

# An Open Letter of Faith and Inquiry

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To all faithful Latter-day Saints,

Friends, I write this to you today with a heart full of respect, but also carrying a profound ache. I look at your community and I see so much that is objectively good. Your deep devotion to God, your fierce love for the family, and your commitment to service are realities worth honoring. The visible goodness in your wards and your homes is beautiful, and I see the sincere faith driving it. I have witnessed the strength of your family bonds, the way you care for one another in times of need, the missionary zeal that sends thousands across the globe, and the quiet, consistent acts of charity that mark your daily lives. These fruits reflect the image of God at work in you, and they deserve genuine admiration and gratitude. You often quote the Lord's words that you will know them by their fruits, and in many visible ways, your community bears good fruit.

But we must be spiritually sober. Sincerity is not the guarantor of reality. Many of you, I know, carry questions or doubts that you have placed on a shelf, hoping that more prayer, more temple attendance, or future revelation will resolve them. I honor the sincerity of that effort. Yet holding conflicting ideas in tension over time creates a heavy internal burden. The mind and spirit long for coherence, and the discomfort of unresolved contradictions is real. While I honor your personal goodness, I cannot in good conscience ignore what is a radical and tragic severing from the Great Tradition of historic, orthodox Catholic Christianity.

By embracing the revelations of Joseph Smith, millions have been led away from the sovereign God of classical theism toward a worldview where God was once a progressing mortal, and where humans might one day become gods themselves. This vision, however sincerely held, fundamentally distorts the ontological reality of who God is and who we are as His creatures.

You often point to the Apostle Paul calling us joint heirs with Christ in Romans 8 to defend this doctrine of exaltation. But historic Christianity has never denied that we are called to be partakers of the divine nature. The Catholic Church has taught the beautiful doctrine of Theosis, or divinization, for two thousand years. However, this means we participate in God's divine life strictly through grace, not by nature. We become like God in holiness, but the absolute, ontological divide between the uncreated Creator and the created being remains forever intact. Being a joint heir does not mean bridging that gap to become an independent deity of your own universe. It means entering into the eternal communion of love that is the Holy Trinity through the saving work of Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. This participation elevates us to share in God's life without ever erasing the infinite qualitative difference between Creator and creature. Many who have stepped into

this understanding describe a profound sense of relief, no longer needing to reconcile human progression with an eternal, unchanging God.

At the heart of this rupture is the nature of God Himself. It is common to hear that the Nicene Creed and the historic doctrine of the Trinity are apostate, Hellenistic inventions developed centuries after the Apostles. But this fundamentally misunderstands how the Holy Spirit guards the Church. The historical development of doctrine was not a pagan corruption. It was the fulfillment of Christ's promise that the Spirit of Truth would guide the living Magisterium into all truth. When early heresies threatened to distort the biblical revelation of who Jesus was, the Church Councils did not invent new theology. They rigorously defined and protected the ancient, apostolic truth that God is one divine essence in three co-eternal, uncreated persons. To dismiss the Trinity as an apostasy is to claim the Holy Spirit abandoned the very Church Christ promised to protect. The Trinity is not a later addition but the luminous unfolding of the biblical revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who have always existed in perfect, relational love.

This brings us to the very foundation of existence. Your tradition teaches that human intelligences and matter itself are co-eternal with God, often claiming that the Genesis account describes a creation out of preexisting matter, or *creatio ex materia*. But when we apply rigorous textual analysis to the biblical text, that argument falls apart. In the opening line of Genesis, the Hebrew word used for created is *bara*. Every single time *bara* is used in the Hebrew Bible with God as the subject, there is never any preexisting material mentioned in the grammar. The text purposefully uses a unique verb reserved exclusively for divine action to show God bringing reality into existence, not just organizing eternal cosmic building blocks.

The New Testament explicitly confirms this creation out of nothing, or *creatio ex nihilo*. Hebrews 11:3 states that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Romans 4:17 describes God as the one who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. If matter is co-eternal with God, then God did not create everything and is not truly sovereign over it. He becomes merely a cosmic architect bound by the eternal laws of the uncreated material He is forced to work with. The historic Christian faith recognizes that the God of the Bible is the uncaused cause of all reality who spoke space, time, and matter into existence simply because He willed it. This truth magnifies God's infinite power and love, revealing a Creator who freely brings forth every soul and every particle out of sheer gratuitous goodness so that we might know Him. Accepting this brings a deep peace, freeing one from the tension of trying to harmonize modern revelations with the plain biblical witness.

This massive theological shift bleeds directly into your temple worship. I know the common defense regarding the undeniable elements in the temple endowment is that Joseph Smith merely used specific cultural, pedagogical vehicles to teach legitimate ancient covenants.

But true ancient temple worship, with its sacrifices and its veil, was entirely and definitively fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. The true, living temple is now the Mystical Body of Christ, and the ultimate covenantal meal is the Holy Eucharist. Reverting to specialized rituals is not a harmless teaching tool. It is a profound theological regression. It leads believers away from the completed sacrifice of the cross and the open grace of the Sacraments, replacing them with a system of human effort and institutional compliance that burdens the soul with anxiety rather than freeing it in the joy of unmerited grace. So many who have walked away from that burden describe entering a rest they had longed for but could not name.

The entire foundation of the Restoration rests on the claim of a Great Apostasy. I have heard the argument that historical schisms within Christianity somehow prove this total apostasy could and did happen. But a branch breaking off a tree does not mean the root and the trunk have died. Schisms are tragedies of human rebellion, but they never resulted in the total eradication of the apostolic priesthood. The Catholic Church has endured every trial, persecution, and internal failure while preserving the faith once delivered to the saints.

I am also deeply familiar with the LDS exegesis of Matthew 16, which claims that when Christ said the gates of hell would not prevail, He was speaking defensively. The argument asserts that because a gate keeps things in, Christ storming the gates of spirit prison, as referenced in 1 Peter 3 and Revelation 1, means the gates did not prevail against the souls trapped inside. This is often tied to 1 Corinthians 15 to justify proxy baptisms for the dead, arguing that since baptism is strictly necessary, proxy work is the only way to save the unevangelized.

Let us look at these claims through the lens of historical orthodoxy. The Catholic Church entirely agrees that Christ holds the keys of death and Hades, and that He descended to preach to the spirits in prison. This is the ancient, beautiful doctrine of the Harrowing of Hell. But Christ accomplished this cosmic victory Himself. He completely shattered those gates. When Paul mentions baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15, he is rhetorically pointing to a practice by a fringe group to prove the reality of the bodily resurrection to his critics, purposefully using the pronoun "they" rather than "we." The historic, apostolic Church never practiced or sanctioned proxy baptism.

While we agree that baptism is the normative necessity for salvation, God is not bound by His own sacraments. The historic Church has always entrusted the unevangelized to the limitless mercy of God through the baptism of desire, knowing the Lord judges the heart perfectly. We do not need a system of genealogical proxy rituals to accomplish what the sovereign grace of Christ already covers.

Most critically, redefining Matthew 16 to apply only to the afterlife strips the militant Church on earth of its promised survival. Christ did not just keep the keys of death; He immediately gave Peter the keys of the kingdom to bind and loose through the earthly

Sacraments. If the earthly priesthood authority and the Sacraments were completely lost from the earth for eighteen centuries, then the gates of death absolutely did prevail against Christ's visible, historical Church.

When subjected to objective historical analysis, the narrative of a total apostasy collapses. We have the unbroken record of Apostolic Succession. We have Clement of Rome writing with authority in 96 AD, Ignatius of Antioch in 107 AD, and Justin Martyr describing the Catholic Eucharist in 155 AD exactly as the historic Church celebrates it today. The God of the universe did not abandon His bride for eighteen hundred years, leaving billions without valid Sacraments. The Church, though always in need of reform and purification, has stood as the pillar and bulwark of truth.

I am sharing all of this not from a place of condemnation, but as a deeply flawed man who relies on the mercy of a Savior every single day. I know the fear and grief that can accompany letting go of long-held beliefs. Yet on the other side of that honest examination lies a profound freedom and joy in the finished work of Christ. My only desire is to point you toward the beautiful, unbroken faith delivered once for all to the saints. The Catholic Church was never lost. The light never went out. In her you will find the fullness of the Sacraments, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the intercession of the saints, and the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary who leads us closer to her Son.

I invite you, with everything I have, to rigorously and prayerfully examine the historical record. Step into the fullness of the Great Tradition that has stood immovable for two thousand years. Come to the biblical Christ, whose work is entirely finished, and whose historic, Catholic Church is standing with open doors, waiting to welcome you home. If the tension you sometimes feel is the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit inviting you deeper, do not be afraid. The truth sets us free.

*With sincere care and brotherly concern,*

*A follower of Jesus Christ*