

# What are our obligations and responsibilities as Catholics?

## In a nutshell:

Our responsibility as Catholics is to **love** as Jesus loved and to be **faithful** in relationship:

- \* Our relationship with God;
- \* Our relationship with the Catholic community of faith.

We can describe this relationship over four major areas:

## BELIEFS

As Catholics we have a responsibility to:

- Read the bible and seek a proper understanding of God's Word.
- Be informed about the traditions and teachings of the Church;
- Keep growing, learning, deepening their faith throughout our lives.
- Respect the teaching authority of the Church (the magisterium);
- Follow our conscience. However it must be an *informed* conscience. Sometimes we refer to a 'Catholic conscience.' i.e. A willingness to think 'with' the Church. This doesn't mean blind, unthinking adherence. It does mean that a spirit of loving unity permeates our mindset. Even if we struggle with a particular teaching, we do all we can to resolve our struggles in a context of respectful listening and prayerful openness to the voice of the church, always seeking deeper comprehension and clarification.

## WORSHIP

As Catholics we have a responsibility to:

- Have a personal prayer life.
- Pray and express our faith in the home (e.g. grace before meals);
- Belong to a worshipping community (usually the local parish), and to contribute to the life of that community.
- Receive the sacraments.
- Observe Sunday as 'the Lord's

Day' by worshipping with the community at Mass on Sundays.

- Attend Mass also on two holy days of obligation each year: Christmas Day (25 Dec) and the Feast of the Assumption (15 Aug).
- Observe Fridays as a day of penance (i.e. practice some gesture of our choice relating to prayer, fasting or service to others).
- Go to the sacrament of Reconciliation a least once a year.
- Receive communion at least once a year.
- Observe the Lenten fast on two days of the year: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- Enter into the celebrations of the various liturgical seasons (e.g. advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter) as fully as possible.

## LIFESTYLE / VALUES

As Catholics we have a responsibility to:

- Keep the commandments, especially the two greatest commandments: to Love God and Neighbour.
- Lead authentic, moral Christian lives, in keeping with our beliefs and patterns of worship.
- Respect human life in all its forms regardless of age, gender, culture, health, capability, etc.
- Respect God's creation, including our bodies/sexuality, and be responsible stewards of the earth's resources;
- Use and share material goods justly, so that the world's peoples may live in harmony.
- Contribute to a spirit of *communio* (loving unity) within the Catholic community;
- Live justly in all our dealings with people, including a particular emphasis on care for the poor.
- Honour the marriage bond as sacred, as a lifetime commitment.

• Whatever our vocation, to live chastely in a manner appropriate to that vocation.

• If Catholics choose to marry, they are expected to marry in the Catholic Church. If they endure the sadness of divorce, they are urged seek healing, and to explore the possibility of an annulment before entering a second marriage.

## MISSION

As Catholics we have a responsibility to:

- To *give life* to the world – e.g. through having children, lifegiving relationships with family, neighbours, parishioners, local society, the wider human family.
- Witness to our faith by word and deed (see "Lifestyle/Values").
- Do all we can to raise our children as Catholics who live according to God's law of love. (Note: Catholics are not obliged to send their children to Catholic schools, but they are expected to do all they can to raise their children in the Catholic faith and bring their children to the sacraments.)
- Evangelize, i.e. 'let our light shine', to share why our Catholic faith is important to us.
- Courageously stand up for our faith in truth and love.
- Support the missionary activities of the church e.g. through prayer, finance, action.

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