

Is Roman Catholicism Preaching the Gospel? Why Not and Why It Does Matter

Dr Leonardo De Chirico



Masterclass



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The Reformanda Initiative Podcast

Masterclass: Is Roman Catholicism Preaching the Gospel? Why Not and Why It Does Matter


1) Same Words, Same Gospel?

2) Why "Roman" and Why "Catholicism?"

3) Where Is The Roman Catholic Church Going with Pope Francis?

4) Can Evangelicals Be United with Rome?

5) Communicating the Gospel to Roman Catholics

An illustration of two people in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. A large, tangled thought bubble is positioned between them, containing the text. The background is a solid dark grey.

1) Same Words, Same Gospel?

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“Evangelicals can embrace two thirds of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*”

but

“when the *Catechism* speaks of Christ, it interweaves Him with the Church to the point of making them one”

Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Roman Catholicism* (2005)

REVELATION

SCRIPTURE TRADITION

MAGISTERIUM

STMCRARAGIDIPISTTE
UIRROIUENM

Case studies

Conversion

Justification

Mercy

Same Words, Different Worlds!



2) Why "Roman" and Why "Catholicism?"

Roman Catholic Synthesis

Centralization / Confrontation	Absorption
Hierarchical Authority	Outward Absorption
Confrontation of those who disagree	Welcoming those who disagree
Pope Benedict/ John Paul	Pope Francis
Trent/ Vatican I	Vatican II
Killing Jan Hus	Thomas Aquinas synthesizing Aristotle
Inquisition	Converting Kings
Persecution of Heretics	Absorption of Charismatic Movement
Lack of recognition of churches outside of Rome	Recognition of other Christians as Brothers and Sisters
Unchanging Character of Doctrine	Development of New Doctrine
One Center	Many varieties of Roman Catholicism
Waldensians	Franciscans
Inward/ Authority Focused	Outward focused
Focus on Eucharist and Sacrament	Integrating New Ideas into the Church

Here is a brief definition of Roman Catholicism:

Roman Catholicism is a deviation from Biblical Christianity that has consolidated over the centuries by clustering around an imperial (Roman) institution, centering on its sacramental system, grounding itself on its synergistic theology and abnormal ecclesiology, And being fueled by its universal (catholic) project of embracing the whole world.

Roman Catholicism retains significant theistic Christian elements (e.g. The Trinity, morality), yet because of its blurred theological system it departs from Biblical Christianity at all points in different ways and degrees of intensity, resulting in a confused and distorted religion.



3) Where Is The Roman Catholic Church Going with Pope Francis?

POPE
FRANCIS

PERSON
OF THE
YEAR



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FORUM OF
CHRISTIAN
LEADERS

Three significant writings

1. Aparecida (2007):
theology of the people and marianism



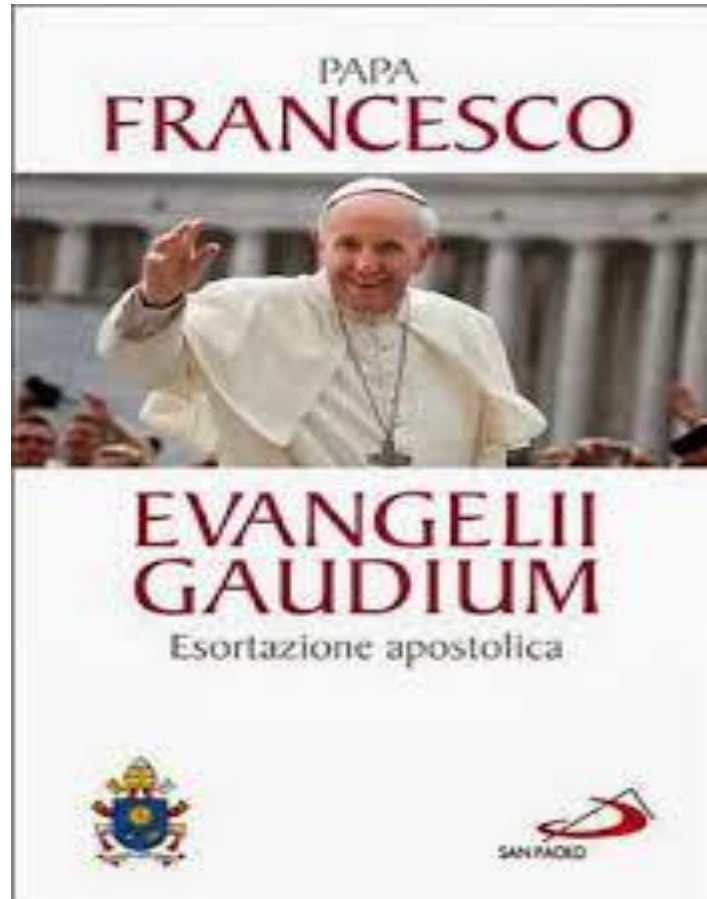
Three significant writings

Lectures on the Jesuits' history (1985):
Luther the heretic, Calvin the schismatic



Three significant writings

3. Evangelii Gaudium (2013) and All Brothers (2020):



4) Can Evangelicals Be United with Rome?

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According to Rome, Christian unity is threefold:

1. professing the same faith,
2. celebrating the same Eucharist (i.e. the Roman Catholic way), and
3. being united under the same sacramental ministry in apostolic succession (i.e. under the Pope).

Pre-Vatican II View of Unity

IN

**Baptized and
communicant**

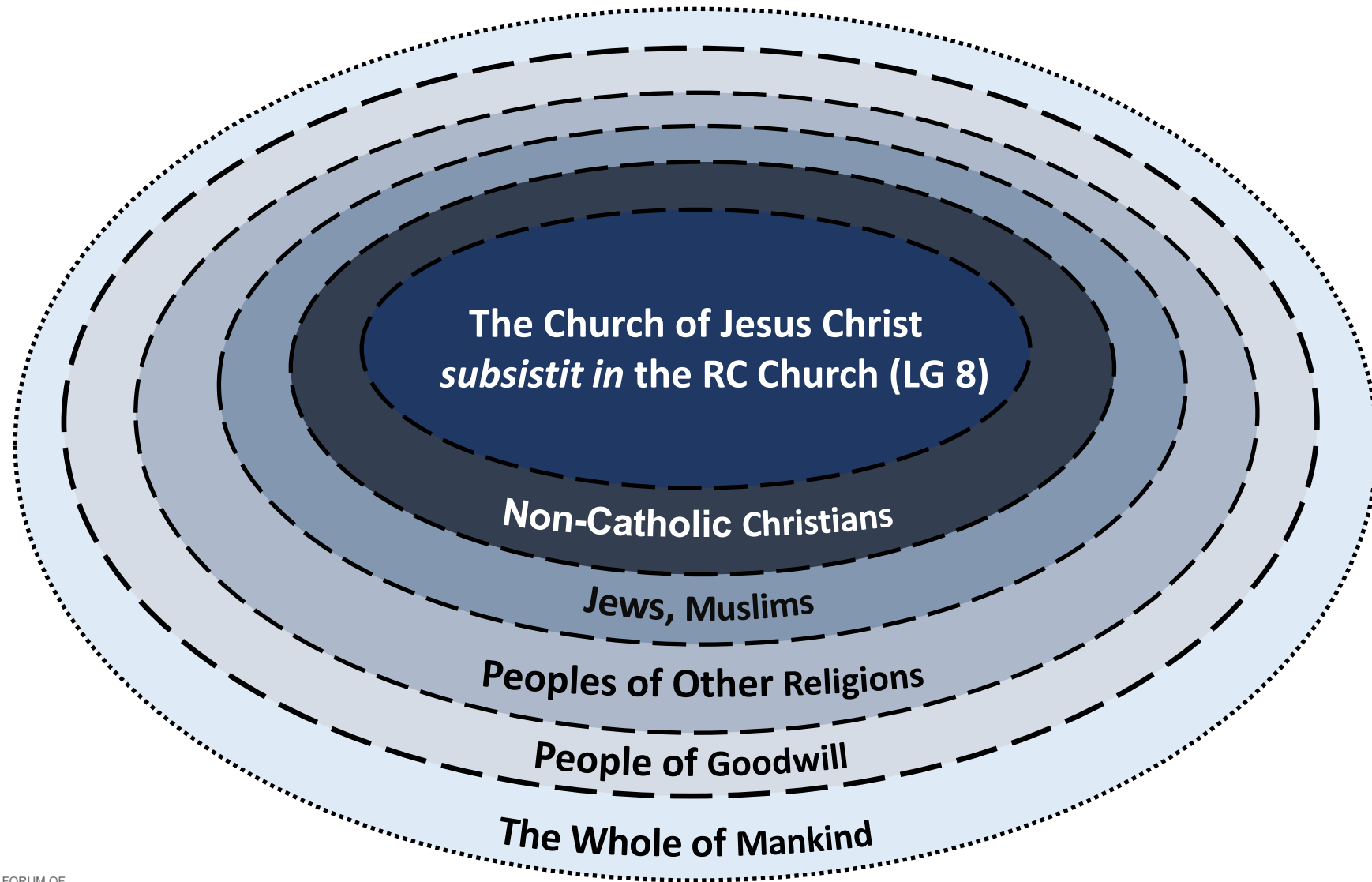
OUT

**Heretics
pagans and
ex-communicated**

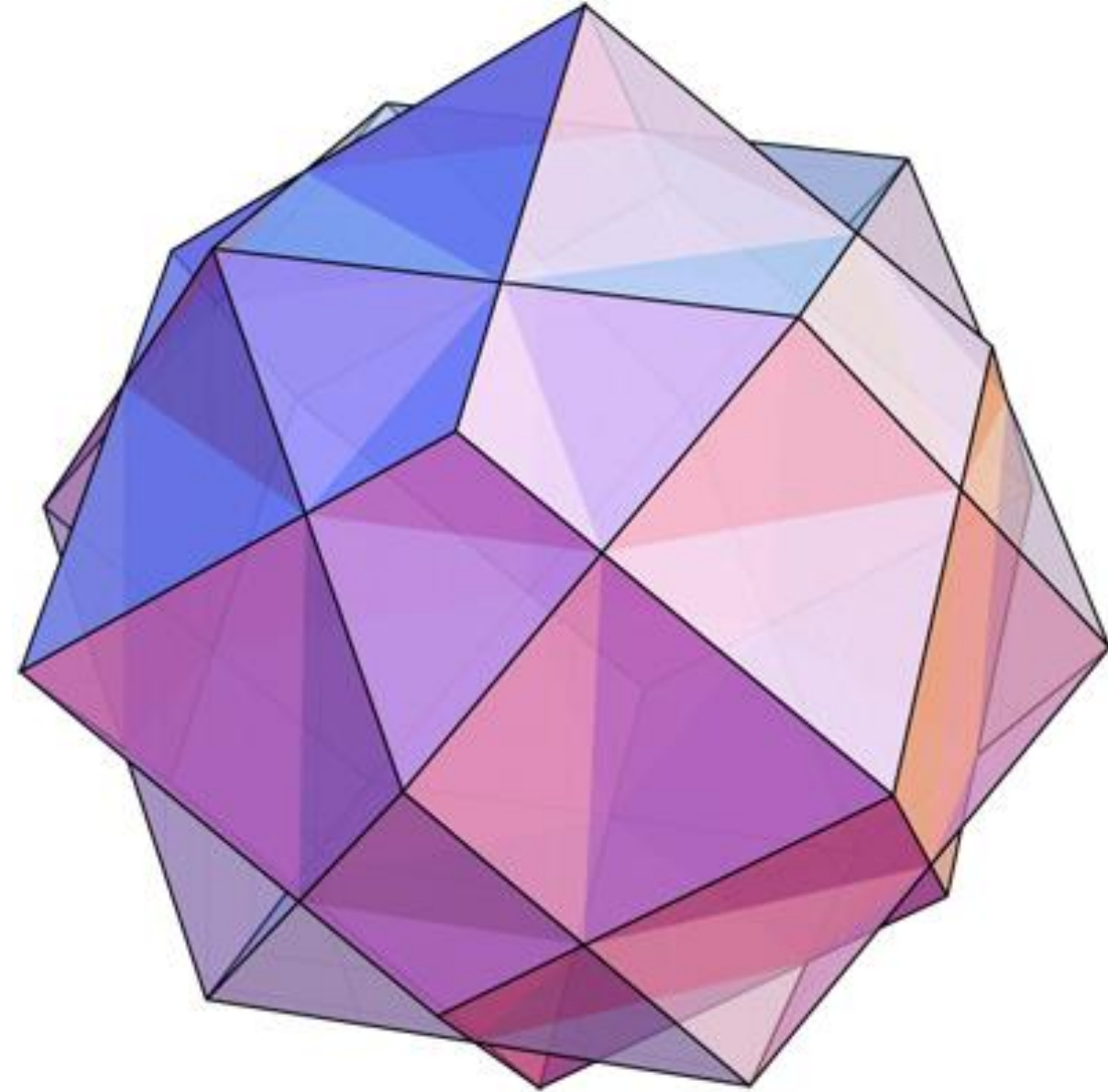
Vatican II

- Imperfect and perfect unity
- “Separated Bretheren”
- Irreversible commitment to Ecumenism
- Church as “sacrament of unity between God and mankind”

The Roman Catholic Ecumenism: Unitatis Redintegratio (1964) and Ad Gentes (1965)



Exegeting Pope Francis' Ecumenism: Unity as Polyhedron





All Brothers
(Fratelli tutti)

A photograph of a priest in ornate golden vestments performing a ritual with a chalice in a church. The priest is in the center, holding a golden chalice to his lips. He is surrounded by other clergy members in similar vestments. The background features a highly decorated altar with a crucifix, statues, and ornate architectural details. The lighting is warm and focused on the altar area.

5) Communicating the Gospel to Roman Catholics

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TWO OPTIONS

In dealing with Roman Catholicism are we dealing with a Philippians 1:15-21 situation or with a Galatians 1:6-9 situation?

Philippians 1:15-21

“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1.15–21 ESV)

Galatians 1:6-9

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

(Galatians 1.6–9 ESV)

Practical Tips: Don't assume or rely on common language

Same Words,
Different
Meaning

Let the Bible
Define Your
Language

Practical Tips: Be prepared to wrestle with the exclusive nature of the Gospel

Scripture
Alone

Faith
Alone

Christ
Alone

Practical Tips: Be prepared to show the personal elements of the Christian life

Beyond religion

Beyond tradition

Beyond the clergy/laity divide

Practical Tips: Be prepared to integrate personal witness and church life

Believing and Belonging go together

The importance of the ordinances, especially the Lord's supper. Catholics are not used to "listen"; they are used to see and experience through the senses and in the context of community.

Practical Tips: Preaching in a Roman Catholic context

Make sure to explain the biblical flow of the passage. In RC there is little sense of biblical theology.

Make sure you communicate the finality of Scripture. The Bible is the ultimate authority.

Make sure you carefully show the impact of the Word on daily life, e.g. personal, work, church, society

If possible quote a church father: it creates a bridge and it reclaims the fathers to the protestant faith (as the Reformers did)

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