



PURPOSE

A Transformative Plan for Confirmation

Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Confirmation Prep | Small Group Session Guide

THE BRIDE MADE READY *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church*

Candidates required to attend.

GOAL: *The goal of this session is to give the teens an understanding of the Four Marks of the Church*

STUDY KEYS:

The Church is "One" in that it is a physical and spiritual community and the Mystical Body of Christ. Christ is the head of the Church and her leader.

The Church is "Holy" in that it is sanctified by Christ and members of the Church are sanctified through the Sacraments. However the holiness of the Church on earth is imperfect because of human imperfection.

The Church is "Catholic" in that she is universal, intended for all people, and Christ is found "universally" wherever the Church undertakes her mission.

The Church is "Apostolic" because after being founded by Christ she was entrusted to the apostles who with the help of the Holy Spirit continue to guide her.

LESSON & REFERENCES:

The Church is "One."

We are part of many different communities. Our parish is a community. Our school and sports teams are communities. Our social media plugs us into and makes us part of different communities. God made us with this desire for community. God Himself is relationship. He is a communion of persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. The Persons in the Trinity are bound together in a relationship of love. Then, out of this love, God created us to share in the divine life. God also made us in His image and likeness. We are like God in that we are made for community.

CCC 254-255, 357, Genesis 1:27

God not only makes us for community, but He also gives us a spiritual community to belong to, the Church. The Church is one, just as the Trinity is one.

CCC 813

At an even deeper level, we, the Church, are the Mystical Body of Christ. We are joined to Christ and each other mystically, through the power of the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism unites us to both Christ's Death and Resurrection. In the Eucharist, we really share in Christ's Body and are taken up into communion with Him and one another.

CCC 790, 1331

Saint Paul writes that the Church is like a body; we are the parts of the body, and Christ is the head. We hear in the Gospel of John that if we remain in Christ, like a branch remains on the vine, we can bear much fruit.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, John 15:1-11, CCC 787

The Church is "Holy."

We do not have to journey in solitude. Christ founded the Church to accompany us on the journey.

Ephesians 2:20, Matthew 16:28

The Church helps us become holy in two distinct ways. First, she gives us the means to join ourselves to Christ who is Holy. We are joined to Christ and therefore made holy when we are baptized, reconciled, and receive the Eucharist. Second, she gives us community to join us on our journey of holiness. We are given fellowship, accountability, mentorship, guidance, and examples of being faithful today all of which help us become holy.

CCC 752

The Church is holy because Christ Himself is holy and united Himself to the Church sanctifying her. However, she is imperfectly holy because she resides here on earth and is made up of humans who "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

CCC 823, Romans 3:23, CCC 825

The Church is unfailingly holy. The members of the Church are on the way of holiness. She is often called the Pilgrim Church, which means she is the Church on earth, making its way to heaven. Each of us are travelers, or pilgrims, journeying toward eternity in heaven. Unfortunately, everyone can probably think of a time when someone at church or someone claiming to be a Christian has acted in a very un-Christ-like way. Imperfect behavior affects any and all members of the Church, though it is more devastating when someone we hold in high regard acts in an unholy manner. In these situations, we are called to forgive and persevere in faith and community.

The Church is "Catholic."

Our Church is catholic. Catholic means universal. Our Church is catholic in that she is present throughout the whole world and that she is on mission to bring Christ to the entire human race. Every human heart yearns for God - young and old, rich and poor, American, Brazilian, Mexican, Canadian, Polish, Swiss, Ugandan, etc. It is a universal yearning and a universal answer, "Jesus." Jesus dwells in the Church.

CCC 830-831

Additionally, our Church is catholic because Jesus Christ dwells in her. Jesus Christ is all-encompassing. Everything was created through Him and in Him all things hold together. Thus Christ's presence in the Church makes her truly universal.

Colossians 1:15-18, CCC 830-831

One of the first recorded times that the word, "catholic," was used to describe the Church was by St. Ignatius of Antioch in a letter he wrote to the Smyraeans. In this letter he said, "Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church."

CCC 830

The Church is "Apostolic."

The Church is uniquely apostolic in three ways. First, she is apostolic because Jesus Christ founded her and handed on His authority to Peter and the apostles. Peter is the first pope. The apostles are the first bishops. Jesus said to Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."

CCC 857, Matthew 16:18-19

Let's look into the significance of keys. The keys are representative of authority. Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is God's kingdom on earth. Those who acknowledge the lordship of Christ and gladly surrender to His rule are part of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus hands on to Peter the keys or the authority to rule this spiritual kingdom. Peter has the authority and responsibility to guard the deposit of faith.

Secondly, through the Holy Spirit, the Church is apostolic in that she keeps and hands on her teachings, or the deposit of faith, through the apostles and their successors. The deposit of faith -- what we believe, the story of salvation, the life of Jesus, and the institution of the Sacraments -- were taught by Jesus to the apostles who in turn, through the power of the Holy Spirit, lived it and passed it on to their successors.

CCC 857

Lastly, the Church is apostolic in that she continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office. Because Jesus Christ is our founder and appointed our first pope, Peter, and Peter appointed the apostles as the first bishops and because they continued to appoint other bishops, etc., we have an unbroken line of succession going all the way back to Jesus, Himself. The deposit of faith, our family's greatest treasure, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has been faithfully passed down to us today.

CCC 857, 861

Small Group Discussion Questions

1) ICEBREAKER: What's a TV show that you couldn't miss as a kid? Why was it so special to you?

Read 2 Timothy 1:12-14 aloud for questions 2-4:

2) Saint Paul, while he was in a dungeon in Rome awaiting execution from the evil tyrant, Nero, does not question his life for Christ, but confidently exhorts his follower Timothy to follow his example and guard this precious deposit. What is precious to you about your Catholic faith?

3) Who is an example of faith in your life? How does their Catholic faith inspire you?

4) When and how do you feel the Holy Spirit encouraging you in your faith?

5) What does it mean to you to be Catholic in the same faith as the first apostles?

Small Group Closing Prayer - St. Thomas Aquinas

Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you,
wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you,
faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you.
Amen.