



Renewing Our Faith

The Church

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

What is the Church?

The community of true Christians: baptised persons who profess the faith and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

People whom God calls and gathers together from all parts of the world.

Church: Greek word “ekklesia” which means in Christian theology the gathering of the chosen people before God.

Why is the Church called the people of God?

The Church is the ‘people of God’ because it pleased God to make holy and to save people not as individuals (single) but by making them into one community gathered together by the unity of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

To become a member of the 'people of God' you need to have faith in Jesus Christ and to have received Baptism. The 'people of God' have Jesus Christ as the head of the Church. Their status is of honour and freedom as sons and daughters of God. Their law is the new commandment of love.

Their mission is to bring unity, hope and salvation for the whole world and for its future (destiny) is to reach the Kingdom of God (heaven) which has already started here on earth.

Who founded the Church?

Jesus Christ: who gathered his faithful followers into one community.

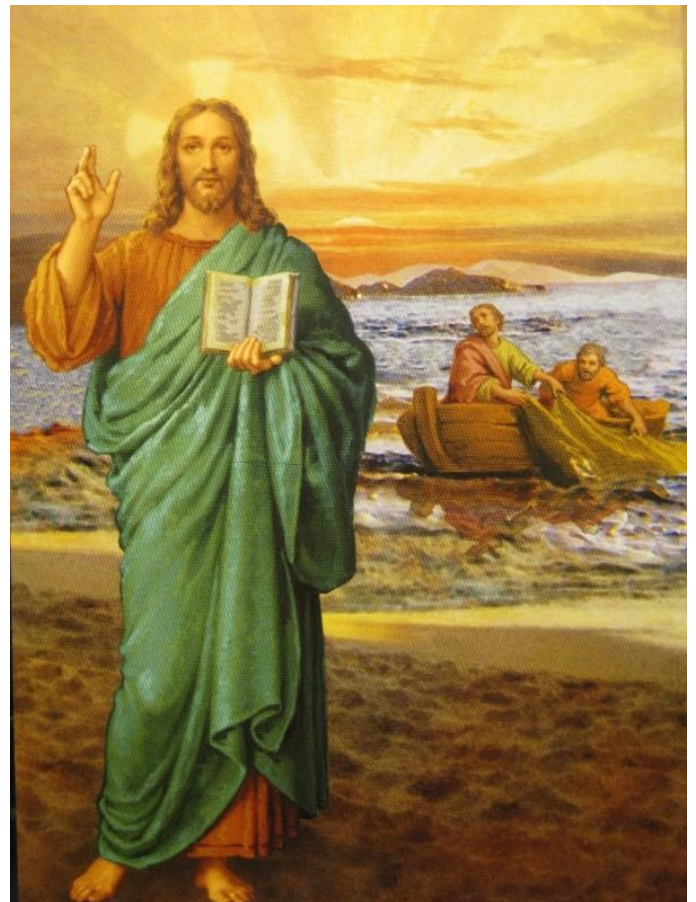
Placed under the direction of the Apostles with St Peter as the leader.

Jesus set up the Church so that men and women would have guidance and to live a life of holiness and eternal salvation.

How did Jesus set up the Church?

Jesus chose 12 disciples, who would be called Apostles. They were to become the future leaders of the Church.

They came from different backgrounds: some were fisherman while another was a tax collector. Jesus spent a great part of his time teaching and forming them.





From the twelve apostles, Jesus chose Peter to be a leader of all and to be Jesus' representative on earth.

The last instructions Jesus gave to the Apostles before he ascended to heaven was to bring the Church to the world and to bring all people to Christ.

He said **“Go and make all people in all nations disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to follow all the commandments I gave you.”**

(Matt 28:19-20).

Ten days later the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (spirit of love and truth) and were then given the grace to go out and preach. Since Pentecost, the Church has grown and spread to all parts of the world.

What is the mission of the Church?

The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples.

What is the identity of the Church?

The Church is
one, holy,
catholic and
apostolic.



How is the Church one?

Unity of belief: All Catholics share the same beliefs about God, redemption and the sacraments. There is also unity of moral teaching (what is right and wrong), based on the ten commandments and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Unity of worship and liturgy: There is one sacrifice, the Mass, by which all members are united in worshipping God. We receive the Eucharist and other Sacraments, by which we all share in the life of Christ. There is also a rich variety in the rituals and ceremonies. Catholics may belong to different rites (e.g. eastern rite, Latin rite) which have different liturgies and customs, but we all believe in the same truths of our salvation.

Unity of government in the Church: All members give themselves to the one divine authority, Jesus Christ. He is the shepherd, the leader of the church and he is represented on earth by the Pope and the bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles. We are united to our bishop, and he in turn is united to the Pope.

However, throughout the history of the Church that has been divisions and separation from the one Church of Christ. For example, some Orthodox Churches have divided from the one faith in some teachings but remain united in apostolic succession and valid (real) sacraments. Some Christian denominations only remain united by Baptism and some teachings of faith and morals.

Even though these Churches are separated from the full communion of the Catholic Church we will still refer to them as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christ wanted unity in the Church, so we pray and work for unity amongst Christians.

How is the Church holy?

Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The teachings of the Church

Sacraments They led us to holiness

Holy Spirit fills it with grace when they are open to God's gifts.

Throughout history, there have been many men and women from all walks of life, who have become holy. We call them saints. The saints are great examples for us. They teach us how to become holy and to reach heaven.

However, it's also important remember that most of us fall far short of holiness and many times fall into sin. There are many examples throughout the history of the Church of Christians who have lived unholy lives.

Despite our sins we must always repent and try to follow the holiness of Jesus Christ

How is the Church Catholic?

The word “catholic” means universal or for all. The Church has spread to every nation on earth, offering salvation to all.

Despite differences in geography, customs, clothing, language and skin colour, all Catholics are united in the fellowship of faith.

How is the Church apostolic?

The Church began with the Apostles whom Christ chose. The Church today is still led by the successors of Peter and the apostles.

They are the Pope and the bishops. The authority of the bishops in the Church can be traced back in an unbroken line to the apostles.

The Church is also apostolic in the sense that it professes the same beliefs taught by the apostles.

Who are the faithful?

People who have received Christ through baptism and have become the people of God.

Every Christian has a duty to bear witness to the Gospel by his own life.

In the Church there is a hierarchy. A **hierarchy** is a ranking of those in leadership. This ranking in the Church comes to us from Christ. At the head is the Pope, then bishops, priests, deacons and then the laity. There are also “religious” who are people called in a special way to live a life of chastity, poverty and obedience.

The Pope

Successor of St Peter (the first Pope), also known as the Bishop of Rome.



The visible head of the entire Church.

Representative of Jesus Christ, the invisible head of the Church.

Having power to teach, govern and sanctify (makes holy) all members of the Church.

Pope Francis is the current Pope.

What is the role of a Pope?

The Pope teaches all Catholics the truths of the faith (what we must believe) and morals (how Christians must act). By a gift of God, he can teach the **infallible** truth about faith and morality.

Infallible: free from error.

All Catholics must believe what the Pope teaches as infallibly true. Normally, the Pope does not teach in this way.

The bishops are also infallible when, in union with the Pope, they teach something on faith and morals, which must be held by all Catholics to be true.

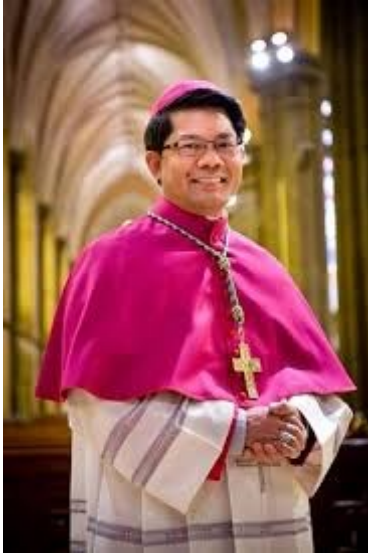
Bishops

Successors to the Apostles.

Teaches the message of Jesus and govern the Christians who are under his care and give them the sacraments.

Oversees (looks after) a diocese.

Diocese: a community of the faithful,
usually established by geographic area.



All the bishops are united under the Pope. Bishop Vincent is the current Bishop for the Diocese of Parramatta

Archbishops:

The head of an
important diocese

Same powers as a
bishop and a few
extra

responsibilities.



Archbishop Anthony Fisher is the current
Archbishop for the Archdiocese of Sydney

Priests

Priests lead and serve the people entrusted to their care in a parish.



Celebrates Mass, listen to confessions and teach and instruct the people in their **parish**.

Parish: a small church community

Deacons

Ordained by a bishop to help him serve God's people.

Assists at the altar by proclaiming the Gospel, preach the homily and distribute Holy Communion.

Doesn't have the power to celebrate the Eucharist or to forgive sins.



Administers the Sacrament of Baptism; he can witness marriages and conduct funeral services

Helps the priests by visiting the sick and using their talents in different ways for the good of the parish.

Laity

All baptised people of the Church who are not clergy (bishops, priests, deacons) or in a religious state of life

Called to be witnesses of Christ and his church. Both by their word and example.

Called to bring Christ's Gospel message to the world and to bring Christian justice and charity into all the activities of human life.

Others are called to live as a single person and are called to serve others.

Vocation of a lay person: to live in the world but must not become part of it. That means that everything they draw must be drawn from God. At the same time they must keep away from conforming to worldly ways.

Religious:

Sisters, brothers, nuns or monks who live a life dedicated to Christ by taking the promises of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Devoting themselves to love and serve God

Live in religious communities following a rule and living a life prayer and contemplation.

Some religious communities separate themselves completely from the world to pray for the world. They work in monasteries, convents and abbeys to support themselves. Other religious communities dedicate themselves to an active service of God and neighbour.

Poverty: giving up world possessions to follow Christ.

Chasity: making holy for God and for God alone.

Obedience: giving up self-love to follow the will of God through their religious leader.

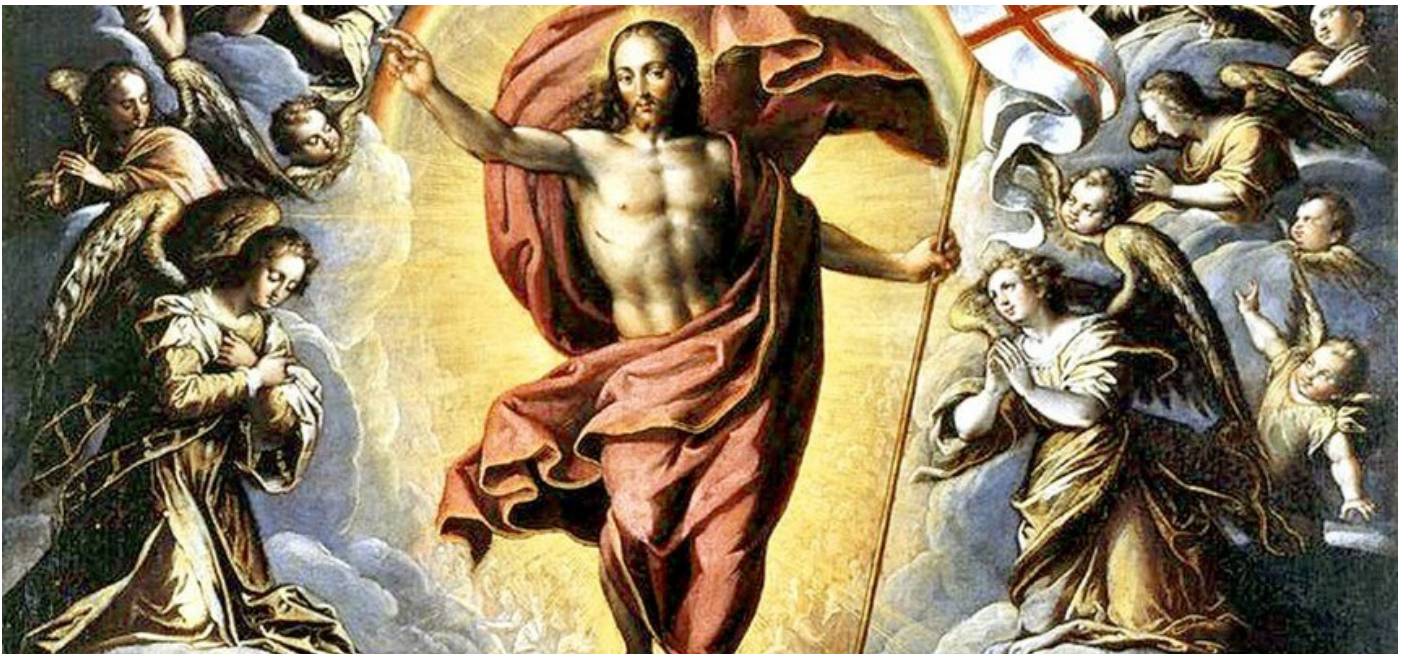


Why is the Church a mystery?

Mystery: a divine truth which we cannot fully understand, but we believe because God told us it is true.

Another name for the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. “Mystical” means spiritual. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life to the Body.

St Paul reminds us that the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. He compared it to a human body with a head and many other parts, or members. Christ is the head of the church. As the head of the body directs and unities the parts of the body, so Christ directs and unites the members of His Church.



Why is the Church called the “Body of Christ?”

The image of the Church as a body helps us to remember that we have gifts and talents in the Church, but we all must work together to bring the Good News of Jesus to the world. However, if one member sins all the others are hurt by it. St Paul affirms this by saying “If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. if one part is praised, all other parts are praised too.”(1 cor 12:26-27)

Why is the Church called the “Bride of Christ?”

Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. The close relationship between a husband and a wife is like the relationship between Christ and the Church. A husband's love for his wife reflects Christ's love for the Church. The love that the Church has for Christ is reflected in a wife's love for her husband.

Why is the Church called the “Temple of the Holy Spirit”?

The Church is called the “Temple of the Holy Spirit” because the Holy Spirit lives in in the body which is the Church; the Holy sprit lives in the Church's Head (Jesus) and in the members.

He also builds up the Church in charity by the Word of God, the sacraments, the virtues, and charisms.

Virtues: a good habit that we learn which helps us to do good and avoid evil.

Charisms: special gifts of the Holy Spirit which are bestowed on individuals for the good of others, the needs of the world, and the building up of the church.

In what ways does the people of God share in the three roles of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King?

As part of Christ Mystical body, we are called to share in the role of the priest, king and prophet.

Priestly people

Some men are called to be priests who have the power to change bread and water into the body and blood and offer it to the Father. But Jesus calls you to share in his priesthood by offering up Jesus and yourself to the Father. And every day, you can offer yourself to God by praying and living a holy life.

Kingly people

We are part of Christ body through baptism. We have become sons and daughters of a king – a royal people.

You spread you father's kingdom by making your conscience rule over your actions to make them good and unselfish. In this way, you can serve Jesus in other people.

Prophetic people

We are asking to share in the role of prophet. We do this by using the talents that Jesus has given to spread His word in the joyful way that we live our life.

Jesus wants everyone to belong to the people of God and he wants you to help.



