



Images of the Church

**SACRAMENT OF SALVATION; MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST - PEOPLE OF GOD;
BRIDE OF CHRIST; TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

- **Sign and Sacrament of Salvation:** The “Church is in Christ like a sacrament or a sign and instrument both of a very closely-knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. (Vatican II, dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* 1, November 21, 1964: *AAS* 57 (1965) 5.)” The Church is the instrument of God, wielded like a pen, that brings forth our salvation. The Church is both a sign of our salvation, since it signifies the means, especially through the Sacraments, that Jesus uses to save us. And, it is the instrument, because it is the actual tool that Jesus uses to save us.
- **Mission of the Church = Salvation of Souls:** The Church’s mission is to unite us with God that we may have eternal and blessed life with Him forever. There is no other purpose of the Church that is as central as the salvation of souls.

MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

- **Full Incorporation: Communion by the Profession of Faith, Communion of Sacraments, Communion of Ecclesiastical Governance, and Having the Holy Spirit:** “They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a ‘bodily’ manner and not ‘in his heart.’ (Vatican II, dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* 14 November 21, 1964: *AAS* 57 (1965) 18-19)” Catholics, to be saved, must not only be in union of faith, sacraments and pastoral governance with the Church, but alive with the Holy Spirit that they are active in a life of faith, hope and love.
- **Threefold Office of Priest, Prophet and King:** Through Baptism we are incorporated into the Church, are constituted the People of God, we are made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and royal offices/functions (*munera*) of Jesus Christ, and we are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world: the salvation of souls.

MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

- **Mystical Body of Christ:** The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. Just as there is Jesus's real body, which we receive in the Eucharist, there is also the mystical body of Christ and that body is made-up of all those who are the People of God.
- **Diverse Functions, One Body - The Choir of God:** Like a choir, we all have a different voice part to offer to the Church. And, harmony is achieved when each person sings the voice part that they are naturally meant for.
- **Jesus is the Head of the Body:** While each of us has a different role in the Church, the head of the Mystical Body is Jesus Himself. It is from the head that a body is governed and given unity of purpose and action. Likewise, Jesus, the Head, provides unity for the Mystical Body, the Church.
- **The Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Church:** Jesus is the head of the Mystical Body. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Mystical Body. And, just as our human bodies cannot act without the brain sending messages to the members of the body, and just as our bodies cannot act without being animated by our soul, the Mystical Body, that is the Church, cannot act without Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

BRIDE OF CHRIST

- **Jesus is Married to the Church:** The Church is the bride of Jesus. Jesus is married to the Church and this marriage is a permanent (perpetual or indissoluble), exclusive (faithful) and life-giving bond. This marriage occurred in the Paschal Mystery and is renewed at every Mass at the consecration, where, once again, Jesus, acting through the priest, expresses his spousal love for the People of God. For, in the bread, made of many grains, which is symbolic of the many people of God, we see Jesus wed himself to us and transform us unto Himself. Here, we see expressed the nature of the Sacrament of Matrimony, of Holy Orders and the centrality of the Eucharist as expressive between the covenant made between God and humanity.
- **“Marks” of this Marriage:** Exclusive Fidelity, Perpetuity (Indissolubility), and Openness to Life. Exclusive fidelity means that Jesus is faithful to the Church, the People of God, and will fulfill the promise of our salvation. Likewise, in the Sacrament of Matrimony the one man and one woman form an exclusive relationship in regards their intimate love for one another. Perpetuity signifies that the relationship that Jesus has with the Church will never and can never be dissolved. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the bond created by the Sacrament can never be dissolved by any authority. By openness to life we see that the marriage of Christ to the Church brings forth both spiritual life, through Baptism, and biological life as the fruit of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **The Place of Worship of God:** The Church, as a building, is the place for the worship of God. Furthermore, by Baptism, our bodies, which are now part of the Mystical Body of Christ, are temples of the Holy Spirit, who animates our prayer life.
- **The Liturgical Life of the People of God - the Christian Cult:** “The Holy Spirit is the ‘principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body.’ He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity: by God’s Word ‘which is able to build you up’; by Baptism, through which he forms Christ’s Body; by the Sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ’s members; by ‘the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts’; by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called ‘charisms’), by which he makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.’ (CCC, 798)”