



Question: "Are Catholics saved?"

Answer: The question "are Catholics saved?" cannot be answered with a universal "yes" or "no." In the same way, neither can the questions "are Baptists saved?" or "are Presbyterians saved?" or "are Methodists saved?" be answered in a universal sense. One is not saved by being Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8–9). There is likely no denomination or division of the Christian faith in which every member truly has personally trusted in Christ as Savior.

Further, there are well over one billion Roman Catholics in the world. Among those adherents, there is a significant amount of latitude in beliefs and practices. Roman Catholics in the United States do not have identical beliefs and practices as Roman Catholics in Italy. Catholics in Latin America are not the mirror images of Catholics in Africa. While the Roman Catholic hierarchy advances the notion that all Roman Catholics hold to the same beliefs and observe the same practices, this is definitely not the case. The diversity within Catholicism is another reason why the question "are Catholics saved?" cannot be answered absolutely.

If we change the question to be more specific, however, we can have a definite answer: "are Catholics who adhere to official Roman Catholic beliefs and practices saved?" The answer to this question is "no." Why? Because the official teaching of Roman Catholicism is that salvation is not by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that one must have good works and observe the rituals of Roman Catholicism in order to be saved.

Summarizing the Catholic understanding of salvation is difficult because it is extensive. Here is a summary of the official Roman Catholic teaching on salvation: to be saved, a person must receive Christ as Savior by faith, be baptized in the Trinitarian formula, be infused with additional grace by observing the Catholic sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and then die without any unconfessed mortal sins. If one accomplishes the above, he or she will be saved and granted entrance into heaven, likely after an extensive time of further cleansing in purgatory.

The Roman Catholic process is significantly different from the apostle Paul's teaching on how salvation is received: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). John 3:16 ascribes salvation to everyone who believes in Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 explicitly teaches that salvation is not by works, with verse 10 then clarifying that works are the result of salvation. Simply put, the Catholic teaching on salvation is very different from what the Bible teaches.

So, no, if a person holds to the official Roman Catholic understanding of salvation, he or she is not saved. Despite their vigorous affirmations, Roman Catholicism does not truly hold to salvation by grace through faith.

With that said, it is important to remember that not all Catholics hold to the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation. There are Catholics who truly and fully believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. There are Catholics who observe the sacraments as an aspect of spiritual growth and intimacy with God, not in an attempt to earn salvation. There are many Catholics who believe in the biblical doctrine of salvation and do not understand that the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is something very different.

Are Catholics saved? Do Catholics go to heaven? It depends. If the question is "are there saved

Catholics?" then the answer is "yes." If the question is "will a person go to heaven if he or she holds to the official Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation?" the answer is "no."

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