

# The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

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## True Religion is Miraculously Confirmed (*Jn. 14:11-12*)

- *Moses* given miraculous powers (Ex. 4, 7-14, 15-17).
- *Joshua's* Battle at Jericho (Josh. 6).
- *Elijah's* Triumph over the Priests of Baal (1 Kgs. 18).
- *Elisha* parting the Jordan river, raising people from the dead, feeding 100, healing (2 Kgs. 2-13).
- *Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, . . .* Predictive Prophecy
- *Jesus' miraculous power over:*
  - Nature (Jn. 2:1-11; Mk. 4:35-41; 6:47-50).
  - Demons (Mt. 12:22-23; Mk. 1:23-27; 5:1-13).
  - The Material Realm (Mt. 14:13-33; Mk. 6:37-44).
  - Disease and Death (Mt. 9:27-35; Mk. 1: 30; 5:22-24; 35-43; Lk. 7: 11-17; Jn. 11:34-46).
  - Even His own Death! (1 Cor. 15)
- *Jesus' Disciples* healing and deliverance (Mk. 6:13, 16:20; Lk. 9:6).
- *Jesus' Apostles* verified by signs and wonders (Heb. 2:3-4)
- *Jesus' Believers* speaking in tongues (Acts 2, 10, 19)
  - Paul's healing handkerchief (Acts 19).
  - Peter's healing shadow (Acts 5)

## Jesus Builds His Church (*Jn. 14:16,26*)

- "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (*Mt. 16:18*)
- "You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (*Eph. 2:19-21*)
- "The household of God which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth." (*1 Tim. 3:15*)

## Jesus Confirms His Church

### *Early Witnesses*

The apostles: 12/12 Tortured . . . 11/12 Martyred . . . 0/12 Recanted.

"This so wonderful conversion of the world to the Christian faith is so certain a sign of past miracles, that they need no further reiteration, since they appear evidently in their effects. It would be more wonderful than all other miracles, if without miraculous signs the world had been induced by simple and low-born men to believe truths so arduous, to do works so difficult, to hope for reward so high. . . .

"If you say, 'but no one has seen miracles performed,' then I answer, that once upon a time everybody worshipped false gods and persecuted Christians, and then afterwards all were converted including the wise, noble, powerful, by a few poor and unlettered preachers. Either this was miraculous or not. If so, then the point is granted; if not, then I ask, what greater miracle than to convert so many without miracles?" (St. Thomas Aquinas, "*Exposition of the Apostle's Creed*")

## *Modern Miracles*

- Shroud of Turin
- Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Incorruptible Saints
- Eucharistic Miracles

## Discerning the Church Today

### *ONE*

- Jesus prayed for unity (Jn. 17), and St. Paul demanded it (1 Corinthians).
- Catholic unity comes from having one source (God), one head (Jesus Christ), one authoritative body (the Magisterium), and one leader (the Pope) - not from the agreement of the laity.
- The very fact of schisms and heresies presupposes that there is a single Church to be in schism with, or removed from by heresy.
- Other groups claiming the title of “Christian Church” often claim unity through agreement on the “essentials” of the faith. However, who gets to draw the line between essential and non-essential doctrines? The Bible does not make such a distinction, and so each group makes its own.

### *HOLY*

- The word “holy” means “set apart” – not perfect.
- The Church is properly said to be holy in at least three ways.
  - First, the Church was set apart by God at its creation.
  - Second, the Church is holy presently because it is united with Christ and being sanctified by him; through him and with him (CCC 824).
  - Third, the Church’s perfect holiness is true of its future as something promised (CCC 825).
- God is not content to merely call something “holy.” When God speaks, it happens!
- Unholy people have cut themselves off from the Church.

### *CATHOLIC*

- “Catholic” refers to universality in the sense of fullness (complete, all-embracing, and with nothing lacking). It refers to *quality*, not necessarily *quantity*.
- Other groups claiming the title of “Catholic” often claim universality due to their view of the Church as being an invisible unity of all believers. This is not how the Church understood the term when the Creed was written.

### *APOSTOLIC*

- The Church is said to be apostolic in three ways.
  - First, the Church is built on the *foundation* of the Apostles.
  - Second, she keeps and hands on the *teaching* of the Apostles.
  - Third, she continues to be *guided* by the Apostles through their successors.
- When the Church is said to be apostolic, then, it is not simply that the Church teaches what the Apostles taught (as other groups sometimes allege).
  - Disagreements over the content of apostolic teaching is, in fact, a significant cause of division.

***But...who represents The Church?***

## ***INFALLIBILITY***

- The Church was built on the apostles and promised it would not fail (Mt. 16-18).
  - Church was to communicate Jesus' teachings (Mt. 28:18-20).
  - Religious error would be a failure.
  - Therefore the Church is infallible (Jn. 16:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- The office of the Bishop of Rome is the best *scriptural* fit:
  - Jesus called *Peter* the rock upon which the Church would be built (Mt. 16:18).
  - Jesus gave *Peter* the keys to the Kingdom (Mt. 16 cf. Isa. 22).
  - Even when *Peter* failed (morally), Jesus specifically prayed for his success (Lk. 22:31-32).
  - Jesus commanded *Peter* to strengthen his brethren, and puts him in charge (Jn. 21:15-19).
  - *Peter* preached the first public sermon and gained the first converts (Acts 2).
  - *Peter* silenced the conflicting voices at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-12).
- The office of the Bishop of Rome is the best *historical* fit:
  - The *Bishop of Rome* settled disputes outside Rome's jurisdiction.
  - The great apologist Irenaeus used the successions of the *Bishops of Rome* to argue against heresy.
    - Cyprian of Carthage, Chrysostom, and Jerome, argued similarly.
  - Among the major Patriarchates of Christendom, only the *Bishop of Rome* never affirmed formal heresy.
- It is a historical fact that:
  - The *Catholic Church* determined the canon of Scripture (the books of the Bible).
  - The *Catholic Church* determined Scripture's orthodox interpretation regarding:
    - *The Trinity*
    - *Jesus' Divinity, Humanity, Personhood, and Will*
    - *Mary, Mother of God*
    - *Salvation by Grace from Original Sin*
- Before most of this, the Church already taught:
  - A.D. 90 – The Lord's Supper as a sacrifice
  - A.D. 95 – Apostolic succession
  - A.D. 110 – The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist
  - A.D. 150 – Baptismal salvation
  - A.D. 150 – The Mass as Christian worship
  - A.D. 155 – Veneration of saints and their relics
  - A.D. 160 – Mary as the New Eve
  - A.D. 180 – The primacy of the bishop of Rome

***So...when did it "go wrong"?***

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