

A Letter from Our Pastoral Coordinator October 07, 2018



May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ –

On Sept. 16th and 23rd weekends, I wrote about two of the first four marks of the Church – that she is both *one* Church and a Church that is *holy* from the Nicene creed that we say together every Sunday. These marks both identify what we are and that to which we are called. In this weekend's column I want to share some reflections about the *catholic* mark of the Church. In this context of the Nicene Creed, the word *catholic* is not an identifier noting that we are Roman *Catholic* (Western) as opposed to Orthodox Catholicism (Eastern). Here the word *catholic*, lower case, originates from the Greek, *kata holos*, meaning “with respect to the whole.”

Pope Francis, in his book, The Church of Mercy, suggests that the Church is *catholic* in three basic ways. First, it's because it is “the home in which the faith is proclaimed to us in its entirety, in which the salvation brought us by Christ is offered to everyone (p. 33).” In other words, all that Christ proclaimed by his words and actions – its confession, its sacraments and its ministry is complete in the Church. We encounter Christ Jesus in its dynamic community.

Second, the Church is *catholic* because she is universal - proclaimed and experienced all over the world to every person everywhere. Pope Francis teaches an important lesson here. “The Church does not rest solely beneath the shadow of our steeple; rather, she embraces a vast number of peoples and nations who embrace the same faith, are nourished by the same Eucharist, and are served by the same pastors. The universality of our church, is united under our local (Arch) bishop [and] linked to the Holy Father”(p. 34). Witnessing to Christ is the work of every one of us to all people in the world, lay or pastoral leader, each with roles to play in the transmission of the Gospel of Christ.

Third, Pope Francis suggests that the Church is *catholic* because she is “the home of harmony, where unity and diversity know how to merge” (p. 35) as one source of greatness. The Holy Father likens the *catholic* nature of the Church to a symphony with various sounds playing together around one theme. We all have our “sound” or gifts that we offer for the sake not of ourselves but for blending with and for others for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel.

What does this look like on the ground at our parishes? In our *catholic* nature, we proclaim all aspects of the gospel of Jesus: in entirety, in universality, in link to our bishops, and in harmony. We are linked to two Catholic churches: Holy Rosary and Visitation and their schools, to those in the Pierce Deanery, to the Archdiocese, to the world. We must continue to work for this *catholic* – i.e. “missionary sense” of ourselves. In her *catholic* nature, the essence of the Church is missionary to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19).

We all have different points of view and understandings of how the *catholic* character of our faith in Christ is lived in missionary discipleship. But we must remember that as members of the Church, Jesus is the head, and he alone is the “maestro.” United in Christ, the Holy Spirit guides us in our *catholic* “harmony.”

In God's great love, hope and mercy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deacon Jim".

Deacon Jim Fish, Pastoral Coordinator
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