

Why the Church?

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) Part I,
Section 2, Chapter 3, Article 9 Paragraphs (para)
748-870

The Church rises out of the life of Christ.

"Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church."¹³⁵ These words open the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. By choosing this starting point, the Council demonstrates that the article of faith about the Church depends entirely on the articles concerning Christ Jesus. The Church has no other light than Christ's; according to a favorite image of the Church Fathers, the Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun.

We can know that God exists using human reason. And because we were made to be in relationship with Him, our hearts long for God. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" - St. Augustine of Hippo

The Church was established by Christ

The Church mirrors the Christ, who is both wholly human and wholly divine (Hypostatic Union). Just as Jesus has a human and divine nature, the Church does as well. It is both a visible, worldly institution made of human beings, but also a spiritual community sustained by God's presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is human in that it is formed of living people; people gathered together to know, love, and serve him. Because it is a society, it has rules, offices, and ceremonial observances. Societies need structure to prevent chaos.

The Church was established by Christ and so has his authority.

Matthew 16:18 - And so I say to you, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of the netherworld will not prevail against it.

Act 2 - Pentecost

Matthew 18: 17 - 19

John 20:23

Universal Mission: Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15

What is the Church?

CCC 751

The word "Church" (Latin *ecclesia*, from the Greek *ek-ka-lein*, to "call out of") means a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose.¹³⁹ *Ekklesia* is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people.¹⁴⁰ By calling itself "Church," the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly. In the Church, God is "calling together" his people from all the ends of the earth. The equivalent Greek term *Kyriake*, from which the English word *Church* and the German *Kirche* are derived, means "what belongs to the Lord."

The Church is a Physical Place Where We Gather

Jesus is the cornerstone rejected by the builders Matthew 21:42

Mark 12:10-11

Luke 20:17

Acts 4:11

Ephesians 2:20

1Peter 2:4-7).

If we are meant for personal relationship with God, why do we need a Church and rules?

Jesus taught us everything we need to know to get to Heaven - 2000 years ago.

Greatest commandment; perfection of the Old Law - Mark 12:30-31

Dr. Peter Kreeft "What if we had to figure it all out on our own? What if God left it up to human intellect? How could we truly know the mind of God?" We all have different ideas of right and wrong.

If we asked everyone in this room, we would likely get multiple interpretations. We NEED an original source to go to that holds and safeguards all that Jesus taught and was given the authority to pass it on and interpret it.

Matthew 28:18 -20; John 20:22-23; Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, Luke 9:1.

We are not just called to love, but PERFECT love

"So be perfect, just as your Heavenly Father is perfect" Matthew 5:48. Learning the rules Help us learn perfection - not that we will ever attain perfection in this life, but without 'rules' or guidance, how can we even attempt it?

Our intellect is clouded because of Original Sin (Original Justice)

God is so far above our wounded intellect that we cannot possibly know much about him other than what he tells us (we can know through human reason that God exists). We NEED a Church established by the God it worships.

The Church Is The Mystical Body of Christ

CCC 771

All people in the state of grace are part of the mystical body. The Church is a spiritual reality in which all baptized Christians are united with Jesus Christ, who is the head of this body, and with each other.

We all have the same divine life flowing through us John 15:1-9

St. Joan of Arc, paraphrasing “Jesus Christ and the Church are the same thing, don’t complicate it”.

Key Aspects of the Mystical Body of Christ

Unity with Christ: Christ is the spiritual head and the Holy Spirit is the soul that animates the body, connecting all its members.

The Church as a Body: The Church is a continuation and spiritual extension of Christ’s physical body.

Shared Mission: Members of the Mystical Body have unique gifts and roles to Perform Christ’s work on earth.

Incorporation through Sacraments: Through Baptism and the Eucharist, individuals are incorporated into this body and nourished by Christ himself.

Theological Foundation of The Mystical Body

The concept is deeply rooted in the writings of St. Paul, particularly his letters to the Corinthians and Romans, where he uses the analogy of a body with many parts but one head.

The Church Fathers: Early Church Fathers, such as St. Augustine developed and reaffirmed Paul's teaching on this spiritual union.

Papal and Council Teachings: Pope Pius XII used the term in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* and the Second Vatican Council reflected this understanding in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*)

Interconnectedness

Just as parts of a physical body depend on each other, the members of the Mystical body are spiritually interconnected.

The Pope and Bishops: The Pope, as the Bishop of Rome, and the bishops in union with him lead and guide the Church.

The Marks of the Church

Unmistakable signs and distinctive characteristics which render the Church recognizable.

- One
- Holy
- Catholic
- Apostolic

The Church is One

The Church is one because it is united in by one shared faith, one belief. There are important definitional tenets that make our faith specifically different from the 45,000 Christian denominations that exist or have existed, that are specifically Catholic.

In particular our shared dogmas that we MUST believe (difference between doctrine and dogma) such as the Trinity, Incarnation, Resurrection, Existence of the Church, and four Marian Dogmas (Divine Motherhood, Perpetual Virginity, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption).

Unity Does Not Equal Uniformity

The unity of the body of Christ does not do away with its diversity.

Although we are all one body, there are many parts. 1Corinthians 12:12-27

Within the Church, we have many "instruments" or different rites in union with Rome - Byzantine, Coptic (Alexandrian), West Syriac (Antiochian) Armenian, and East Syriac (Chaldean), different religious orders, and charisms.

We are one in our bond of charity (perfect love)

Col 3:14 "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony".

True love is active, and that is especially true as it pertains to our bond of charity, our unity in the perfect love of God - we have to LIVE our love. Love is not passive or reactionary, it is active. We show our love for God by active participation in all aspects of our faith.

The Church is Holy

The Church is holy because God is holy. The Church does not depend on the holiness of her members to be holy. Though we strive for perfection, we are sinners. The Church is holy because Christ joined himself to the Church and the Church is made holy through him.

The Church is not a hotel for saints, but a hospital for sinners.

People create problems and are messy; God still chose to use us in his plan of salvation. God chose messy people throughout salvation history - Moses was a murderer, David was an adulterer, Peter denied Jesus.

What About Profound Scandals?

The Church is part of God's plan and he promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail, Mt 16:18.

The people who cause scandal CHOSE to fail. We can and should expect more from Church leaders.

The holiness of the Church DOES NOT depend on the holiness of the people.

Despite the damage, God offers profound healing and mercy. We need to heal the Church the way the body heals a bone - it becomes stronger in the place that was broken. We can't leave it up to the hierarchy, we have to be part of the transformation

People Have Been Fueled by Faith to Accomplish Great Things

The Church is the oldest institution in the Western World, responsible for:

- Inventing the university system.
- Starting the first hospitals.
- Catholic monasteries preserved Western culture by copying and preserving art and literature.
- The Church is the largest humanitarian organization in the world.

The Church is Catholic

The Church is “catholic” - meaning universal; Christ was sent for all people in all times.

The fullness of the means of salvation - correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. Other faiths have elements of Christ’s teachings.

Can people who are not Catholic get to Heaven.

The Church is Apostolic

CCC 857 - 870 Built on the foundation of the Apostles in three ways

1. She was and remains built on “the foundation of the Apostles”, the witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ himself.
2. With the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps hands on the teaching, the “good deposit” she has heard from the Apostles.
3. She continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the Apostles until Christ’s return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops...

The Apostles’ Mission

CCC 858 From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called to him those whom he desired...and he appointed the twelve...to be with him, and to be sent out to preach....In them, Christ continues his own mission.

CCC 859 Jesus unites them to the mission he received from the Father....Christ’s apostles knew that they were called by God as ministers of a new covenant {and that} they were servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

CCC 860 ...but their office also has a permanent aspect. Christ promised to remain with them always. The divine mission entrusted by Jesus to them “will continue to the end of time...”

The Bishops - Successors of the Apostles

CCC 861 In order that the mission entrusted to them might be continued after their death, [the apostles] consigned, by will and testament...to their immediate collaborators the duty of completing and consolidating the work they had begun...They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death other proven men should take over their ministry.

CCC 862...Hence the Church teaches that “the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them, despises Christ.

The Apostolate

CCC 863 The while Church is apostolic, in that she remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin; and in that she is “sent out” into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. “The Christian vocation is, of its nature, avocation to the apostolate as well”. Indeed, we call an apostate “every activity of the Mystical Body” that aims “to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth”

Mass ends with ‘go, you are sent’.

Matthew 28:16 - 20

