

## Faith sharing group meeting 2025-09-02

Our meeting tonight was like many other meetings. We never got into discussing the pages we read for tonight but got into many discussions on various topics that were of interest to the group. In these notes, I also expanded on many of the topics to give more details. (I hope it is ok with everyone).

We started our meeting talking about the mass shooting on August 27 at the Church of the Annunciation in the Minneapolis, Minnesota. An attack that took place during a school-wide Mass attended by the students and faculty of Annunciation Catholic School. We discussed some of the comments made by various talking heads regarding sending prayers and condolences to the families and what may need to be done to stop school shootings.

From previous discussion we were wondering when was the first recorded written evidence of the Apostles creed. From research, the Creed existed orally from the 2nd century, and first written around 215 AD, and finalized by the 8th century.

Realizing that the Nicene creed was written to address the divinity of Jesus, this led to a discussion regarding various Christian splits that occurred from the Catholic church. We discussed Mormonism (**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church)** **which** has beliefs that are similar to Christianity. Mormons believe in the **Bible** (King James Version) but also have additional scriptures.

Some of the major differences from Catholicism which teaches the Trinity (one God in three persons), Mormons believe:

- **God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost** are **three separate beings** united in purpose.
- God the Father has a physical, glorified body, as does Jesus.
- Jesus is the literal Son of God, Savior, and Redeemer.
- His church was restored through Joseph Smith after a period of apostasy (falling away) from the truth.

Also, someone mentioned that the CIA recruit a lot of Mormons? While there is no official policy or specific strategy to recruit Mormons, the CIA and other agencies have historically

found the Latter-day Saint (LDS) population to be a strong source of candidates, partly due to shared values and the likelihood of candidates having prior foreign language experience from missionary service, a clean background, and a strong sense of patriotism.

Then we talked about Jehovah Witnesses who use their own translation of the Bible, called the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

- They believe the Bible is God’s inspired Word and the ultimate authority for faith and life.
- Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself.
- He existed as a spirit being (the archangel Michael) before coming to earth as a human.
- His death was a ransom sacrifice that makes salvation possible.
- They do not believe Jesus died on a cross but on a simple upright stake.
- The Holy Spirit is not a person but God’s active force, like His power or energy.
- They do not believe in eternal torment in hell — instead, those who reject God are permanently destroyed (cease to exist).
- No immortal soul — when a person dies, they are unconscious.
- Only 144,000 faithful Christians will go to heaven to rule with Christ.
- The rest of the righteous will be resurrected to live forever on a paradise earth.

It is interesting to look at other Christian religions and their beliefs. However, The **Catholic Church** traces its founding to **Jesus Christ Himself, and we believe in the Real Presence** — Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist: **Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.**

- We discussed the statement in the Apostles creed that Jesus dies and descended into hell. When Catholics say Jesus “**descended into hell**”, they do **not** mean the place of eternal damnation. The word “hell” in the Creed translates the ancient term **Sheol** (Hebrew) or **Hades** (Greek) — meaning the **abode of the dead**, not the hell of the damned. It refers to the place where the souls of the dead were waiting before Jesus’ resurrection — both the righteous and the unrighteous but separated.

(I have a more detailed handout on this for the group)

We discussed the upcoming canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, this led us to talk about when did the church start to reference “saints” and has there been any saints that have been “unsainted”. Yes — there **have been saints who are no longer officially recognized as saints** in the Catholic Church, though it’s rare. The Church doesn’t

“un-canonize” saints lightly. Canonization is considered an infallible declaration that a person is in heaven. But a few cases exist where names were **removed from the universal calendar** or where someone once venerated as a saint was later determined not to be historically real.

Some early saints were removed from the universal liturgical calendar because there was **no solid historical evidence** of their existence. They may still be venerated locally, but they are not universally celebrated anymore.

Examples:

**St. Christopher** – Patron saint of travelers who is still considered a saint, but his feast day is now optional and not universally celebrated.

**St. Philomena** – A young virgin martyr venerated widely in the 19th century.

**St. Clement of Alexandria** – Highly respected Church Father, but never formally canonized; his name was removed from the Roman Martyrology in 1586 by Pope Sixtus V because of some doctrinal concerns

And some saints turned out to be entirely legendary figures:

- **St. Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins** – Likely based on a much smaller historical event, later exaggerated.
- **St. George** – Historically questionable, but still officially recognized as a saint (feast day remains, though with a note that his story is partly legendary).

Michael asked a good question, “Would there be anything you would add to the Nicene Creed?” Which then brought up “Would there be anything you would remove from the Nicene Creed?”. Why we didn’t come up with any good points either way it did make for a good discussion.

We talked about the how there has been **a notable increase** in the number of **Catholic conversions** in several regions around the world, particularly in recent years. These conversions have been particularly noticeable in:

- **France and Europe** (especially among youth),
- **Numerous U.S. dioceses** with double-digit and even triple-digit growth,
- **Los Angeles Archdiocese**, with a significant surge at Easter.

This trend is driven by young adults seeking spiritual depth, effective evangelization strategies, digital engagement, and a post-pandemic spiritual awakening.

Our topic tonight was suppose to be on Ch 4 the Holy Sprit, but asa you can see from the nortes, He led us in many other directions. So we will try and discuss pages 79-93 “the Holy Sorit” chapter at our next meeting.

The next meeting will be on September 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.

May the Holy Spirit send his blessings upon us all.

Saint Carlo Acutis pray for us.

Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us

Norbert