

The Four Marks of the Church



One



Holy



Catholic



Apostolic

Catholicism 101 (RCIA)

2011-12

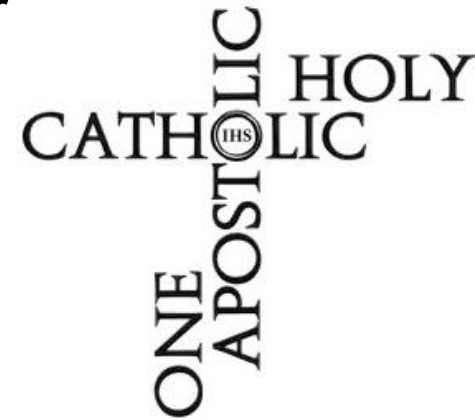
The Four Marks of the Church

The Third Part of the Creed

“I believe in one, holy, catholic, and
apostolic Church ...”

The Four Marks

- One can identify the Catholic Church and her mission by these four marks
 - The Church does not have these marks from herself but only through Christ and the Spirit
 - They are inseparably linked with each other
- *Faith* - The 4 marks are an object of faith
 - Only by faith in Christ can one see them in their fullness
- *Reason* - The four marks are indicated to reason
 - Historical longevity despite dramatic changes in culture, e.g. fall of the Roman Empire or the Renaissance
 - Astounding propagation to every nation
 - Continual works of Charity in every age, e.g. hospitals and formal education



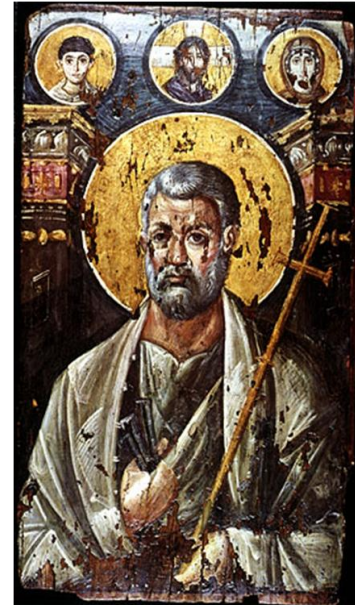
The Church is One

- The Church is one because of her:
 - *Source* which is the unity of the Trinity
 - *Founder* which is Jesus Christ who came to reconcile us to God in one body through the cross (cf. Eph 2:15)
 - *Soul* which is the Holy Spirit who brings about and animates communion among the faithful
- Part of Jesus mission was to reestablish the unity of all people
 - **Babel**: explanation of the divisions among humanity
 - **Pentecost**: the means by which God restored unity



Bonds of Unity

- Invisible bonds of Unity
 - **Charity** - Above all the Spirit's gift of charity binds the Church together in harmony
- Visible bonds of Unity
 - **Faith** - Profession of one Apostolic Faith
 - **Sacraments** - Common celebration of worship
 - **Governance** – Apostolic succession through Holy Orders
- The one Church which Jesus founded “*subsists in*” or is fully present in the Catholic Church
 - Only through the Catholic Church can one obtain the fullness of the means of salvation since Christ has entrusted these means to the apostles and their successors



Unity and Diversity

- In the midst of the unity of the Church there is always a great diversity of:
 - Divine gifts
 - People who receive them
 - Traditions (little “t” traditions)
- Diversity is a part of authentic unity (e.g. man and woman) but can also be a source of sinful division
- Sin constantly threatens the gift of the Church’s unity
 - “I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” (1 Cor 1:10)



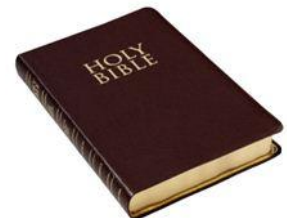
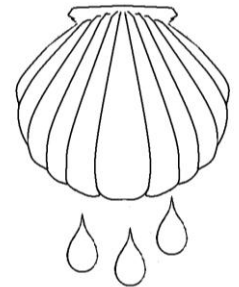
Wounds to Unity

- From the time of the apostles to today there have arisen various dissensions when certain communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church
 - The Corinthian and Galatian communities
 - Gnosticism, Arianism, Nestorianism, etc...
 - The Eastern Orthodox
 - Protestant reformation, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism etc...
- Often times especially in later centuries of the Church individuals from both sides were to blame



Separated Brethren

- Today there are many Christian communities which are separated from full communion with the Catholic Church (apporx. 38,000)
 - The Church sees these communities as brothers and sisters because of our common baptism in Christ
 - Many elements of sanctification and truth can be found in these communities
 - Examples - belief in Christ our Savior, the Trinity, the scriptures, grace, charitable works, baptism, prayer
 - These elements lead toward Christian unity



Toward Unity: Ecumenism

- All Catholics are called to work for Christian unity
 - Conversion of heart, prayer, fraternal knowledge and dialogue
 - Jesus High priestly prayer
- **Ecumenism** - the quest for unity among all Christians
 - *Dialogue of charity* – seeks the building up of good relationships
 - *Dialogue of life* – joins in common efforts such as prayer or social good
 - *Dialogue of salvation* – recognizing the means of salvation that are present in different communities
 - *Dialogue of truth* – discusses the differences of doctrines
 - *Dialogue of union* – takes the steps toward full unity



Jesus prayed, “that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Jn 17:21

The Church is Holy

- As a matter of faith the Church is held as unfailingly holy because of her:
 - **Source** - The Church is unfailingly holy because Christ, who is all holy, loved her and has united her to himself (read Eph 5:25-27)
 - **Means** - Sanctified by Christ the Church is also sanctifying; in the Church one finds the fullness of the means of sanctification, e.g. all the sacraments
 - **Goals** - All the activities of the Church are directed toward the sanctification of men and woman and the glorification of God
 - **Canonized Saints** – who have reached the goal of heaven and are models and intercessors for us
 - **Vocation** - Holiness or charity is the vocation or call of all the members of the Church (Charity is so closely bound to holiness that the two are almost synonymous)

At Once Holy and Imperfect

- The Church on earth is at once holy and always in need of purification and renewal
 - All her members including her ministers must acknowledge that they are sinners
- Parable of the weeds among the wheat
 - In the Church there will always be found those growing in holiness and those growing in sinfulness (Mt 13:24-30)
 - In every individual the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel



The Church is Catholic

- Catholic comes from the Latin word *Catholicus* which means “universal” in the sense of ‘according to the totality’
 - **Christ** - She is Catholic in the sense that she possess the totality of Christ and what he has given as the means of salvation: (1) fullness of faith/morals; (2) full sacramental life; (3) apostolic succession
 - **Mission** - She is Catholic also in the sense that she has a mission from Christ to the whole human race
- Ancient usage
 - “Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is there is the Catholic Church” (Ignatius of Antioch d. 110 AD)

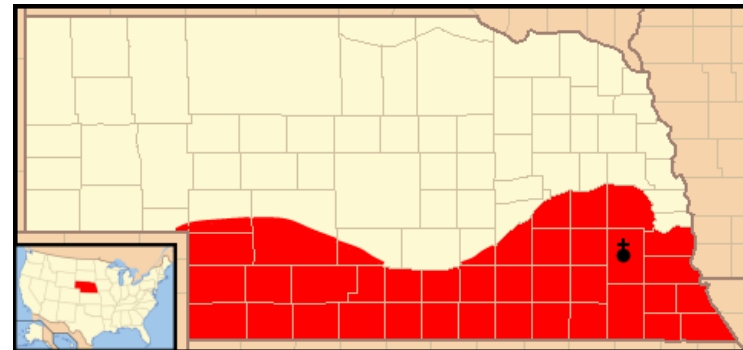
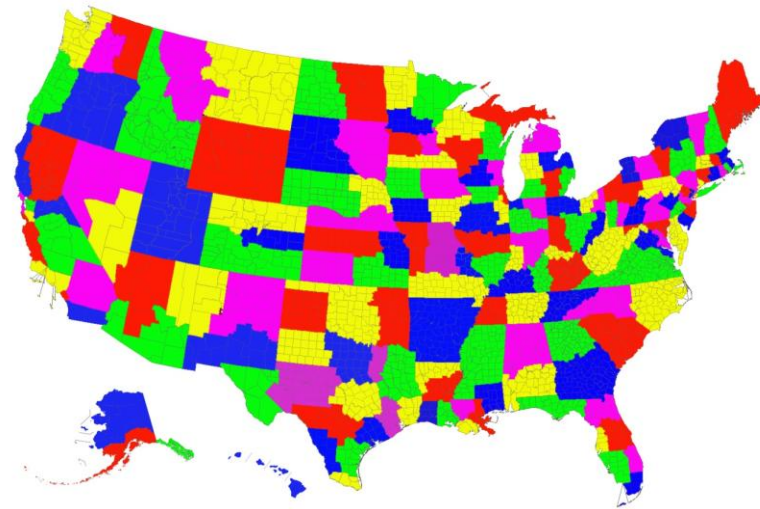
Each Particular Church is “Catholic”

- The Catholic Church is fully and truly present in all particular churches (dioceses) that are in communion with the Church of Rome
 - “it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church [Rome], on account of its preeminent authority” (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, d. 202)
 - Its “preeminent authority” is based upon the fact that Peter, the head of the apostles, was the 1st Bishop of Rome



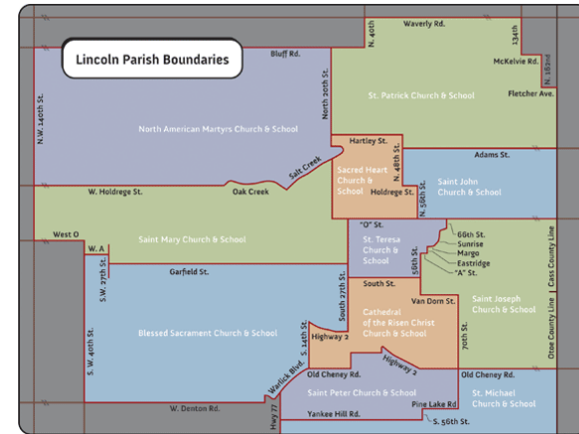
Particular Church

- **Particular Church** (diocese) – is a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their appointed bishop
- The Catholic Church throughout the world is structured into dioceses
 - However, it is not merely a confederation of particular Churches for all are part of the one mystical body of Christ
 - It is in the particular Churches that the one Catholic Church exists



Parish

- Parish comes from the Greek word *paroikia* which means “community of sojourners”
- **Parish** – a community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church under the care of a pastor
 - The pastor carries forward the ministry of the bishop and is under his authority
- The center of parish life is Christ
 - It is the place where the Christian faithful especially live out their share in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and kingly office
 - E.g. the worship of God, religious education, social programs



Who Belongs to the Catholic Church

- Since Christ came to save all, all are called to the catholic unity of the People of God.
- Thus all have a relation to the Church and belong to her either actually or potentially
 - ***The Catholic faithful*** - communion of faith/morals, sacraments, and governance
 - ***Orthodox Christians*** – who communion with the Church is so profound that their is little to prevent a common celebration of the Eucharist
 - ***Others Christians*** - common belief in Christ and baptism
 - ***Jews*** – they truly possess and have begun to respond to God's reveled word
 - ***Muslims*** – with us worship the one merciful and just God
 - ***Other religions*** – we share a common origin and a common destiny

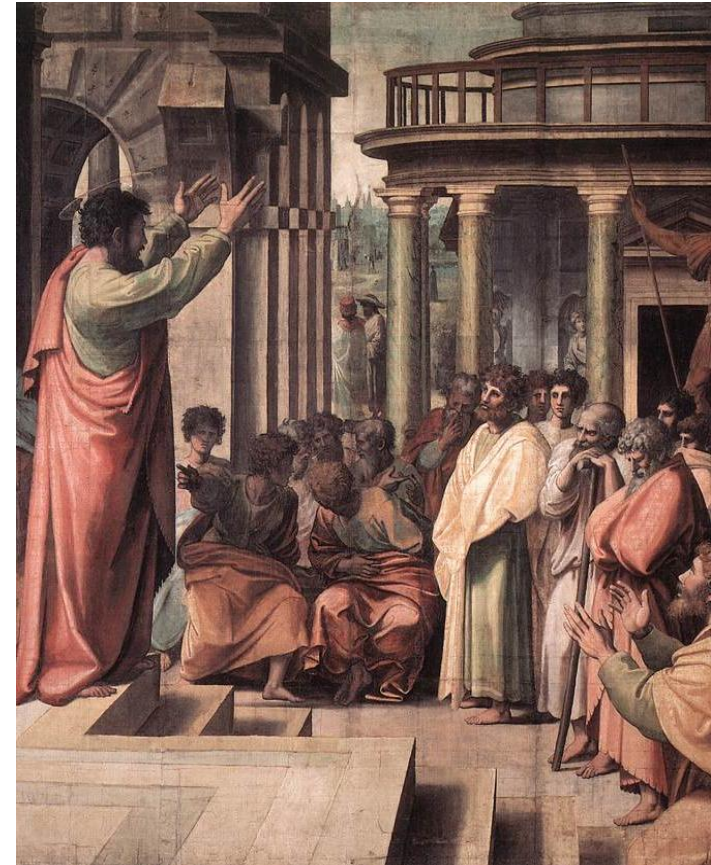


Salvation and the Catholic Church

- An often repeated saying of the Church Fathers is, “*outside of the Church there is no salvation*”
 - Positively worded it means: all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his body
 - “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)
- Stated in the negative this teaching means that a person cannot be saved:
 1. If they know Christ founded the Church
 2. That the Church is necessary for salvation
 3. And yet refuse to enter or stay in the Church
- Stated in the positive this teaching means that:
 - Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ or his Church can find salvation through Christ and his Church in a way known to God alone

Catholic and Missionary

- The Church on earth by her very nature is missionary
 - **Divine mandate** – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Mt 28:19)
 - **Purpose** – to enable all to share the fullness of God’s divine life and love
 - **Motive** – the love of God and humanity is the motive for mission work—“the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14)
- The Church’s mission is fruitful to the extent that her members follow the promptings and guidance of the Holy Spirit



Paul Preaching in Athens

The Church is Apostolic

- The Church is apostolic in her:
 - **Origin** – since she is built on “the foundation of the apostles” (Eph 2:20) who were chosen by Christ himself
 - **Teaching** – since with the help of the Holy Spirit she teaches what was handed on by the apostles
 - **Structure** – in that she is taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles through their successors the pope and college bishops in union with him



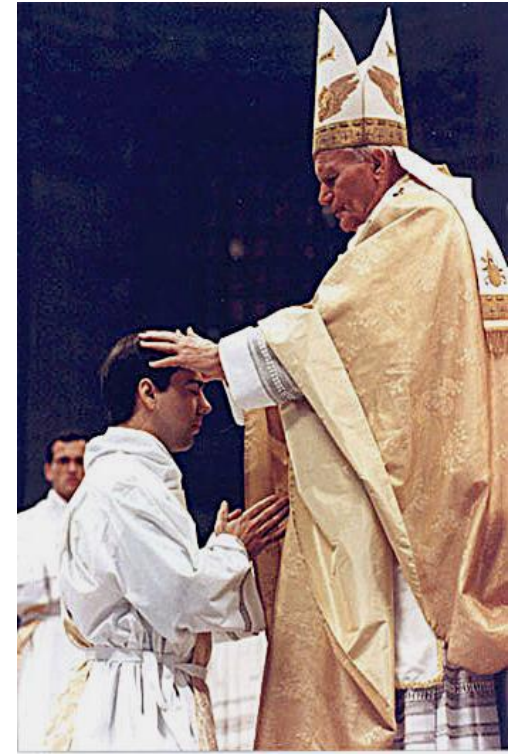
Mission of the Apostles

- Apostle comes from the Greek word *apostolos* which means “one who is sent”
- Jesus was sent by the Father who in turn sent the apostles who continue his mission
 - “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21)
 - “He who receives you receives me” (Mt. 10:40)
 - The mission of the apostles is the mission of Christ they are appointed to be “stewards of the mysteries of God” (2 Cor 3:6)
- Jesus chose twelve to signify the fulfillment of the 12 tribes of Israel



Apostolic Succession

- **Apostolic succession** – is the transmission of the mission and power of the Apostles to their successors the bishops by means of Holy Orders
 - “Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6)
 - “...from city to city they [the apostles] preached, and from among their earliest converts appointed men whom they had tested by the Spirit to act as bishops and deacons for future believers...and afterwards laid down a rule once for all to this effect: when these men die, other approved men shall succeed to their sacred ministry” (Clement of Rome d. 101)
- It is through this transmission that the Church maintains the faith of the Apostles



Apostolic Structure

- It is through the Apostles and their successors that the Church is upheld infallibly in truth
 - “if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”
(1 Timothy 3:15)
- Christ governs the Church through Peter and the other apostles who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops
 - **Pope** - Successor of Peter
 - **College of Bishops** –
Successors of the Apostles

