

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHAT DOES "ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC" MEAN?

One of the meanings of the word Ecumenical is "all-inclusive." The Ecumenical Catholic Church is a branch of Catholicism that practices that tradition in an inclusive manner. We welcome all people to Jesus' table for communion, and all who wish to worship with us. The Ecumenical Catholic Church is part of a growing movement of independent Catholic communities arising in a variety of developing forms. These communities often began with groups of Roman Catholics who could no longer support the position of the current Roman Catholic Hierarchy; they also often include people from many different Christian Traditions. St. Mary of Magdala Church is such a community, and is affiliated with the Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of New England. We celebrate Mass using the Mass of Paul VI, promulgated after the Second Vatican Council. Among the primary differences one might find from the Roman Catholic Tradition are that we are an inclusive community, welcoming all to our liturgical celebrations and to the communion table.

For example, divorced and remarried people, Christians from other traditions, and people of good faith are welcome to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in communion if they desire to do so. People of all sexual orientations are welcome here. Also, we recognize the call of men and women, married and single, to the sacramental priesthood, and the right of any individual to commit themselves to another person in sacramental marriage regardless of gender.

2. ARE YOU AFFILIATED WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

While many people use the term Catholic to specify the Roman Catholic Church, there are more than 25 Church Bodies in the world that identify themselves as Catholic, including the Orthodox Catholic Church which is older than the Roman Church.

We do identify ourselves as Catholic and we cherish and live out our Catholic heritage. We are not, however, affiliated with the local Roman Catholic Diocese and our authority does not come from the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

(For more about the history and use of the term Catholic see the following article: <http://www.stmaryofmagdalachurch.org/infodocspdf/articleontermcatholic.pdf>).

3. WHERE DOES YOUR AUTHORITY COME FROM?

As with all throughout history who have formed Church in the name of Christ our authority comes from Jesus. St. Mary of Magdala Church is affiliated with the Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of New England, whose bishop and priests are ordained in the line of apostolic succession.

4. DO YOU CELEBRATE THE OTHER SACRAMENTS (IN ADDITION TO THE EUCHARIST)?

We recognize and celebrate seven Sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, and the Sacrament of the Sick. All seven are open to all people regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Anyone with questions about the sacraments is welcome to contact our priests to discuss what is involved in receiving the sacraments.

5. I AM DIVORCED AND REMARRIED AND I DO NOT WANT TO GO FOR AN ANNULMENT. WOULD I BE ABLE TO RECEIVE COMMUNION AT YOUR MASS?

Of course.

6. MY SPOUSE IS NOT CATHOLIC. WOULD S/HE BE WELCOMED AT MASS?

Yes, and if he or she expressed the understanding of and desire to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion s/he would be welcome to do so. (We follow the practice of Jesus in welcoming all to the table.)

7. WHAT IF SOMEONE WAS NOT CATHOLIC BUT WISHED TO BECOME CATHOLIC?

We would be glad to discuss that possibility with anyone on a case by case basis.

8. I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM THE CHURCH FOR A LONG TIME AND WISH TO RECONNECT WITH THE RELIGION OF MY PAST. CAN YOU HELP ME?

We would be glad to talk to anyone who finds themselves in this position. If you discover that your reconnection can happen in our community, we will welcome your presence. If you would like help in reconnecting to a traditional Roman Catholic Church, we would be glad to refer you to a Roman Catholic Priest who could help you.

9. ARE YOU IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH OF ROME?

From our point of view the Eucharist is far too precious a gift to be used as a punitive tool. We believe it was Jesus' intention and practice that it be celebrated to nurture unity and understanding, not to highlight differences. Hence, while we adhere to the foundational teachings of the Church (Creedal Statements), we welcome all at our table and see ourselves to be in communion with all Christian Traditions. We welcome the opportunity for dialogue with those with whom we disagree, but do not see such disagreements as having to end in disunity.

Nevertheless, it is our understanding that the Roman Church Hierarchy do not consider themselves to be in communion with us, nor do they see us to be in communion with them. We look forward to the day when we can all, as Christians, open our teachings to continued growth and learning based on the ongoing discernment of God's Spirit at work in our world.

10. AS A MEMBER OF ST. MARY OF MAGDALA CHURCH, COULD I BE REFUSED COMMUNION IN A ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH?

The Roman Catholic Church has made the choice to distribute communion only to “Roman Catholics in good standing who are in the state of grace,” a teaching which some Roman Catholic priests publicly announce before the distribution of communion at Mass.

Therefore, if it is known that you are a member of another Christian Tradition or another Christian Church which identifies itself as Catholic, it is possible that you would be refused communion.

This is one significant difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Catholic Church where all are welcome to the Lord’s Table. (see no. 9 above)