

THIS IS OUR FAITH!

5. I BELIEVE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

For many Church just means "all Christians". For others it is their own local congregation or even building. For some it refers to clergy. For yet others it is some murky, rich and powerful organisation which is set in the past and which resists change.

There is some truth in all of these, perhaps. But none of them have the full answer.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The Church is people. Not just clergy - but mostly just ordinary people.

The phrase 'People of God' tells us that the Church is a Holy Nation, as were the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

It has a local, regional, and international structure (the Parish, the Diocese, with the Pope at the Head). It has its own system of law (Canon Law). It owns property, has a range of activities, especially schools and hospitals.

In many ways it looks like any other human organisations. But its is more than this.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Church is more than just people. The People of God make up the Body of Christ. This means several things.

The Church is rooted in Christ. Christ founded the Church and is the Head of the Church.

The Church has a structure - but this is a holy rule, not like other organisations or nations - made up of bishops and priests, with the Pope at the head.

Baptism - a sacrament - is the way in which we enter into the Church. The Sacraments are the spiritual work of the Church, increasing the holiness of God's people.

The Work of the Church is driven by its Mission - to build up the Kingdom of God in the world. Most of its activities - care for the poor, health care for the sick, and education - come from this Mission.

NOT ONLY ON EARTH

The Church on Earth, doing Christ's work and preparing for his return, is called "The Church Militant" - at war with evil.

There is also the Church of the Holy Souls, those who have died and are waiting for the return of Christ at the end of time. This is called "The Church expectant".

And there is also the Church in Heaven, "The Church Triumphant" which is also known as "The Communion of Saints". The Saints are those good souls who enter heaven after their deaths and are now in heaven praying for us.

We in the Church on earth are joined in prayer with the saints in heaven. We therefore honour them and pray for their intercession in our earthly pilgrimage.

In Scripture, the Church in glory is described as the 'bride of Christ' and the 'new Jerusalem'.

FROM THE CATECHISM

What does it mean to say that the Church is "the Universal Sacrament of Salvation"?

This means that she is the sign and instrument both of the reconciliation and communion of all of humanity with God and of the unity of the entire human race.
Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church 152



THE FOUR MARKS OF THE CHURCH

One
Holy
Catholic
Apostolic



DOORWAYS TO FAITH

Sessions are held at 3pm on Sundays in the Newman Room, Downey Street, Hanley and at 4.30pm on Wednesdays in Our Lady's School, Watkin Street, Fenton.

Part One: The Creed

The Holy Catholic Church Dec 2 & 12

The Word of God Jan 6 and 9



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Last Week: If the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples at Pentecost, where was he before?

Answer: This is a question not so much about the Spirit, as about the Holy Trinity. God is eternal, and so all three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are eternal. They always exist. This is true, of course of the Son - as St John says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God", and it is true also of the Spirit. There are plenty of references to God's Spirit in the Old Testament - for example in the inspiration of Moses and the Prophets, and most importantly in the story of the Creation of the World in Genesis when God's breath or spirit is said to be over the waters, while he creates through his Word. The misunderstanding that the Son and the Spirit are not eternal (always present) probably comes from the fact that the Holy Trinity is only revealed step by step. The Eternal Word becomes incarnate in Jesus - the Holy Spirit comes down upon the Apostles at Pentecost. Only then is the Trinity fully revealed. But God was always, is always, Three in One. To teach that the Spirit and the Son are less than God (the Father), that "there was a time when they were not" is an ancient heresy known as *Arianism*.

Next: Is the Catholic Church the same as the Church that was founded by Christ?

For the answer come along to "Doorways to Faith" or read this leaflet next time.

This is Our Faith is a weekly leaflet to accompany the Doorways to Faith groups which are meeting in the parishes of Fenton and Hanley during the Year of Faith (October 2012 to November 2013). The leaflet is produced only while the groups are meeting - so there are no leaflets during holiday periods.