

Q. Why haven't I heard about the Independent Catholic Church before? How large is it?

There have been independent Catholic Churches since the earliest days after the death and resurrection of Jesus. A careful study of the early church will show that each community of Christians were a fully functioning and complete church under the leadership of a bishop with their deacons and presbyters, independent of any other bishop. The responsibility and accountability of the community fell on the shoulders of the bishop alone. Relationships between bishops and their communities were based on Apostolic teachings and love for the body of Christ. It was never a relationship built on power and control.

Ignatius of Antioch was the first to use the Greek word **katholikos** (καθολικός), meaning "universal", "complete" and "whole" to describe the church. It is from this word **katholikos** ("according to the whole") that the word catholic comes. When Ignatius wrote the Letter to the Smyrnaeans in about the year 107 and used the word catholic, he used it as if it were a word already in use to describe the Church. For these two reasons we call ourselves "Independent Catholics".

Our particular group came to America about 1871. We were originally part of the Old Catholic Church in Europe. The reason that we maintain our independence from Rome was that Pope Pius IX had himself "declared" infallible by the bishops who remained at the First Vatican Council. Because many popes have acted as absolute dictators both politically and spiritually for centuries, the independent Catholic Churches were determined to bring back the original democracy of each parish, diocese and bishop. Popes have tended to rule from top down with **no accountability**. We are not certain how many independent Catholics exist. We believe that there are at least 2 million in the US alone. We also know from polls that about 40

million Roman Catholics in America believe in all of the principles that we openly profess and live by. Just the divorce and birth control issues alone point to a vast number of Roman Catholics who agree with us.

Q. What are the lines of apostolic succession of Bishop Frank Adams?

Bishop Frank Adams was ordained as a Jesuit deacon (November 2, 1979) and priest (June 6, 1980) by bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Adams was consecrated a bishop (June 6, 1996) by six bishops and duly elected by the people. Two bishops were from the Russian Orthodox Church, two bishops were from the Friends Catholic Church (an independent catholic church) with succession from the Roman Church through a bishop of Brazil. One bishop was from the Apostolic Orthodox Church and also recognized as a bishop by the US Veterans Administration. Finally, one bishop was from the Community of Jesus independent Catholic Church.

Q. Are all of the sacraments recognized by the Roman Catholic Church?

Yes! Since all of our bishops, priests and deacons are validly ordained and consecrated; and we follow the same sacramental practices, our sacraments are recognized even according to the Roman Catholic Church's Canon Law.

Q. What are the differences between the Independent Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church?

The American Independent Catholic Church is one of the many independent catholic churches around the world. Independent because like the church in the first four or five centuries, each bishop is equal to every other bishop and there is no papal authority over the bishops. We operate mostly according to the rules of the first thousand years of Christianity. We have the same seven sacraments, scriptures, basic beliefs, early creeds and early Ecumenical Councils. We trace our bishop and priestly ordinations back in

an unbroken line to the apostles. We have a married clergy. We do **not** believe in papal infallibility. We do **not** make laws about birth control. We are **for** a stronger, more equal role of women in the church. We invite **all** baptized and sacramentally confirmed Christians to Eucharist from both the catholic and orthodox traditions.

Q. Do we need an annulment to get married in the Independent Catholic Church if one or both of us are divorced?

No! You do not need an annulment. For two thousand years the Orthodox have allowed people to marry up to two times after divorces. In the Roman Church, annulments became a control issue over the people. Even today there is a little known loop-hole that pastors can use (but seldom do) where if the pastor knows from the internal forum (confession) that there were problems before and during the marriage that would invalidate the marriage, the pastor can secretly marry the divorced person. As independent Catholics, we deal with reality—some marriages die, and that you have a right to live the sacrament of marriage and receive all of the sacraments!

Q. Will our marriages be recognize by the Roman Catholic Church even if one of us is divorced?

For the different gender marriages the answer is, Yes! Since each bishop has the power to determine the marriage laws within his or her diocese, then a valid marriage in our Church must be acknowledge within all Catholic jurisdictions. The Roman Catholic Church is a church of Canon laws that sometimes conflict with themselves and with justice. For Eastern Orthodox Churches, remarriage is allowed up to two times after divorce and a time of penance, as was the custom in the early church.

Q. Why do we use the word Orthodox in our title?

Many of the independent churches, like ours, are also from the eastern orthodox tradition.

Each of the jurisdictions are self-governing entities as in the early church, though certain parts of Orthodoxy in modern times seem to have changed the Orthodox understanding of 'canonical' into a new version of papacy. Their definition of 'canonical' is focused on being recognized, for instance, by the Patriarch of Constantinople, as if he were some sort of Eastern pope. They appear to have adopted the ecclesiology of Roman Catholicism by making legitimacy or canonicity dependent upon recognition by a particular Patriarch or Pope. It is as if by being in communion with a particular segment of Orthodoxy, whether Patriarchal or not, somehow would make one Orthodox. This "neopapal" concept has no historical precedent in Holy Orthodoxy and contradicts centuries of Orthodox tradition back to the times of the Holy Apostles (Luke 9:49-50).

Q. How can a Catholic priest be married and remain a Catholic priest?

The ordination ceremony says: "You are a priest forever!" For the first 1200 years in the Roman Catholic Church, priests were allowed to marry. The Orthodox Churches have always allowed priests and bishops to be married. Until about the 1500's most or many parish priests had a "wife" in all senses except by Church law and had children. In the Roman Catholic Church today, men, who were priests or ministers in other Catholic/Christian Churches, and wish to become Roman Catholic priests are allowed to remain married. We consider the Celibacy Issue as a matter of discipline and control over the Roman Catholic Priests. We allow men and women priests to be married. We think this makes our priests more attuned to the real issues of family life.

Q. Do you have the sacrament of Penance or Confession?

Yes! However, we generally reserve the sacrament for serious sins (following the practice of the early church) and for spiritual

counseling. We offer General Absolution at every Sunday Mass. Even the Roman Missal instruction call the prayer/blessing at the end of the penitential rite during Mass—"absolution!" The Roman Catholic Church tries to hide that fact from the general public and used to admonish me when I was in the Roman Church that I was not to make it clear that this was absolution by the words and actions that I used. The early church also believed that all sins were forgiven at the Eucharist, **except for murder, adultery, and denying the faith!**

Q. Can we have our baby baptized without all of those classes and questions about our marital status?

Yes! Of course we would like to see you on a regular basis, but most of all we want you to practice your faith, worship regularly and bring your child up in the faith. We will ask you to promise that as part of the baptismal ceremony. But how you practice your faith is between you and God. We love you and want you to pray and be with us whenever you will.

Q. How do I join the Independent Catholic Church?

If you are a baptized or dedicated Christian, all you need to do is come to Church and introduce yourself to the priest or deacon, and tell him or her that you wish to join. If you have not been baptized the priest or deacon will start you on instruction and meet with you regularly until your baptism. Adults and children old enough to understand fully what they are doing, will be Baptized and receive Eucharist and Confirmation all in the same ceremony. All priests in our diocese are delegated to Confirm as in the Orthodox Church. There are times and situations that an infant will be Baptized, Confirmed and receive the Eucharist as practiced in the early church.

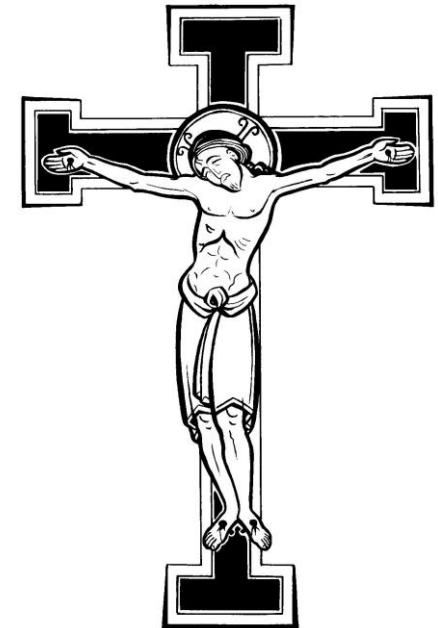
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Independent Catholicism



Questions and Answers

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