

EVANGELIZATION & APOLOGETICS...

SPREADING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE IN SUPPORT OF OUR CATHOLIC BELIEFS

SESSION ONE
EVANGELIZATION,
TOOLS FOR THE GREAT COMMISSION

PRESENTED BY
C. MICHAEL HAGER

WWW.THEBIBLECATHOLIC.COM

Session One

Evangelization, Tools for the Great Commission

Welcome!

Christ commanded us to “...Go forth and preach the Gospel to all nations”

In this series of classes, we are going to discuss evangelization. I hope to give you some tools, and ideas for being comfortable sharing your faith with friends, family and even strangers.

We’re going to discuss approaches, attitudes, demeanor and knowledge. How to start a conversation, and how to answer questions. I’ll give you the basis of apologetics, reasoned and logical answers for Catholic beliefs and a few answers to some common objections to Catholicism.

Let’s open in prayer.

Lord we know your Holy Spirit is in this room. We give you thanks for bringing us here together in your name. We praise you today by accepting your command to spread your word to all people. Open our hearts to understand your teaching. Help us open ourselves to this great calling.

Amen

How many of you have a Witness speech prepared and ready at a moment’s notice to recite at a proper time or circumstance? Somebody asks what brought you to the Catholic Church, or why are you Catholic? Or simply why are you a Christian? Are you ready to answer them?

If you are a cradle Catholic, what keeps you in your faith? If you’re a convert, what led you to your faith?

I was confirmed Catholic at Easter Vigil, 2010. At that time, my witness story led back only to Christmas Vigil Mass of 2003, the first time my wife and I attended any Mass at St. Mary Magdalene. We’d just moved here from Florida, were looking for a Church home and my wife, being Catholic wanted to go to a Christmas eve Mass. In the middle of Mass she turned to me and said “You should join the choir.” I didn’t really know why, but after Mass I approached the Choir leader and joined. I’ve been sitting in the choir section ever since.

Later, I attended a high school youth retreat only as a member of the band. We had a praise band called “Fish on Fridays” and we went to the retreat only to provide music. When we returned to the church on Sunday afternoon, and everybody was laying around on the lawn waiting for the Life Teen Mass to start, I asked a group of teens, “What was your favorite part of the retreat?” they answered in unison, “Adoration”.

I have to tell you, I had never heard of or witnessed adoration before. Forty or fifty high school teenagers being absolutely quiet for about an hour. Not only quiet, but on their knees before the exposed Eucharist and after three days of retreat games, free-time, praise music, and lessons, their favorite part was adoration.

I got involved more heavily in the youth program after that and soon was a full-time core member.

Finally, in 2009 a Baptist minister, converted to Catholicism named Michael Cumby gave a three night mission here at St Mary Magdalene and on the third night, at the very end of his last session, he so completely and logically explained the Eucharist that I felt a physical opening of the curtain and I walked out of the church, shook his hand and told him that he had just made a convert that night and I was confirmed on April 3rd 2010 at the Easter Vigil.

Now, that is my story, but here is my witness to the glory of God and his ultimate plan for us all.

While leading a small group discussion at a Life Teen life night a few years ago, well after my confirmation, the subject of conversion came up and my wife out of nowhere told the teens that she had always prayed for me and that during one such prayer she had heard an audible response, "You don't have to worry about Michael."

I was shocked as this was the first I'd heard of this. But what a powerful witness to the teens!

But the topper came nearly two years later when the subject came up between us and I asked when she had heard this response. She very casually said, "Oh, it was out in front of your parent's house in Canoga Park. I remember it perfectly."

What's shocking about that? My parents moved out of that house in 1975! My wife prayed for my conversion, God told her not to stress over it and she remained calm and patient for like, thirty years!

So my witness changed at that moment from being led to the Church by some teens and a Baptist Pastor, to being led by God when he sent my future Catholic wife to a Presbyterian youth group with a friend. When they walked through the door, I was the closest to that door and the first other teen she met that night. I remember it well. She met fifty other people so I was inconsequential to her. But it worked out!

God has a plan for us all. We simply need to pay attention to it. Maybe your being here tonight is part of his plan.

What is your witness?

Let's do a little exercise right now... everyone turn to the person next to you and each give a two minute "elevator speech" about your witness in Christ. An elevator speech is as if you were in an elevator with someone you wanted to say something important to and you only have the time it takes

to reach the floor where one of you must get off. So it has to be concise, clear and make your point before the door opens... GO.

Evangelization

So how do we evangelize? You've all seen street preachers standing on a corner admonishing all to repent and seek the Lord! You've seen young people holding signs "Jesus Saves!" You've undoubtedly seen the Mormons in their white shirts and ties riding their bikes from house to house, or had Jehovah's Witnesses knock on your doors. Even bumper stickers that say "Honk if you love Jesus." That's evangelization. But I'm also guessing that if you're like me, despite their intentions, it makes you a little uncomfortable.

So how do we evangelize without making others uncomfortable? How do you bring up your faith for discussion without turning others away?

First, get comfortable and confident with your Catholic faith. Don't be embarrassed by it. Be happy and ready to bring it up in public.

What do you do when you get a new car? You evangelize it. You tell your friends. "What have you been up to lately?"

"Oh I got a new car!"

"Really, what kind?"

"Oh, it's a 2018 Rockwell X-37"

"Rockwell makes cars?"

"Oh, yeah! Brand new! It's a hybrid, four-cylinder internal combustion for around town and part GE turbo fan for the highway. It was originally designed for the Autobahn! It has Bluetooth, GPS, self-parking, auto drive, hands free communication and oh, yeah, it has stealth technology paint that deflect all frequencies of radar waves!"

Then you proceed to show the car off, give your friend a ride or even offer to let him drive it! Then you go to work Monday morning and repeat the same conversation with your fellow employees and pretty soon, they're thinking about getting one.

So how do you do that with your faith?

It's really quite simple. We all go to classes like this, or to men's or women's Bible Study. We go to Alpha for eight or ten weeks and the Alpha away weekend, we go to couple's weekends, catechist training retreats and we enjoy them and come home revitalized in God.

Guess what? SHARE IT!

“Good morning Bob! How was your weekend?”

(Ok, this is your opening! Don’t blow it.)

“Man, it was awesome! I spent the weekend at a youth retreat with fifty-three Catholic teenagers worshipping and praising the Lord! It was amazing!”

“Catholic. I didn’t know you were Catholic.”

Why not, you never shared that with your co-workers?

“Oh, yeah, I was confirmed in 2010. Our church has a great youth program and I’m on the core team.

“Wait, you were confirmed? You mean like converted?”

“Yeah, so, this weekend, it was so inspiring to see these kids kneel in silence for an hour for adoration!”

“Ok wait, what’s adoration?”

Now you have a conversation. It might only last until you fill your coffee cup and go back to your desk, but it plants a tiny seed.

Later you might ask Bob to come to your Men’s Bible Study or Alpha.

It’s simple conversation with you showing your excitement over your faith just like a new jet car.

I love to wear this cross you see here, and one of the many tee-shirts from retreats and events in the church. I get comments all the time.

Somebody asked me why I don’t wear a crucifix. There’s two reasons. First, because this cross was a confirmation present from some good friends, and second, because I’ve found that it allows a conversation to start during which I can choose the proper moment to fill them in that I’m Catholic.

“Hey, I really like your cross!”

“Thanks, it was a confirmation gift from some friends.”

“Confirmation?”

“Yeah, when I became Catholic.”

You have a conversation started. Maybe they'll ask you why you became Catholic. Or they may start asking questions; "Don't Catholics worship Mary?" Or "Who gave men the right to forgive sins." Then if you're prepared, you can start explaining the truth and logic of Catholicism and if you do it with kindness, patience and love you start sowing seeds.

A couple of "Nevers";

Never be judgmental.

Never criticize

Never be right for the sake of being right

Never tell someone else they are wrong.

Tools

Why Apologetics?

Apologetics from the Greek ἀπολογία, (apologia) is the practice of mounting a reasoned defense of a person, or issue. The word Apologia actually appears in the scriptures in the original Greek, where Thomas on trial offers his Apologia or reasoned defense. Here we will provide tools for a reasoned defense of the teachings left to us by Christ, of the Catholic Church, based on the scripture that the church herself compiled at its beginning.

1 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, ¹⁶ but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: ² proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. ³ For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers ⁴ and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. ⁵ But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.

How Do We Use Apologetics In Evangelization?

First, we must make a couple of basic assumptions:

1. We believe in one God, the creator of the universe and of all things in it.

2. We believe in His Son Jesus Christ who died for our sins in order that we might be saved. (Insert Nicene creed here)
3. We believe in the entire body of works we call the Bible, and we believe in all of the teaching and authority of the Church.

The moment that we say we do not believe in one or more of the teachings of the Church, we are no longer in a position to defend the faith. We must accept ALL teaching and Authority of the truth as the whole truth, as God wants us to know and understand it. If we stumble, or admit that there is one tiny bit of Catholic teaching that we do not agree with, we are left open to the criticism that the Church does not have the authority, and we, like our Protestant brothers and sisters are free in our own minds to interpret scripture as we see fit and we give up all power and authority that we should have at our backs.

In Catholic apologetics, especially when evangelizing to most Protestants, this is a key point. Since most Protestants subscribe to the theology of Sola Scriptura, or the Bible alone as the authority of Christianity, the question you will be asked most when explaining your Catholic beliefs is “Where is that in the Bible?” And that’s where the fun begins! Because if you are prepared, you can logically and scripturally answer every objection that anyone poses to you about the Catholic Church.

In a nutshell, here are two basic important points that I learned in my ever-skeptical quest for the truth:

There is nothing in the teachings of the Catholic Church that contradicts the Bible
There is nothing in the Bible that contradicts the teachings of the Catholic Church.

In other words, there is not a question you can ask about the teachings of the Catholic Church that does not have its roots in the traditions of the Church with the support of the Scriptures, or from the scriptures with the support of Church teachings. If you get nothing else, get this firmly settled in your head and be assured that you are backed up by the “*Church of the living God, the **pillar and foundation of truth.***” (remember that statement for later)

Now, there are a few things that we believe in that are NOT mentioned directly in the Bible. To name a few,

- The actual word Purgatory
- The Assumption of Mary, body and soul into Heaven
- The Immaculate conception
- The word trinity (this is a good one because most sola scriptura Protestants do believe in the Trinity)
- Sola Scriptura, a basic Protestant belief cannot be found in the Bible
- Salvation by faith alone is not in the Bible and oddly, there’s only one place the words “Faith Alone” are found in the scriptures;

James 2:24

*²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and **not** by faith alone.*

So we can tread on shaky ground by saying simply that we believe the interpretations of the Church. This allows the Protestant to say, "Well, I believe in my interpretation of the Bible!"

But remember:

***There is nothing in the teachings of the Catholic Church that contradicts the Bible
There is nothing in the Bible that contradicts the teachings of the Catholic Church.***

So now you need to look into the bible that the Magisterium has interpreted for two thousand years and logically and lovingly explain YOUR interpretation of the bible (that just happens to coincide with the Magisterium)

As you can see, if unprepared, we can be walking through a mine field, and from my experience, most Protestants will be better armed biblically than we are.

When I was in the third grade, I had to memorize one hundred popular Bible verses in order to be awarded the White Bible that we all coveted. (Was that a sin?) And throughout most Protestant's lives they memorize important verses that either, give them solace, comfort and peace (which is a good thing), or verses that help support their particular beliefs.

Father Michael Boyle once told me that the difference between a sermon and a homily is that for a sermon, the speaker chooses a topic, then researches scripture to bolster his point, while in a homily the meaning and interpretation of scripture is taught in its context with the experience and authority of the Church behind it.

One thing we could all learn from our Protestant brothers and sisters is to learn the bible more thoroughly. But we do have a defense, and that is that we cannot be found wrong if we stick to the teachings of the Church.

John Martignoni, president of the Bible Christian Society in Birmingham Alabama, has several great points to make concerning evangelizing to Protestants:

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.

There are many practices and traditions in the Catholic Church that at first glance, and to many non-Catholics are not scriptural. This is a major source of complaint for those who hold to the idea of Sola Scriptura. When we speak of these practices to many non-Catholics, their natural response is “Oh Yeah, Where is THAT in the Bible?”

Some of the most notable examples are:

- The Assumption of Mary (and other beliefs)
- Purgatory
- Infant Baptism
- The Trinity (Although most protestant denominations do recognize and teach the Trinity)

One major such topic is the assumption that Catholics are idolaters. That the proliferation of statues and idols in our churches, and the evidence that we constantly bow and pray to these statues is idolatry.

So tonight I’m going to start out with a little examination of the ten commandments. This is fairly simple and hopefully will get your heads in the right direction for further self study and preparation for your personal evangelism mission.

Confusion Over the Ten Commandments

The scriptures containing the Ten Commandments are identical in chapter and verse in the Catholic and Protestant bibles, differing only in the language used in the translation, but in no way different in content. Let’s compare them side by side:

The Protestant Ten Commandments

- 1 I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me.

- 2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image

- 3 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain

- 4 Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

- 5 Honor thy father and thy mother.

- 6 Thou shalt not kill.

- 7 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

- 8 Thou shalt not steal

- 9 Thou shalt not bear false witness.

- 10 Thou shalt not covet

The Catholic Ten Commandments

- 1 I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange Gods before me.

- 2 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- 3 Remember the Lords Day to keep it holy.

- 4 Honor your father and mother.

- 5 You shall not kill.

- 6 You shall not commit adultery.

- 7 You shall not steal

- 8 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- 9 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- 10 You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Now let's take a look at the actual scripture as translated in the New American Bible, Revised Edition and in the Authorized King James Version.

Exodus 20:1-17

The Protestant King James Version:	The Catholic New American Bible, revised edition
¹ And God spake all these words, saying,	¹ And God spoke all these words, saying,
² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.	² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.	³ You shall not have other gods beside me.
⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:	⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;
⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;	⁵ you shall not bow down before them or serve them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation;
⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.	⁶ but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.	⁷ You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain. For the LORD will not leave unpunished anyone who invokes his name in vain.
⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.	⁸ Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy.
⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:	⁹ Six days you may labor and do all your work,
¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:	¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God. You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your work animal, or the resident alien within your gates.
¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.	¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.
¹² Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.	¹² Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
¹³ Thou shalt not kill.	¹³ You shall not kill.
¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery.	¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.
¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal.	¹⁵ You shall not steal.
¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.	¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.	¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Notice that in both versions, if you read them carefully, there actually appear to be thirteen separate commandments.

The footnotes in the New American Bible Revised Edition explains it this way;

“The precise numbering and division of these precepts into “ten commandments” is somewhat uncertain. The traditional designation as “ten” is not found here but in [Exodus 34:28](#) and also [Deuteronomy 4:13](#) and [10:4](#), where these precepts are alluded to literally as “the ten words.” That they were originally written on two tablets appears in [Exodus 32:15–16](#); [34:28–29](#); [Deuteronomy 4:13](#); [10:2–4](#). Traditionally among Catholics and Lutherans, verses 1–6 are considered as only one commandment, and verse 17 as two. The Anglican, Greek Orthodox, and Reformed Churches count verses 1–6 as two, and verse 17 as one. In [Deuteronomy 5:21](#), “Wife” and “Possessions” are separated re. coveting.

“The present form of the commands is a product of a long development, as is clear from the fact that the individual precepts vary considerably in length and from the slightly different formulation of [Deuteronomy 5:6-21](#) (see especially vv. [12–15](#) and [21](#)). Indeed they represent a mature formulation of a traditional morality. Why this specific selection of commands should be set apart is not entirely clear. None of them is unique in the Old Testament and all of the laws which follow are also from God and equally binding on the Israelites. Even so, this collection represents a privileged expression of God’s moral demands on Israel and is here set apart from the others as a direct, unmediated communication of God to the Israelites and the basis of the covenant being concluded on Sinai.”

The Biblical references to the numbering of 10 commandments

Exodus 34:28

²⁸ *So Moses was there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights, without eating any food or drinking any water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words.*

Deuteronomy 4:13

¹³ *He proclaimed to you his covenant, which he commanded you to keep: the ten words, which he wrote on two stone tablets.*

Exodus 10:4

⁴ *The LORD then wrote on the tablets, as he had written before, the ten words that the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me.*

It is important to remember that the chapters and verses we know today did not appear in the original scriptures and there is no authoritative basis for the divisions we now use in the Bible. The chapter and verse divisions were added to the Bible for the sake of convenience by a priest named Stephen Langton who divided the Bible into chapters in the year A.D. 1227, so the division of the commandments was never about the verses, but about the commands themselves.

According to the Catechism, paragraph **2066**:

“The division and numbering of the Commandments have varied in the course of history. The present catechism follows the division of the Commandments established by St. Augustine, which has become traditional in the Catholic Church. It is also that of the Lutheran confessions. The Greek Fathers worked out a slightly different division, which is found in the Orthodox Churches and Reformed communities.”

Not until the paraphrased or abbreviated versions of the Ten Commandments became popular after the reformation, did Protestants adopt the Orthodox versions in use today that separate Idolatry from One God.

By accepting the separation of verses 3 and 4 as two different commandments, some Protestants helped justify their division from the Catholic Church by claiming that the statues of saints and angels were graven images forbidden by a specific commandment, whereas the commandment itself, read in its full context is clearly intended to prohibit the creation of idols of worship. The misconception is perpetrated by those who do not have a full understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church and mistake veneration and intercession for worship.

Further, if verse 5 is a prohibition against all “craven images” why, later in the scriptures does God give explicit instructions on how to carve two Cherubim of the purest gold to adorn the cover of the Arc of the covenant?

Why does he specify the exact design of a bronze serpent to protect the people from snake bite?

Why does he describe in great detail the cleansing basin to be held on the backs of four oxen?

And, (be careful how you state this one) if there should be NO images of any kind, why is there a picture of Jesus and his Apostles in your bible? You might ask at this point, “Do you worship that picture of Jesus?” and when they say “No, it is only a picture to remind us of the Savior who we do worship.”

And then you could say “Exactly. We are expressly forbidden to worship inanimate objects, statues or idols as Gods, but the statues we have in our churches and cathedrals remind us of those people gone before us that we venerate and we ask them to lift up our prayers to the Father who we worship above all else.”

You may not convince them, in fact you probably won’t convince them. But if done with logic and reason, with specific references from the Bible that they hold as all of the truth of the faith, perhaps you will plant a seed that with further nurturing may sprout into something larger.

You and I will never convert anyone. Only the Holy Spirit does the reaping. We can only do the planting and gentle nurturing and pray.

Next week we’re going to talk about One Church. This week, I’d like you to consider a little homework.

Take a moment to sit down and write out your witness. Put down on paper so that you have a clear understanding of what you would say to a stranger about what brought you to, or what keeps you in your faith.

Bring it with you next week and I'd like two or three of you to share with the group if possible. This isn't a test, it isn't mandatory and I won't ask you to turn them in for credit. You'll get nothing from me for doing it and I won't even know if you didn't.

What you will get out of it is a clearer understanding of your own faith, what it means to you, and it will give you one more tool in your tool box to use when speaking to someone about your joy in our Lord.

Let's close in prayer.