

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IS NOT THE OLDEST CHURCH IN THE WORLD

The Catholic Church claims they are the oldest church in the world, but it's a false claim. The oldest church in the world is the church over which Jesus the Christ is Head. He said He would build His church within the lifetime of His own generation (Matt. 16:18; Mark 9:1). In fact, it was established on the first Pentecost after His resurrection in 33 A.D. (Acts 2, less than two months after His death).

The church of Christ (the Lord's church) was established hundreds of years before the Catholic Church. The organizational structure and doctrine/teaching of the Catholic Church makes it impossible to be the oldest church in the world!

The Catholic Church came into being as a result of a gradual change in church government (along with *additions to, subtractions from* the Bible). The first universal pope (Boniface III) was recognized in 606 A.D. The position of pope is recognized as the supreme head of the Catholic Church. According to their doctrine, the pope takes the place of Jesus on earth. Catholics claim the pope *"has supreme and full power in faith and morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the entire church, the father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth"* (New York Catechism).

The Catholic Church looks to the pope as its source of authority; whereas, the church Christ built uses only the Bible as its source of authority (John 12:48).

Constantine (emperor of Rome, 4th century) set out to organize the church as the

Roman Empire which had an emperor, Advisors, Governors and Lieutenant Governors. The Catholic Church came to have in its organization: the Pope, under him Cardinals, under them Archbishops and Bishops. The Bible knows no such organization as this, nor does it authorize such an arrangement.

The Catholic Church changed God's arrangement of elders (bishops) over each local congregation (Acts 14:23) and put several churches under one "Bishop." By the close of the second century, these bishops began conferences (synods, councils) to decide what local congregations would and would not do. No man or group of men has the right to make laws for the church. God has already given His law (the Bible) to govern the church (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Peter 1:3).

Human creeds came to replace Bible authority. The use of *holy water* began in 120 A.D., *Latin mass* in 394, *extreme unction* in 588, *purgatory* in 593, *transubstantiation* in 1,000, *celibacy* in 1,015, *sprinkling* instead of immersion (baptism) in 1311. Practically everything they teach and practice is strange and foreign to the Bible. There's hardly any resemblance at all between the Catholic Church and the Bible!

We can safely say that the Roman Catholic Church is the oldest man-made denomination in the world, but not the oldest God-made church in the world.

The church Jesus built is the oldest church in the world. It is His church and wears His name. It is referred to as the "church of Christ" in Romans 16:16. You can't read anywhere in the Bible about the Catholic Church. Are you interested in learning more about the church of Christ?

—Garland M. Robinson