

# Catholicism

*Catholicism is the largest branch of Christianity. While most of its beliefs are in line with Orthodox Christian beliefs there are some which have been rejected since the protestant reformation.*

## Dimensions of the Religion

### 1. Sacred Texts

- The Bible
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church

### 2. Sacred Beliefs

- That Jesus is truly the Son of God
- Heaven and Hell
- Being created in God's Image

### 3. Sacred Symbols

- The Cross
- The Alpha and Omega
- A Fish

### 4. Sacred Rituals

- Baptism
- Eucharist and other Sacraments

### 5. Sacred Ethics

- Ten Commandments
- Modern ethics

### 6. Religious Social Structure

- Headed by the Pope, with Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and Religious and the Laity

### 7. Religious Experience

- Personal Revelation
- Pilgrimage Experiences (e.g. to Lourdes)

### 8. Sacred Stories

- The Story of Creation
- Parables
- Not Jesus though... that's fact not a story!

### 9. Religious History

- Jewish Origins
- Reformation and Counter-Reformation
- Second Vatican Council

## Functions of the Religion

### 1. Giving meaning to life

*Catholics are called to live according to the example set by Christ. Focused on this they will live fulfilled lives and find peace in the knowledge that they will attain eternal life.*

### 2. Responding to mystery

*Since Catholics view God to be the creator of all things they believe he has power over all things. Therefore God is capable of doing the impossible (performing a miracle)*

### 3. A guide for how to live

*Catholics and Jews live by a similar code, namely "the ten commandments" which are believed to be a divinely instituted set of rules revealed to Moses. In difference to Jews however Catholics should also consider the WWJD (What would Jesus do?) principle.*

### 4. Giving security

*One of the fundamental beliefs of Catholicism is that God loves and cares for everyone. Knowing that someone as powerful of God cares for you is a very secure feeling. Also knowing that eternal life waits for a good Catholic is another factor that gives security.*

### 5. Patterns used to express and celebrate beliefs

*Catholicism has the seven sacraments which are rituals that make real the presence of Christ. The fact that God created the material world is important to this belief; therefore God is capable of making Holy things of this world.*