

Recently, a post appeared on Facebook that has been receiving quite a bit of activity, both pro Catholic and anti-Catholic over the past several months. The initial post was entered by a person named Marissa Brand on June 1, 2018. The content and format was based on the Roman Missal prior to the beginning of Advent 2011.

The following script reflects a dialogue between a former Catholic, now evangelizing non-Catholic Christianity and a believing Catholic and frequent participant at Mass. Whether the encounter ever actually occurred or is a composite of many encounters over a period of time does not matter. It is the Truth found in the message and content, demonstrating that the Catholic Mass is the primary source for teaching, literally anyone, on the Practice of our Catholic Faith through belief in the God of the Trinity and His manifestation as a human being in the person of Jesus. Some bolding and highlighting was not in the original document but shows the emphasis on key words and phrases that should become part of our Catholic – Christian vocabulary.

I was a Catholic once....

"I was a Catholic once," said the lady a few yards from me in the parking lot. "Now I'm a Christian and you can be one as well." She preceded to hand a tract to a gentleman standing next to the opened trunk of his car. I couldn't help it.

"Excuse me," I said to the lady "but could I too have a tract?" The lady's face beamed. "**Are you saved?**" she asked. "Of course I am; I'm a believing Catholic," I retorted. She looked at me as if I had bad breath or something.

She continued, "I was just telling this gentleman that I too was a Catholic - a Catholic for thirty-some years in fact. Now I've found Christ and I'm trying to **tell everyone** I know about **salvation through Christ.**"

"Wow, that's really something! May I ask why you left the Church?" I could tell that, by asking this question, my new acquaintance was getting excited. After all, she had probably been snubbed by dozens of people and now she has someone that she can "**witness**" to Christ. I didn't mind much either, but I tried not to show it.

"You see," she said, "I was born Catholic. I attended Mass every week, received the Sacraments and graduated from a Catholic school. *Not once did I ever hear the gospel proclaimed.* Not once! It was after the birth of my first child that a **good friend of mine shared 'the gospel'** with me and I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and became a Christian. Now I belong to a '**Bible-believing**' church and I'm sharing the gospel with whomever will listen."

This shocked me. "You mean you belonged to the Catholic Church for almost forty years and you never heard the gospel?" I said. She was getting more excited. "Yes, **I never once heard the gospel of salvation preached or taught or even mentioned in the Church.** If you don't preach the gospel, excuse my bluntness, but you're simply not Christian." I scratched my head and said, "that's strange. I've been a Catholic all my life and I bet I hear the gospel ever week at Church."

Her smile quickly faded into a look of curiosity. “Maybe, I’m missing something,” I continued. “**Tell me what you mean by ‘the gospel?’**”

The lady reached back into her purse to pull out a little tract and said, “This tract explains the simple gospel of salvation. It can be broken down into four easy steps:

“**First**, we acknowledge that we are all sinners in need of God’s forgiveness.

Secondly, we recognize that only God can save us.

The **third** step is that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for our sins and to bring us to God **[the Father or Triune God in the Trinity]**.

And the **fourth** and final step is that each individual accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior to be saved.”

I thought for a couple of seconds and said, “If I could demonstrate to you that Catholics hear “**the gospel**” every Sunday, would you agree to take a closer look at the Catholic Church?” Now, she knew she had me over a barrel. “Prove it,” she said. I excused myself for a second and ran to my car to grab a Missal.

“Since you have attended Mass nearly all your life, you probably remember these prayers.” I flipped open to the beginning prayers of the Mass and proceeded to show her how Catholics hear, pray and live the gospel message every Sunday.

Penitential Rite

The **first** step in my new found friend’s tract stated that we are all sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. After the Greeting, the Mass continues to what is known as the **Penitential Rite**. I read loud the text to her while she followed reading silently.

“I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;”

I mentioned that it is here in this section that each Catholic states publicly that he or she is individually a sinner - not merely in a general sense - but specifically in thoughts, words and deeds. You can’t get much more complete than that. I continued reading:

“...therefore I ask Blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.”

The priest reaffirms this confession of sin by praying:

“May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.”

And the whole congregation says “Amen,” that is, “I believe.”

The priest continues:

“Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy,”

and finishes by saying:

“Lord show us your mercy and love. And grant us your salvation.”

[note: this is one of the Penitential Rite options found in the Roman Missal Order of Mass]

I looked at her and said, “You see, we Catholics start every Mass with a public declaration of our own personal sinfulness and look to God for forgiveness.” She responded, “But Catholics don’t believe that God alone can save them. They believe Mary and the saints will save them.” I shook my head in disagreement. “No, we don’t. Remember what we had just read in the Mass. Catholic ask Mary, the angels, the saints and the whole congregation to pray to God for mercy on their behalf - just like I would ask you to pray for me to God. Does that mean that I look to you to ‘save’ me? No, of course I don’t believe that. I’m just asking for your help. Besides the ‘Gloria’ of the Mass proves that Catholics look to God alone to save us.”

[second]

I began reading the Missal emphasizing certain words to prove my point:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, almighty O God, Almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.”

As I looked up, I could see the lady intently reading the page. She couldn’t believe that she had prayed these prayers for years and never noticed what it was saying. Yet, there it was in black and white.

I continued with the **[third]** step - the acknowledgment that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and to bring us to God.

The Profession of Faith [*From the Councils of Nicaea <325AD> & Constantinople <381 AD>*] reads in part:

“For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.”

In the **Eucharistic Prayer 1**, the priest prays:

“Remember, Lord, your servants [*for whom the priest intends to pray with us*]

all gathered here, whose faith and devotion are known to you. For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise or they offer it for themselves and all who are dear to them: for the redemption of their souls, in hope of health and well-being, and paying their homage to you, the eternal God, living and true. . . .order our days in your peace, and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation and counted among the flock of those you have chosen.”

[95 Commemoration of the Dead:]

“Grant ‘them’ O Lord, we pray, and all who sleep in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace. To us, also, your servants, who though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies, grant some share and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs. Through Christ our Lord through whom you continue to make all these good things, O Lord; you sanctify them, fill them with life, bless them, and bestow them upon us.”

Similarly the **second Eucharistic Prayer** proclaims:

Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with the blessed Apostles and all the saints who have pleased you throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you...”

Likewise, **Eucharistic Prayer 3** reads:

“...You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise, for through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit you give life to all things and make them holy, and you never cease to gather a people to yourself. . .

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim [Christ] by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself. . .

May he make of us an everlasting offering to you so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect. . .

Lastly, the **fourth Eucharistic Prayer** reads:

“...you so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. . . .”

“To accomplish your plan he gave himself up to death and rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life.”

In the middle of each of these Eucharistic prayers, the congregation proclaims **the mystery of faith by responding with one of the following acclamations:**

<a>We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

<c> Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

the Eucharistic Prayers [**prayers of Consecration**] ends with the following,

“Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty for ever and ever.”

“You see, every week Catholics proclaim that Jesus died for them,” I said to the lady who was now searching for something to say. After a brief moment of silence, she shot a response back at me.

“What about accepting Jesus Christ and their personal Lord and Savior?” She retorted. “They may be saying all this stuff, but they don’t make a personal act of acceptance.” What she didn’t know was that I deliberately didn’t mention the last “step” of her “gospel.”

I explained that if Catholics don’t believe what they are praying, they ought not to be publicly proclaiming it. Since we can’t read the dispositions of other people’s hearts, we ought not to judge whether they truly believe what they are saying. Next, I pointed out the last step - where Catholics are accepting Jesus into their hearts.

Right before communion the priest holds up the host (which is now the body, blood, soul and divinity of Our Lord under the appearances of bread and wine) and prays:

“Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”

And the congregation responds,

[fourth] “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

I looked straight into the lady’s eyes and said, “It is here that all those who are prepared to

receive Jesus Christ walk up to the front of the church but they don't just believe in Christ or merely asking Jesus into their hearts." "They don't?" She asked. "No," I answered, "they receive that same Christ who died on the cross on Calvary into their mouth and into their stomachs - body, blood, soul and divinity - and become one with him in an unspeakable way. Now that's accepting Christ!" She didn't have a response. I'm not sure that she had ever really thought about the Mass and Christ's real presence in the Eucharist because she appeared to be both surprised and intrigued.

I gave her my phone number and invited her to a study group I was heading in the neighborhood which examined the Biblical foundation for Catholic doctrine. As we departed, I couldn't help but wonder how many other people, like my new friend, left the Church thinking that it had nothing to say about salvation. Yet the richness of the liturgy of the Mass and even more so Christ's real substantial presence in the Eucharist so outshines our separated brethren's "low church" prayer services that there is no comparison!

Indeed, the mystery of the Mass goes far beyond the simple "sinner's prayer." What I wanted to demonstrate is that all the elements of what Protestants consider the "essentials" of human salvation are presented, in Technicolor, in the liturgy of the Mass and that to deny the charge that the Church is somehow neglecting to present "the gospel".