

Why I Am Catholic

An unbroken Connection Back to Christ

Another reason I am Catholic is the institution of the church and the offices of bishop, priest, and deacon. The Episcopalians have something similar, but we do not recognize their ordinations since they were excommunicated when King Henry VIII broke away and started the Anglican Church. The Catholic Church is the only one with an unbroken connection back to Christ.

We hear of bishops in St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy and in his Letter to Titus. Paul describes the qualifications for bishops in I Tim 3. He also describes the qualifications for deacons. This office is first mentioned in Acts 6 when "seven reputable men" are called from the community to assist the apostles in specific tasks. The apostles retain the ministries of prayer and the word.

The priesthood emerges from the Old Testament. Aaron and his sons are the first priests of the nation of Israel and later priests are called from the house or tribe of Levi. Their main responsibility is to offer sacrifice. At the Last Supper, Jesus hands on the sacrifice of His Body and Blood to the Apostles, who he institutes as the first priests of the New Church and the New Covenant.

The Passover Lamb of the Old Testament is replaced by Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The Passover Meal—the Last Supper—becomes our Eucharist, an unbloody sacrifice offered in memory of Jesus who feeds us, saves us, and unites us with His Sacrifice on the cross which is our salvation.

The 12 Apostles eventually need helpers and they call others to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, these are usually called presbyters. Today the words presbyter and priest are interchangeable. All three offices are established within 40 years of the death of Jesus. All have been handed down to today's bishops, priests, and deacons.