

## AREN'T CATHOLICS CHRISTIAN?

*Pinewood Christian Academy is a ministry of Pinewood Church PCA. It is a protestant church that is "Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission." We proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and we believe in the biblical truths proclaimed during the Protestant Reformation. This often puts us at odds with the doctrines and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and this is why Pinewood Christian Academy does not believe that enrolling students from families who hold to Roman Catholic beliefs and traditions is mutually beneficial. Following are five major differences between Protestantism and Catholicism which could cause confusion for a child, and potential conflict for a family:*

**1. We believe that the Bible alone is the source of God's special revelation to man (2 Timothy 3:16).**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Bible alone is not sufficient for knowing who God is and what He requires. Tradition and *ex cathedra* pronouncements from the Magisterium or the Pope himself are equally binding upon Christians. Consequently, some Roman Catholic doctrines such as purgatory, beatification of saints, and the veneration of Mary, have little or no basis in the Scriptures.

**2. We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Romans 10:9), "not [by] your own doing" nor as a "result of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9); good works are a *product* of faith (James 2:18) and not a means to obtain it.**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that people are saved by grace through baptism, but that Christians must "work out" their salvation "through love" to merit eternal life. Vatican II states, "Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can . . . merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life."

**3. We believe that Jesus is the only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), the sole Priest (Hebrews 8:1-6), and Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Since His ascension into heaven, He is present with His people by His Word (Matthew 24:35) and by His Spirit (John 16:13-14).**

The Roman Catholic church teaches that Christ confers to the Roman Pontiff (i.e. the Pope) infallibility by which he may proclaim doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. This infallibility is also present in the body of bishops when, together with the Pope, they exercise the supreme Magisterium in an Ecumenical Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed" and as the teaching of Christ, it "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith."

- 4. We believe that a person is justified (i.e. declared righteous) upon believing in Christ, that ongoing repentance of sin is beneficial to the Christian (Psalm 32:1-2), and that forgiveness is granted by God upon confession to Him through prayer (1 John 1:9). We believe that while confession to others is helpful for spiritual growth (James 5:16) and for the restoration of broken relationships (Matthew 5:23-24), it is not required for absolution (Hebrews 4:14-16).**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that penance is a sacrament in which Christians present themselves to a priest, accuse themselves of their sins, and the priest pronounces absolution and imposes means to make amends. Confession is made not in the secrecy of one's heart nor to a layman as friend and advocate, nor to a representative of human authority, but to a duly ordained priest with the power to forgive sins which Christ granted to His Church.

- 5. We believe that all people will face judgment before God concerning their works. Those who are trusting in themselves for salvation will be condemned to Hell (Romans 3:20), while those who trust in Christ and His fulfillment of the law and the prophets on their behalf will enter His rest in heaven (Acts 16:31). We do not believe in an "intermediary state" in which souls must be purified (i.e. Purgatory); we do not pray for, nor pray to, the dead.**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that immediately after death, Christians stand before God for judgment. They then enter heaven, Purgatory, or hell. Those who are free from all sin enter heaven immediately. Purgatory is for those who die in a state of grace and friendship with God but who are not yet fully purified; those in Purgatory are assured a place in heaven after their purification and Catholics are encouraged to pray for those in Purgatory, that they may soon be with God in heaven. Hell is for those who have willingly chosen to reject God and his love; all who persist in a state of serious sin, damn themselves to hell.

*The purpose of this document is not to elevate what we believe over that of the Roman Catholic Church. Nor is our intention to call into question anyone's beliefs or commitment to their church. However, at Pinewood Christian Academy, subject and spiritual content are so integrated that a family could not expect their child to receive an excellent academic education without also being taught, at the very least, the fundamental Protestant tenets described above.*

*Pinewood Church affirms and agrees that many in the Roman Catholic Church are true believers who trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. We encourage anyone who make these claims to examine the full scope of the doctrines and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and test for yourself if they are truly faithful to the Scriptures.*