

Recap:

- Belief
 - Trust in a person
 - Belief in the Church flows out of the profession of the Trinity.
- Church as a people “called out”
- Church’s beginning in Scripture
 - The Church exists before Scripture
- Membership in the Church
 - Centrality of Baptism in the Trinitarian formula
- Mystery and Institution
 - Gap between the divine and the human

The Four Marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

Intro: What is a mark?

- “Character” comes from the Greek *charassein*, meaning to cut or engrave
 - Noun meaning “mark or distinctive quality”
- The four “marks” are the four characteristics of the Church.
- These four characteristics indicate essential features and the mission of the Church.
- The Church does not “possess” the characteristics, rather it is Christ through the power of the Spirit who gives these characteristics to the Church and the Holy Spirit who sustains them.
- The recognition of these characteristics is an *act of faith*. This is why they are properly expressed in the Creed. They are not some nice invention of Catechesis or a nice thought about what the Church

should be. They are an expression of the reality of what Christ has promised, they are matters of *belief*.

The Church is One:

- What does it mean to be ‘one’?
 - It means that there is a single unity that defines the Church. The oneness of the Church is the unity of peoples and cultures into one People, one Body, a single object, a single mystery.
- Why is the Church one?
 - Because of her:
 - Source
 - The Trinity, which is one God
 - Founder
 - Christ, who reconciled all humanity to God through the Cross.
 - Soul (animating principle)
 - The Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who believe and who enlivens the communion of faith between members of the Church.
- What binds the unity, the oneness of the Church?
 - 3 things:
 - Profession of the same faith
 - Common celebration of the Sacraments
 - Apostolic succession through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.
- Wounds:
 - Division, which is not of God, but of the Evil one attacks these three things. Sin causes division, because it clouds the mind and hardens the heart.

- But even those who change one of the three things, if they are Baptized in the Trinitarian formula, remain “Christians”
- The process of correcting and clarifying is at the service of the unity of the Church. It calls people to maintain these three bonds of unity so as not to damage the oneness of the Church. We have a lot to do in the regard, from a human perspective, in getting back to the unity that Christ prayed to the Father for. “That they may be one as you and I are one” And we must rely on God’s guidance and approach others with humility and Charity while maintaining the integrity of the Faith as a divine gift.

The Church is Holy:

- Probably the most challenging mark of the Church. Sadly, often the least experienced, and sometimes the least believable.
- It hardly seems rational to say to the average person today “the Church is Holy.” So many of the Church’s members have done so many terrible things, even in the name of the Church.
 - But again, these qualities do not rely on the humans that make the Church up, they are given by Christ and maintained by the Holy Spirit.
- The early Church called its members “saints.” Saint means “holy one.” In Acts 9:13 Ananias is praying to God about Paul and says, “Lord, I have heard much about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.” And Paul refers to the collection he asks for from the Corinthians as the “collection for the saints (1 Cor 16:1).”
 - The members of the Church could properly be called saints because they are people made holy by Baptism, washed clean of sin and made members of the Church, the communion of saints.

- The Church is holy because the life of the Church is the life of Grace. Though sinners are members of her fold, sinners are bound together as one in the bond of Charity, which constantly perfects each member. The Church, then, is holy because she is the source of grace for the whole world. Jesus entrusted his power to the Church he founded, this is the power to sanctify the world, to redeem what was lost and to bring it back to God.
- The Church communicates grace to the world, especially by the celebration of the Sacraments, but also by the prayers and penances offered up to God. The Church is holy because all that is holy in the world comes through Christ, who, as we saw last time, instituted a community of believers to carry on His presence and power to “all ages.”

The Church is Catholic:

- Catholic means “universal” “total”
- The Church is Catholic in two senses:
 - Totality.
 - As St. Ignatius of Antioch, writing in the second century said: “Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church.”
 - The fullness of Jesus’s Body and Power rests in the one, holy, catholic church. The best/fullest means of Salvation which are meant to be shared with the whole world are given to the Church:
 - Correct and complete confession of faith
 - Full sacramental life
 - The ordained ministry in Apostolic succession
 - We see these themes again, which we saw in seeing how the Church is one. This fullness that brings Christ’s

presence into the world is “total” in that nothing is lacking as a means for salvation in Christ. A person’s acceptance of or conversion to God might be “a work in progress” but the Church from the beginning possesses and dispenses all that is necessary for salvation and is therefore “total” “catholic.”

- Universal
 - The second way the Church is catholic is that she has been sent by Christ to all. There is not a single person who is not invited and called to be members of the Body of Christ, the People of God. Jesus died and ransomed all of humanity.
 - This indicates the missionary mandate that is part and parcel to being Christian. When Jesus said, “Go and make disciples” He was serious.
 - God desires that all people come to recognize the fullness of the truth about who He is, who they are, and what God has done for them.

The Church is Apostolic:

- The Church is Apostolic in three ways:
 - 1. She is built on the foundation of the Apostles, who were specifically chosen and sent by Christ. Apostle means sent.
 - 2. The Church, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, keeps true to the “deposit of Faith” given by the Apostles. This is all that was handed down through the Apostles in word and deed and teaching.
 - 3. The Church continues to be guided by the Apostles through their successors, the Pope and Bishops in communion with him.

- The Church is “apostolic” as well in the sense that through maintaining communion and unity with the teaching and preaching of the Apostles, the Body of Christ also maintains and lives the mission that Christ entrusted to the Apostles, that is, the Church is sent out to the world with the fullness of the teaching of who Jesus said he is and with the power that Jesus gave to His Apostles.
- The whole live of the Church is wrapped up in mission, and this makes sense, since Christ Himself was *sent* from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is *sent* from the Father as well.

Conclusion: Responding to the Reality

- The Church is defined by these four characteristics which are truly a gift from God, but also are a challenge for each of us as members of the Church. They need to be lived, not just left in the realm of theory.
 - Like a gift, needs to be opened.
- A good question: How do I as a disciple of Christ build up the Church in these four ways? For example: How do I promote the unity of the members of Church? How do I draw from and contribute to the holiness of the Church? How do I promote the mission of the Church to all the nations? How do I remain faithful to the teaching that Christ entrusted to the Apostles?
 - There are hundreds of questions you could examine yourself with based on these four characteristics.
 - They are a model for us as individuals, because they describe the reality that we are called to.