

Lesson 8: The Church



The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. The Church is the living body of Christ on earth. The People of God are the Church. The Church is the Bride of Christ and Jesus is the Bridegroom. Like any marriage, the bride and groom become one. For the Church will become one with Christ in his fullness in the eternal wedding feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church is the Universal Sacrament of Salvation.

Often, people look at the Church as a hospital for the sick since it cares for and heals sinners (*those who are spiritually sick*). The Church is seen as a museum since it contains statues of saints and spiritual artwork. But it is unfair to limit the Church with a comparison that focuses on only one aspect of her beauty. The Church is the House of God and the Kingdom of Christ on earth and as such she is an inexhaustible mystery.

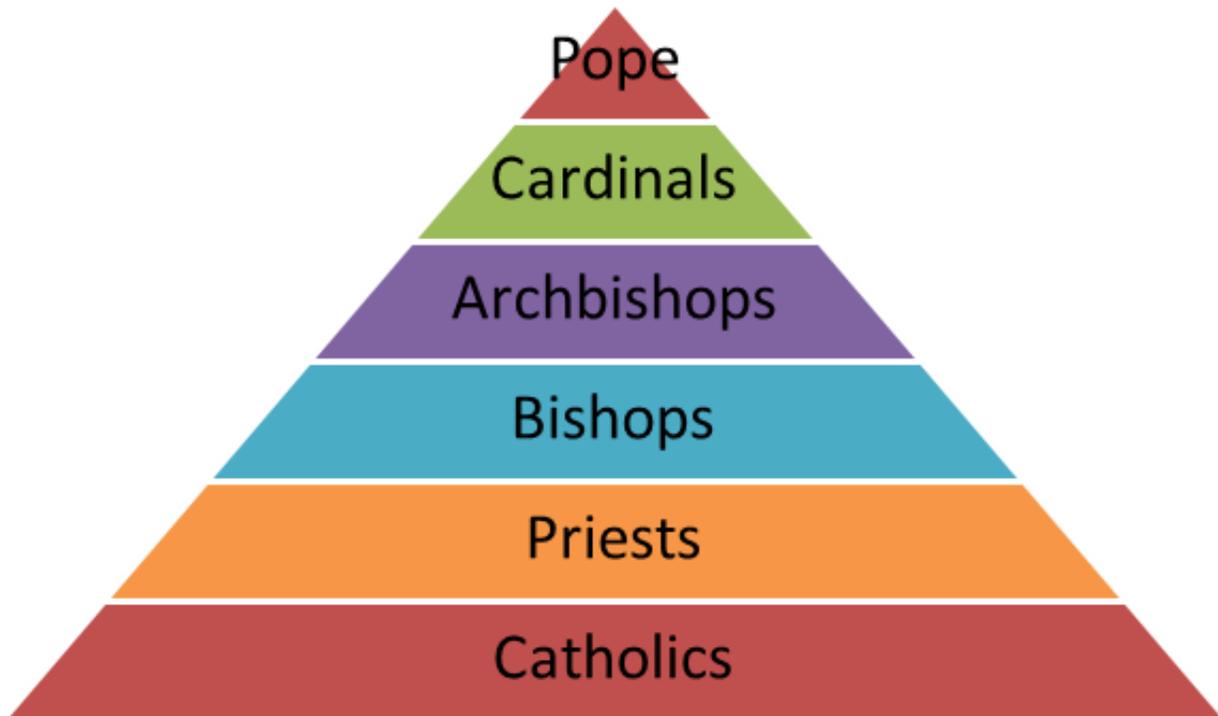
Willed by God the Father, the Church founded by Jesus Christ enjoys the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Church that God carries out His plan of salvation for all people.

Jesus gave the Apostles the task to build his Church on earth. He gave the keys to the kingdom to Peter and his successors (*the popes*), thus giving them supreme authority in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



The Hierarchy of the Church

The Church has a hierarchical structure. This type of structure is like a pyramid with the pope at the top and the people of God at the foundation.



The Pope

The pope is “the Bishop of Rome” and Saint Peter’s Successor. He is the visible head and foundation of unity in the Church. The pope has full, supreme, and universal authority over the whole flock. In other words, the pope is the supreme shepherd of the flock, the people of God. The pope is preserved from error when making solemn definitions **ex cathedra** (*from the chair*) regarding faith and morals. This is the **Principle of Infallibility**, which states the pope and the Church cannot err when teaching on faith and morals. In short, the pope administers Church affairs and is the universal teacher of religious truth.

Cardinals

A cardinal is a senior ecclesiastical leader, considered a “Prince of the Church,” and usually an ordained bishop of the Roman Catholic Church. The cardinals of the Church are collectively known as the **College of Cardinals**. The duties of the cardinals include attending the meetings of the College of Cardinals and making themselves available individually or in groups to the pope as requested. Most have additional duties, such as leading a diocese or archdiocese or managing a department of the Roman Curia. A cardinal's primary duty is electing the Bishop of Rome (*the new pope*) when the **see** (*the*

pope's office) becomes vacant. During the the period between a pope's death or resignation and the election of his successor, the day-to-day governance of the Holy See is in the hands of the College of Cardinals. The right to enter the **conclave of cardinals** (*where the pope is elected*) is limited to those who have not reached the age of 80 years by the day the vacancy occurs. In short, cardinals are chose by the pope to serve as his advisors and to help administer Church affairs.

Archbishops

An archbishop is a bishop of higher rank or office and is the leader of an archdiocese. In short, archbishops are the chief bishops overseeing affairs of the chief diocese in an area.

Bishops

Bishops claim **apostolic succession** (*a direct historical lineage dating back to the original Twelve Apostles*). They are seen as those who possess the full priesthood and can ordain clergy – including another bishop. They are modern day apostles due to their apostolic succession. Bishops, along with the pope and cardinals, comprise the **Magisterium of the Church** (*the teaching authority of the Catholic Church*). Therefore, they are infallible when they teach together with Peter's successor (*the pope*) in an ecumenical council. Bishops are the visible sources of unity in their own dioceses. In short, bishops are the successors to apostolic powers. They are appointed by the pope. With him, they share major responsibility for preserving truth and unity of belief in the Church. Bishops administer affairs of a diocese.

Priests

Priests are co-workers with the bishop. Their main purpose is to dispense the sacraments and minister to the spiritual needs of the people of God. In short, priests are ministers ordained to celebrate Mass, administer sacraments, and teach the word of God. Priests are responsible to the bishop and their parish communities.

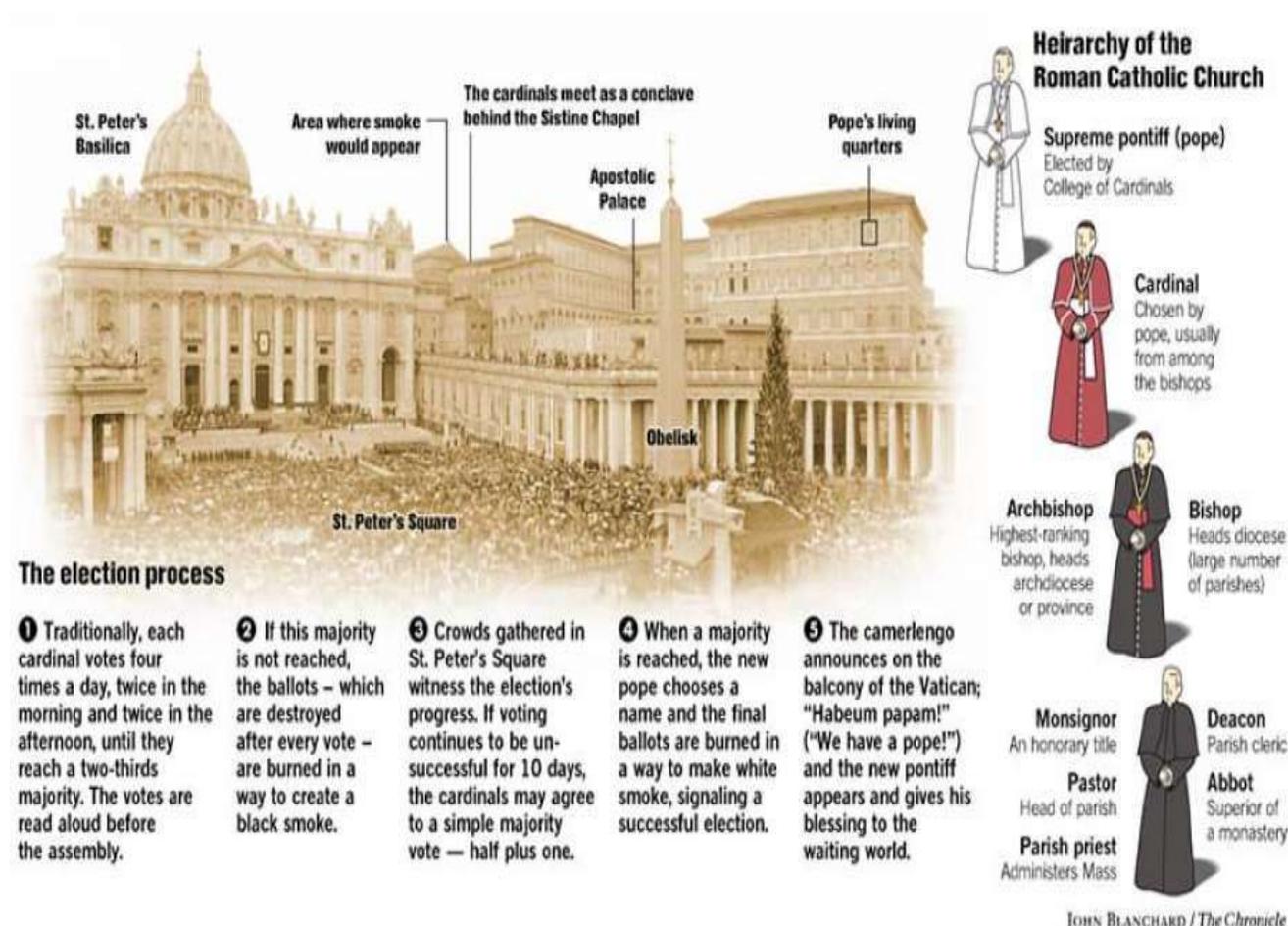
Deacons

Deacons are responsible to the bishop. They are ordained to a “ministry of service,” especially to preach the Gospel and baptize. Deacons are usually assigned to a particular parish by the bishop to assist the priests.

Catholics (*The Laity or The People of God*)

This group consists of the People of God and includes all those who are not in Holy Orders or members of religious institutions in the Church. This group is often called “the laity.” Their main purpose is to pass on the gift of the faith to their family and the world. In short, the laity take part in parish ministries and work to build up the parish community. The members of the laity are called to practice the faith in all aspects of their lives.

The following illustration shows the election process for selecting a new pope:



The Marks of the Church

There are four Marks of the Church which are contained in the Nicene Creed. They are: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

One Catholics everywhere profess one faith, receive the same seven sacraments, worship in the same way (*Mass*), and are united under the authority of the Pope.

Holy Christ sanctified his bride (*the Church*) and made her holy through the Holy Spirit; through Christ and with him, the Church sanctifies her members, and we achieve holiness by the grace of God at work in her.

Catholic Means “universal”; the Church has received from Christ the fullness of the means of salvation and has been sent by him to gather the whole human race into the one People of God.

Apostolic The Church is founded on the apostles; she faithfully guards the deposit of faith and is guided by Peter’s successor (*the pope*).

The Three States of the Church

1. The **Church Militant** which consists of Christians on earth who struggle as Soldiers of Christ against sin, evil, and the devil.
2. The **Church Penitent**, also called the **Church Suffering**, consists of the souls in Purgatory, the state of purification of souls in preparation for their entrance into heaven.
3. The **Church Triumphant** which consists of the saints in heaven.

The Precepts of the Church

The Precepts of the Church provide the faithful with a foundation for living a Catholic life. These rules describe the **minimum** effort we must make in prayer and in living a moral life. All Catholics are called to move beyond the minimum by growing in love of God and love of neighbor. The Precepts of the Church are as follows:

7 Precepts of the Church

- 1** Go to Mass and refrain from unnecessary work on Sundays and Holy Days
- 2** Observe the laws of fasting and abstinence
- 3** Confess our sins to a priest at least once a year
- 4** Receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season
- 5** Contribute to the support of the Church
- 6** Obey the laws of the Church in regard to marriage
- 7** participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization

Church Related Buildings

Rectory	The residence of the parish priests.
Parish Center	A building, or large space, where parish activities are held.
Monastery	The place where communities of religious men or women live.
Convent	The place where religious sisters (<i>nuns</i>) live.
Cloister	The living area and adjoining property of religious orders who restrict their contact with the outside world.
Cathedral	The official church of the bishop of a diocese. It gets its name from the bishop's chair (<i>the "cathedra"</i>) which is located in the sanctuary.
Chancery	The building where the bishop has his office. It is also home to the diocesan offices. In the <u>Diocese of Saint Petersburg</u> (<i>the diocese that St. Michael the Archangel Parish belongs to</i>), the Chancery is called the "Diocesan Pastoral Center."
Basilica	A church designated as a place of special importance.
Shrine	A Shrine is a place that has a holy object, like a statue, picture, or relic that is important to Catholics. A shrine is also a place dedicated to a particular belief or devotion that inspires Catholics. The faithful often make pilgrimages (<i>spiritual journeys</i>) to a shrine.

Church Related Territories

Diocese	A portion of the people of God that is entrusted for its pastoral care to a bishop. A diocese is divided into smaller territorial regions known as deaneries and each deanery is comprised of parishes.
Mission Territory	A geographical location where the Gospel has not yet been preached or where the response to the Gospel has not been sufficient for the local church community there to be considered self-sustaining.
Vatican City	A 108 acre plot of land in Rome, Italy, that serves as the worldwide headquarters of the Catholic Church and is the official residence of the pope. Vatican City is a recognized "state," with the pope as its temporal leader, and it has diplomatic relations with many countries.

10 things that you might not know about the Catholic Church:

1. Vatican City has the highest crime rate in the world! With a population around 500 people and a little over one crime per day, the Vatican crime rate is above 100 percent, per capita. Although the fact is shocking it should be remembered that the Vatican is about one square mile in size, and has nearly 20 million visitors annually. Most of the crimes are pickpockets, purse snatching and other petty offenses done by outsiders.
2. The ONLY Christian church in existence for the first 1,000 years of Christian history was the Roman Catholic Church. All other Christian churches which exist today can trace their lineage back to the Roman Catholic Church. Most non-Catholic churches which exist today are less than a century or two old by comparison.
3. The Catholic Church consists of more than just the Roman Catholic Church. There are 22 Eastern Rites that are in full communion with Rome and although they go by different names, they are every bit as much a part of the Catholic Church.
4. Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press, was Catholic and the first book ever printed was the Catholic Bible.
5. The Catholic Church is entirely responsible for the composition of the Bible, which books are included, as well as the breakup of the chapters and verses. Protestants have removed some books of the Bible because some of the verses were inconsistent with their theology. Martin Luther was a prime offender in this regard, removing Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch. He also made an effort to remove James and Revelations, but this was rejected by his followers and those two books were kept. Catholics are often accused of "adding" the books, but despite this common belief, it is false. Older, pre-Protestant, Catholic translations of the Bible include them.
6. How many saints are recognized by the Catholic Church? There does not seem to be an official number, but it exceeds 10,000. Of course, any person who enters heaven is a saint, by definition, so it is certain the number of actual saints in existence is much greater than the number recognized by the Church.
7. Any Catholic may perform an emergency baptism, such as if a person is in grave danger of death. In such a case, the validity of the baptism only depends upon the wishes of the person being baptized, that they desire the baptism. There are specific guidelines for such practices that Catholics should follow.
8. About 15 percent of all hospitals in the United States are Catholic hospitals. In some parts of the world, the Catholic Church provides the only healthcare, education and social services available to people.

9. The Catholic Church spends more money than Apple brings in. Expenditures by the Catholic Church, largely on charity, exceeded \$170 billion in 2012. In that same year, Apple took in \$157 billion in revenue.
10. The pope is protected by the Swiss Papal Guard. Wearing uniforms designed by Michelangelo. Each member is Catholic, male, and Swiss, and must complete military training in Switzerland. They must demonstrate good conduct and be at least five-foot-eight in height. Those who are chosen are granted a private audience with the pope along with their families. In extreme circumstances, they are expected to guard the Holy Father with their lives. The Swiss Papal Guard is the oldest active military unit in continual existence since 1506.

A Photo of Vatican City



Saint Peter and Saint Paul

Jesus gave his Apostles the task of building his Church on earth. In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we read how the development of the early Church took place. Acts of the Apostles, highlights the ministries of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Saint Peter's mission focused mainly on converting the Jewish People (*God's Chosen People*) to Christianity; whereas, Saint Paul (*who is called the "Apostle to the Gentiles"*) focused his mission on the non-Jewish nations (*often referred to as "the Gentile Nations"*). Together, Saints Peter and Paul built the Church as Universal (*for all peoples and nations*) and as One (*one faith for all people*). Saints Peter and Paul helped to establish unity within the early Church.



The lives of Saints Peter and Paul are mirror images of each other. In other words, the things that happened to Peter and very similar to the events of Paul's life and vice-versa. This parallelism of the lives of Saints Peter and Paul is most clearly displayed in the Acts of the Apostles. The parallels between them are significant for the following reasons:

1. It demonstrates that the power at work in Peter is also at work in Paul.
2. It displays that the preaching of Peter is also the preaching of Paul.
3. It illustrates that the protection given to Peter by God is likewise given to Paul.

4. It shows that Paul is equally approved by God and has all the credentials of a true Apostle of Christ, like Peter.
5. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is at work in both Peter and Paul.

The following chart shows the Parallels between the lives of Saints Peter and Paul:

Peter and Paul Parallels

Peter

Paul

First sermon announces the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant
(Acts 2:14-36)

First sermon announces the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant
(Acts 13:16-41)

Uses Psalm 16 to explain the Resurrection
(Acts 2:25-28)

Uses Psalm 16 to explain the Resurrection
(Acts 13:35)

Heals the lame (*cripple*)
(Acts 3:1-10)

Heals the lame (*cripple*)
(Acts 14:8-10)

Filled with the Holy Spirit
(Acts 4:8)

Filled with the Holy Spirit
(Acts 13:9)

Becomes famous for healings, so that the sick hope to be touched by his shadow
(Acts 5:15-16)

Becomes famous for healings, so that the sick are healed by handkerchiefs or aprons touched by him
(Acts 19:1-12)

Confers the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands
(Acts 8:14-17)

Confers the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands
(Acts 19:6)

Rebukes Simon the Magician
(Acts 8:18-24)

Rebukes Elymas (*Bar-Jesus*) the Magician
(Acts 13:6-11)

Raises Tabitha from the dead
(Acts 9:36-42)

Raises Eutychus from the dead
(Acts 20:7-12)

Refuses to be worshiped as a god by Cornelius
(Acts 10:24-26)

Refuses to be worshiped as a god by the people of Lystra
(Acts 14:8-18)

Rescued from prison by a miracle
(Acts 12:6-11)

Rescued from prison by a miracle
(Acts 16:25-34)

As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Saint Paul plays a major role in the growth and development of the Church. His conversion is a true story of hope because it reminds us that we too no matter how great of our sins may be, we still have the potential to become saints. Saint Paul started his life as Saul, a man who was fixated on destroying the Church and persecuting Christians. After an encounter with the Risen Christ, Paul had a conversion of heart and began to dedicate his life to building up the Catholic Church by proclaiming Christ Crucified.

Read the Conversion Accounts of St. Paul:

Acts 9:1-22

Acts 22:1-21

Acts 26:12-18

Saint Paul presents his **Christology** (*the study of Christ*) in Philippians 2:6-11. His understanding of Christ (*as outlined in these verses*) is broken into two parts which are centered around the cross. The first part (*verses 6-8*) focuses on Jesus' **self-emptying** (*his incarnation and humility*). The second part (*verses 9-11*) focuses on Jesus' **exultation** (*his glorification*). Notice that Saint Paul's Christology ends as everything should with "the glory of God the Father."

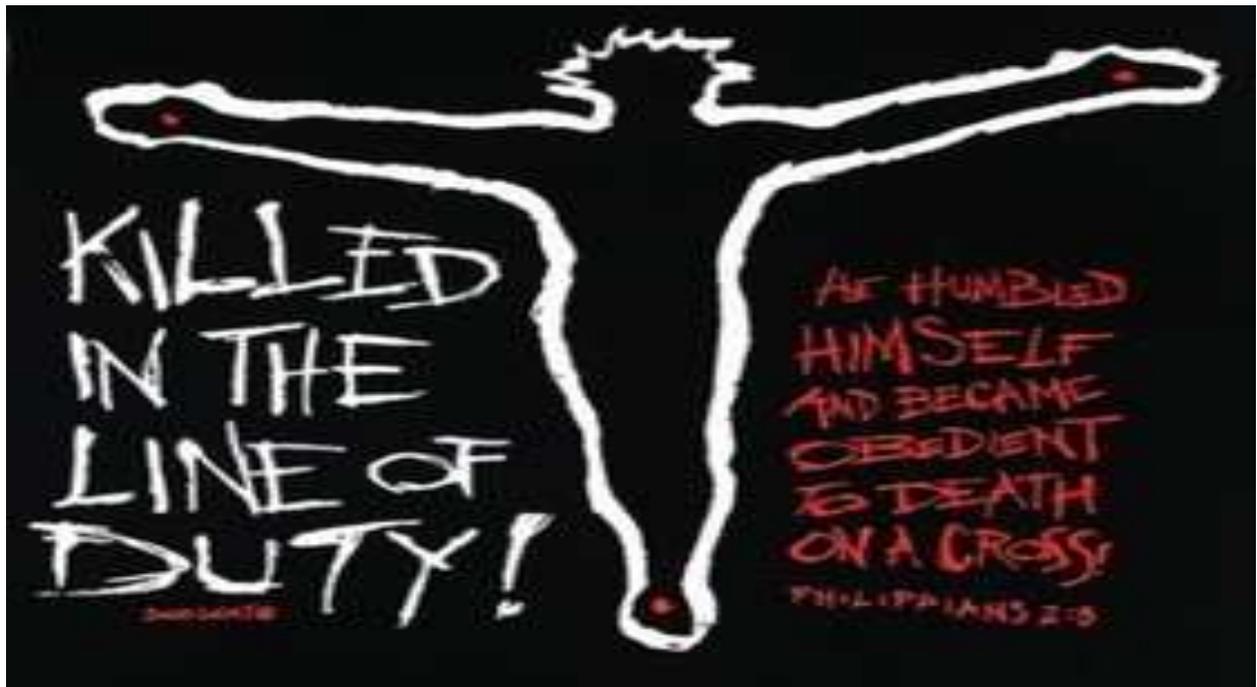
Read Saint Paul's Christology:

Philippians 2:6-11

Like Saint Paul, Saint Peter's preaching was centered around the Cross of Christ and his suffering. Sharing in the Cross of Our Lord is how we are able to enter into and participate in the Paschal Mystery (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus*).

Read:

1 Peter 4:13-14



The Deposit of Faith

The **Deposit of Faith** is the body of saving truth entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and handed on by them to be preserved and proclaimed. Jesus ordered them to teach the nations *"everything I have commanded you" and assured them "know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20)*. The metaphor of a "deposit" suggests that this teaching is an inexhaustible treasure, that rewards reflection and study with new insights and deeper penetration into the mystery of the **divine economy of salvation** (*God's plan for saving mankind*). Although the Church's understanding of this teaching can and does develop, it can never be augmented in substance. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

"The apostles entrusted the sacred deposit of the faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. 'By adhering to (*this heritage*) the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread (*the Eucharist*) and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practicing and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful."

Both Oral Tradition and Scripture "come from the same divine wellspring." Simply put, the **Deposit of Faith = Apostolic Tradition + Sacred Scriptures**.

Apostolic Tradition: Jesus commissioned the Apostles to *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19-20)*. He promised that the Holy Spirit would *"instruct you in everything and remind you of all that I have told you" (John 14:26)*. Just before his ascension into heaven, Jesus said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16: 15)*. He commanded them to do precisely what he himself had done, namely, deliver the Word of God to the people by the living voice and granted them, through the Holy Spirit, the gift of tongues. He told them, *"He who hears you hears me and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me" (Luke 10:16)*. In short, **Tradition** (*with a capital "T"*) refers to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church that are passed down from one generation to the next under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What Christ entrusted to the Apostles was handed on to others (*through the Church*) both orally and in writing.

Sacred Scripture (*the Bible*): The Bible consists of the Old and New Testaments. The Church and the faith existed before the New Testament was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Jesus died between 30-33 A.D., but none of the New Testament books were written before about 45-50 A.D. Millions of people were converted before the Bible canon (73 books) was agreed upon. The Bible is the inerrant word of God, but it is not a systematic presentation of all that was in the Deposit of Faith. By recognizing and utilizing the Scriptures, it is easy to see that the Church is founded on the Word of God (*both the Bible and Christ himself*).

Tradition and Scripture together make up the single deposit of faith, which remains present and active in the Catholic Church.

Ecumenism

The term **Ecumenism** refers to the movement to bring unity among divided Christians. Christ gave the Church the gift of unity from the beginning, but over the centuries, that unity has been broken. All Christians are called by their common Baptism to pray and to work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity Christ wants for the Church.

Ecumenism

◦ SPIRIT OF ECUMENISM

The word 'ecumenical' is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. It therefore covers ... both Unity and Mission in the context of the whole world. (World Council of Churches Central Committee, August 1951)

◦ DEFINITION

The efforts to restore unity among the Christian Churches, which are separated from each other in various ways.

◦ CHARACTERISTICS

- Stress on common values and teachings that prevail across all Christian Churches
- The rediscovery of the shared history (Apostolic tradition) and ethos of all Christians