

The Church

One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

“There is one God, and one Christ, and one Church, and one chair founded by the voice of the Lord on the rock. Another altar cannot be set up, nor a new priesthood made, besides the one altar and the one priesthood. Whoever gathers elsewhere scatters.”

-St. Cyprian, Epistle 43:5

“Wheresoever Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

-St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 8:6

Etymology of the Word “Church”

- † The English word “Church” is a corruption of the Greek word “kyriakon” meaning “the Lord’s house”
 - † from *kyrios* (lord).
- † French, Spanish, Italian and all the Romance languages use variations of the Latin word for Church, *ecclesia*, itself a derivation of the Greek *ekklesia*, which in its pre-Christian context meant an assembly
 - † Literally “to call out from,” i.e. we are called out from the fallen world opposed to God into the life of grace within the Church

Founded by Christ

- † Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church at his Ascension, giving her the mission to evangelize (Mt 28:20), and giving her the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 2)
 - † It was not a human invention
- † To his Church, Christ gave his divine authority
 - † As the Father gave authority to Christ (Jn 5:22; Mt 28:18), Christ passed it on to his apostles (Lk 10:16), and they passed it on to the successors they appointed as bishops
 - † The bishops today derive their teaching authority from this unbroken “apostolic succession” dating all the way back to the time of the apostles

Church authority

- † The teaching authority and Sacred Tradition of the Church are the basis for:
 - † Our knowledge of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the two natures of Christ, the Sacraments and divine worship, the Blessed Virgin Mary and more
 - † The Scriptures
 - † Recall that the Church existed for decades before the Scriptures were written. The Church (apostles and their successors) wrote the New Testament and later decided what books would be included in the Bible.
 - † Our knowledge of Christ
 - † We have only ever heard of Christ because of the Church's witness and teaching, the faithful life of her members, and by the celebration of our sacred rites, making Christ present in the Sacraments

The Visible Church

- † A visible Church needs a visible head
- † Christ appointed Peter as the head of the apostles
- † Peter's successor, the pope, is the head of the apostles' successors, the bishops, and is therefore the visible head of the visible Church
 - † The pope governs the entire Church with full, supreme and universal authority, together with the bishops in communion with him
 - † The bishops have no authority unless united with Peter's successor as their head (CCC 882)
- † The pope is the visible source and foundation of the unity of the bishops and the entire faithful

Priest, Prophet and King

- † In the Old Testament, God established these three offices to sanctify, teach and govern his people
- † Christ fulfills them all perfectly
 - † He is the perfect priest, offering himself as the perfect sacrifice upon the Cross
 - † He is the perfect prophet, the very Word of God itself made flesh
 - † He is the perfect King, leading us to eternal life and ruling through service and by laying down his life.

Priest, Prophet and King

- † Christ established these three offices in the Church, most fully in the person of the bishops and other clergy, in order to:
 - † Sanctify (through the Sacraments)
 - † Teach (through authentic handing on of divine revelation)
 - † Lead (through apostolic authority)
- † These offices are hierarchical, but the gifts are not limited to the clergy
 - † At our baptism, all of us are anointed as “priest, prophet and king” and share in the work of building up the Kingdom

In summary...

- † Before his Ascension, Christ instituted his holy Church as the means by which all people would come to the knowledge of God and, through which, the grace that Christ merited by his death on the cross (forgiveness of sins and a sharing in his divine life) would be diffused through the means of the sacraments.
- † This Church of Christ is built upon the foundation of the apostles (Rev. 21:14) with Peter as its earthly head.
- † Christ gave governance of the Church to Peter (Matt.16:13-19) and to his successors who, in collegiality with the bishops as successors of the apostles, are to govern the visible Church until Christ returns.

The Mission of the Church

- † Worship God
- † Serve Others
- † Make Disciples
- † “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers...praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number...”(Acts 2:42)
 - † Right from the beginning the Church was doing these things
- † The Church has received her “mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ”

To Evangelize...

- † Literally, to “bring the Good News”
- † Evangelization is proclaiming the name, person, teaching, life, promises, Kingdom and paschal mystery (passion, death and resurrection) of Jesus Christ, and inviting people to repentance and conversion to Christ for their eternal salvation.
- † If we’re not doing this, we’re doing something wrong!!!
- † This is the very reason the Church exists – to “go out, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them.”

Worship, Serve, Evangelize

- † **Worship God**
 - † Mass, adoration, sacraments, prayer groups, processions
- † **Serve others**
 - † Hospitals, orphanages, soup kitchens, shelters, Catholic Charities, Catholic Hospice, Catholic Legal Services
 - † St. Vincent de Paul, men's club, women's club, Respect Life office, Knights of Columbus, etc.
- † **Make Disciples**
 - † School, religious education, youth groups, Bible study, RCIA and faith formation

The Mystical Body

- † The phrase “Mystical Body of Christ” is meant to describe the unity of Christ with his Church.
 - † Upon giving the Apostles their mission, he told them, “and behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20)
- † Christ is not simply the hierarchical head of the Church, the way a CEO is head of a corporation; Christ both rules the Church and is immediately present here and now within her through:
 - † the sacramental ministry of the priesthood,
 - † the guidance of the whole Church by the Holy Spirit
 - † The holy Eucharist present at Mass and in the tabernacle
 - † In his Word proclaimed
 - † In his assembly gathered in his name

Visible & Invisible

- † The Church is
 - † both the mystical Body of Christ and a hierarchical society,
 - † both a visible organization and a spiritual community,
 - † both an earthly Church and a Church endowed with heavenly riches.
- † These aspects of the Church are “one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element (CCC 771).
- † So there are visible and invisible elements of the Church

Visible & Invisible

- † The visible Church constitutes those who are incorporated into her by baptism and are in communion with the visible head of the Church on earth, the Pope.
- † The sign of visible unity of the local church (diocese) is the bishop; local churches preserve their unity by communion with the head of the universal Church, the Bishop of Rome.
 - † In other words, the visible Church includes all faithful living on earth within the hierarchical structure of the community
- † The invisible aspect of the Church is comprised of
 - † all the saints and angels in heaven (the Church Triumphant)
 - † all the members suffering in Purgatory (the Church Suffering)
- † All these elements, united with Christ, the Head, comprise the Church. Often referred to as the 'Mystical Body of Christ.'

The Four Marks of the Church

One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

The Church Is One

- † The unity of the Church is a supernatural unity possessed by virtue of Christ's unity with the Father
 - † "...And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, Father, I in them and you in me..."(John 17:21).
- † The unity is also a unity of belief.
 - † The Church is one because she believes the one doctrine handed on to her by the Apostles
 - † The "deposit of faith" or "the ball"
 - † This is one reason why we all say the Creed – individually and as a community – each Sunday

The Church is One

- † St. Paul said: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6)
- † St. Cyprian said: "There is one God, and Christ is one, and there is one church, and one episcopate...they can no longer have God for their Father who have not the Church for their mother."
 - † In other words, there is no such thing as a solitary Christian...there is always a community, the Church
 - † When we stray from the Church, that's when we start getting goofy ideas (i.e. heresy) about the faith

The Church Is Holy

- † The Church is called holy not because every one of her members individually is holy, but because Christ, who is unfailingly holy, has united himself to her and in her resides the fullness of grace and all the means of salvation given to humanity.
- † “The Church is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God...loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.” (CCC 823)
- † “The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect. In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired...all are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.” (CCC 825)

The Church Is Holy

- † In other words, the holiness of the Church derives not from us sinners who make up the Church, but from Christ, who has joined himself to the Church as her Head.
- † The Church – because of Christ – is always holy.
- † But also the Church – because of us sinners – is always in need of purification and perfection.
- † The Church’s holiness, including the holiness of her individual members, derives ultimately from Christ, who alone is holy.
- † “We hold this treasure in earthen vessels.” (2 Cor 4:7)

The Church Is Catholic

- † The word catholic means “universal.” It was first used to describe the Church by St. Ignatius of Antioch in 107 A.D.
- † The Church is catholic in a double sense:
 - † First, it refers to the totality of the faith that the Church received from Christ (the ball), the fullness of the means of salvation, the complete and correct faith, which the Church is tasked with guarding, teaching and handing on.
 - † Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been given a mission to all mankind.
 - † The faith is universal – meaning it is for everyone
 - † “Go out into the whole world and make disciples of all nations...”

The Church Is Catholic

- † In addition to this, each local church (diocese) is catholic. Local churches are catholic by virtue of
 - † their organization around a bishop
 - † their participation in sacramental life administered by a valid priesthood
 - † their communion with the Church of Rome.

The Church Is Apostolic

- † The Church was founded by the Apostles by the mandate of Christ;
- † It faithfully hands on the teaching of the Apostles without error
- † The Apostles were given the authority to teach, lead and sanctify the People of God
 - † This authority they passed down to their successors, the bishops
- † In the person of the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, the Church continues to be guided by them.
- † Our adherence to the teaching authority of the Apostles and their successors (the Pope and the Bishops) is our guarantee of possessing the truth of the faith.

In two weeks...

- † Next class is Monday, Dec 7
- † The Sacraments – Channels of God’s grace
 - † General sacramental theology
 - † What is a Sacrament?
 - † Why are they important and necessary?
 - † What do they do?

- † Bible Study – The Book of Revelation begins Wed, Dec 2
- † Special Advent talk and Christmas Market on Thursday, Dec 3

- † Sources: NABRE, Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Catholic Christianity by Peter J. Kreeft, unamsanctamcatholicam.org

Coming up...

- † The Sacraments in particular
- † The Mass – the Source and Summit of the Catholic Faith
- † The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church
- † The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints
- † The Four Last Things
- † Purgatory and the Church Penitent
- † The Seven Deadly Sins
- † The Ten Commandments
- † The Virtues and the Call to Holiness
- † Catholic Spirituality and Prayer
- † And much more....