

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–202 AD) –

“...the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles. With that church, because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition.” (Against Heresies 3:3:2)

Tertullian (c. 155–240 AD) –

“The Lord said to Peter, ‘On this rock I will build my Church, I have given you the keys of the kingdom of heaven [and] whatever you shall have bound or loosed on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven’ [Matt. 16:18–19]. . . . What kind of man are you, subverting and changing what was the manifest intent of the Lord when he conferred this personally upon Peter? Upon you, he says, I will build my Church; and I will give to you the keys.” (Modesty 21:9–10)

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258 AD) –

“If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he [should] desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?” (The Unity of the Catholic Church 4)

“There is one God and one Christ, and one Church, and one chair founded on Peter by the word of the Lord. It is not possible to set up another altar or for there to be another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever has gathered elsewhere is scattering.” (Letters 43;40:5)

Mary Ever-Virgin

The doctrine of **Mary’s perpetual virginity** holds that Mary remained a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus Christ. This belief emphasizes her unique role in salvation history and her purity as a woman chosen by God to be the Mother of the Savior.

Quotes

Origen (c. 185–254 AD) –

“And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first fruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity.” (Commentary on Matthew 2:17)

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373 AD) –

“Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that he took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary.” (Discourses Against the Arians 2:70)

Jerome (c. 347–420 AD) –

“You [Helvidius] say that Mary did not remain a virgin. As for

myself, I claim that Joseph himself was a virgin, through Mary, so that a virgin Son might be born of a virginal wedlock.” (Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary 19)

Saints’ Intercession

The belief in the **intercession of saints** means that saints in Heaven can pray on our behalf. They act as intermediaries under the one mediatorship of Jesus. This idea emphasizes the unity of all believers—living and dead—within the Body of Christ.

Quotes

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD) –

“In this way is he [the true Christian] always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he pray alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him [in prayer].” (Miscellanies 7:12)

Origen (c. 185–254 AD) –

“But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels . . . as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep.” (Prayer 11)

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258 AD) –

“Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides [of death] always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father’s mercy.” (Letters 56:60:5)

Although this is not an exhaustive list, we can observe a unified belief among the Church Fathers on Catholic themes. The views held by these figures represent the earliest understanding of Christians regarding the words contained in Scripture. This golden thread of belief aligns with St. Paul’s exhortation to hold fast to the teachings, whether through written word or spoken testimony (2 Thessalonians 2:15), that connects us to the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

Written by Ian Stone
Edited by Mark J Hornbacher
Quotes collected by Ian Stone

To learn more:
stpaulse.com/ibelieve
streetevangelization.com



SAINT PAUL
STREET EVANGELIZATION

Copyright © by St. Paul Street Evangelization, Inc.

Early Church Fathers & Catholic Teachings



SAINT PAUL
STREET EVANGELIZATION

This pamphlet presents key quotes from the **Early Church Fathers**: Bishops and lay writers before the **First Council of Nicaea (325 AD)**. Early Christian figures such as **St. Clement of Rome**, **St. Ignatius of Antioch**, and **St. Irenaeus of Lyons** defended key Catholic doctrines. These doctrines include belief in the divinity of Jesus, belief in the **Trinity** (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one God in three persons), belief in the **Eucharist** as the true presence of Christ's body and blood, the Pope's special authority as successor of St. Peter, and the belief that Mary and the other saints intercede for us from Heaven through their prayer.

These Early Church Fathers understood themselves as part of an unbroken chain of succession, preserving the faith and teachings handed down from the Apostles. For example, **St. Polycarp**, a direct disciple of **St. John the Apostle**, passed his knowledge to **St. Irenaeus**, while **St. Ignatius** was a student of John and consecrated bishop by St. Peter. These writings confirm that **Catholic beliefs were held by the earliest Christians**, challenging the idea that they were merely invented at the **Council of Nicaea** or developed later in history.

Divinity of Christ

This refers to the belief that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, meaning He is fully divine and fully human at the same time. Early Christians expressed this belief in response to heresies that questioned His divinity and humanity.

Quotes

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD) –

“There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true Life in Death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Letter to the Ephesians, 7:2)

“For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit.” (ibid., 18:2)

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–202 AD) –

“For the Word, being the Son of God, and being made man, is Himself God and man.” (Against Heresies, 3.16.2)

“To Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Savior and King, in accord with the approval of the invisible Father, every knee shall bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” (Against Heresies 1:10:1)

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD) –

“This Word, then, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for He was in God) and of our well-being, this very Word has now appeared as man, He alone being both, both God and man—the Author of all blessings to us; by whom we, being taught to live well, are sent on our way to life eternal.” (Exhortation to the Heathen 1:7:1)

The Trinity

This doctrine teaches that the one God exists in three distinct Persons, each fully divine, yet together making up one single divine essence. This would mean that there is **one God in three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit**.

Quotes

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD) –

“There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true Life in Death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the Father, and the Holy Spirit.” (Letter to the Ephesians, 7:2)

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD) –

“But we must hold that the three are one... for the Father is the cause of the Son, and the Son is the cause of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit reveals the truth of the Son.” (Stromata, 5.14)

“I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all things were made according to the will of the Father.” (Stromata, Book V, Ch. 14)

Tertullian (c. 155–240 AD) –

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct, and yet the three are one in substance. There is no division in their essence.” (Against Praxeas, 2)

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373 AD) –

“We acknowledge the Trinity, holy and perfect, to consist of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit... in the Church, one God is preached, one God who is above all things and through all things and in all things. God is above all things as Father, for he is principle and source; he is through all things through the Word; and he is in all things in the Holy Spirit.” (First letter to Serapion, Ep. 1 ad Serapionem 28-30: PG 26)

True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

The **Eucharist** is the central act of Catholic worship, celebrated at Mass, where **bread and wine become the real body and blood of Jesus Christ, while retaining the appearance of bread and wine**. This belief is based on Jesus' words at the **Last Supper** (“this is my body ... this is my blood”) and has been upheld by Christians throughout history.

Quotes

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD) –

“I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible.” (Letter to the Romans, 7:3)

“Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again.” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 7:2)

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–202 AD) –

“For as the bread, which is from the earth, receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, receiving the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.” (Against Heresies, 5.2).

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 AD) –

“For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the Word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word ... is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” (First Apology, 66)

Tertullian (c. 155–240 AD) –

“And since the soul is, in consequence of its salvation, chosen to the service of God, it is the flesh which actually renders it capable of such service. The flesh, indeed, is washed [in baptism], in order that the soul may be cleansed ... the flesh feeds [in the Eucharist] on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may be filled with God.” (The Resurrection of the Dead)

Apostolic Succession and the Church of Rome

The **Catholic Church** is built on a foundation of apostolic tradition and leadership, rooted in the authority of the Apostles and their successors. **Apostolic succession** is the unbroken chain of authority passed down from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops, and to the Pope as the successor of **St. Peter**. The community of believers in Rome were established as a foundation of Christian unity, with special emphasis on the leadership of **St. Peter** and his successors.

Quotes

Clement of Rome (c. 35–101 AD) –

“The Apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent from God. Christ therefore is from God, and the Apostles from Christ. Both these positions then are true: that the Apostles have preached the Gospel, and that the Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles.” (Letter to the Corinthians, 42:1-3)

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD) –

“Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist, which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints.” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8:1)