

THE CHURCH IS ONE

- The Church is one because of Christ. He founded his Church on St. Peter (see Matt. 16:18) and the rest of the apostles and ensured that through them and their successors gathered around the successor of St. Peter, the Gospel would continue to be preached and his Kingdom would spread throughout the whole world.
- The one Church continues his saving presence on earth and unites the People of God in “love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14).
- Although charity is the most important sign of the Church’s unity, there are also three other visible bonds of her communion:
- The profession of the one faith received from the apostles;
- The common celebration of the sacraments; and
The apostolic succession which ensures that the authority of our present pope and bishops is the same as that received by the apostles from Christ.
- We cannot fail to recognize that, while unity subsists in the Catholic Church, this unity has been profoundly wounded by divisions caused at least in part by the sins and pride of her own sons and daughters.

- The Church prays constantly for Christian unity in its work of ecumenism and strives to heal these wounds and reunite all Christians into the one Church of Christ.

THE CHURCH IS HOLY

- Jesus taught us to “be perfect as [our] Heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48) and so the Church offers to its members every spiritual gift and grace toward this end of perfection and sanctity.
- Viewed from above, the Church is that divine institution created by the Father, established by the Son, and animated by the Holy Spirit.
- She is the Bride of Christ and the new Jerusalem shown to St. John in his Heavenly vision: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2).
- Viewed from here below, the holiness of the Church is imperfect. The Church is made up people who have not yet attained the perfection which awaits them in Heaven.
- This of course does not fully explain the weaknesses and moral failings of some of her children in past and present centuries.

- For that, our Lord offers the parable of the wheat and the weeds (see Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Like the master of the field who allows the weeds to grow up with the wheat until harvest lest in uprooting them the wheat is destroyed.
- The Church is patient with all her children and holds out to them, even the most hardened sinners, the mercy and love of God.
- When Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, only then will he “gather out of his Kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:41-42).
- It should also be noted that, during the Church’s more difficult times, the Lord has been gracious in sending her great models of sanctity and charity.

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

- The word “catholic” means universal, which is applied to the Church in two ways.
- First, the Church is catholic in the sense of being “whole” or “total” because in her subsists the fullness of Revelation and means of universal salvation.
- Only the Catholic Church has the fullness of the deposit of faith because only she is linked to the apostles who were entrusted with it and given the great commission from the Lord: “Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

- Second, the Church is catholic in the sense of “universal” because she is meant to draw people from every corner of the world into her fold. Thus, evangelization is both a sign and a requirement of the Church’s catholicity.
- God desires all people to be drawn into the Church and form the one People of God as one family. Her missionary effort respects cultural differences from around the world when they do not conflict with Gospel values, and the Church herself is made more beautiful by the diversity of gifts poured out by the Holy Spirit and by the diversity of cultures in which she finds herself.
- (CCC 748-757, 811-856)