



# The Church, Our Spiritual Home

A Pastoral Letter  
on the Church

To the Clergy,  
Religious and  
Laity of the  
Archdiocese  
of Washington

from

His Eminence  
Donald Cardinal Wuerl  
Archbishop  
of Washington





# "The Church, Our Spiritual Home"







Grace  
and peace  
to you  
in Christ.

# Introduction

**J**ESUS INVITES US INTO GOD'S FAMILY. Jesus is the "only Son of God" (Jn 3:18). We receive our status by adoption. "As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Gal 4:6-7).

"Why do you call us brothers and sisters?" a youngster asked me after Mass. "You're not my brother." "Ah, but I am spiritually. Because we are all members of God's family," I responded. After he received a nod of affirmation from his mother and father who stood behind him, he said, "Wow, I didn't know that." Then he added, "That's cool," offering his youthful declaration of approval.

Each of us, in fact, is a member of God's family, God's people. Clearly we belong to our own natural family and then because of baptism we belong to God's family. Together we are real spiritual brothers and sisters.

Like any family, the Church also faces challenges. In the last decades some have chosen to leave home. Some may say they are "spiritual" but not "religious" and therefore not affiliated with the Church. Others may never have really known what the family is all about. And still others may have had a bad experience.

Once, back in the early 1980s, I was preparing for confessions at a parish and I was approached by a man who told me he had left the Church 25 years earlier.

I tried to make reentry a little easier for him by striking up a conversation. "What kept you away?" I asked.

"You," he replied.



I was stunned. I had not been a priest for as long as he had been away. I stumbled a bit as I tried to respond: "I beg your pardon. I don't think I've ever..."

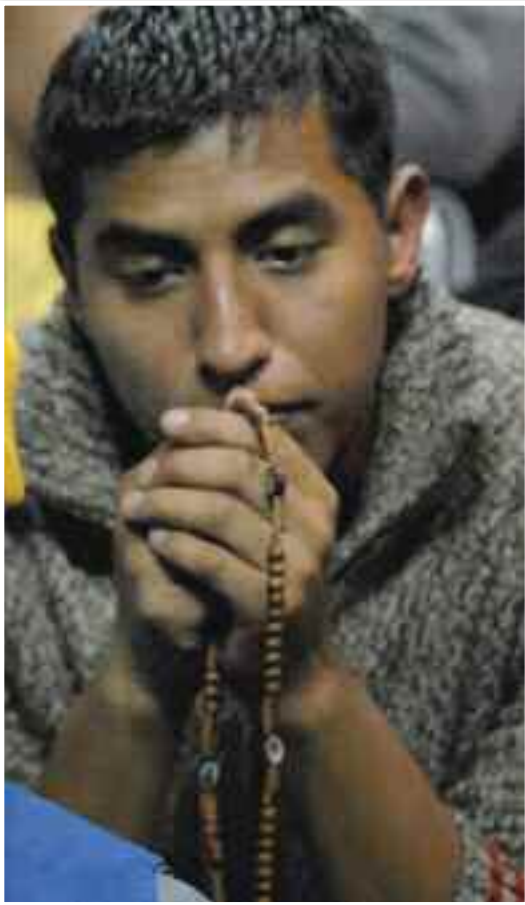
"Oh no," he said, "I don't mean you *personally*. I just mean the Church."

In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI told the story of a skeptical scholar of the nineteenth century, a wayward priest who had lost his faith. The man complained that Jesus had promised the world a kingdom, but all he left us was the Church.

The family of God is called his Church. Its members, those baptized into the Church, you and I, form a body with Christ as its head. In order to truly know Christ, one must know him in his Body, the Church.

Saint Paul takes this for granted when he calls us, as he did the first disciples, "to live in a manner worthy of the call you

"Each of us is a member of God's family, God's people."



"The new body of Christ is made up of all the members of the family of faith who are blessed with the gifts of the Spirit and are united as one body around the apostles and their successors, with Christ as its head."

have received...striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." (Eph 4:1-5).

**My purpose in writing you this letter** is to reflect on what we mean by the Church, the Body of Christ.

The Second Vatican Council, which was convoked 50 years ago by Blessed John XXIII, chose in a particular way to speak of the Church as the "people of God" (*Lumen Gentium* 9-17). The Church is not an abstraction or a mere human institution. The new Body of Christ is made up of all the members of the family of faith who are blessed with the gifts of the Spirit and are united as one body around the Apostles

and their successors, with Christ as its head.

### The Profession of Faith

Did you ever wonder why when we make the profession of our faith at Mass we include with our belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son and the Holy Spirit our belief also in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church? How is it that we place the Church alongside the persons of the Most Holy Trinity in a declaration of faith? The answer to that question explains why we hold our membership in the Church so sacred.

What is the Church and why should I be a member? These questions go back 2,000 years and are regularly repeated throughout history. More recently, they have become prominent topics of discussion on radio and television talk shows, blogs and in the pages of both

local and nationally circulated newspapers.

The answer to the question, "Why should I be a member of the Catholic Church?" follows on the response to the question "What is the Catholic Church?"

The short answer to these questions is that the Catholic Church is the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the world – in our day and time. The Church is the Body of Christ. This revealed teaching is not metaphorical language. Nor is it just a figurative way of speaking about the Church. Sacred Scripture holds up the Body of Christ for our creedal profession in a very real, literal sense. We will examine the identity of Christ with his Church as we move through these reflections.

Again, the simplest answer to the question, "What is the Catholic Church?" is that the Church is the presence of Christ in the world today. The Church is variously described in the pages of Sacred Scripture as the Body of Christ and as the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth.

### What is the Church? – A Comparison

As we continue this reflection, it might be helpful to note first what the Church is not. Much of what we read or hear from people who are upset with the Catholic Church or some of its teachings or some of its members comes out of a profound misunderstanding of what the Church is.

**The Catholic Church is not a man-made organization.** It is not the result of people coming together and deciding to form a church. While there is a human dimension to the Catholic Church, its origins are found in the will of Christ. The Church, her structures and charter come from Jesus. "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mt 16:18).





Saint Peter's profession of faith stands at the center of the same declaration that each Christian must at some time make – consciously, freely and lovingly. “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

To ensure that each subsequent generation would have the opportunity to hear of his kingdom, to know his Gospel and to receive his invitation to follow him, Jesus established his Church on the foundation rock – Saint Peter. Catholics recognize in Saint Peter, who today bears the name Benedict XVI, the touchstone that keeps us in contact with the truth of the revelation entrusted to the Apostles. We, like the Apostles, are to look to Saint Peter today for confirmation. “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:31-32).

Our appreciation of the task of the successor of Saint Peter causes us to have such respect for him. When asked

who is Pope Benedict XVI, our answer begins with, “He is Joseph Ratzinger,” but goes far beyond to recognize and declare, “He is the 264th Successor to Saint Peter” – the rock on whom Jesus founded his Church.

**The Church is not a club** made up of like-minded people who are attempting to carry out some specific goal or purpose. Such clubs and organizations can be very helpful and provide opportunities, for example, for personal enrichment, entertainment, education or social service. Membership in such organizations is a free decision of its participants with no consequences other than agreeing to follow the club's rules and trying to achieve its goals. It is a human creation. But the Church is very different. Christ who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6) established the Church to invite all people into it to accept his vision, way and truth.

Jesus did not establish one among many other organizations, all of which have

## BODY OF CHRIST:

The Church is called the (mystical) Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples; the metaphor of a body, whose head is Christ and whose members are the faithful, provides an image which keeps in focus both the unity and diversity of the Church (787, 790, 1396).

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church



### CATHOLIC CHURCH:

The Church established by Christ on the foundation of the Apostles, possessing the fullness of the means of salvation which he has willed: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession (830).

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

equal value and an equal claim on our allegiance. His Church is the “Way” that Jesus founded to help us attain eternal life. His death and Resurrection is the action by which our redemption is won. His Church would be the means by which we can share in the salvation Jesus gained for us on the cross. Just as he is the one mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tm 1:5), so his Church is his way of ensuring the continuation of that mediating work. It is to his disciples that Jesus gives the command before returning to his Father, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20).

### The Church is not a political party.

Many Americans belong to political parties – a variety of them, judging by the increasing number of designations on local ballots. Political parties and action groups have a laudable purpose – to press for a social structure, a political agenda that their members feel is one way to establish a good and just society. Political entities by their nature reflect human preferences and opinion. The wide array of opinions – even if held and presented quite dogmatically – only shows the diversity of human response to issues of public concern. None can

claim to be more. Certainly they are not the voice of Divine Revelation. The Church has an identity, purpose and teaching that transcends and defies reduction to any specific political philosophy or party. Thus when the Church speaks about God’s law, the natural moral order, right and wrong, it does so not from a political platform or following a political convention. Rather it presents the received teaching of Jesus that comes to us from the Apostles. As Saint Peter replied to Jesus, “You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

Some acts of public policy more fully reflect Gospel values than others and Catholics may choose to self identify as members of one political party or another. But one’s decision to be a member of the Church and to accept her teachings cannot be based on one’s political orientation. For those for whom partisan political allegiance can trump adherence to Catholic faith and moral doctrine, the Church’s teaching will necessarily be a problem.

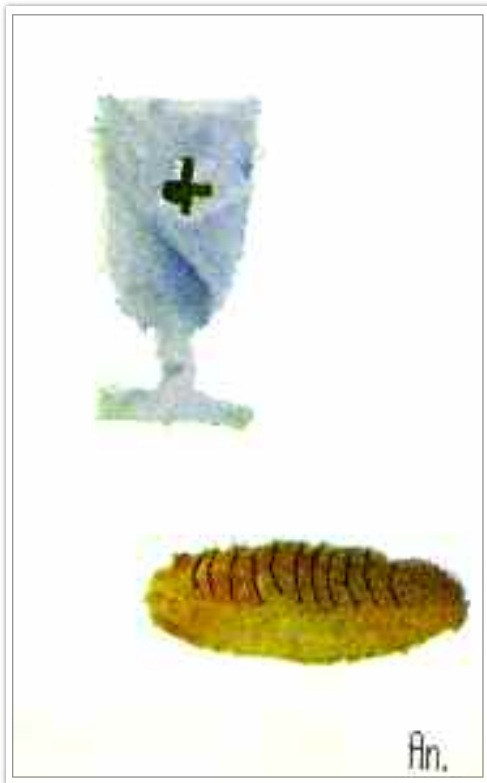
The Church is not to be confused with the political community and it is not bound to any political system. The political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. We must also





remember that the individual believer, a member of the Church, is at the same time a citizen of the political community. There is not a firm separation of religious conviction from political preference precisely because the faithful believer is a citizen.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *God is Love*, taught us that the lay faithful, precisely because they are citizens of the state, “are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity.” He went on to point out, citing Blessed John Paul II and his apostolic exhortation *On the Laity*, that the lay faithful “cannot relinquish their participation ‘in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good’ (*Christifideles Laici*, 42)” (29). We should expect our most firmly held religious beliefs to impact on our political life. In an August 28, 1879 letter to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I know but one code of morality for all, whether acting singly or collectively.”



**The Church is not an expression or manifestation of current popular or cultural conditioning.** As

significant as are political correctness, peer pressure and cultural influence, the Catholic Church does not draw its inspiration from these, but rather from the Word of God as it has been faithfully passed on over 20 centuries within the Church. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mt 24:35).

The Catholic Church does not see itself and its teaching as one among many options in deciding what is morally right and what is morally wrong or how to fashion a response that reflects the revelation and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Yet we regularly hear “the Church needs to come into the 21st century,” as one parishioner let me know at a church reception not too long ago. Not that this was the first time I had heard the admonition. Given all the media attention to some specific issues in recent months, I expected that the Church’s teachings that contradict today’s popular culture might be the focus of her indignation. But it was not. Her annoyance grew out of the instruction her pastor had given to her daughter, who was planning



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her wedding. It turned out that the young woman and her fiancé were already living together and had been for some time — a situation not all that uncommon. The pastor pointed out that this was not right — certainly not moral. This piece of straightforward and honest advice was the occasion of the demand that "the Church come into the 21st century."

"All over the country, people are living together before they get married. What can be wrong with that? They love each other." This, in short, was the gist of the position of the mother who was so upset — upset with the Church for suggesting that living together should come after the wedding, not before. If we look around, we see many examples of where, in the minds of some, the Church should "get with it." Regularly the media cites people claiming to be Catholic who support, for example, abortion, sexual license or some other "hot button" issue.

While we recognize that many seek to form our society, our culture and our way of life drawing upon a breadth of backgrounds and inspirations, the Catholic Church remains convinced that what it brings to society is in fact what Jesus called, "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). It is for this reason that the Church is protective of her right to speak in the public forum. What she has to say may not always be popular but it needs to be said — in faithfulness to her mission to go and teach all people (cf. Mt 28).

**The Church is not a special interest group.** While there are many such identifiable organizations which cluster around a special interest for which they speak, the Catholic Church, over her 2,000-year history, speaks for Jesus Christ, his teaching, his Gospel — the faith.

Sometimes we will hear from some entity with its own claim of being "Catholics for (something)" — usually



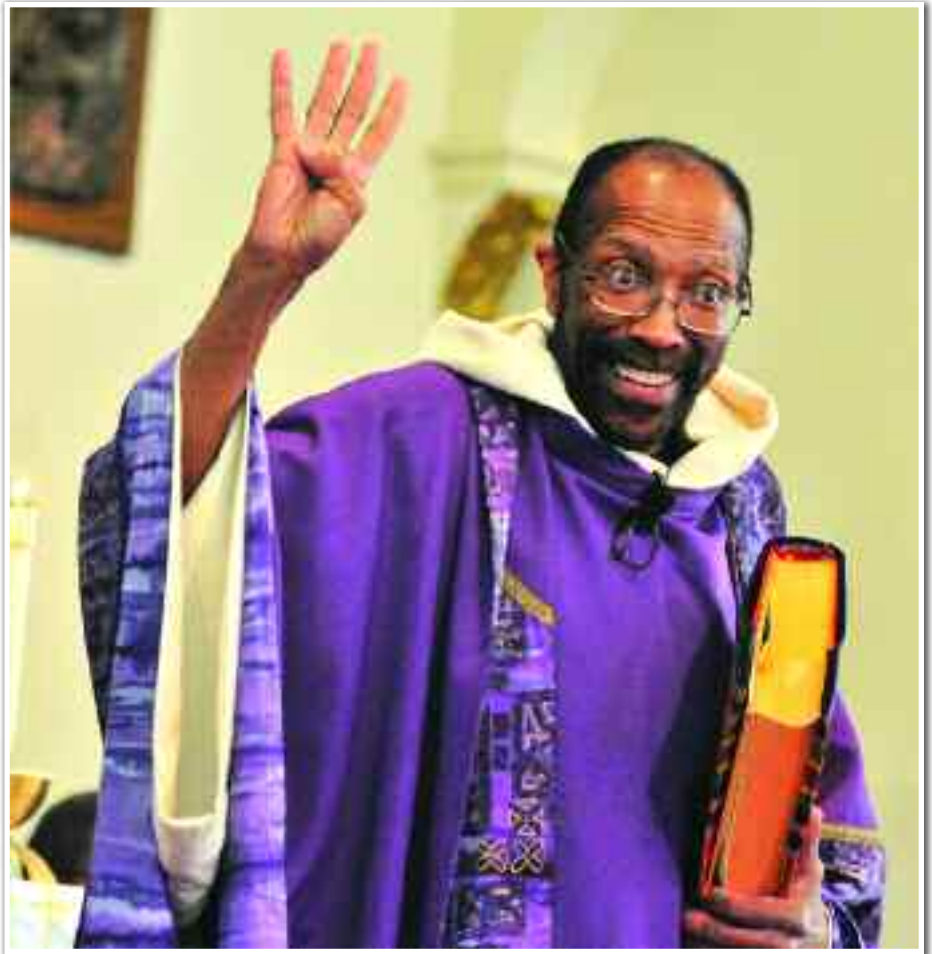
some cause contrary to Church teaching. This really becomes simply a way of challenging Catholic teaching. We need to remember that anyone can claim to be a Catholic, but only the bishops as successors to the Apostles speak for the faith. The line from Saint Paul comes easily to mind when we hear from a group claiming to speak for the Catholic faith while presenting its own opinions. Saint Paul tells us to beware “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel other than the one that we preached to you...” (Gal 1:8).

Once we have clearly distinguished what the Church is not, we can turn our attention to the reality that is the Church.

### **The Church – The Enduring, Visible Presence of Christ in the World**

The Catholic Church is the enduring, visible yet spiritual, structured yet Spirit-led, human yet divine presence of Christ in the world today. The new Body of Christ teaches in his name, sanctifies with his grace and leads with his authority. One makes a free will choice to be a member of this Church and this choice should change our lives. Such a decision is itself a gift of God’s grace.

Being a member of the Church incorporates us into something beyond us – greater than ourselves. The mystery of the Church is something into which we enter recognizing that the Church is a unique spiritual reality, the home of God’s Word and sacraments, and that we do not have the authority or power to change the nature of the Church, her Gospel, her teaching, her sacraments, her mission. The Church today preexists any one of us who claims to be a member – a believer. While we recognize that the Church has need for constant renewal, a renewal that begins with each of us, we also acknowledge that we do not come to the Church to change its teaching. It is the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of his Church that should change us.



As followers of Christ we are called to holiness. We are challenged not only to participate in the life of the Church, but actually to manifest the coming of God’s kingdom in our world, and so grow in spiritual stature.

### **The Focus of This Letter**

In this letter, I intend to concentrate on the unique role of the Church, the family of laity and clergy alike, as the continuation of the teaching ministry of Jesus. All of us need to be confident in the truth of what the Church teaches if we are going successfully to move forward to face some of the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

### **New Evangelization**

Already we are aware of the call to the New Evangelization unfolding

“The Catholic Church remains convinced that what it brings to society is what Jesus called, ‘the way, the truth and the life’ (John 14:6).”





## The Second General Council of the Vatican, 1962-1965

The Second Vatican Council, the largest of the general councils in number of Council Fathers attending, opened October 11, 1962 and solemnly concluded on December 8, 1965.

The Council produced four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations.

The constitutions of the Council are the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), the Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), and the Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*).

The decrees include the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication (*Inter Mirifica*), the Decree on

Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*), the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church (*Christus Dominus*), the Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatum Totius*), the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*), the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), and the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes*).

The declarations are the Declaration on Religious Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*), the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), and the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*).



throughout the Church Universal. The New Evangelization is the challenge given to all of us to repropose the Gospel to those who have heard and have forgotten and to those who have yet to hear the Good News. Later in this letter I will return to the work of the New Evangelization in our archdiocese. In October, we will receive fresh emphasis, inspiration and guidance on this important matter as the Synod on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith called by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, takes place in Rome.

### Year of Faith and Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council

In the midst of that Synod, our Holy Father will initiate the Year of Faith that calls us to reflect more profoundly on our Catholic faith as we attempt to live it out more fully. Already, the Pope in his apostolic letter *Porta Fidei* outlines the

aspects of such a renewal reflective of the challenges of the Second Vatican Council which began 50 years ago this October.

A general or ecumenical council is an assembly of the bishops of the Church gathered together to consider and make decisions on doctrine, discipline, liturgy and the life of the Church. To date, there have been 21 general councils, including the last one, the Second General Council of the Vatican, which opened October 11, 1962 and was solemnly concluded on December 8, 1965.

This fall we in our archdiocese will begin the initial working meetings of those preparing for our own archdiocesan synod which is intended over the next few years to help us reflect on all of the aspects that we as an archdiocesan Church are called to be and do.

### ECUMENICAL COUNCIL:

A gathering of all the bishops of the world, in the exercise of their collegial authority over the universal Church. An ecumenical council is usually called by the successor of St. Peter, the Pope, or at least confirmed or accepted by him (884).

- Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

“We are challenged not only to participate in the life of the Church, but actually to manifest the coming of God’s kingdom in our world...”





# Our Archdiocesan Synod

"Our archdiocesan synod gives the faithful an opportunity to participate in the work of our local Church as we review its mission in manifesting the kingdom of God here in our community."

A synod is canonically defined as "a group of selected priests and other Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community" (Code of Canon Law 460).

Our archdiocesan synod, therefore, gives the faithful an opportunity to participate in the work of our local Church as we review its mission in manifesting the kingdom of God here in our community. The participants in the synod, which include representatives from each part of the archdiocese, would be invited to reflect on how the Archdiocese of Washington can best manifest all that the Church calls us to be.

It is the task of the archbishop to preside over a synod. *Ex officio* members would include the auxiliary bishops, episcopal vicars, judicial vicar, members of the Priest Council, deans and representatives of religious communities located in the archdiocese. Selected lay members would reflect the composition of our local Church. Some 250 participants will study

the input provided from the whole archdiocesan Church.

The preparatory phase of the synod is well underway following discussion with the members of the Priest Council, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and all of the priests during the January/February 2012 deanery meetings. The synod's Pastoral Commission and Canonical Commission and their various subcommittees will have a special responsibility leading up to Pentecost 2013. It is during this time that observations from the faithful throughout the archdiocese will be received and evaluated. Formal synodal sessions will be held from Pentecost 2013 to Pentecost 2014 to reflect on all of the observations that have been received and to prepare the conclusions of the synod. The actual synod itself will be convened on Pentecost 2014, the year marking the 75th anniversary of Pope Pius XII's 1939 establishment of the Archdiocese of Washington. At this synod, the priorities of this archdiocesan Church and any declarations or statutes will be promulgated.





## Our Archdiocesan Synod

An archdiocesan synod provides an opportunity to look at the life of the local Church, to evaluate areas where the ministry of the Church is successful and areas where there may be need for more attention so that we can better prepare ourselves to carry forward the work of the Church into the future. Our archdiocesan synod will be the setting in which existing policies will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated. The pastoral priorities of our local Church will be examined especially within the context of the New Evangelization. Input from the faithful will be gathered with the goal of providing pastoral direction for the future work of our archdiocesan Church.

In his encyclical letter *God is Love*, Pope Benedict XVI told us, “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming

the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*)” (25). In the upcoming archdiocesan synod, we will concentrate on seeing these three elements as they are manifested in our local Church in the areas of worship, education, community, service and stewardship/administration.

## Looking to the Future

Thus, in a way, this letter on *The Church, Our Spiritual Home* is written to prepare us to address all of the things that are a part of our immediate future, the challenges of the New Evangelization, the Year of Faith, the recognition of the impact of the Second Vatican Council as we commemorate its 50th anniversary, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which was published 20 years ago this year and our own archdiocesan synod.

## SYNOD:

A diocesan synod is an assembly of priests and other members of Christ’s faithful who assist the bishop by offering advice about the needs of the diocese and by proposing legislation for him to enact (887, 911).

– Glossary of the  
Catechism of the  
Catholic Church







## Jesus Announces the Presence of the Kingdom

“The Resurrection showed the world that in Jesus Christ sin and death are destroyed and in their place a spiritual kingdom has been established. We are invited to realize that kingdom and Jesus’ kingship in our lives.”

It is common in American sporting events to see signs that say “3:16.” The reference that the energetic fans are making is to the Gospel of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

The human family has sinned. We were lost and could not find our way home. God sent his Son, born of Mary, to find us, heal us and die for our sins that we may have eternal life. The Resurrection showed the world that in Jesus Christ sin and death are destroyed and in their place a spiritual kingdom has been established. We are invited to realize that kingdom and Jesus’ kingship in our lives.

Christ insisted that he was proclaiming the one sure way to be a part of his kingdom now and in glory. In fact, he announced that without baptism one could not enter the kingdom (cf. Jn 3).

When the waters of baptism are poured over the person being initiated into the Church, a whole old order begins to pass away and a new creation comes to be. The faith of the Church, clearly expressed in the New Testament, is that Christ came to establish a kingdom of the Spirit. Through his death and Resurrection, Christ won for God a new people, a holy people, a people set apart – marked with God’s Spirit. We who are members of the Church are that new people, and we are the beginning of a whole new creation.



Our Lord said to us before his Ascension, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16). This is called the Great Commission, the command given to the Apostles and so to the whole Church. Jesus is clear that baptism is essential for salvation and that this sacrament is the doorway into the Church, the family of God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, “Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the ‘family of God.’ By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal Mystery – his death on the cross and his Resurrection – he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ Into this union with Christ all men are called” (542). To draw all to himself, to build and make present the kingdom, Jesus established his Church.



It is important to note that the Church and the kingdom of God are not precisely synonymous. The Church is the realization on earth of the beginning of God’s kingdom, whose final fulfillment is in eternity. The Gospels tell us that Jesus “went around all Galilee...proclaiming the gospel of the



kingdom” (Mt 4:23). He taught a reality that was a part of the messianic hopes of the Jewish people, which centered on the glorious kingdom that the messiah would establish. Yet when Christ spoke of the kingdom of God, he was careful to free the idea of the “kingdom” from the nationalistic hopes of the people among whom he lived. To accomplish this, he often emphasized the heavenly aspect of the kingdom and its interior religious character.

The kingdom is spiritual and will be perfected in the last days. It is not a political kingdom: “My kingdom does not belong to this world” (Jn 18:36). Yet Christ’s kingdom is rooted in this world. Jesus shows it to us as something visible, a community called together by him, of which he is the Good Shepherd, the true and lasting head.

### Jesus Established His Church

How does the knowledge and teaching of Christ get from him to us? How can we claim that we truly know Jesus? God spoke through Jesus Christ. But we live

“When the waters of baptism are poured over the person being initiated into the Church, a whole old order begins to pass away and a new creation comes to be.”



**CHURCH:**

The name given the “convocation” or “assembly” of the people God has called together “from the ends of the earth.” In Christian usage, the word “Church” has three inseparable meanings: the people that God gathers in the whole world; the particular or local church (diocese); and the liturgical (above all Eucharistic) assembly. The Church draws her life from the Word and the Body of Christ, and so herself becomes Christ’s Body (752). In the Creed, the sole Church of Christ is professed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic (811).

– Glossary of the  
Catechism of the  
Catholic Church

20 centuries after his Resurrection and Ascension so Jesus established his Church choosing Apostles to carry on his work and founding it on Saint Peter, the rock.

The story of salvation was not simply for one generation. Jesus did not come just to save those who lived in his time and place and who had personally experienced his voice and saving power. We read in the First Letter to Timothy: “This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:3-4).

What brings that revelation down to our generation is the apostolic tradition. Through the apostolic succession, the saving story of what Jesus said and did is passed on, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in a way that guarantees that it is not forgotten, misunderstood or lost from age to age and generation to generation.

Jesus established the Church on the Apostles and gave to Saint Peter a unique and enduring authority. We return again to the faith-defining conversation between Our Lord and the Twelve.

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt 16:13-19)

Saint Peter and the other Apostles were mortal, but the mission given to them was to be carried out until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20). Thus, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, “For this reason





the Apostles took care to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society” (LG 20). This apostolic succession is noted by the earliest Fathers of the Church who lived at the end of the apostolic age. Pope Saint Clement of Rome, writing around the year 96 A.D., says that the Apostles themselves “laid down a rule once for all to this effect: when these men die, other approved men shall succeed to their sacred ministry” (*Letter to the Corinthians*).

Christ chose men as Apostles whom he would anoint in the Holy Spirit and guide as they taught and led his Church. They in turn chose successors through the laying on of hands and the imparting of the Spirit to continue this work. It is the Spirit, poured out in the sacrament of holy orders, who is the ultimate source of the bishops’ fidelity to the truth.

Saint Peter as our first pope and all his successors are the rock, the visible source of the Church’s unity, and the individual bishops are the foundations of unity in their own dioceses. Following the traditional teaching of the Church, the Catechism lists the duties of the bishops as teaching, sanctifying and governing. In each of these areas, the bishop in the local Church or diocese, together with the Pope for the whole Universal Church, acts for Christ and his Church.

There is today, as there has always been, a temptation to treat the Church as if it were incidental to salvation. This theory places the individual’s personal convictions and preferences at the center. We do not belong to the Church to set within it our own path to salvation. We are members of the Church because we want to be shaped by its teaching and gift of grace. Christ founded the Church to be the gift to lead us to eternal life. We redesign that gift at our own peril.

As Saint Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians reminds us, “We hold this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). The Word of God, the Gospel message and the living tradition of the Church continue to be passed on even when it is clear that the vessels containing that sacred treasure are made of clay. The message is faithfully passed on even if in some instances the one passing it on does not live up to the message being transmitted. While the old adage remains true, you do not kill the messenger because of the bad news he brings, so it is also true you do not abandon the truth of the message because of the moral qualities of the messenger.

This is particularly important for us to remember today when regularly we are told by people who oppose the Church’s teaching on a wide range of issues from

## INFALLIBILITY:

The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church whereby the pastors of the Church, the pope and the bishops in union with him, can definitively proclaim a doctrine of faith or morals for the belief of the faithful (891).

- Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church





social justice to human dignity, that the Church's message should be ignored because some clergy failed to respond as they should have in the sexual abuse scandal. There is no denying that the commission of such grave sins by our clergy is a source of great shame to the Church and an occasion for purification and renewal. But it is one thing to say that the message we carry is not a foolproof guide to a holy life and quite another to say that the message we carry is false.

It is inevitable – though no less deserving of our repentance – that we will sin. Our moral failings must not cloud our belief in the truth of Christ's teachings. And believing in that truth, we must not fail to proclaim it. If only the absolutely pure of heart were permitted to

speak in our world, it would be a much more silent place.

Our need for a firm reference point of truth is important because we will hear odd-sounding teaching put forth by "Catholic" writers, speakers and teachers. If that teaching does not conform to the faith of the Church as affirmed by the Pope and bishops in communion with him, it is not authenticated as the faith of the Church. To verify such authenticity all of us have the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. If what you hear contradicts the teaching in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* you should be well warned. The same is true when you hear of organizations using the name Catholic, but presenting something very different.

In the seat next to me on the flight I took to a recent meeting of bishops was a woman who identified herself as "born again," or having had a spiritual renewal or conversion experience. As our conversation unfolded she asked me, "Do Catholics believe that the pope

cannot sin?" What followed was a good discussion on the difference between "impeccability," freedom from sin, and papal "infallibility," freedom from error in teaching on matters of faith and morals.

As the plane landed, the man in the seat across the aisle leaned over and said, "Couldn't help but eavesdrop on your conversation. I am Catholic and I wasn't clear on the pope's role and the importance of the gifts he receives for all of us."

All of us know the difference between carrying out sacred duties and being personally holy. The charism of truth entrusted to the Apostles and their successors does not mean that each bishop will always be a holy man. But it does mean that their teaching, collectively and individually in the communion of their apostolic office, will not lead us away from Jesus. No one else can make that claim, even if personally he or she is recognized as holy. The verification of the teaching of Blessed John Paul II or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta does not come from their personal holiness, but from their fidelity to the received teaching of Jesus passed on by the Church. What they also added personally was convincing testimony by the totality of their witness – the holiness of their lives.

The mystery of the divine and human quality of the Church does not expect every Catholic always to be perfect. We do not lose faith over the failure of a priest, bishop or religious. Not every homily must be perfect for it to proclaim the truth. Not every Mass must evoke profound feelings of satisfaction for the true saving participation in the sacrifice of Calvary to take place. In short, we realize that with all its human imperfections the Church continues to be the means established by Christ to be his presence and carry on his mission.



"The truth of the teaching of Blessed John Paul II or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta does not come from their personal holiness, but from their fidelity to the received teaching of Jesus passed on by the Church. What they also added personally was convincing testimony by the totality of their witness – the holiness of their lives."



## The Church as the Beginnings of God's Kingdom – Visible and Structured

**T**he sisters of the parish grade school I attended instructed us well. We memorized the truth that a sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. There is a visible, audible, tangible character to the seven sacraments which help us recognize that an invisible reality is present. For example, we see water being poured three times over a child and hear the priest saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We know that child is now spiritually washed of original sin and joined to Christ.

The Church is very much the same. It possesses a sacramental character. It has a visible structure and a spiritual reality as well. Through the visible,

tangible elements – e.g. the structure, the creed, the liturgy – we know that we are encountering the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Church as the Body of Christ and the people of God is structured, visible and identifiable. It carries on the unique work of Christ. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes the Second Vatican Council: “The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men’ (LG 8). The Church is at the same time: a ‘society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ; the visible society and

“There is a visible, audible, tangible character to the seven sacraments which help us recognize that an invisible reality is present...The Church is very much the same. It possesses a sacramental character. It has a visible structure and a spiritual reality as well. Through the visible, tangible elements – e.g. the structure, the creed, the liturgy – we know that we are encountering the Mystical Body of Christ.”



“The Apostles and the other disciples share in Christ’s mission and his power precisely to lead and serve his new Body, so that together through works of faith and love the kingdom of God may become manifest in our world.”

the spiritual community; the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches” (LG 8) (771).

The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the kingdom is fully achieved. He purposefully chose the Twelve, with Saint Peter as their head, as the foundation stones of “the new Jerusalem” (cf. Mt 19:28). The Apostles and the other disciples share in Christ’s mission and his power precisely to lead and serve his new Body, so that together through works of faith and love the kingdom of God may become manifest in our world.

### **The Church – Bride, Mother and The Body of Christ**

The New Testament is replete with many images that help us grasp the profound mystery of the Church. One of the most beautiful images used by Saint Paul to portray the nature of the Church

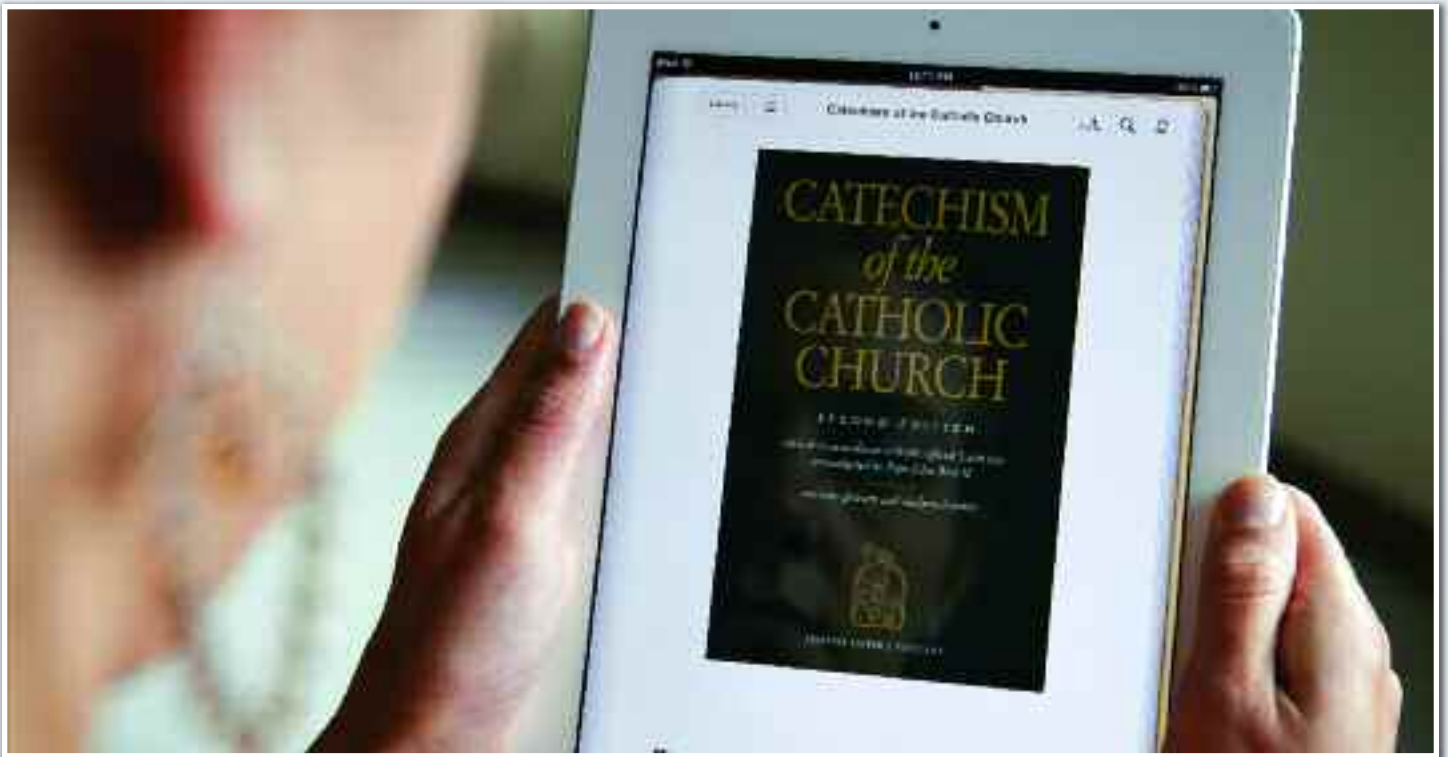
and its relation to Christ is that of a bride whom Christ deeply loves. So much does he love the Church that he “handed himself over for her” (Eph 5:25).

Through his gifts, sacraments and saving words, he cares for her and makes her holy “cleansing her by the bath of water with the word” (Eph 5:26). His love makes her a resplendent bride, “the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ... holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).

The Church also is named “Holy Mother Church” by her members because in the sacrament of baptism she gives us new life and in the other sacraments she nurtures, sustains, heals and sanctifies our spiritual life. The Church is called mother because, by virtue of Christ’s love, she gives birth to many children. All the faithful are born of her: “by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God” (LG 64). As Saint Cyprian



# The Catechism of the Catholic Church



**T**he *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was published by decree of Blessed John Paul II on October 11, 1992, the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. According to the apostolic constitution *Fidei Depositum* of Blessed John Paul II on the publication of the Catechism, it is intended to “faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers and the Church’s saints, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to the Church. It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past” (3).

This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Catechism which is intended to provide a “sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms. It is also offered to all the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation (cf. Eph 3:8)” (*Fidei Depositum* 3).

In November 2004, the bishops of the United States approved the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* in response to Blessed John Paul II’s vision that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would be an authentic reference for preparing local catechisms. Earlier in 2002, Cardinal (then-Bishop) Wuerl wrote *The Catholic Way, Faith for Living Today*, based on the content of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Catechism which is intended to provide a ‘sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine...’”





### SACRAMENT:

An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (1131, 774).

The sacraments (called 'mysteries' in the Eastern Churches) are seven in number: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony (1210).

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

expressed it so clearly centuries ago, "You cannot have God for your father if you have not the Church for your mother" (*On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 6).

Perhaps the most powerful expression of the Church is that of the Body of Christ. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us, "The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body" (789). The Body of Christ is one. The faithful are the members of the living Body alive in the Holy Spirit.

Christ is the head of his Body. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). To live as a Christian is to grow in Christ, to be more closely identified with him, to have his rich life penetrate us more and more and to be our very life. When we understand that the Church is the Body of Christ, we will learn to love the Church more earnestly and see in it more clearly the reflection of Christ.

The uniqueness of the Church and its identification with Christ in the task of bringing us to God is not always understood. The Church's claim to uniqueness is today sometimes described as "intolerance" or "dismissive" of other faiths. The Church does not teach that all others who are not

Catholic cannot reach heaven. But it is clearly the faith of the Church that Jesus established his new Body to be the sure and clear way to life everlasting.

The Apostle Thomas said, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (Jn 14:5-6). The Church is not only one with Jesus, but it is also the bearer of all his saving gifts. Christ often identifies himself with his followers – his Church. As he sent the Apostles to preach in his name he said, "Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me" (Lk 10:16). To those who did deeds of charity he proclaimed, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

Through faith and sacraments we encounter the living God and we develop a relationship, a personal relationship, with Jesus Christ, such that we can say we know Jesus because of what he has done in our lives and our relationship with him. But this relationship is only fully authentic in the context of the Church because it is through the Church that the truth about Jesus is revealed from generation to generation.

What does this teaching mean for someone today? In summary form it tells us that we should not be surprised



if the Church, Christ's Body, looks like Christ. It is made up of both the human and the divine. Through his new Body, composed of all of us, the Holy Spirit carries on the spiritual action of sanctification. In this new Body structured, visible, audible and tangible, the life-giving word of God is proclaimed, the saving sacraments are celebrated and we care for one another through the works of charity.

## Marks of the Church

In ancient professions of faith, the Catholic Church identifies itself as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” These words, found in the fourth-century Nicene Creed and used at Sunday Mass, refer to what are traditionally known as the “marks” of the Church – that is, traits that make it possible for a person to recognize the true Church.

**The Church is one.** Even in the Old Testament, God's people were seen as a community. The New Testament writers also emphasize that Christ's Church must be united. Only now the bond is much more profound. Saint Paul compares the members of the Church to the limbs and organs of a body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27). No more than an arm can stay alive apart from a heart can an individual be a Catholic apart from the Church. For the Church is Christ's Body (cf. Eph 1:22-23), and he is the head. Jesus identified himself with the Church when he asked Saul, the great persecutor of Christians, “Why do you persecute *me*?” Saul, once converted to Christianity (and known as Saint Paul), was insistent that “there is one body” (Eph 4:4; Col 3:15), not many bodies.

**The Church is holy.** Saint Paul also taught that Christians share the holiness of Jesus: “Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her, to *sanctify* her” — that is, make her holy — “cleansing her by the bath of water with



the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). Because its members have been washed in baptism, Saint Peter adds, the Church is now “a holy nation, a people of his own” (1 Pt 2:9). Saint Paul uses the term “holy ones” (in Greek, *hagioi*) to describe the members of the Church (Col 1:2). In English we translate that word as “saints.” Thus, another traditional term for the Church is the “communion of saints.”

**The Church is catholic.** “Catholic” is another word we borrow from the Greek. It means universal. It means that Church membership is open to every ethnic group, every race, every nation, every class and every people upon the earth, and all are equals before God. Jesus told the Apostles, “Go ... and make disciples of *all* nations” (Mt 28:19) and “you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Many peoples were represented when the Church was

“‘Catholic’ is another word we borrow from the Greek. It means universal. It means that Church membership is open to every ethnic group, every race, every nation, every class, and every people upon the earth, and all are equals before God. Jesus told the Apostles to ‘Go ... and make disciples of all nations’ (Mt 28:19).”



# Our Family of Faith



After Jesus commissioned the first disciples to bring his Good News to all nations, the seeds of faith they helped plant have now grown to include more than one billion Catholics around the world.

The Archdiocese of Washington includes over 600,000 Catholics who live in Washington, D.C., and the five surrounding Maryland counties of St. Mary's, Charles, Calvert, Prince George's and Montgomery. They live along city streets, in suburban neighborhoods and in the countryside. The archdiocese includes newly arrived immigrants from nearly every continent, and people whose ancestors immigrated here over the past four centuries. Our archdiocese includes senior citizens who survived the Great Depression and World War II, and young children taking their first steps in the digital age.

Each weekend, Masses in the Archdiocese of Washington are celebrated in more than 20 languages, including Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, French and American Sign Language. Spanish-language Masses are celebrated at dozens of locations to serve the approximately 270,000 Hispanic Catholics in the community.

Our Catholic family of faith in the Archdiocese of Washington includes people from many different lands, backgrounds and ages who speak many different languages but who share one faith, and the call to be Jesus' disciples and share his Good News in today's world.



born on the first Pentecost; Saint Luke mentions more than a dozen ethnicities in his account (cf. Acts 2:9). Thus the Christian church has been catholic since the very beginning. “Catholic” means that the Church does not identify itself with a political party, ethnic group or cultural movement. The Church does not belong to a particular earthly empire or republic. The Church recognizes Christ as King of Kings, and he reigns from heaven.

**The Church is apostolic.** Christ never wrote a book. He did summon *Apostles* — that is, particular men who would be his emissaries to the world. He entrusted them with the sacraments, and they took the Good News of Jesus Christ to the

nations. They told the story of Jesus’ life, death, Resurrection and Ascension to glory. And they administered the sacraments. They offered the Mass (Jn 6:32-60; 1 Cor 11:23-25; Acts 2:42). They baptized (Mt 28:19; Acts 2:41). They ordained men for ministry (Acts 6:6; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 1:6; Ti 1:5). They absolved sins in confession (Mt 16:19; Jn 20:22-23; Jas 5:16), and they anointed the sick (Jas 5:14). It was the Apostles who articulated the initial form of the Church (for instance in the ordination of deacons described in Acts 6). Their work continues today in the office of bishops, whose succession from the original twelve has been continuous and verifiable.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we find this citation from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council: “This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic” (LG 8) (811).

Each of these signs also has a human dimension. Side by side with these wondrous qualities that the Church possesses through its identity with Christ, there exist human imperfections. In fact, the effectiveness of the signs is sometimes compromised by the scandals that arise from the sinfulness of the human members of the Church, both clergy and laity. These signs have a paradoxical aspect.

The Church is one, and yet we find divisions. The Church is holy, and yet its members are sinful. We attest to the universality of the Church, and yet we see examples of exclusiveness.

“Jesus entrusted the Apostles with the sacraments... They offered the Mass. They baptized. They ordained men for ministry. They absolved sins in confession, and they anointed the sick. ...Their work continues today in the office of bishops, whose succession from the original twelve has been continuous and verifiable.”





## The Church: One Body, Many Members

"...The very soul of the Church is the Holy Spirit. Each follower of Christ, every believer, is anointed in the Spirit through the sacrament of baptism. In this outpouring of the Spirit one is made a member of the Church. Everything the Church is and has to offer begins with the sacrament of faith."

### The Laity and Their Baptismal Calling

Whatever the human imperfections of its members, the very soul of the Church is the Holy Spirit. Each follower of Christ, every believer, is anointed in the Spirit through the sacrament of baptism. In this outpouring of the Spirit one is made a member of the Church. Everything the Church is and has to offer begins with the sacrament of faith – baptism.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines laity as "all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those" – such as monks and nuns, sisters and brothers – "who belong to a religious state approved by the Church" (LG 31) (897). By far, the majority membership in the Church is the vast array of laywomen and laymen baptized into Christ and confirmed in the gifts of the Spirit. The Second Vatican Council defines the work of the laity as taking "on the renewal of the temporal order as their own specific obligation" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7). The temporal order is our world, our culture, our neighbors, our family, our friends.

When something happens in the community, or when laws are enacted challenging some of our most cherished convictions, bishops and priests will often hear from some people, "Why doesn't the Church do something about this?" While it is true that clergy are called to proclaim the Gospel, it is equally true that laywomen and laymen are challenged to apply the Gospel to the situation and circumstances of our time. The immense task of addressing the serious social and moral problems of our society cannot be left to the Church hierarchy alone. Everyone has to be involved and take an active role. We sometimes hear politicians say that, while they may hear from bishops and priests on specific issues, they do not hear much from significant portions of the Catholic laity.

The principle of lay involvement holds for other areas as well. The voice of Catholic physicians needs to be heard in the area of medicine. Catholic lawyers need to speak out on the ethics involved in the law. Catholic parents need to be involved in education issues. The list goes on. This is what the Second Vatican Council meant when it said that the laity are responsible for the "renewal of the temporal order."



Lay people have responsibility for the temporal order because it requires all knowledge, skills, talents and insights they acquire and exercise in their varied secular skills. The temporal order must be renewed with reverence by those who respect its own "stability, truth, goodness, proper laws, and order" (*Gaudium et Spes* 36), while bringing it into conformity with the higher principles of Christian life (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7).

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, Blessed John Paul II wrote that "the voice of the Lord clearly resounds in the depths of each of Christ's followers, who through faith and the sacraments of Christian initiation is made like to Jesus Christ, is incorporated into a living membership in the Church, and has an active part in her mission of salvation" (3).

Lay women and men clearly are essential to the transmission of the Gospel. The hierarchical structure of the Church does not mean that the bishops and priests continue Christ's ministry all alone. In an ever-increasing appreciation of the role of the laity

fostered so explicitly by the Second Vatican Council, religious and laity are reminded of the work particularly of evangelizing the wider community in which we live. All the faithful are called to participate in the evangelization and sanctification of the temporal order. The voice and the engagement of the laity will ultimately determine the direction of our society. Bishops have the responsibility to teach, but the laity must apply that teaching and witness to its validity in their actions and conversations with others.

The final words of Mass "go in peace" are not just a dismissal but a commissioning, a sending forth of those in attendance to bring our Lord to a world that needs him desperately. The vocation of the laity is integral to the life of the Church. I rejoice in the gift of the many laymen and laywomen who profoundly live their lives as genuine representatives of Christ in the world.

### Holy Ordering of the Church

Out of the Body of believers, all one in baptism, Christ calls those who will serve him as servants of the Body. In a special

### CONSCIENCE:

The interior voice of a human being, within whose heart the inner law of God is inscribed. Moral conscience is a judgment of practical reason about the moral quality of a human action. It moves a person at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil (1777-78).

An examination of conscience is recommended as preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance (1454).

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church





**GOSPEL:**

The “good news” of God’s mercy and love revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

It is this Gospel of good news that the Apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the entire world (571, 1946). The Gospel is handed on in the apostolic tradition of the Church as the source of all-saving truth and moral discipline (75).

The four Gospels are the books written by the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John which have for their central object Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate Son: his life, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church’s beginnings under the Spirit’s guidance.”

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church



sacrament that differentiates those who are called to minister to the whole Body, certain men are empowered by sacred ordination. By the sacrament of holy orders, a man is configured to Christ in a unique and special way as head of the Body that allows him to exercise the authority of Christ, to speak in his name, and actually, in certain instances, to function in the person of Christ.

The hierarchy of the Church from the earliest apostolic times is clearly seen as the ministerial priesthood, which in its fullness is the order of bishops. The presbyter or priest is a loyal coworker with the bishop to extend the ministry of orders throughout the Church. In reflecting on the significance of priestly ministry, I recognize and thank all of our priests, especially those in parochial ministry. Parish priests assist the bishop at the most local level in the ministry of teaching, sanctifying and offering guidance. Priests are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral care of the people entrusted to them, the celebration of the Eucharist, the administration of the sacraments, the preaching of the word and the direction of the ordinary business of the parish.

Likewise, I am grateful for our deacons who are ordained to the ministerial service that focuses on those works in the Church that free the priest for his distinctly apostolic activity. As priests are configured to Christ, Head of His Church, deacons are configured to Christ the Servant (cf. CCC 1563).

We recognize in the bishop powers unique to that order. Only a bishop can ordain. He is also the ordinary minister of confirmation. Within his diocese the bishop is the chief shepherd, liturgist and teacher.

In establishing his Church, Christ chose Apostles and charged them to lead, to teach and to sanctify his flock entrusted to them. Every bishop of the Catholic Church has been so entrusted. We are, in the words of the New Testament, “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1). We have received something that is not ours; it is God’s. It is the Church, with all its distinctive marks, doctrines, rites and commitments. We have a very clear and defined role as authentic teachers of the faith. We do not possess the power to change what we have received. We can only pass it on — or fail to pass it on.

All the bishops form a college in the same way that the Apostles formed an apostolic college. At the head of this college of bishops is the Pope, the successor to Saint Peter, with the prerogatives and responsibilities of Saint Peter. Thus we speak of the Bishop of Rome as the visible head of the Church on earth. Bishops throughout the world pledge to him reverence and obedience, just as priests in an individual diocese pledge reverence and obedience to their bishop. The Church is constituted in this way so that the hundreds of millions of faithful will be served in a way that not only reflects but also makes present the loving, caring, pastoral ministry of Christ himself.

### Consecrated Life

Many of the Church institutions in this country were built by religious communities, especially women religious. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge them. In the early 1700's a small group of sisters arrived in this country and by the year 1900 there were over 50,000 sisters in the United States. They founded schools, hospitals, orphanages and built the largest social service network in this country. Today about 57,000 religious sisters serve the Church in our nation.

Christ taught the rich young man in the Gospel that everyone is obliged to love God and his neighbor in the faithful

observance of the commandments (cf. Lk 18:18-25). But those in whom God's grace stirs a hunger for a more demanding spiritual life are called to share with Christ a willingness to give up much that the world offers so that they might cling to God in a richer freedom.

Christ's invitation to close discipleship endures in the Church in a special way in the religious life. Those who enter religious life bind themselves, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, "either by vows or by other sacred bonds, which are like vows in their purpose" (LG 44) to an observance of the evangelical counsels of perfection – that is, the Gospel counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out, quoting directly from the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "The state of life which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, while not entering into the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs undeniably to her life and holiness" (914). The evangelical counsels are lived out in a range of callings, including the eremitic life, the commitment as a consecrated virgin, religious life within a community that is distinguished by "its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the



### TRADITION:

The living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church. The oral preaching of the Apostles, and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Bible), are conserved and handed on as the deposit of faith through the apostolic succession in the Church. Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (75-82).

The theological, liturgical, disciplinary and the devotional traditions of the local churches both contain and can be distinguished from this apostolic Tradition

- Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church







### DEPOSIT OF FAITH:

The heritage of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, handed on in the Church from the time of the Apostles, from which the Magisterium draws all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed (84; cf. 1202)."

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

union of Christ with the Church" (925). At the same time, secular institutes and societies of apostolic life exist so that their presence might act as a leaven in the world even in those societies whose members do not take religious vows.

All of these forms of response to a call from God share a common desire: to build up the Church through the exercise of a unique gift from God, and at the same time to bear public witness to the coming of the kingdom that will bring about the full glory and completion of the Church.

### Living the Faith

The task of proclaiming and spreading the faith is not always easy. It begins with a heart seeking Christ in prayer and a continuing formation in the faith. We are not born with an infused knowledge of theology or with a conscience fully formed. They do not arrive automatically, like wisdom teeth or gray hair, as we grow older.

Our spiritual lives need to be informed by true moral teaching. Human moral action is conditioned by the social, familial and personal experiences that mold and give structure to the values a person accepts as his or her own. Given our fallen condition, we need moral teaching by competent authority.

What does this teaching mean for us today? Essentially it says to us that if we want a world that more clearly reflects the high ideals of the Gospel, all of us must be actively engaged in this transformation. This Catholic vision of life also tells us that we cannot be bystanders as events that determine our society unfold. We cannot be passive as others set the agenda for public discourse and public policy. We are all called to be participants in the struggle to establish a truly good and just society. Clergy are to speak clearly the Gospel message. Laywomen and laymen are commissioned to take the Gospel – God's Word – and apply it to every

aspect of life. Thus we speak about defense of human life, marriage and family; care of the sick and those in need, and the development of a more just distribution of the goods of the earth and care for all of creation. This is what is meant by the transformation of the temporal order.

### Theology

At this point, I want to touch on one area of considerable interest and even concern today. Here I want to mention briefly the great gift of the Church that we call theology. Over its lifetime the Church has benefited from the deeper understanding of the meaning of revealed truth through the disciplined, reasoned investigation called theology. It is traditionally defined as "*fides quaerens intellectum*" – faith seeking understanding.

We can rejoice – as the Church long has – in the development of the understanding of our faith through theological reflection, discussion and refinement. Such development has always recognized the bishops' ultimate role in confirming or correcting theological speculation.



The responsibility of the bishops is to teach in the name of Christ. This authority extends to applying the Gospel to our own day. Theologians speculate and attempt to understand more deeply the revelation. Yet theological speculation yields to authentic faith proclamation.

Theological opinion can never be placed on an equal footing with the authoritative teaching of those to whom Christ has entrusted the care of his flock. Theological examination, questioning, interpretation and testing the limits of Catholic teaching have their purpose, but also their own limits, which sometimes the teaching office of the Church – the bishops – need to assert. Very often this means that unquestioned assumptions must be challenged and viewed in a new light, and this process of probing and pushing the limits of the familiar can be a sign of health and vitality. So, too, in theological debate there are principles of faith that cannot be undermined without undermining the discussion itself. It is the responsibility of bishops to ensure that these principles in Catholic theology continue to guide the important work of theological speculation and investigation.

### Conscience Acknowledges God's Law

Deep within us, within every human being, is the desire for God who created us. There is also an inclination for the goodness that is a reflection of God's call to each of us to draw more closely to him. The *Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church* defines conscience as “a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of the concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed” (1778). The Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) teaches us, “Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey...For man has in his heart, a law inscribed by God...His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (16).

Judgments of conscience are the outcome of a person’s honest effort to avoid being arbitrary or unresponsive in pursuing true human values. Conscience, then, is not a device for making exceptions to objective requirements of morality. On the contrary, as the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) teaches, “Through the mediation of conscience man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law” (3).

In our search for the objective norms of morality so that we are able to inform our conscience and keep it from error, we turn obviously to the Word of God. While there is planted in our human nature a natural moral law that urges us and inclines us to do good and avoid evil, in God’s infinite mercy God chose to speak directly to us: first in the prophets and in the law and finally in his Son (cf. Heb 1:1).

As we face the world of complex choices and seek to properly form our conscience, we turn to the teaching of the Church provided us by Christ precisely to help us make right choices and avoid wrong ones.



“Lay women and lay men are commissioned to take the Gospel – God’s Word – and apply it to every aspect of life.

Thus we speak about defense of human life, marriage, family, care of the sick, those in need and the development of a more just distribution of the goods of the earth and a care for all of creation. This is what is meant by the transformation of the temporal order.”







## What It Means to Be a Member of the Catholic Church



Probably no article of the creed today is as much misunderstood as our profession of faith in the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” The true Church, the one Church founded by Christ, is not of our making, nor can it and its teaching be interpreted by us according to a majority vote. The Church of Christ, the Body of Christ in the world today, is the visible, structured, hierarchical manifestation of the Risen Lord at work to complete the task assigned him by the Father – to bring all women and men together into one family, anointed in one Holy Spirit, made holy through the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The faith of this Body is to be translated into works of love that will transform the world and make it here and now the manifestation and realization of the kingdom of God. We have not yet arrived, but the beginnings of that kingdom, the presence of God’s Spirit, the saving power of the sacraments, are

found in our world and are at work in our lives in that Church that we profess in the creed to be the object of our faith.

More and more, I find that people do want to be members of the Catholic Church. Many people are seeking to know the deeper meaning of life or searching for that which is enduringly good and beautiful. People often express a hunger for a genuine experience of loving and being loved. These are the people who will explore membership in the Catholic Church and in it find a spiritual home. Every year at Easter, the Archdiocese of Washington welcomes more than 1,000 new members who are seeking and have found in an encounter with the Risen Lord a new life in Christ.

### Agents of the New Evangelization

This brings us to the New Evangelization. If there are many who do not understand who the Church is, what her mission is, who do not understand the

# The New Evangelization



Pope Benedict XVI uses the word “repropose” to describe the New Evangelization. Somehow in what we do and how we express our faith, we have to be able to repropose our belief in Christ and his Gospel for a hearing among those who are convinced that they already know the faith and it holds no interest for them. We have to invite them to hear it all over again, this time perhaps for the first time.

When Jesus first came among us, he offered a whole new way of living. The excitement spread as God’s Son, who is also one of us, announced the coming of the kingdom. The invitation to discipleship and a place in the kingdom that he held out to those who heard him, he continues to hold out to all of us today.

The elements of the New Evangelization include:

- 1) a personal renewal of our faith;
- 2) a confidence in the Truth of our faith, and
- 3) a willingness, even an eagerness, to share the faith.

Church’s true identity, it falls to us, faithful followers of Christ, members of his Church, to share with them that Good News.

Two years ago I addressed the call to the New Evangelization with a pastoral letter entitled *Disciples of the Lord: Sharing the Vision* and spoke in more detail about the unique role of the laity in the task of reproposing Christ to the world as its answer. In this reflection on the Church, I want to return to that pastoral letter. There I reflected that the Sower entrusts the seed of faith to us. He already knows our difficulties, our intentions, our restlessness, our faults and our human weakness. Nonetheless he calls us and places the seed in our hands and entrusts it to our stewardship. The seed is the beginning of fruitfulness. Planting the seed may mean that we learn new styles of communication, open our hearts to a more culturally

diverse community, study more deeply the mysteries of the faith, reach out with confidence and invite a neighbor to attend Mass, forgive a long-held grudge or focus on a new and more influential approach with a son or daughter, father or mother or spouse who is away from the practice of the faith. Every moment becomes a new opportunity to connect another person with the abundant springtime that God promises. In this, we are protagonists of hope.

So often we have talked about the New Evangelization involving three elements: to deepen our own faith, to have confidence in the truth of that faith and to share that faith. Perhaps this reflection on the Church can help us not only understand more deeply what the Church is – who the Church is – but also strengthen our confidence in the truth of this revelation so that we are better prepared to share it.

## SENSUS FIDEI:

A supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) shown by the universal consent in matters of faith and morals manifested by the whole body of the faithful under the guidance of the Magisterium (92).

– Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church







"The Spirit does continue to guide, protect and enliven the Body of Christ. It just happens to be our turn now..."

## Holy Examples

Since I was first introduced to T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* all the way back in high school, I became intrigued with the life of Saint Thomas à Becket. The more I learned about him the greater my admiration for him grew. He was a martyr, of course, but I was particularly struck by the cause of his martyrdom: he gave his life up in defense of Christ's Church. He was asked to deny his fidelity to the Church and submit to the authority of the English crown, which would have

compromised what was considered necessary in his day for the freedom of the Church to carry out her mission of proclaiming the Gospel. Circumstances have greatly changed. One can question whether someone these days would die precisely for the issues that took the life of Saint Thomas à Becket.

Nevertheless, what I have always appreciated was his devotion to the Church as the instrument and means of Christ's working in the world. Circumstances change and the details surrounding the Church's relationship with the social and political order also change. But what has always inspired me about Saint Thomas à Becket and why I believe he was canonized is because he never waived in his conviction that the Church, in all of its incarnational reality, with all of its lights

and shadows, was truly the Body of Christ.

Centuries later, Thomas More and Cardinal John Fisher both paid the ultimate price – execution – for defending the Church. Many others in high positions, civil and ecclesiastical, found ways to work with the accommodations held out by the king. Yet both Saint Thomas More and Saint John Fisher realized that Christ and his Church are one and when you compromise the doctrine of one you compromise the effective presence of the other.

What do we take away today from the history of the Church, the story of her martyrs, heroes such as Thomas à Becket, Thomas More and John Fisher? Each draws his own conclusion, but I think one fact remains true, the Church, the incarnational Church, the Church that is the Body of Christ, is found immersed in the human condition, in human history and in all of the vicissitudes that reality entails. But if, as we know, the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and guides her leaders in matters of faith and morals, then our fidelity to her teaching and our love for our Church are never misplaced.

## The Presence of the Church

If we are looking for signs of the Church incarnate in our world, all we have to do is look around this archdiocese. Our schools, our Catholic social service



# The Saints

## Saint Thomas à Becket, bishop and martyr

**T**homas à Becket was born in London in 1118. A cleric of the Diocese of Canterbury, he first became chancellor to the king and then in 1162 was chosen bishop. His tireless defense of the rights of the Church against Henry II prompted the king to exile Becket to France for six years. After returning to his homeland, he endured many trials and in 1170 was murdered by agents of the king. He is commemorated in the liturgy on December 29.

## Saint John Fisher, bishop and martyr and Saint Thomas More, martyr

Saint John Fisher was born in 1469. After completing his theological studies at Cambridge in England, he was ordained to the priesthood. Appointed Bishop of Rochester, he led a most austere life and fulfilled his pastoral role by frequently visiting the faithful. He also composed works against the errors of the time.

Saint Thomas More was born in 1477 and was educated at Oxford. He married and had one son and three daughters. While Chancellor in the king's Court, he wrote works on the governance of the realm and in defense of the faith.

Both were beheaded in 1535 by order of King Henry VIII whom they resisted in the matter of his divorce and his assertion to be head of the Church of England. John Fisher was martyred on June 22 and Thomas More on July 6. While detained in prison, Bishop Fisher was named to the College of Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church by Pope Paul III. Both are commemorated in the liturgy on June 22.



Saint Thomas More

agencies, all of the Catholic health care providers, not to mention the 148 parishes and missions where the Gospel is proclaimed and lived, all speak to us of the goodness of God, the power of the Spirit, the presence of Christ actually visible, tangible, audible in our community.

Earlier this year the archdiocese published a booklet, *Catholic Impact, Archdiocese of Washington 2012*, that tells in words and pictures a story of faith, hope, love, goodness, compassion, outreach, caring, service, truth, justice and peace. Everyone involved in all of those actions of the Church may not be perfect, as none of us is, but together we continue to do what Christ asked us to do – to be his presence, his love in our community.

*Catholic Impact* is a story of a vision for a fuller life, hope for a better world, engagement and service to others, partnerships that nurture human development and faith that manifests spiritual renewal. When asked why we love our Catholic Church often all we have to do is look around at all she does – all that her members achieve.

Every time we make that Profession of Faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and announce, “We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” we are simply affirming that we are Catholics and that in our 2,000-year history we have found Christ to be present in his Church in a way that is not found elsewhere.



“The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and guides her leaders in matters of faith and morals...”



"...Let us, once again, renew our dedication and offer our fidelity to the Church we love and to the Church that brings us every day the love of Christ."



Perhaps that accounts for the regular renewal of the Church in age after age. The Spirit does continue to guide, protect and enliven the Body of Christ. It just happens to be our turn now to be open to the Spirit, to be attentive to the great received Tradition, and to look to the future with serenity and joy. As Christ himself assured us, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mt 24:35).

As this archdiocesan Church moves into the future with our archdiocesan synod, the Year of Faith, the celebration of the New Evangelization and all the things that reflect our individual and collective commitment to Christ and service to his

people, and our love of God and all people, let us, once again, renew our dedication and offer our fidelity to the Church we love and that brings us every day the love of Christ.

Faithfully in Christ,

Archbishop of Washington

**September 14, 2012**  
**Feast of the Exaltation**  
**of the Holy Cross**

# Photo/artwork credits

**Cover** – Painting by artist Robert Daley, after El Greco's painting of the Pentecost (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Inside cover and page one** – A crowd of an estimated 5,000 people attend the closing Mass of the Fortnight for Freedom, held July 4, 2012 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Wuerl was the main celebrant for the Mass, where people prayed for religious freedom in the United States (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 3** – Cardinal Wuerl blesses a mother and child at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Gaithersburg, Md. (Catholic Standard file photo).

**Page 4** – A young man prays the rosary during a Rally and Mass for Life at the Verizon Center (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 5** – Members of the Multicultural Choir sing at St. Camillus Parish in Silver Spring (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 6** – In the upper left photo, the moon can be seen over the steeple at St. Dominic Church in Washington. In the lower right photo, Mary Frances LaHood plays a game with her friend Curtis Teets, who has Down syndrome, at St. Joseph's House in Silver Spring (Catholic Standard photos by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 7** – Cardinal Wuerl greets people after Mass at Nativity Church in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo). At lower left is artwork for the holy card prepared for then-Father Wuerl's ordination to the priesthood in 1966.

**Page 8** – In the upper photo, Pope Benedict XVI blesses the crowd of 50,000 people attending his Papal Mass at Nationals Park in Washington in 2008 (Catholic News Service photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters). In the lower left photo, a detail of a wood carving depicting St. Peter from St. Peter Church in Olney (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 9** – Monsignor Raymond East preaches during Mass at St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 10** – Bishops fill St. Peter's Basilica in Rome as Pope Paul VI presides over a meeting of the Second Vatican Council, which opened in 1962 and concluded in 1965 (Catholic News Service/Catholic Press Photo).

**Page 11** – Cardinal Wuerl blesses a child, and Father Lawrence Swink gives Communion to a woman at Jesus the Divine Word Parish in Huntingtown, Md. (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 12** – In a 2007 photo, Cardinal Wuerl convenes the Archdiocese of Washington's Convocation for Catholic Education, held at Trinity Washington University (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 13** – Children at Our Lady of Victory Parish in Washington line up for their First Holy Communion (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 14** – A mosaic in the Redemption Dome at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception depicts the risen Christ (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 15** – Cardinal Wuerl baptizes a young woman during the Easter Vigil at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington. In the lower photo, people pray during the vigil. (Catholic Standard photos by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 16** – People join hands to pray the Our Father at Assumption Church in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 17** – Pope Benedict XVI celebrates Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (Catholic News Service photo/Alessia Giuliani, Catholic Press Photo).

**Page 18** – In an undated photo, Pope John Paul II greets Mother Teresa at the Vatican (CNS photo by Arturo Mari).

**Page 19** – Washington Auxiliary Bishop Francisco Gonzalez confirms a young man at Jesus the Divine Word Church in Huntingtown, Md. (Catholic News Service photo by Bob Roller).

**Page 20** – Students participate in the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive at Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 21** – A woman displays the e-book version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on an iPad (Catholic News Service photo by Nancy Phelan Wiechec).

**Page 22** – In the top photo, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Martin Holley celebrates Mass at Mother Seton Church in Germantown. Concelebrants at the Mass included Father Carlos Benitez, left, and

Father William Carloni, right (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo). In the bottom photo, Monsignor Charles Pope presides at the wedding of Laura and Robert Wright at St. Mary Church in Barnesville (Photo by Eddie Arrossi).

**Page 23** – Women perform a dance to honor Mary during a Chinese Catholic pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 24** – A father prays with his young son before an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Camillus Church in Silver Spring (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 25** – A painting by artist Robert Daley, inspired by El Greco's painting of the Pentecost (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 26** – In the top photo, choir members sing during an African Catholics' Eucharistic Congress gathering in Bethesda, Md. (Catholic Standard photo by Leslie Kossoff). In the lower photo, a woman participates in a procession in Washington honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 27** – Cardinal Wuerl celebrates a Mass for students from St. Elizabeth School in Rockville, Md., at their parish church (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 28** – Father John Barry gives First Holy Communion to Madelyn Cipolla at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Bowie (Photo by Mike Saunders).

**Page 29** – In the top photo, a young woman participate in a Bible study class at St. Thomas Apostle Parish in Washington. In the lower photo, Deacon Al Turner blesses a young man during a Mass for vocations at the National Shrine (Catholic Standard photos by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 30** – In the top photo, a man venerates a statue of Mary during an Asian Catholics' pilgrimage to the National Shrine (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo). In the lower photo, members of the Missionaries of Charity prepare to take their final vows during a Mass at the National Shrine (Catholic Standard photo by Leslie Kossoff).

**Page 31** – In the top photo, people march for life in Annapolis, Md., and in the bottom photo, people demonstrate against redefining marriage during a separate rally in Maryland's capital (Catholic Standard photos by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 32** – In the top photo, youth from Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Takoma Park participate in a Rally for Life at the Verizon Center. In the bottom photo, Nova Nelson sings during a Mass at Holy Redeemer Church in Washington honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Catholic Standard photos by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 33** – People greet a young man during a neighborhood evangelization effort sponsored by Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian Parish in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo). A mosaic at Mount Calvary Church in Forestville depicts the Holy Spirit (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt).

**Page 34** – First Communicants help lead a neighborhood Corpus Christi procession sponsored by the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Washington (Catholic Standard photo by Michael Hoyt). In the lower photo, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Barry Kneestout receives the offertory gifts during a Mass for the Mother of God charismatic Catholic community in Gaithersburg, Md. (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Page 35** – A statue at St. Patrick Church in Washington depicts St. Thomas More (Catholic Standard photo by Rafael Crisostomo). In the lower photo, Pope Benedict XVI holds the Book of the Gospels during his 2008 Papal Mass at Nationals Park in Washington (Catholic News Service photo by Karen Callaway).

**Page 36** – In the top photo, Cardinal Wuerl greets people after a Mass at Ascension Parish in Bowie. In the middle photo, a teacher works with students at St. Anthony School in Washington. In the lower photo, a man gets his blood pressure checked at a Spanish Catholic Center clinic (Catholic Standard photos by Rafael Crisostomo).

**Back cover:** A collage of some churches of the Archdiocese of Washington includes, at center, the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in downtown Washington, D.C. In the top row, from left to right, are Our Lady, Star of the Sea Church in Solomons, St. John Church in Hollywood, St. Augustine Church in Washington, and Most Holy Rosary Church in Upper Marlboro. The three churches at left center are, in descending order, Our Lady of Vietnam Church in Silver Spring, the historic chapel at St. Mary Parish in Rockville, and St. Francis Xavier Church in Newtowne. The three churches at right center are, in descending order, Holy Face Church in Great Mills, the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Washington, and Our Lady of the Visitation Church in Darnestown. The churches in the bottom row are, from left to right, St. Gabriel Church in Washington, Mount Calvary Church in Forestville, the chapel at Sacred Heart Parish in Bowie, and St. Joseph Church in Pomfret (Catholic Standard photos by Michael Hoyt).



