



HIGHLIGHTS FOR TALK 3

WHERE IS JESUS CHRIST NOW? THE CHURCH, SCRIPTURE, TRADITION

- ❖ The Catholic Church will never cease to exist because the Church is the **Mystical Body of Jesus Christ**. Christ promised to remain with His Church through the end of time. After the Lord's Ascension, temporal responsibility for the Church fell to the Twelve Apostles (the first bishops) under the leadership of St. Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome.
- ❖ The "Four Marks" -- i.e. basic characteristics -- of the Church are: **one, holy, catholic, and apostolic**.
- ❖ The Catholic Church is the **one** true church because she alone was founded by Jesus Christ. Our Lord spent His public life laying the Church's foundation by proclaiming its doctrines, instituting its sacraments and liturgy of worship, and forming its leaders.
- ❖ The Church received her true teachings (or doctrine) directly from Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn 14:6). Though our understanding of these teachings can and does develop and grow over time, the truths that the teachings express are unchangeable and call for the belief of all men and women everywhere.
- ❖ Though it is celebrated at various times and in different languages and rites around the world, The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is always the memorial of Christ's Passion and Death. In the Mass, Christ daily renews the offering of Himself upon the cross.
- ❖ The life of grace is communicated to the faithful everywhere through the same seven sacraments.
- ❖ Our Lord united the members of His Church under the leadership of one man in union with his apostolic brethren. Among the Twelve Apostles (the first bishops), St. Peter held the first place in honor, as Jesus had ordained. Those who inherit St. Peter's office as Bishop of Rome inherit the task of leading the entire Church on earth. Today the Bishop of Rome is better known as the Pope, also affectionately referred to as the "Holy Father".
- ❖ The Church is **holy** because the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church is referred to as "the spotless bride of Christ" because, despite the sinfulness of her members, she is holy as founded by Christ, her teachings are holy, and she offers the necessary means for salvation.
- ❖ The word **catholic** means "universal". The Church is catholic because her message is for all mankind; she teaches the fullness of the Christian faith; she offers the means of salvation to all; and she is called to preach the Gospel in every corner of the world until the end of time.
- ❖ The Church is **apostolic** because Christ built it upon the foundation of His Twelve Apostles. It is the Church's mission to make the person of Christ and His teachings known to all mankind.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit protects the Church from error and helps her stay faithful to the teachings Christ handed down to the Apostles.



Moms Transmit the Faith

- ❖ The Church's apostolic mission is carried on by the successors to the Apostles -- the bishops and the priests under them who serve as our pastors in union with the Pope, "the Church's supreme pastor".
- ❖ The laity (everyone in the Church who is not called to ordained or religious ministry¹) is also responsible for transmitting the faith to those around them -- to their immediate family, relatives, and friends.
- ❖ Christ is the head of the Mystical Body (the Church), and it is the Holy Spirit who makes us members of it. Here on earth, the Pope is Christ's representative. He stands in as the visible head of the Church and is supported by his brother bishops and priests. Lay men and women make up the ordinary "parts" of the Mystical Body.
- ❖ God utilizes three vehicles for communicating His Word (Divine Revelation) to His people. These three vehicles are: **Sacred Scripture**, **Sacred Tradition**, and the **Magisterium**.
- ❖ **Sacred Scripture** (i.e. the Bible) is the Word of God -- it is the Truth in written form. As the Word of God, the Bible has complete integrity with respect to faith and morality -- i.e. the truths we need to know for our salvation.
- ❖ Any translation of the Bible that is approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops or the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is suitable for personal or family use. To verify Church approval, look for either of those names or for the Latin word "*Imprimatur*" -- meaning "Let it be printed" -- in the first few pages of the edition. In addition to the *New American Bible* (NAB), the *Catholic Revised Standard Version* (RSV) and the *Donay-Rheims Version* are among the Bible translations that have Church approval.
- ❖ Divine Revelation (God's Word) is not solely constituted by the written words of Sacred Scripture. There are also unwritten truths concerning faith and morals that God has revealed through what is called **Sacred Tradition**.
- ❖ Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are inseparable. Sacred Tradition is simply everything other than Sacred Scripture that was handed on by the Apostles which contributes to our holiness of life and increase in faith. Divine Revelation is like a song -- a combination of music (Sacred Tradition) and words (Sacred Scripture) -- that God is singing to us.
- ❖ Within Sacred Tradition, the Church "gives expression" to the Truth as it has been given to us by Christ. While that Truth itself is unchangeable, particular expressions of the Truth (i.e. actions) can change without contradicting it.
- ❖ The Pope with his fellow bishops, and all of the priests under them, constitute the Church's hierarchy, whose teaching office is known as the **Magisterium**. Together they work to carry on the Church's apostolic mission of proclaiming the Good News of salvation.
- ❖ The Magisterium is responsible, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, for preserving, rightfully interpreting, and communicating to the people Divine Revelation as contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.
- ❖ All priests have three basic responsibilities: to **teach**, **sanctify**, and **govern** the faithful.

¹ According to Canon law, anyone who is not ordained is technically a lay member of the Church; however, it is commonly understood that the laity refers to all who are neither ordained nor part of a religious order.



- ❖ The **teachings** that Jesus passed down to us through the Apostles are utterly reliable because Christ is the Son of God.
- ❖ Bishops and priests are also called to help **sanctify** the Church by praying and by doing their work well for the love of God. Celebrating Holy Mass, administering the sacraments, and preaching the Gospel are a priest's most important functions in the life of the Church.
- ❖ From the Pope worldwide, to the bishops in their dioceses, and then to priests in their parishes, ecclesial authority (**governance**) flows to keep the Church in order.
- ❖ The Church's "precepts" are meant to ensure that the faithful put forth at least a minimum effort to grow in the love of God. The precepts that have been decreed in the United States are:
 - 1) Attend Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation, and rest from unnecessary labor on these days.
 - 2) Confess your sins at least once a year.
 - 3) Receive the Eucharist during the Easter season at least once.
 - 4) Observe the days of fast and abstinence.
 - 5) Provide for the material needs of the Church.
 - 6) Observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.
- ❖ Vatican II, the most recent Ecumenical Council of the Church (1962-1965) gave special attention to the role of the laity in the Church and in the modern world. One of the most important Council documents (*Lumen Gentium*) emphasized the "universal call to holiness". Every baptized person (not just priests and those with religious vocations) is called to live a holy life.

