

## **The Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic**

In the Creed, Catholics profess that the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These words are very important to understand what the Church is about. They are not tasks, but four essential traits of the Church and its mission. The Church is one already because of the presence of Christ in the Church. We are all one in Christ. These four traits direct us toward Christ and remind us of him. The Church's unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity are gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is our task to work together with the Holy Spirit to make them more visible.

**ONE:** The Church is one because it is the sacrament of the risen Christ. The Holy Spirit works in us to make us more like Christ, to be one with him. The Holy Spirit joins all believers into a unified community. Unity here does not mean that the Church is without diversity. It is a union with and in Christ among a wide variety of peoples and cultures.

**HOLY:** The Church is holy because it embodies the love of God that Jesus revealed in his life, death and resurrection. It is holy because it is the body of Christ, we are a holy people. Holiness arrives as a gift through the waters of Baptism, and is nourished through the Eucharist. Our holiness is obviously not perfect, but it is still real. The sources of holiness in the Church is agape love or charity. The Church is holy despite having sinners in its midst.

**CATHOLIC:** The Church is catholic (meaning universal) in two senses. It is universal because the fullness of Christ's body and his life dwells in it. Christ is the beginning and the end of everything. Where Christ is, all creation is. The Church is also catholic in the sense that it has been sent out to all nations. Wherever the Church is, Christ is. And so in every parish on Sunday, the whole Church is present. Every community where the gospel is preached and the Eucharist is celebrated is catholic.

**Apostolic:** apostolic means that Church is founded on the apostles and their mission. Jesus said that he would build his Church on Peter because of Peter's faith. The Catholic Church is built upon the faith of the apostles. As successors to the apostles, all bishops throughout history have retained a link with the apostles through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Each bishop passes on the one, holy, catholic and apostolic tradition. In other words, the teaching of the Church today is the continuation of the teaching of the apostles. To this day, the college of bishops, assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the pope, continue to hand on the Catholic tradition.