

Christian Theology

Distinctions among Christians

October 11, 2009

Roman Catholicism

- This is both the *oldest* and the *largest* of all Christian groups.
- Because of its long history, this group has gone through many significant *changes*.
- This group traces its origins to *Jesus* himself.
- The elected Catholic leader, the *Pope*, had *secular* power for many centuries. However, today this person primarily holds *spiritual* power.
- Christianity spread throughout Europe because of this group's *political* influence.
- The summary of Catholic beliefs is given in the *Nicene Creed*.
- Perhaps the most important distinction of the Roman Catholic Church is its attitude toward *tradition*. This forms a source of doctrinal truth for the group.
- The most important figure in Catholic theology is Jesus, of course. A close second is *Mary*, who was a *virgin* her entire life, the *mother* of God, immaculately *conceived*, and *assumed* into heaven (body and soul).
- Roman Catholics believe in the *Trinity* and in *seven* sacraments.
- The Catholic Bible draws its Old Testament from the ancient *Greek* translation.
- This group sees itself as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, but it acknowledges that the Holy Spirit can and does bring salvation to other Christian groups. Hence it engages in *ecumenical* activities whenever possible.
- One becomes a member through *baptism*. Children/infants do receive this. People from other groups are accepted as long as theirs was *trinitarian*.
- An important component of this group's history is its emphasis on religious *Orders*, which provide opportunities for concentrated study, meditation, and service.
- For practicing Catholics, faith is deeply *spiritual*.