

Apologetics – Defending the Catholic Faith

Objective: We are constantly bombarded with the messages that religion is for the stone ages and not for the modern culture, that it has no grounds in reality and cannot be proven. Use this session to explore what the Bible and Church say about defending the faith. It is the responsibility of each of us as practicing Catholics to be properly Catechized. Understand some techniques to increase your knowledge of your faith. Discuss the question of why be catholic. Be prepared to defend the faith, and answer our friends and family of other faiths with respect and humility.

Song Suggestion: Be Not Afraid (Blue 54, Red 596, Gather 263)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Ps 119:46

"I will speak openly of your decrees without fear even before kings."

Mt 10:16-20

"Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Lk 12:8-9

"I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God."

1 Pt 3:15-16

"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 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."

Catechism 856

"The missionary task implies a respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel. Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God." They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man."

Catechism 905

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world. This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers...or to the faithful."

Saint: St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274) is the patron saint of students and universities. St. Thomas became a prolific author and teacher, his most important works, the Summa Theologica, a summary of the Catholic faith,

and the Summa Contra Gentiles, a manual for missionaries to explain the faith for unbelievers. In 1273 Thomas was seen by the sacristan Domenic of Caserta to be crying and levitating in prayer before an icon of the crucified Christ at the Dominican convent of Naples, in the Chapel of Saint Nicholas. During this prayer, Christ is said to have told him, "You have written well of me, Thomas. What reward would you have for your labor?" Thomas replied, "Nothing but you, Lord." Following this exchange, something happened but Thomas never wrote or spoke of it. He abandoned his routine and, when begged to return to work, replied, "I cannot, because all that I have written seems like straw to me."

Vignette: – Nick was over at his brother-in-law, Scott's house for the holidays. Scott had been involved with an Evangelical church for a while, and knew that Nick was a faithful Catholic. Scott had many questions about things that were unique about the Catholic Church. "Tell me more about Mary. Isn't it wrong to worship anyone but Jesus?", Scott asked. Also, "Similarly, what is the big deal about these Saints?" And the big one, "You guys eat this wafer thing, and you claim it is really Jesus. How can that be? It really is just a symbol, isn't it? Nick was a cradle Catholic, and went to Mass pretty often, but really couldn't articulate good answers (at least not good enough to satisfy Scott) to these questions. He felt embarrassed – almost ashamed. He vowed to reach out to a priest, or someone else in the Church to figure out the best way to get back to Scott, and be able to answer similar questions in the future.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

How did you learn about your faith? How do you keep learning?

If you are Catholic, why? If not, why not?

Have you had to defend or shared your faith? If so, please share your experience.

What is it about the Catholic faith that makes you feel special, go to church on Sunday, and teach it to your children?

Action Plan:

1. Take an action to increase your knowledge of your faith and church teaching this week.
 - a. Listen to "Catholic Answers Live" on Sacred Heart Radio from 6:00-8:00pm M-Fr
 - b. Watch "Why be Catholic" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjCbCs-y1_k) by Father Mike Schmitz on YouTube, or other similar videos
 - c. Visit Catholic Answers (catholic.com) and research topics of interest to you. Here is one in particular to try (<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/christian-yesbut-why-catholic>)
2. Pray for opportunities and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to share and defend the faith.

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