

The Catholic Church Belongs to Christ

Q. 145. Why does the Catholic Church belong entirely to Christ?

The Catholic Church belongs entirely to Christ, because He is the Head of the Church, its Founder, its Spouse, and its Savior. He continues to do His saving work in and through the Church.

In the New Testament we see Christ's preparation for the Church, His promises concerning it, and the beginning of their rich fulfillment.

Christ is the Light of the world. The Church receives its being and mission from Him. The Church is not merely a society of men; it has a certain sacred dimension because of the inseparable union which Christ established between it and Himself.

Sacred Scripture

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." *Matthew 16:18*

And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. *Ephesians 1:22*

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. *Ephesians 5:23*

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789 The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered *around him*; she is united *in him*, in his body. Three aspects of the Church as the Body of Christ are to be more specifically noted: the unity of all her members with each other as a result of their union with Christ; Christ as the head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.

Q. 146. How does the Catholic see the Church?

The Catholic always sees the Church in its relationship to Christ. It is not the Church as such that is the primary object of Catholic faith. The Catholic believes in Christ and in His Father and in the Holy Spirit. In the Creed, the Catholic professes his belief in "the holy catholic Church" precisely because he sees the Church as a presence of Christ and of His Spirit.

The Catholic believes what the Church teaches precisely because he recognizes Christ's authority in the Church.

The Catholic recognizes a duty to further the work of the Church precisely because he sees the mission of the Church as a continuation of Christ's work in the world.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

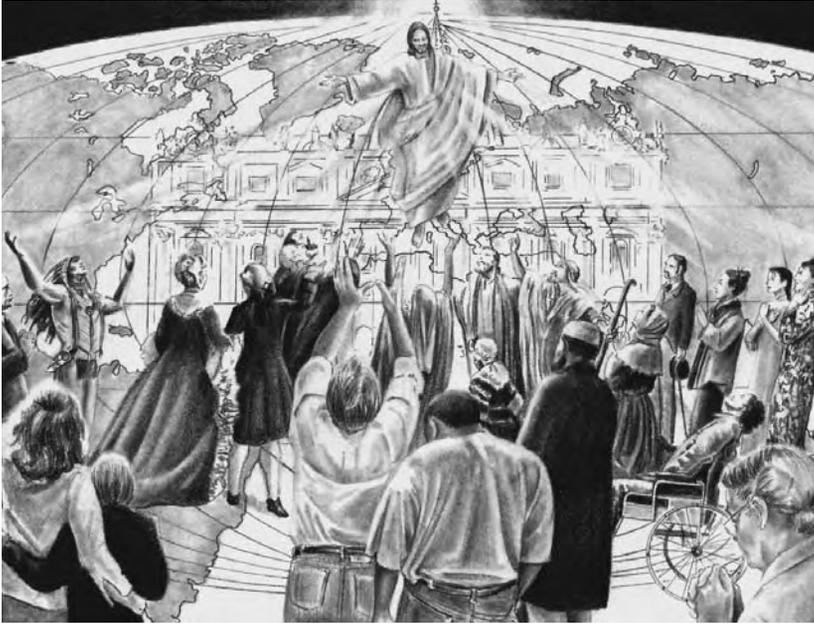
Q. 145. Jn 8:12, 14:5-7.

Q. 146. 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 2:14-22.

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Q. 145. Paragraphs 763, 765-766, 768, 786, 792, 795-796, 926, 973.

Q. 146. Paragraphs 749, 763-766, 771.



Sacred Scripture

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and all were made to drink of one Spirit. *1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

Q. 147. Why is the Catholic Church a living continuation of Christ on earth?

The Church is a living continuation of Christ on earth because Christ spiritually and mystically lives and acts through the Church. It is a living organism, not just an organization.

Christ organized the Church to carry on His work in the world and to bring His ministry and truth to all men and all ages.

It is Christ Who accomplishes all that is done in the Church for man's salvation. The institution which is the Church survives because it comes from Christ, and because He promises to be with it to the end of time (cf. Matthew 18:20).

The Church is a living continuation on earth of its divine Founder. Jesus is indeed the Son of God, but He is truly a man too, the Son of Mary. Similarly, in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is found the presence of Christ, its Head, and His Holy Spirit, the bearer of heavenly gifts. Yet, the Church is also very human. Its sublime mission is carried out by its baptized members. Among them are the ordained priests, who perform sacred ceremonies, called the sacraments, with ordinary realities of human life such as bread, water, wine, and oil. These ceremonies have been entrusted to the priests by Christ.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

The Church acts for Christ. When a priest gives us a sacrament, it is Christ Who gives us the sacrament through the priest. When the Church speaks His word to us, it is Christ Who speaks to us and calls us to faith. The teaching and ruling authority of the Church is the shepherding of Christ.



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864 “Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church’s whole apostolate”; thus the fruitfulness of apostolate for ordained ministers as well as for lay people clearly depends on their vital union with Christ.¹ In keeping with their vocations, the demands of the times and the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostolate assumes the most varied forms. But charity, drawn from the Eucharist above all, is always “as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate.”²

Splendor of Truth

Jesus Christ, the “light of the nations,” shines upon the face of his Church, which he sends forth to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15). (*section 2*)

Vatican Council II

The head of this body is Christ. He is the image of the invisible God and in him all things came into being. He is before all creatures and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body which is the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might hold the primacy (cf. Col. 1:15-18). By the greatness of his power he rules heaven and earth, and with his all-surpassing perfection and activity he fills the whole body with the riches of his glory (cf. Eph. 1:18-23). All the members must be formed in his likeness, until Christ be formed in them (cf. Gal. 4:19). *The Church*, 7

Q. 148. Why is the Catholic Church called the sacrament of Christ?

The Church is called the sacrament of Christ because it is a visible reality which Christ has formed in this world as a sacred sign of His presence. It is the sign and also the means He uses to give us the unity and holiness He actually confers through it. It is a sacrament of His presence because He is really present in it.

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As a family called to share in the life of the Trinity, the Church has an eternal destiny. But in its time of pilgrimage on earth, it also has a visible, sacramental dimension: it exists also as a sign. Because the Church is a sign, it leads us to what it signifies, that is, to Christ, our God. When we finally come to God in eternity, the Church, as a material and time bound instrument of God’s will and grace, will have no further reason to exist. It will have accomplished what God put it on earth to do.

The sacrament, which is the visible Church, is now, in time, a precious indispensable gift of Christ. It is the work of Christ. It will last, as He promises, until the end of the world, when it will reach its fulfillment in glorious union in Christ. Its task on earth will not be finished until Christ brings His redemptive work to completion and God has become, as St. Paul put it, “all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11).

#C15-41



Sacred Scripture

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building... For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. *1 Corinthians 3:9, 11*

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775 “The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.”¹ The Church’s first purpose is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of men with God*. Because men’s communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the *unity of the human race*. In her, this unity is already begun, since she gathers men “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues”;² at the same time, the Church is the “sign and instrument” of the full realization of the unity yet to come.

Summary Prayer

Jesus, in Your questions to Peter before bestowing on him the primacy of authority over Your Church, we sense three great yearnings of Your Sacred Heart: the yearning to prove to us Your love, the yearning for our love in return, and the yearning for us to be able to find You and love You in souls.

Christian love is self-giving, Christian love is sacrificial, and Christian love is expressed in deeds rather than in words. Your Heart loves souls with an everlasting love, a love greater than that of any human being, a love that is both divine and human, a love that is symbolized by Your Sacred Heart. May Your great love flood our souls and bring us to the rewards of eternal life. Amen.

#J3-12

**Q. 149. What do we mean when we speak of the Church in heaven?**

When we speak of the Church in heaven, we do not mean the Church in the condition in which it is a sign, with ministers and sacraments; these will cease. As signs and instruments, they will be absorbed into the heavenly realities which they now serve. When we speak of the Church in heaven, we mean the union of the saints with Christ and the life they have in Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Sacred Scripture

For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. *Romans 2:6-7*

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr: John Vianney and Fr: Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 149. Jn 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:16-17; Rev 7:13-17.

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Q. 149. Paragraphs 1023-1029.

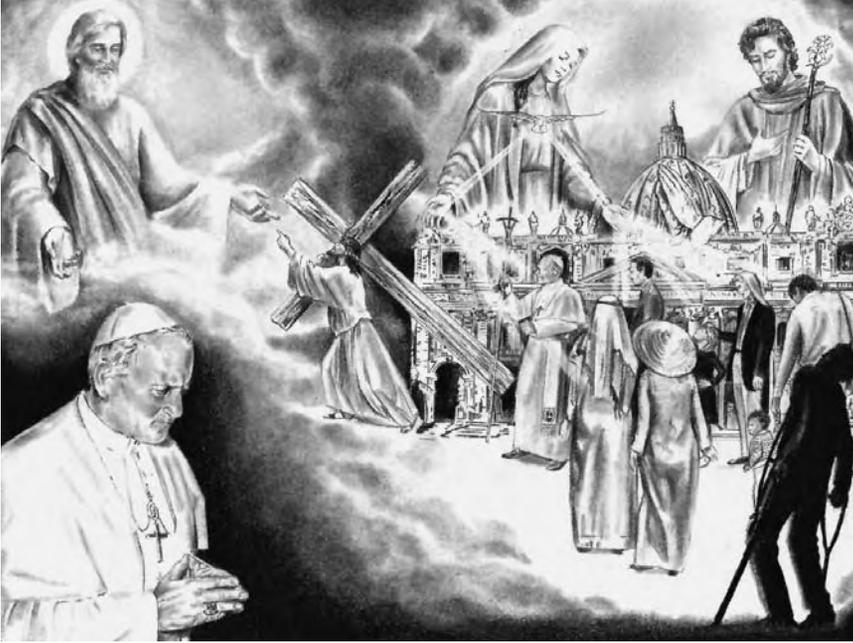
For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. *1 Corinthians 13:12*

We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. *1 John 3:2*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1026 By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has “opened” heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

#C15-42



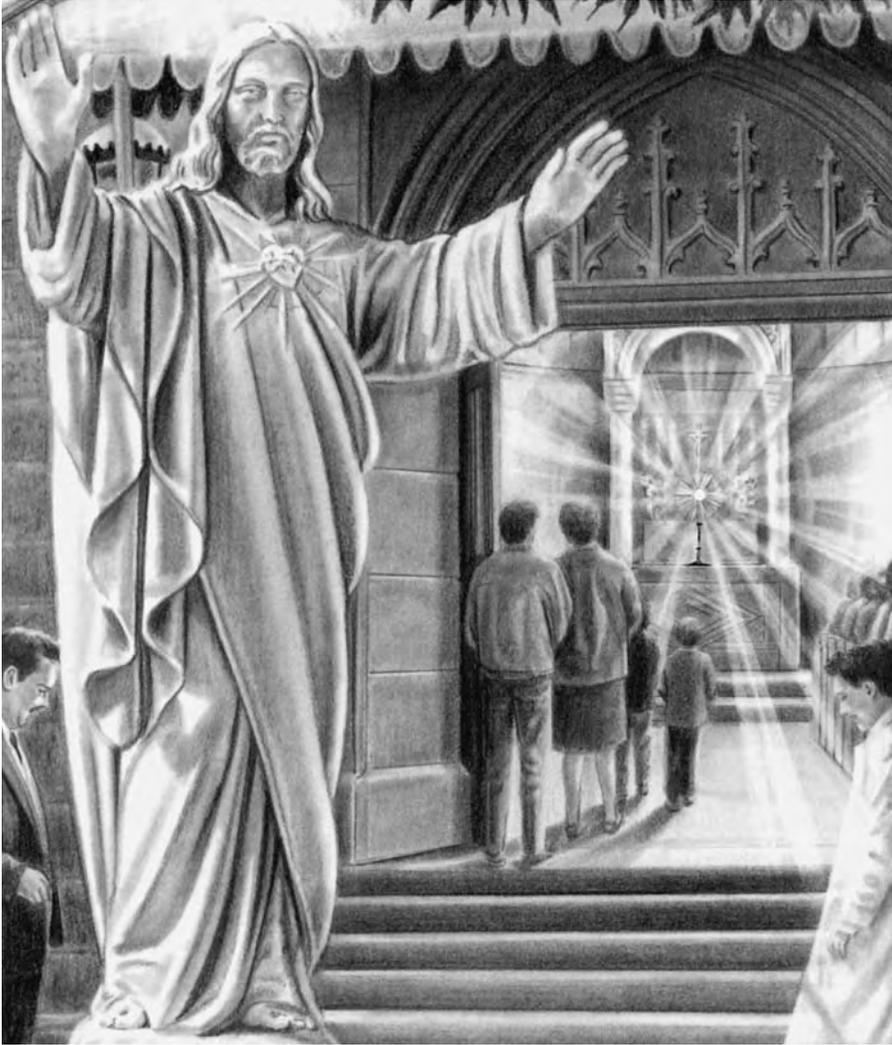
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Already the final age of the world is with us (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11) and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect. However, until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13) the pilgrim Church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God (cf. Rom. 8:19-22). *The Church, 48*

We must all appear “before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor. 5:10). *The Church, 48*

Summary Prayer

Surround Your people, Lord Jesus, within the safety of Your Church, which You preserve on its rock foundation. Let us neither reach out our hands to evil deeds, nor be destroyed by the insidious snares of the enemy; instead, bring us to share the love of the saints in light. We ask this in Your most holy Name. Amen.



Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. How does the Catholic Church finish the work begun by Christ?
2. How can you be a sacrament of Christ's presence in your family, school, and workplace?
3. Using the Chapter Summary Prayer, praise Jesus for His sacred presence in the Church.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Lord God, Your only Son wept over ancient Jerusalem, which was soon to be destroyed for its lack of faith. He established the new Jerusalem firmly upon the rock and made it the Mother of the faithful. Make us rejoice in Your Church and grant that all people may be reborn in the freedom of

Your Spirit. Grant us always to seek the wisdom of the Cross and the blessing of those who suffer for the sake of justice. May we always be filled with Your happiness and remain safe under the guidance and care of the shepherds to whom You have entrusted Your flock.

May the faithful respect and love the Pope and the bishops in union with him and the priests and deacons who assist them in the care of Your Church. Help all pastors to edify, both by word and example, those over whom they have charge, that they may reach everlasting life together with the flocks entrusted to them. Be their light, their strength, and their consolation.

Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of light and darkness, origin and preserver of all that exists, remember Your Church, protect it from all evil, perfect it in Your love, gather it from the four winds, and bring it into Your Kingdom, for Yours is the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.



#C15-44

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 43

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 145. Why does the Catholic Church belong entirely to Christ?

Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Vatican II, sect. 21-26;
Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 5-9, 14;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 25-27;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 52;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 7, 18;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6;
Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 1, 2.

Q. 146. How does the Catholic see the Church?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 14;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 25-26;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 52, 61-64;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6.

Q. 147. Why is the Catholic Church a living continuation of Christ on earth?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 5-8, 12;
The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 7, 15, 42;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 5, 25, 63;
On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 5, 43;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6;
On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 41;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 19.

Q. 148. Why is the Catholic Church called the sacrament of Christ?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 1, 5-9, 11-14, 48, 49;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 2;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 63;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 18;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6.

Q. 149. What do we mean when we speak of the Church in heaven?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 49.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 145: If the Catholic Church belongs entirely to Christ, what about her members?
- Q. 146: How should Catholics respect the Church?
- Q. 147: A. The Catholic Church is a living continuation of Christ in space and time. What does this truth imply for us her living members?
- B. Can you think of several things that Jesus expects of us to reach out to others?
- Q. 148: Can we Catholics be regarded as sacraments of Christ?
- Q. 149: In what does the happiness of Heaven chiefly consist?
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