

The Marks of the Church: The Church Is One

Q. 172. What are the marks that point out the true Church founded by Jesus?

There are four marks which point out the true Church founded by Jesus. They are four adjectives: one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Having made His Church a means of our everlasting happiness, our Lord has stamped it plainly with the mark of its divine origin. In the Nicene Creed we say: “We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church

865 The Church is ultimately *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that “the Kingdom of heaven,” the “Reign of God,”⁷¹ already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time. The kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation. Then all those he has redeemed and made “holy and blameless before him in love,”⁷² will be gathered together as the one People of God, the “Bride of the Lamb,”⁷³ “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.”⁷⁴ For “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the *twelve apostles of the Lamb*.”⁷⁵

Splendor of Truth

When people ask the Church the questions raised by their consciences, when the faithful in the Church turn to their bishops and pastors, the Church’s reply contains the voice of Jesus Christ, the voice of the truth about good and evil. In the words spoken by the Church there resounds, in people’s inmost being, the voice of God who “alone is good” (cf. Mt 19:17), who alone “is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16). (*section 117*)

Vatican Council II

A diocese is a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy so that, loyal to its pastor and formed by him into one community in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active. *Bishops, 11*

We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all men when he said to the apostles: “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. 18:19-20). *Liberty, 1*

Missionary activity extends the saving faith of the Church, it expands and perfects its catholic unity, it is sustained by its apostolicity, it activates the collegiate sense of its hierarchy, and bears witness to its sanctity which it both extends and promotes. *Missionary Activity, 6*

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



Summary Prayer

God our Father, through the Gospel and the Eucharist, bring Your people together in the Holy Spirit and guide us in Your love. Make us a sign of Your love for all people, and help us to be the living presence of Christ in the world. We ask this in His most Holy Name. Amen.

Q. 173. Why is the Catholic Church one?

The Church is one because it is unified in belief.

The truths which the members of the Catholic Church hold are the truths made known to us by Jesus Himself; they are truths which come to us directly from God. God is Truth. He knows all things and cannot be mistaken. He is infinitely truthful and cannot lie. Whatever God has said is true forever and for everybody. It is not for us to pick and choose and to adjust God's revelation to our own convenience. In the Catholic Church, all are obligated to believe the same truths. Thus, every Catholic must mean exactly the same thing when he recites the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

815 What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony."¹ But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
- apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family.²

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

Splendor of Truth

From the Church's beginnings, the Apostles, by virtue of their pastoral responsibility to preach the Gospel, were vigilant over the right conduct of Christians, just as they were vigilant for the purity of the faith and the handing down of the divine gifts in the sacraments...And ever since Apostolic times the Church's Pastors have unambiguously condemned the behavior of those who fostered division by their teaching or by their actions. (*section 26*)

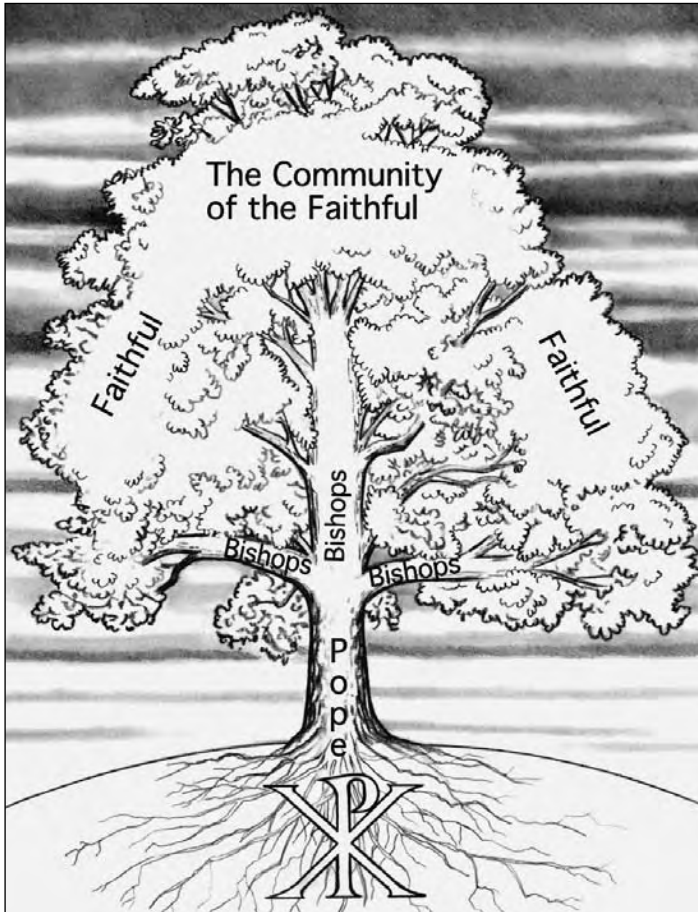
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***Vatican Council II***

All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of this saving unity. *The Church, 9*

Catechism by Diagram

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The Catholic Church Is One. The Catholic Church is one because its members have unity of belief; all are united under the same spiritual leadership and the same worship. They are united through the seven sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Jesus willed that the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, should be shepherds in His Church. He placed Peter over the other Apostles. The Church is like a great tree: it carries its life-giving sap through all the branches (bishops) to all the leaves (the community of the faithful). Jesus Christ (monogram) is the source of life for the Church. The Pope is a visible sign of Jesus and the symbol of unity for the Church. Together with the bishops, and as their head, the Pope is the universal teacher and governor of the Church. The bishops are visible signs of Jesus in each diocese and are the symbol of unity in them.

174. How did Jesus indicate that His Church is one?

Jesus said, “And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Jesus prayed to His Father: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

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

#T3-53



Sacred Scripture

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. *Mark 3:24*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

820 “Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.”¹ Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us,... so that the world may know that you have sent me.”² The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.³

Vatican Council II

The universal Church is seen to be “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” *The Church, 4*

Q. 175. Why are we united by a spiritual leader?

All Catholics are united under the same spiritual leadership because Jesus Christ made Peter the chief shepherd of His flock, and provided that Peter’s successors, the Bishops of Rome, would be the heads of His Church and guardians of His truths until the end of time.

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

Loyalty to the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, will ever be the binding center of our unity and the test of our membership in Christ's Church.

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*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”¹ The “power of the keys” designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: “Feed my sheep.”² The power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles³ and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

Vatican Council II

The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches, which are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. And for that reason precisely each bishop represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the pope, represent the whole Church in a bond of peace, love and unity. *The Church, 23*

Q. 176. Why are we united in worship?

We are united in worship because we have but one altar, upon which Jesus Christ daily renews the offering of Himself upon the Cross. Everywhere we have the same Mass and everywhere the same seven sacraments.

By means of the Eucharist, Christ re-offers Himself to the Father through the ministry of His priests in the Sacrifice of the Mass. At Mass, Jesus and the faithful daily adore the Father. With Him they give glory to God and praise Him for His kindness toward mankind. With Him they ask God for His forgiveness and beg His help. We are one with Jesus in His Sacrifice.

Sacred Scripture

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. *1 Corinthians 10:17*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1108 In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of the Father's vine which bears fruit on its branches.¹ The most intimate cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is achieved in the liturgy. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of communion, abides indefectibly in the Church. For this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together. Communion with the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion are inseparably the fruit of the Spirit in the liturgy.²

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1209 The criterion that assures unity amid the diversity of liturgical traditions is fidelity to apostolic Tradition, i.e., the communion in the faith and the sacraments received from the apostles, a communion that is both signified and guaranteed by apostolic succession.

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

1. The Catholic Church is one because her members are united in belief and worship. How can you explain this in simple terms?
2. Do you believe all the truths of our faith and make a continuous effort to learn and understand them? How do you show your loyalty to the Pope, our spiritual leader?
3. Reflect on the Scripture verse, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (Mark 3:24). Reflect on the lyrics of the song “One Bread, One Body.” Pray for Christian unity.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Father, through Christ You bring us to the knowledge of Your truth, that we may be united by one faith and one Baptism, and thus become His Body. Through Christ, You have given the Holy Spirit to all people. How wonderful are the works of the Spirit, revealed in so many gifts! How marvelous is the unity the Spirit creates from their diversity, as He dwells in

the hearts of Your children, filling the whole Church with His presence and guiding it with His wisdom.

Lord, by the sacrament of the Eucharist, You make us one family in Christ Your Son, one in the sharing of His Body and Blood, and one in the communion of His Spirit. Help us to grow in love for one another and to come to full maturity in the Body of Christ.

God of wisdom and truth, without You, neither truth nor holiness can survive. Safeguard the Church You have made one and make us glad to proclaim Your glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 49

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 172. What are the marks that point out the true Church founded by Jesus?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 8; Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 8, 107.

Q. 173. Why is the Catholic Church one?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 8, 15; On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 27; On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 25-26, 62.

Q. 174. How did Jesus indicate that His Church is one?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 8, 15; On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62.

Q. 175. Why are we united by a spiritual leader?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 8, 9, 18-21; On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26; The Relationship Between Faith and Reason, John Paul II, sect. 70.

Q. 176. Why are we united in worship?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 8, 9, 10; On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26; On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62-64; On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 3, 5, 12; On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 48; The Relationship Between Faith and Reason, John Paul II, sect. 70.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 172: It is incorrectly taught by some theologians that Jesus did not intend to found a Church. In fact, they claim, it was founded by His followers and is, therefore, not of divine origin. Can you think of any Scripture passages which indicate that Jesus really did found the Catholic Church?
- Q. 173: Where does the Catholic Church's unity of belief come from?
- Q. 174: What is the basic visible sign of the unity of the Catholic Church?
- Q. 175: How does being in communion with the Pope, the Successor of St. Peter, in the primacy of authority over the Church, assure her members that the Church possesses the totality of doctrinal truth?
- Q. 176: The Holy Eucharist is sometimes called the Sacrament of Unity. Why?