26-28; Luke 1:34-49; Luke 2:13-19; Luke 2:27-35; Luke 2:41-52; Mark 3:31-35; John 19:25-27; Acts 1:14**

2. According to official Roman Catholic teaching, what are some other things that must be believed about Mary?

3. **Read Hebrews 4:15-16.** What does this say about who Jesus is for us now and how we can approach him?



Time Magazine, Nov 29, 1948.

“This week, the vast machinery of the Roman Catholic Church seemed almost ready to proclaim, by papal infallibility, a new dogma which all true Catholics would be required to believe: that upon the death of the Virgin, her body was taken up directly into Heaven.

Belief in the "Assumption," as it is called, can be traced back into the earliest records of Christianity, but no reference to it appears in canonical scripture. Accepting the apocryphal account of the event as genuine, Gregory of Tours (538-593) tells that, as the apostles were watching round the dying Mary, Jesus appeared with angels and committed the soul of His mother to the Archangel Michael. Next day, as the body was being carried to the grave, He appeared again and carried it in a cloud to Heaven.

Although the Feast of the Assumption has been celebrated in the Church at least since the 7th Century, and the Assumption is one of the "glorious mysteries" on which Catholics meditate while saying the Rosary, this belief has never been pronounced a dogma. Informed sources now predict that Pius XII will do so next April 2—the 50th anniversary of his ordination.”

4. We should realise that all Christian groups have had councils, committees, oral teachings and official doctrines that are part of our traditions to help us work out what the bible is teaching. But what is the end result of the Roman Catholic teachings on Mary?

Even the Presbyterian church has a doctrinal statement - the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)—one of several summaries of doctrine that emerged out of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. Presbyterian ministers and elders give their agreement to the WCF when they are 'ordained'. Congregation members need not express any such agreement. It's important to realise that ministers and elders take the bible, the Word of God as the 'supreme standard' (primary and final authority) and the WCF as the 'subordinate standard' (a very distant second!).

5. **Read Romans 5:6-11.** There is a sense of joy and confidence in this passage. What are we to have confidence in?

6. According to this passage why can we be confident?

7. In chapter 8 of his book, Ray Galea makes the point that extra teaching about church and the means to salvation - all work to remove confidence and assurance that we can have in Jesus. Do you think Ray Galea is right? Why?

8. As Ray Galea points out in the chapter 'It is finished', he has written his book to offer a critique of Catholicism—but he has not done it lightly or flippantly—it's come as a result of his own painful personal journey. Ray Galea says it's not easy to explore these issues, but he has done it because these issues matter. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

9. Our desire at freshchurch is that we grow to be **clear-thinking** followers of Jesus. In what ways has studying God's word over the last few weeks clarified your thinking?

Appendix 1: Glossary

Ray Galea uses some terms that might unfamiliar to a lot of us. As you read the book, many of these terms will be explained, but for quick reference here are some definitions:

St or Saint: - In Roman Catholic theology, this is a person of exceptional holiness who is now in God's presence and who can be asked to intercede or pray for those still on earth. The process of declaring someone a saint is called 'canonization'. The process of becoming a saint is lengthy, often taking decades or centuries to complete. The canonization process has been in the news lately because of the movement to make Mother Teresa a saint. A saint may be designated as a patron saint of particular causes or professions. The exact number of saints is unknown but the Catholic church has canonized around 3000 people. The New Testament refers to saints eg. Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18; Philippians 1:1.

Mass: Latin *missa*. Probably derived from the words of dismissal which closes the Catholic church service in the Latin rite, 'ite missa est'.

Council of Trent— Held between 1545-63. That's a long meeting! It's purpose was to clarify the official Roman Catholic belief in the light of the Reformation. Trent (Trento, today) is in northern Italy. At this Council, traditional Roman Catholic teaching was asserted - the mass, priests, sacraments, purgatory, and the saints.

First Vatican Council or 'Vatican I' - The Roman Catholic Council which had its first session in 1869, and was officially closed in 1870. And you thought the Council of Trent went for a long time! It had a number of small interruptions—Franco-Prussian War, WWI, WWII. This Council is not seen as significant as Vatican II.

Second Vatican Council or 'Vatican II' - The Roman Catholic Council held between 1962-1965. This council brought a number of reforms to the church including an increased 'openness' to other religions, and the need for the Mass to be spoke in the vernacular language. Interestingly, the current Pope—Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) was in attendance as a 35 year old and last year it was reported that he now wishes to bring back the Latin mass. One feature of Vatican II is that it produced the document *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church) which provides a definition of how papal succession and authority works, ".....our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which He erected for all ages as the pillar and mainstay of the truth. This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him". Also this from the *Lumen Gentium* - "loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff.....".

Papal Infallibility—See Vatican II above. This Roman Catholic doctrine is not about insisting that the Pope is 'sinless'. It is the doctrine that insists that when the successor of Peter makes a solemn pronouncement about faith or moral, he is guarded by the Holy Spirit against teaching error. Infallible doctrine can arise directly from the pope or through an ecumenical council (eg. Vatican I, Vatican II) which is guided by the pope and subject to his confirmation. Matthew 16:18-19 is seen as the key text for Papal succession and authority.

Catechism: A systematic summary of theology held by a denomination or religion. Traditionally they were used as a way of giving instruction at church and also within families. There is a Catholic Catechism. Within the history of Presbyterianism, there are catechisms: Westminster Larger Catechism and Westminster Shorter Catechism of 1647.

Appendix 2: Martin Luther

In his book, Ray Galea mentions Martin Luther a number of times. You could fill Suncorp Stadium to the roof with the number of books written about him! Here are just 5 things you may not know:

1. Martin Luther's World

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. But it was not known as Germany like it is today. It was part of the 'Holy Roman Empire' which took in what today is Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, as well as parts of Italy, Poland and France. Martin Luther went to university at the age of 17 and graduated but found the whole experience of his studies unsatisfying. In 1505 he entered a 'friary' to become an Augustinian monk.



2. Martin Luther's Protest

In 1517, Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in the city of Wittenberg, accusing the Roman Catholic church of various wrong teaching. In his theses he raises many issues including the place of priests. But what primarily prompted this action was the Roman Catholic tradition of 'indulgences'. Others had protested against what they saw as abuses in Roman Catholic church, but Luther's massive impact can in part be seen as a result of the invention of the printing press. Before long, Luther's 95 Theses had been copied and published all over Europe. This set off the chain of events known as 'the Reformation'

3. Martin Luther and His Diet of Worms

Luther's Protestant views were condemned as heretical by Pope Leo X and Luther was summoned to either renounce or reaffirm them at the Diet of Worms on 17 April 1521. 'Diet' is a term used for an assembly or government body. When he appeared before the assembly, he was presented with copies of his own teaching and was asked if he still believed what these works taught. Luther requested time to think about his answer. On the next day he was asked the same question. In response Luther apologised for the harsh tone of many of his writings, but said that he could not reject the majority of them or the teachings in them. Luther said, "*Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.*" On May 25, the Emperor Charles V issued his Edict of Worms, declaring Martin Luther an outlaw.

4. Martin Luther's Wife

Catherine Von Bora was 18 at the time Martin Luther issued his 95 Theses at Wittenberg. She had lived in a convent since she was 3, but when Catherine and several of the other nuns read Luther's teaching they wanted to leave. When Luther heard of this he encouraged a friend to help them. They were smuggled out of the convent in empty fish barrels! Luther helped find husbands for many of the women, though no husband was found for one—Catherine. He had previously said, "*I shall never take a wife, as I feel at present. Not that I am insensible to my flesh or sex (for I am neither wood nor stone); but my mind is averse to wedlock because I daily expect the death of a heretic.*" They were married in 1525 and had 6 children and raised 4 orphaned children. The former celibate monk Luther once wrote, '*There is no bond on earth so sweet, nor any separation so bitter, as that which occurs in a good marriage.*' Luther called Catherine, 'the morning star of Wittenberg'.

5. Martin Luther's Death

He died of natural causes at the age of 62. Luther's last written words were, "*We are beggars!*"