



What Is This? by Joe Sixpack

The obvious questions you've got to be asking yourself are, "What is this, and who in the world is Joe Sixpack?" Well, let's begin with the last question first.

Apparently Joe Sixpack is the person who is writing this little bulletin article, but Joe Sixpack is just a pen name. The reason I use the moniker Joe Sixpack is because the name pretty much sums up everyone...it's a name used interchangeably for John & Jane Q Public. So, at the risk of sounding sexist or politically incorrect, Joe Sixpack is the average woman and man sitting in your parish pew. I'm just a regular, everyday Catholic who is just like you. I have the same financial worries, the same family concerns, the same daily struggles as you...and I want to try to live right and do what God wants so I can one day go to heaven. Perhaps the only difference between this Joe Sixpack and most of the Joe Sixpacks reading this is, I'm a convert to Catholicism. Yeah, I realize that some (thankfully not all) "cradle Catholics" sort of view converts as interlopers, but those same folks seem to overlook one thing about we interloping converts: *we became Catholics because we were struck by the irresistible truths of Jesus Christ and made the conscious decision to become Catholics.*

Perhaps another little difference between this Joe Sixpack and you is that I'm a professional writer. I'm also a highly trained Marian Catechist, a catechetical organization founded by the Servant of God Fr. John Hardon, SJ. As a Marian Catechist, convert and writer, I really delved deeply into all things Catholic. I have studied the Church's teachings to the extreme. I've read and studied all the documents of Vatican II, the lives of scores of saints and historically notable Catholics, moral theology, sacramental theology, Church history, catechetics, and a host of other things that concern our glorious 2000 year doctrinal history. Most importantly, I've struggled over a quarter of a century following Christ's command to become a holy...which is why I now understand why we say we're "practicing" Catholics. The only logical reason anyone would spend all this effort at study is because such a person would be deliriously in love with Jesus Christ and his Church. I am, and I hope to help you feel the same.

I've been a Catholic since the late 1980s. I've seen all the scandals. I've witnessed all the experiments in the Church—catechetical, liturgical, social, *et cetera*—both successful and failed. St. John Paul II was the Supreme Pontiff when I entered the Church. Some of the times we've seen have tended to be a bit confusing, and some have been downright disappointing, but all have definitely been exciting.

Something that has disturbed me over the years has been the result of one of those little failed experiments I mentioned earlier. It seems that the vast majority of us Joe Sixpacks simply do not know and understand our holy and ancient faith as we should, and that results from some of

the failed experiments in catechesis that took place (and unfortunately caught hold) in the '70s and early '80s. Some of you may be thinking that you know our faith well, and you may indeed know it well, but I still contend that you probably do not.

If you can't tell yourself off the top of your head how many sacraments there are and name them, you likely don't know our faith.

If you can't explain what Baptism is, what it does, and why we have it, you likely don't know our faith.

If you can't explain what Confirmation is, what it does, and why we have it, you likely don't know our faith.

If you don't go to confession at least once a month, you likely don't know our faith.

If you can't explain what we mean by the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, you likely don't know our faith.

If you can't explain what the Mass is, you likely don't know our faith.

If you can't tell yourself or someone else why God created you—a question any Catholic 3rd grader could answer 60 years ago—you likely don't know our faith.

Now many of you gave explanations to these topics, but I'll bet even among those of you who did, most of you have a nagging thought in your mind about whether your explanation is really the right one. Well, we're going to try to help you learn what you need to know—*what all Catholics need to know*—about the Catholic faith.

About 150 years ago, Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman said that the greatest tragedy in the Catholic Church is an ignorant laity. A lack of knowledge among the laity is especially tragic today. We live in a culture and society that believes in killing babies in the womb on demand, perverts the meaning and purpose of marriage, dumbs down our children so they will be unable to use simple logic and right reason in adulthood to lead truly productive lives, is absent of a moral compass so that anything is permitted that “feels good” without concern for the eternal consequences of our actions. Apparently your pastor agrees, which is why this insert is in your bulletin.

As long as you need it, *What We Believe...Why We Believe It* will be in your parish bulletin... every week. In little bite-size portions, we will begin to look at what the Church teaches from the 12 articles of the Apostles' Creed, the 7 Sacraments, the 10 Commandments, the life of prayer and virtue, apologetics, history, approved devotions, and the lives of the saints. Everybody loves a good story, so when it's possible to do so I'll use little stories to help you better understand the truths of our holy and ancient faith. As you read and begin to grasp a better understanding of the glories of Catholicism, you'll find your chest beginning to swell with pride and you'll actually discover a new excitement for our faith.

So I hope you take time each week to read and digest these single page inserts. And let me invite you to go to www.JoeSixpackAnswers.com, visiting our contact page to let us know what you think about *What We Believe...Why We Believe It*. Your input matters to me.

By the way, to answer why God created us: He created us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this life so that we can be forever happy with Him in the next life. Once you know Him, you cannot help but love Him. When you love God you naturally want to serve Him, and he rewards that faithful love and service with eternity in heaven. That's *What We Believe...Why We Believe It*.

Got a question? Go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com.