

# Practical Suggestions When Witnessing to Catholics

## Don'ts

1. Do NOT criticize the Catholic Church, its practices, or its doctrines, especially those relating to Mary. Even if you feel you have a valid point, it is counter productive to criticize for various reasons:
  - a. It is not in the spirit of Christ.
  - b. It will only antagonize people.
2. Do not ridicule any of the practices of the Catholic Church. Some evangelical Christians are too prone to make fun of their sacraments, images, statues, crucifixes, etc. These things are very dear to Catholics. Only the Holy Spirit, through God's Word, can give them understanding regarding these things as they grow spiritually.
3. Don't be negative just because you differ with someone. You can disagree without being disagreeable.
4. Do not to use 'churchy' terms, such as redeem, born again, etc, that may cause confusion because these will have a different meaning to them than what you intend to say.

## Do's

1. Love your Catholic friends. Find opportunities to manifest your love in practical ways.
2. Pray with and for your Catholic friends. Many of them have never had the experience of having someone pray for them by name and mention specific needs. Say something like: "Lord, I pray for (person's name), you know that he has this need (name the need) and, Lord, you have promised to hear our prayers. Bless (name), help him..."
3. See the best in them. When someone says to you: "I'm a Catholic," be in a position both spiritually and emotionally to say to them, "I'm glad to meet you." Let the love of Christ flow through you. Remember, everyone you meet is a person for whom Christ died.
4. Make sure you back up every point with Scripture. They need to learn to trust Scripture over the word of any teacher or religious leader (even yours). Give them time to find the Scripture text and ask the person to read it with you. You may have more of an impact if you ask the person to use his/her own Bible. Now, many Catholics will not have a Bible; ask if they will accept one. A contemporary English version, such as NIV, will be better, OR one in the person's mother tongue.

5. Some Catholics will not trust an 'evangelical Bible.' If possible, have a copy of a 'Catholic Bible' (one with the seal of approval from the Catholic Church) at hand so they can look up the verses in that one.
6. Emphasize the need for a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Catholics will agree with the basic "plan of salvation" but they fail to understand that they can and need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that they need to surrender their lives to His control and authority. This needs to be emphasized over and over before it sinks in.
7. When questioned about Mary or the "saints" it is better to avoid the argument. The moment you begin this argument you close the door for the Gospel. You may answer their question with something like, "I believe everything the Bible teaches about Mary and the saints," and immediately bring the conversation back to Jesus. **The Gospel is Jesus.** As they learn more and start reading the Scriptures, they will discover the truth about Mary and the real saints.
8. Take time to study and mark Biblical passages that relate to Catholic beliefs beforehand. However, NEVER use these to create controversy or an argument. These are to be used only when specifically questioned about by a Catholic person.
8. Study the information provided in the handout "Understanding Catholic Concepts." Again, this is for your knowledge and is never to be used to create controversy. It will help you by giving you a better understanding of their beliefs and by giving you the Scripture to answer some of their questions and concerns.
9. The following are passages that may help you when discussing some of the other topics not discussed in the handout "Understanding Catholic Concepts":
  - A. The Ten Commandments—Exodus 20:1-17. The list of the commandments that the Catholic Church teaches its members is not the list found in the Bible. They usually omit the commandment against making idols (see also Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:3-10).
  - B. Jesus' warning against using religious titles and hierarchies—Matthew 23:8-10
  - C. Against believing in spirits or consulting the spirits of the dead—Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, Leviticus 20:27
  - D. Against the praying for the dead and purgatory—Hebrews 9:27 and Luke 16:19-31.

- E. Having faith for salvation (believing in God) requires more than just believing that He exists—it requires a relationship and obedience to His Word: John 14:15, 23-24; James 2:19 (Even the demons believe in God, but they do not have a relationship with Him nor do they obey His commandments except out of fear. All Catholics will say that they believe in God, and even that they love Him, but they do not follow His teachings because they do not know Him personally nor His Word.)
- F. Against repetitious prayer (rosary, Hail Mary, etc)—Matthew 6:7
- G. Regarding relics: most Catholic relics consist of body parts of a dead person, usually one considered a ‘saint.’ Many if not most Catholic altars will have special boxes or areas where these relics are kept (mostly within the table used to present the ‘sacrifice of the mass’ or Eucharist). Also, in some parts of Mexico, people will dig out the bones or mummies of dead relatives and have special celebrations and masses on certain religious festivities, such as the ‘day of the dead’ (All Saints Day, Nov. 1). Catholics ignore the prohibitions in the Bible against having dead people anywhere near the altar—in fact, anyone who had touched in any way a dead body, human bones, a grave, or who had just been in a house with a dead body, was considered ritually unclean and could not come anywhere near the temple. (See Numbers 19:14-16 and related passages.)

## The Ten Commandments

### Exodus 20 2-17

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

### Catechism of the Catholic Church

1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.

2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

3. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day. (In some versions it reads: "Sanctify the Church's Feasts")

4. Honor your father and your mother.

5. You shall not kill.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

*[www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/command](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/command)  
This is only one of several altered versions of the commandments taught to Catholics.*