

WHO CAN TEACH AUTHORITATIVELY? CAN ONLY CATHOLIC PRIESTS, BISHOPS, & POPES INTERPRET THE BIBLE?

The Catholic Blog - Helping people find answers to the most common questions about Catholicism with answers from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible.

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“Can only Catholic Priests Interpret the Bible Authentically?” - Important Passages of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to Consider:

- **“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”** (CCC 95)
- **“The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone”** (CCC 85)
- **“The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.”** (CCC 100)
- **“It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.”** (CCC 120)
- **“Tobit, Judith...1 and 2 Maccabees...Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)...Baruch”** (CCC 120)
- **“Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records.”** (CCC 113)

“Can only Catholic Priests Interpret the Bible Authentically?” - Important Scriptures to Consider:

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”** (ESV)
- 2 Timothy 3:15 **“how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”**
- Psalm 19:7–14 **“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; [8] the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes”**
- John 10:27–30 **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. [30] I and the Father are one.”** (ESV)
- 1 Peter 2:5–9 **“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [6] For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ [7] So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ [8] and ‘A stone**

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of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. [9] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (ESV)

- 1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”
- Hebrews 10:12 “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,”
- Hebrews 4:14–16 “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 2:11–13 “For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. [12] Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. [13] And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (ESV)
- John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”
- Ephesians 1:17–18 “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the **Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him**, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (ESV)
- John 16:13 “When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (ESV)
- Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it” (ESV)
- Matthew 21:42 “Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures”
- 1 Timothy 4:13 “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.” (ESV)
- Revelation 1:3 “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (ESV)

“Can only Catholic Priests Interpret the Bible Authentically?” - Important Questions to Consider:

- If the Roman Catholic Church is has the exclusive claim to “authentic interpretation”, does that mean Orthodox and Protestant Churches are invalid?
- **What does it mean to say that the Bible cannot stand without the Roman Catholic Tradition and Magisterium? Is that a biblical claim?**
- Who saves us? Jesus alone? A Church or Denomination?
- Who are Christians called to follow?
- **Are the biblical claims to authority based on faithfulness to God or the chronological/familial lineage?** What happened in the Bible if a King/Judge/Prophet was unfaithful to God’s truth?
- Has the Catholic Church been faithful to God’s truth and love over the past two millennia?
- Does the Holy Spirit indwell Churches or people? What is the task of the Holy Spirit? Who has the Holy Spirit?

- **Why do some of the more controversial Catholic teachings (indulgences, purgatory, penance, transubstantiation, baptismal regeneration, veneration of and prayer to Mary and the saints, etc.) come primarily from the Deuterocanon/Apocrypha (i.e. books not usually found in Protestant Bibles) and Tradition?**
- What does it mean to say that “Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records.”? Are our hearts trustworthy?
- Why does Jesus and the New Testament give so much attention to reading the Bible?

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