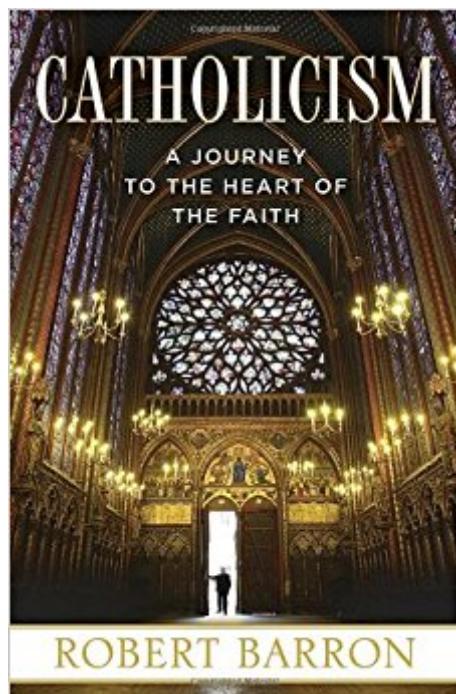


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# Catholicism: A Journey To The Heart Of The Faith



## Synopsis

“What I propose to do in this book is to take you on a guided exploration of the Catholic world, but not in the manner of a docent, for I am not interested in showing you the artifacts of Catholicism as though they were dusty objets d’art in a museum of culture. I want to function rather as a mystagogue, conducting you ever deeper into the mystery of the incarnation in the hopes that you might be transformed by its power.” Father Robert Barron

What is Catholicism? A 2,000-year-old living tradition? A worldview? A way of life? A relationship? A mystery? In *Catholicism* Father Robert Barron examines all these questions and more, seeking to capture the body, heart and mind of the Catholic faith. Starting from the essential foundation of Jesus Christ’s incarnation, life, and teaching, Father Barron moves through the defining elements of Catholicism from sacraments, worship, and prayer, to Mary, the Apostles, and Saints, to grace, salvation, heaven, and hell using his distinct and dynamic grasp of art, literature, architecture, personal stories, Scripture, theology, philosophy, and history to present the Church to the world. Paired with his documentary film series of the same title, *Catholicism* is an intimate journey, capturing “The Catholic Thing” in all its depth and beauty. Eclectic, unique, and inspiring, Father Barron brings the faith to life for a new generation, in a style that is both faithful to timeless truths, while simultaneously speaking in the language of contemporary life. Includes over 100 black and white and color photos.

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## Customer Reviews

“Clarity, intelligence, passion and elegance” these are the marks of a writer in top

form, and Father Barron brings all these gifts to bear in this extraordinary reflection on the Catholic faith. If you read one book this year on what Catholics believe and why, this is the book to read and to share with others. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap, Archbishop of Philadelphia “Father Robert Barron’s Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith takes a path less traveled in leading us to explore the faith through stories, biographies, and images. In these pages, we meet the “Word made Flesh” not only in theological formulations, but also in saints and poets, cathedrals and chants, priests and prophets. What makes Catholicism so compelling are the ways in which Father Barron shows how the Incarnation goes on in the true, the good, and the beautiful.” Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York “Catholicism is one of the most significant efforts ever to advance what Pope John Paul II called “The New Evangelization.” George Weigel, author of *Witness to Hope* and *The End and the Beginning* “Prepare yourself for an entrancing tour of the many facets of Catholicism. From Her art to Her architecture, Her theological riches, to the inspired personalities that have filled Her pews, the Catholic Church is laid bare by a priest who is more than up to the task. Like the Faith it seeks to capture, it is a journey that will leave you full and then hungering for more.” Raymond Arroyo, New York Times Bestselling Author of *Mother Angelica* and host of EWTN’s *The World Over Live* “Father Robert Barron is a brilliant academic, a popular writer, a seeker and a seer. In Catholicism he illuminates truths that have the power to set us free.” It will be a benchmark book for years to come. Michael Leach, author of *Why Stay Catholic?* “When Father Barron is talking, I can’t stop listening. Whatever he writes, I can’t put down unfinished. He loves the people he addresses. He writes about what matters to us. To read him is to be loved in word after word. In these pages, heart speaks to heart.” Mike Aquilina, co-author of *The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition* “Father Robert Barron’s great gift is to wed intellectual depth with clarity and vividness of expression. His *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith* is a superb exploration of the Catholic vision that seamlessly unites theological reflection and masterpieces of architecture and art. The story he tells comes truly alive in his portraits of concrete men and women who, in every age, have lived the journey of faith to the full.” Rev. Robert Imbelli is Associate Professor of Theology at Boston College

Father Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, the Rector of Mundelein Seminary, and the host of *CATHOLICISM*, a groundbreaking, award winning documentary

about the Catholic Faith. He has received a Master's Degree in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America (1982) and a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Institut Catholique de Paris (1992). He has published numerous books, essays, and articles on theology and the spiritual life. He has also appeared on several media outlets including NBC, PBS, FOX News, CNN, and EWTN. His website, WordOnFire.org, has reached over 3.8 million people and his weekly YouTube videos have been viewed over nine million times. His pioneering work in evangelizing through the new media led Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, to describe him as "one of the Church's best messengers."

When defining Catholicism, many first turn to its unique practices and characters--the Mass, the sacraments, Mary, priests, and the Pope. Others point to its intellectual traits--its distinctive apologetics, theology, and philosophy. In his new book, *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith* (Image, hardcover, 304 pages), Fr. Robert Barron explores these typical characteristics but doesn't stop there. He looks through many more lenses to reveal the core of Catholicism. Barron is not just concerned with what's good and true about the Catholic tradition but also what's beautiful. The Catholic faith is not just a matter of the mind and the soul but of the body and the senses. Therefore if we want to fully understand "the Catholic thing", we need to gaze on art, history, culture, music, literature, and architecture: "In order to grasp (Catholicism) more fully, we have to read the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, the Confessions of St. Augustine, the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, *The Divine Comedy* of Dante, *Saint John of the Cross' Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Story of a Soul* of Therese of Lisieux, among many other texts. But we also have to look and listen. We must consult the Cathedral of Chartres, the *Sainte-Chapelle*, the Arena Chapel, the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Grunewald's Crucifixion in the Isenheim Altarpiece, the soaring melodies of Gregorian chant, the Masses of Mozart, and the motets of Palestrina." In his *Catholicism* book, as well as in his epic ten-part film series with the same name, that's exactly what Barron does. Over the last five years he's traveled to more than fifty locations from Rome to Jerusalem to India to Poland to highlight the Catholic tradition in all of its splendor, richness, texture, and genius. The film series will debut in October on PBS stations across the country, but the *Catholicism* book will be available in September. To be blunt, this is simply the best book on Catholicism I've ever read. And I've read a lot of them. Without hyperbole, I can say that this will now be the first book I'll recommend to anyone exploring the Catholic faith. Barron is a systematic theologian at heart, and *Catholicism* presents a complete tapestry of God and his Church. The book touches upon every facet of

Catholicism--Jesus, the apostles, Mary, the Church, the saints, prayer, the sacraments, and more. The content in the book aligns very closely with the scripts from the film series. In fact the book devotes one chapter to each episode in the series. But since "the medium is the message", the book communicates Barron's content differently than the documentary does. For instance, one of the most complex chapters concerns the existence and character of God. It's titled "That Than Which Nothing Greater Can Be Thought", an allusion to St. Anselm's famous ontological argument. In the film series, Barron's dense philosophical arguments can be tough to track. Moving fast they can fade behind the stunning visuals. But the text in the book makes it easy to read slowly and grasp each concept before moving on (it also lets you flip back if you want a refresher.) On the other hand, having seen large chunks of the film series, the book can't compete with the film's astonishing images and music. The book does include more than one hundred black-and-white photos along with an eight-page color insert. But in the film, Barron's words are illuminated as you see the very places, culture, and artwork he is speaking about. When he explains the Incarnation, for example, he doesn't just present his image of a strange baby King who thwarts the violent Roman Empire--he stands at the site of the Nativity. He doesn't just describe the vibrant celebration of the Ugandan martyrs--he takes you to Africa so you can see the tribal excitement for yourself. So while the book makes it easier to digest the more complex material, it does lack the visual and audible flair of the film series. Those familiar with Fr. Barron's other materials will quickly recognize his favorite themes in this book. For instance, the "loop of grace" and the non-violent, non-competitive nature of God are seen throughout. And his chapter on the saints, one of the book's most exhilarating, recalls material from *The Priority of Christ*. In this chapter he profiles four holy women--a not so subtle reply to those who accuse the Church of being anti-feminist. Therese of Lisieux, Katherine Drexel, Edith Stein, and Mother Teresa exemplify what Barron calls "elevated virtue" and they let us taste the wildly diverse community of saints. Barron also applies his characteristic intelligence and artistry to the peculiar teachings of Jesus, the missionary zeal of Peter and Paul, the central importance of Mary, the riches of Catholic spirituality, and even death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Catholicism closes with a grand crescendo, climbing and trumpeting toward one of the most stirring conclusions I've ever read. The whole book flows similarly to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. When you finish Catholicism, just like finishing Dante's *Paradiso*, your soul is left soaring. Ultimately, Catholicism stands as Barron's magnum opus, the culmination of his life's work so far. Which means it's the best work from one of the world's best theologians, a monumental gift to the Church. RCIA programs across the country should adopt the book as a foundational text, and through Word on Fire's own study program, parishes should use the film series and book to reignite the passion of their

flock. One reviewer described the book and film series as "the most vivid catechism ever created." And I think he's right. This will go down as the greatest catechetical tool of our generation, the premier, single-volume book on Catholicism. In a culture hungry for truth, Catholicism offers answers. To people searching for goodness, it provides the path toward sainthood. In a world desperate for beauty, this book ravishes. If you're a Catholic, get this book and discover the radiance of your faith. If you're not a Catholic, get this book and glimpse the Church's splendor, maybe for the first time. If you know a young person, an RCIA candidate, or a fallen away Catholic burned out by religion, let this book spark new wonder. Whoever you are, and for whoever you know, buy this book. I simply can't give it a higher recommendation.

Bishop Barron has done nothing less than write a love letter about that Catholic faith that is inspiring and motivating at the same time. He goes through the ages and displays with great beauty how deep the Catholic faith is, how it has been manifested not only in the faith itself and the communion of saints, but in the art, architecture, and writings that have been a part of it for 2000 years. As some others have pointed out, the ending of this book is beautiful, as is his treatise of 1 Corinthians 13, both of which challenge you to keep your eyes dry as you read. This book is not by any means a complete history of the faith, nor is it a full description of our theology and beliefs. However, I do believe it is approachable for readers of any faith or background desiring to learn more about the Catholic Church. Indeed, I would recommend it as a persuasive work that can be used to hold onto any teetering Catholics, as well as to draw anyone into the faith who may have considered joining.

Fr Barron's work is a masterpiece. It is accessible for someone looking to understand the historic Catholic Church better. It is inspirational for someone looking at the Catholic Church seriously, whether they are already Catholic or considering a journey to the Catholic Church. More than those, it is an excellent outline for a lifetime of study of the fullness of the Christian faith and the Church founded by Jesus. The book documents the foundations, Traditions, traditions, works, trials and history of the Catholic Church in the whole world. Fr Barron presents an excellent introduction to classical education to a world that is technically educated, but culturally illiterate, educated by mediocre music and tv sitcoms. If you read this book, chapter by chapter and delve into the original sources for each of the subjects Fr Barron presents, you will come out a better educated, analytical person with a broad understanding of western and eastern civilization, history and philosophy, art and architecture as well as the basics of the Catholic faith. Excellent resource for RCIA, Church History, Western Civilization, Philosophy and art.

I really love Fr. Barron. I have been listening to his homilies on Word on Fire, and I loved this book. Right after I finished it I started reading it again, because he makes you think and in different ways and I thought I would get even more out of it if I read it again. I loved reading about Peter and Paul, and the Saints, and of course Jesus. I took a 45 year break from religion and am still in the process of becoming a Catholic, so this book is great for me. But many non-Catholics would enjoy it too, as long as they have an open mind. His writing has life because he is very profound but he also captures the spiritual so well.

I would refer you to Stuart Dunn's excellent 3-star review for an insightful critique. Although we bought and enjoyed the DVD series, which is clearly more carefully edited and pruned to be more palatable, the book reveals faults. As early as page 18, there is clumsy digression from the words of Jesus about honoring the law (keeping in mind he was a Jew!), incorrectly stating that "his people" "Had fallen into spiritual death." Oy vey. Give me a break.

Beautiful and perfectly done. If you think you know what Catholicism is, what they believe and/or what it is all about, you should see this and verify your understanding. This is the perfect opportunity to get the truth about the faith that so many believe in, fought and died for. Get the facts, then decide. This is presented in a very beautiful and easy to understand format of 10 separate sessions. Beautiful scenery and precise information. Very enlightening and enjoyable program. Suitable for individuals, or groups - small or large.

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