

• People of God

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Cor. 6:16-18)

- In creating the world, God the Father had in his heart the desire to create men and women to live together both in communion with himself and with each other.
- The human family was to be a people created and called into communion with God. The book of Genesis tells us what happened when Adam and Eve sinned, rejected God's friendship, and were alienated from God and each other.
- The Good News is that he sent his Son Jesus to heal the wounds of division caused by sin and to restore us to friendship with him as the People of God, the Church.
- The plan of God, however, was not realised overnight but, according to the history narrated in the Old Testament, was fulfilled in stages.
- At the very moment our first parents fell, God made his first covenant with them, promising a saviour who will defeat Satan (see Gen. 3:15).
- God next made a covenant with the eight members of the family of Noah (see Gen. 9:8- 17), and then with Abraham as the patriarch of his tribe, promising to make him the father of many nations (see Gen. 17:1-14).
- At the foot of Mount Sinai, God, through Moses, made a covenant with the Israelites as his Chosen People (see Ex. 19:3-6).
- With David the king of the Israelites, God made a covenant promising to the line of David a perpetual Kingdom (see 2 Sam. 7:9-16), a promise fulfilled in **Jesus Christ**, Son of God, Son of David, our eternal high King (see Matt. 16:16; 21:9; 25:31).
- Through these covenants, God the Father was preparing the world for the Church that would bring to fulfilment, in the new and final covenant in the blood of Jesus (see Lk. 22:20), his desire to draw all people to himself (see Jn. 12:32) and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.
- The Church, as that People of God called into fellowship with the Trinity, realizes "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages" (Ephesians 3:9), as St. Paul says, by communicating the grace and merit of Christ to the world.
- The Church, united in Christ and entrusted with his authority and grace, is God's instrument or sacrament through which communion with him is made possible.
- The call of Christ is for the Church to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). For this reason the Church, spread throughout the world and seeking always to

bring the message of the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it, is a family of a great diversity of cultures.

- Wounded by sin, we too often succumb to the temptation to divisiveness, rather than heed the call to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).
- We, all of us, Christian and non-Christian alike, are called to belong to the People of God, restoring our original unity under Christ our Head. We know that God gives grace to all to seek and find him; and “in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:35).
- Through Baptism, the Christian becomes a member of the People of God and are anointed as priest, prophet and King.
- **The priestly office** of God’s people is realized through the sacraments of the Church particularly the Mass.
- **As a prophetic people**, the Church witnesses to the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the example of authentic Christian living.
- **Finally, the Church is a royal (kingly) people** when its members, like their master who “came not to be served but to serve” (Matt. 20:28), make themselves the servant of others, especially the poor and the

neglected. The kingship of Christ can only be extended through works of charity, because only love has the power to change hearts and bring people to conversion.

- “The Church ‘is the visible plan of God’s love for humanity,’ because God desires ‘that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit’” (CCC 776).¹
- At the end of time, God’s plan will be completely fulfilled, and everyone that Jesus has redeemed will be gathered together as one People of God when God will be all in all.
- CCC 758-762, 776, 781-786, 814, 831, 836, 839-840, 865

¹ Paul VI, June 22, 1973; *Ad Gentes* 7 § 2; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 17.