

The Church is Apostolic

You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles. (Eph. 2:19-22)

- The Son of God called and appointed twelve men to enter a relationship with him that was altogether unique (see Mk. 3:13-19). He lived and ate with them, listened to and consoled them, taught and admonished them. He gave them a share in his own miraculous powers. It was only fitting that He should entrust these men with his own saving mission (see Mk.16:15).
- It is through them and their successors that the divine grace won for us by Jesus on the cross, and the fullness of his saving message, are communicated to the world.
- A careful reading of the Gospels reveals that, for Jesus, everything depended on the apostles.
- Although anyone who fears God and does what is good is acceptable to him (see Acts 10:35), God wills to save us and make us holy as a “people” who are bonded and linked together in unity and charity.
- The calling of the Israelite race and God’s desire to make them his own attests to this. Nevertheless, Israel was called in anticipation of a new people of God who would be gathered together from every tribe and nation.
- This new “People of God” was destined to be gathered, governed, and sanctified by “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14). They were sent to preach the Gospel that converts hearts, establish believers in communities of faith, celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments that give the graces necessary for salvation.
- In short, they were called to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, namely, the Church. Thus, the one Church established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity is an apostolic Church.
- Apostolicity is essential for the Church's authenticity. It is founded upon the apostles and built upon Peter, chosen from amongst them (see Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 21:15-17), with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.
- Since our Lord intended to be with us until “the close of the age” (Matt. 28:20), the apostles needed to choose successors to themselves. We see this first in the Acts of the Apostles, when St.

Peter initiates the selection of a successor to Judas the traitor (see Acts 1:15-26).

- As the Church spread beyond Judea into the Gentile world, it became essential to appoint additional individuals to oversee the various local churches, as we read in St. Paul's letters (see Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:7; the English word "bishop" derives from the Greek *episkopos*, which means "overseer"). And we learn also from St. Paul that, in his role as apostle, he had the power to appoint others to serve as priests: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might appoint elders in every town as I directed you" (Titus:1:5).
- This transfer of authority occurs by the laying on of hands, as we read in the book of Acts (see Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3) and in St. Paul's letter to his disciple, the bishop St. Timothy (see 2 Tim. 1:6).
- It is the firm tradition of the Catholic Church and part of who we are that every bishop, every priest, and every deacon can trace his ministerial powers through the laying on of hands of a bishop who himself can trace his ordination directly to the apostles themselves. Protestants broke with Tradition at the Reformation.