

# THE CHURCH

Number One

## **What is the Church?**

*The Catechism of The Catholic Church* tells us that the Church is “The name given the convocation or assembly of the People God has called together from the ends of the earth.” There are three main uses of the word ‘church’:

- a. The People that God gathers in the whole world
- b. The local diocese
- c. The liturgical assembly

*The Catechism* goes on to state that:

“The Church draws her life from the Word and the Body of Christ, and so herself becomes Christ’s Body. In the Creed, the sole Church of Christ is professed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

## **When did Christ found the Church?**

In Matthew 16:18. In this passage, immediately after Simon Peter confesses that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” Jesus responds “I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” Jesus renames Simon ‘Peter’ because the name ‘Peter’ means ‘rock.’ Thus, Jesus intentionally founded the Church on the rock of Peter’s faith.

## **How does the founding of the Church relate to Jesus giving Peter apostolic authority?**

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus imparts His authority to Peter. Here, Jesus declares “I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” Through these words, Jesus gives Peter and his successors, the bishops of the Church, His very own authority to govern, teach and sanctify. We know this because prior to Jesus giving Peter His authority, only God had the “keys of the Kingdom,” meaning that only God could forgive sin. After Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, God opened Heaven to believers. God also ordained that through the Sacrament of Penance, Peter and his successors would have the ability to bind and loose sin through sacramental absolution. This is because Jesus gives them the “power of the keys.”

## **What is apostolic succession?**

*The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* teaches us that this is “the passing on of the office of bishop from the Apostles to bishops, and from them to other bishops down each generation, by means of ordination.” Priests share in this same succession through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

## **How does a pastor share in this authority?**

*The Catechism of The Catholic Church* teaches us that the pastoral office involves a priest “shepherding the faithful in the Name of Christ.” It goes on to explain that “The Pope and the Bishops receive the pastoral office which they are to exercise with Christ the Good

Shepherd as their model; they share their pastoral ministry with priests, to whom they give responsibility over a portion of the flock as pastors of parishes.”

### **What are the 4 Marks of the Church?**

Since the beginning, the Church has taught us that when the authentic Church Jesus Christ founded is present it will have these characteristics.

- a. One- It will have world-wide unity under the leadership of the Bishop of Rome.
- b. Holy- The Church as a whole is holy and seeks to grow in holiness through prayer, the sacraments and reflection upon the Word of God. The Church will ever encourage its members to grow in holiness.
- c. Catholic- It is universal. Jesus’ intention when He founded the Church was that there would be one Church throughout the world embracing all peoples, nations and cultures. The Church is not the particular community of one ethnic group or another. It is meant for all believers. It also has a universal mission of salvation of which all are a part.
- d. Apostolic- It is founded on Apostolic Tradition which it actively continues . *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* explains Tradition as “The living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church, flowing from the oral preaching of

the Apostles and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tradition is preserved and handed on as the Deposit of Faith under the guidance of the bishops, successors to the Apostles.”

### **How is the Church the Body of Christ?**

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, St. Paul explains that the Church is like a human body. He states “as a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.” St. Paul compares each member of the Church to a part of the human body when he states “God placed the parts, each one of them, in the Body as He intended.” He explains that each member has a function in the whole Church “Now you are Christ’s Body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the Church to be, first, apostles; second prophets; third, teachers...” St. Paul makes it clear that no member of the Body of Christ is unimportant.

### **How does one become a member of the Church?**

Through the Sacrament of Baptism. *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* teaches us that Baptism is “the first Sacrament of (Christian) initiation by which we are freed from all sin and are endowed with the gift of divine life, are made members of the Church, and are called to holiness and mission.”

### **How does the Church assist us towards salvation?**

It helps us by providing many graces, community, guidance and prayer. The 7 Sacraments of the Church, all instituted by Christ, are channels of grace by which we receive strength, healing, forgiveness

and union with Christ. It is in this way that the Church makes God present to human beings in the world.

### **What are The Three States of the Church?**

The Church exists in three states because its life extends beyond the temporal world. The Three States of The Church are:

- a. The Church Militant- The Church on earth, consisting of believers who are alive and are called 'militant' because they daily fight against temptation and evil on their way to eternity.
- b. The Church Suffering- Members of the Church, now dead, who are undergoing final purification before entrance into Heaven. The Church Suffering is in Purgatory and requires our daily prayer and sacrifice. The Mass is the greatest way we can assist our deceased brothers and sisters so they may leave purification and enter into Heaven. As we pray for the Church Suffering it prays for us in return.
- c. The Church Glorified- Members of the Church, now dead, who enjoy eternal union with the Trinity in Heaven. This is the Church of the Saints which seeks to assist us with loving intercession, protection and consolation.