



## Doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels

### The Bible:

The Holy Bible is the source of all understanding. Therefore, regardless of interpretations, it is infallible. While the reality of God can never be adequately put into human words and understandings, the message of God is the message of God; it is infallible because it is true and reliable regardless of the fallibility of the writer.

### Interpreting Scripture:

Human language evolves and adds or drops words as necessary. It becomes important to interpret scripture based on the spirit of the message and not solely the words written. The spirit of scripture is revealed through Jesus Christ. Through Christ, the spirit of scripture is revealed to be a message of inclusivity, mercy, forgiveness, and love. The message of scripture rejects condemnation and judgment on the basis that these solely belong to God and God alone. It is the position of the Church that interpretations of scripture shall be based solely on the message conveyed and not on the words as written. The role of the church in this matter is to attempt to faithfully interpret scripture, and help believers apply that interpretation to their lives.

### The Holy Trinity:

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost make up what is called the holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity, in totality, is God in a general sense. God is God, but Jesus and the Holy Ghost are also God. Jesus is God made flesh. The Holy Ghost is the spirit of God. God the Father though is God the creator. When we pray to God, we pray to the God who embodies the entirety of the Holy Trinity. When we pray to Jesus, we pray to God who took on flesh. When we pray to the Holy Ghost, we pray to the spirit of God that moves and is omnipresent in the world. Each person in the Trinity is God. Each person in the Trinity is worthy of worship and adoration because they are God. Therefore, the stance of the church shall be firmly rooted in the Nicene Creed's truth. In accordance with scripture, we believe that God is eternal, having no beginning and no end. We believe that God, the Son, was begotten of God and is one being with him. We believe the Holy Ghost to be the spirit of God, inhabiting mankind and speaking God's truth through them. The Holy Ghost has spoken through the prophets and dwells within the hearts of those who follow Christ.

### The Four Marks:

It is the position of the church that the institution laid out in the bylaws and doctrine conforms with a gospel-centered understanding of the Four Marks of Catholicism. The first is the holding that there is but one church headed and commissioned by Christ. The second is the holding that the church is holy because Christ is holy. We understand that we, as humans, are imperfect, flawed, and frail beings, thus we strive for holiness but only the Trinity is truly holy. Third, we hold that the church is universal, conforming with the word Catholic in its original Greek context. Regarding the term apostolic, we recognize that many Catholic institutions rely on apostolic succession to meet the apostolic criteria. However, we believe that this limits God and Christ unnecessarily. Instead, we believe that, through the Holy Spirit, God can make an apostle through calling. We look to the Gospel of Luke and find that Christ himself defined apostleship as those whom he called to represent him and that those he called carried his full authority with his blessing. We also consider that Paul, formerly known then as Saul of Tarsus, was made and recognized as an apostle based on Christ's command. Therefore, we refuse to place limitations on the Holy Trinity as to whom they can and cannot call. When we discern a person's call, we shall evaluate only that which proves their call; gifts of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, fruits, and faith in Christ.

#### On LGBTQ+ Persons

It is the position of the church that LGBTQ+ persons are to be included in worship and not condemned or judged. They shall be made to feel welcome, accepted, and invited. Regarding same-sex attractions, the Church holds the position that this behavior can be observed in the natural world. While the fall of man may have opened mankind up to sinful behavior, we recognize that other creatures who did not fall with man also exhibit same-sex attraction. The Church is aware that there are scriptural interpretations that contradict its position. However, It is the Church's stance on these interpretations that they are fundamentally flawed because they do not consider the context, the limitations of language, or require a too narrow reading of scripture than what was likely intended. Regarding those who have no attraction to others, we hold to the teaching of Christ that some were created that way by God. Regarding those who live as a different gender than the one they were born into; we hold that persons can be born as both genders at birth. Therefore, who are we to shun those whose gender may have been determined by a physician or their parents? Regarding others covered under the LGBTQIA+ acronym, we believe that God moves in mysterious ways. We refuse to shun or condemn others based on unalterable facets of their being, respecting them as made by God for a purpose that only he knows. Lastly, it is the purpose of the church not to seek to understand God's workings but rather to accept them and declare them good in his eyes. The Church takes the mission of Christ seriously and rises to the challenge to showcase the radical love that Christ had for all persons. Taking Christ's command to love others and love God to heart, we believe that we don't need to understand someone to show them love and uphold their dignity and worth as children of God.

#### On Poverty and Homelessness:

It is the position of the Church that poverty and homelessness are to be combatted whenever the opportunity arises. Christ's teachings specifically call the church and its members to help those in need, especially the poor and those without shelter. Therefore, the church at the

nearest opportunity, shall stand ready to provide aid and comfort to the poor and homeless. The Christian faith has long taught about poverty and homelessness but has yet to live up fully to the gospel's teaching on caring for those in need. It is the position of this church that wherever and whenever possible, those in need shall be able to find shelter and a meal regardless of their faith or background. It shall further be the stance of this church that we shall not aim to convert those in need, but rather to do for them what is required because Christ commanded it and because it is the right thing to do for our fellow humans.

#### On Prisons and Prisoners:

It is the position of this Church that incarceration is necessary to protect society. However, we uphold that all humans have the right to life and dignity. Therefore, whenever, and wherever possible, the Church shall visit those in prison and give whatever comfort possible. It shall also be the position of the Church to visit families victimized by crimes as well as victims of crime. We believe in a compassionate approach to both the transgressor and the transgressed, as Christ commanded.

#### On Abortion:

While the Church holds that all persons have a right to life, including those unborn, we understand that there are circumstances that require the termination of pregnancy. We would hope that these decisions are not made lightly and are made on the advice of a professional medical practitioner. We further hold that prospective parents may have valid medical or personal reasons for their decision to terminate a pregnancy. The Church, wherever possible, will try to find a solution that benefits the parents and upholds the sanctity of all life. However, the church acknowledges that this may not always be possible, and when this happens will try to care for and comfort the family on their journey.

#### On Marriage:

It is the position of the church that marriage is a sacred covenant between two persons and is made in the sight of God. While traditionally held to be between a Man and a Woman, we recognize that this may not consider the diversity of creation. Therefore, we look at the spirit of the scripture about marriage. It is the position of the church that God intends for marriage to only be between two people, a voluntary covenant, that it should not be broken except in cases of abuse or infidelity, and is entered into out of love. The Church rejects the traditional teaching that marriage is for procreation only, recognizing that many are born sterile and unable to conceive children. While marriage was originally meant to be for procreation, in the face of scientific truth the Church must accept that this is no longer the case.

#### On Exorcism:

It is the Church's position that evil does exist and that Satan, along with his minions, prowls the earth. We further believe that buildings or homes can become infested with demonic forces, and therefore the church shall have rites to combat infestations and possession of persons by demonic forces. Possession of a person by demonic entities, while considered archaic, does occur. However, the doctrine of the church shall be that possessed persons and infested buildings

must have no other natural rationale that can be explained. Only upon referral to the Church by a reputable psychologist can the rite of exorcism be performed on a person. It must be in the psychologist's professional opinion that no other natural causes can be found. In cases of infestation, the Church need not require an abundance of evidence but rather can be initiated by the owner or residents of a building in conversation with the Church and its ministers.

#### On the Eucharist:

It is the position of the church that the Eucharist, commonly called communion, is one of the most sacred sacraments that can be taken by the faithful. We believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist, but that the Eucharist does not become Christ's literal body and blood. While the church is aware of supernatural events surrounding the Eucharist, i.e. bleeding hosts, we recognize that these events are done by God alone and not by the officiant. Regardless of the Church's view of the Eucharist, or whether it becomes the literal body and blood of Christ, we uphold the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist and believe that no act of defilement should be taken against it.

#### Of Feast days:

It is the position of the Church to adopt the feast days of the general Catholic Church. Feast days are set days when the Church recognizes saints and martyrs for their lives and works, with mindfulness that their lives and works have helped further the church's mission and have interceded for the faithful.

#### On Liturgy:

It is the position of the Church that a liturgical style of worship is the most beneficial. Liturgy helps teach prayers to the faithful and ensures that there is an order and form of worship that is predictable. This, the Church believes, helps ensure that no matter which of our churches the faithful visit or the language the service is conducted in, the liturgy remains consistent. Concerning hymns and other music selected for worship, it is the Church's position that all sacred music, no matter the Christian denomination, has a place within the Church. Therefore, the Church does not adopt one single official hymnal, rather leaving hymn and sacred music selections to the priest and director of music.

#### On Liturgical Colors:

It is the position of the Church that the traditional colors of the church calendar shall be kept. While originally invented to convey the season of the church to the faithful, many of whom were uneducated and unable to read, we believe the colors of the Church Calendar are sacred and show reverence to the faith.

#### On Ordination:

It is the position of the Church that all persons are capable of being called to ministry. We believe that God doesn't differentiate between the morally pure and impure, calling many to his service. Therefore, the Church shall only discern the individual's call to ministry. Upon finding a valid call to ministry, the Church shall help train and educate the individual in all matters of

pastoral care and ministry. While the Church may in the future open a theological seminary aimed at educating and training prospective clerics, the Church shall have policies and alternatives open to those who have no financial means to attain formal education.

#### On Baptism:

It is the position of the Church that only one baptism is required. We believe that individuals of mature enough age should confirm their faith and baptism in a rite of confirmation. Confirmation, as a ritual of the church, is made voluntarily. Baptism, as a rite of the church, is often chosen by the faithful regarding their children. The child, at the time of baptism, is spoken for by their parents and sponsors. When the child is of a mature enough age, it then becomes the responsibility of the individual to uphold their baptismal covenant, entered into on their behalf by their parents and sponsors. The public affirmation of the baptismal covenant and rejection of Satan is called confirmation.

#### On the Sacraments and Sacramentals:

It is the position of the church that sacraments are expected of its members. Sacraments are deeply religious rituals, are public displays of the faith, and are done in the name of the Church. The sacraments shall be Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Holy Eucharist, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction. It is also the position of the Church that sacramentals, or items worn or used to display one's faith, are also valid. These sacramentals may include medals portraying saints or angels, holy water, crosses or a crucifix, rosary, and other items that display the person's faith in the Holy Trinity. Sacramentals are to be blessed by the church whenever requested and shall follow the form and rites of the church. Some sacramentals may have specific blessings, while others may have a general blessing given (i.e. the blessing of water vs. the blessing of a medal).

#### On the Role of the Church:

It is the position of the church that its role changes from age to age, but that its mission does not. The Church does not exist to convert, but rather to guide and care for all of humanity. We believe that Christ has the power alone to change the heart, and while we refuse to convert people, we support the work of Christ-centered ministry. We believe that the Church should fling its doors wide open, allowing all persons to enter who wish to worship God with us. It is the position of the Church that its role is not to support political parties or have political leanings. Christ has been made a political figure in modern times and is often portrayed as conservative. However, we recognize that Christ transcends politics and had stood up to the conservative factions of his day. Christ practiced radical love and preached to the marginalized. Christ overturned money tables; fed the poor; and interacted with those considered to be unclean by Jewish standards. Nothing in scripture supports a conservative Christ but does support a loving and welcoming Christ who advocated for those without a voice. Therefore, it is the Church's position to reject political polity and uphold the image of Christ as presented in the scriptures. Christ has his own government, and his rules and teachings are perfect. While Christ recognized temporal power, Christ is the King of Heaven. While temporal power may reign on Earth, Christ's power governs both Earth and Heaven. Therefore, while we respect the leaders who hold

temporal power, we acknowledge that all power stems from God and only he is worthy to hold absolute power. Finally, it is the position of the Church to remain apolitical, but we recognize that our members may align with a polity in their secular lives. Therefore, we make no condemnation of any political faction. We believe in teaching the love and acceptance of Christ and a commitment to nonviolence. Due to the radical teachings of Christ, and our adherence to them, it may appear to the faithful that the Church has a political leaning. However, nothing in this stance shall be construed as such. The Church shall reject ideologies that misalign with its understanding of Christ, but leave members of the church to form their own opinions on secular matters. If their faith informs a member as to which political faction to support, that is the member's private business and not the business of the Church. We exist solely to instruct and uphold the teachings of the gospels, not to advocate a political stance.

#### On Future Matters of Doctrine:

It is the position of the Church that all matters of doctrine shall be rooted within the mission of Christ and the Church. We recognize that as times change, there may be problems that don't have a direct scriptural equivalent. In these cases, it shall be the Bishop of the HCCoG, in coordination with all other bishops, who determine the scriptural foundations for a doctrinal position. The position of the Church shall be issued as a doctrinal statement by the Bishop of HCCoG, the theological conclusions that led to that understanding, and should reflect the spirit of the gospel message. While canon laws or other aspects of the Church may change, the doctrine is to be maintained strictly as it is the very identity of the Church.