

6/1/25

## The Church is One

As we approach the end of the Easter season, it is a good time to ponder the primary effect of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, namely the unity of the Church. At Mass, after the homily, we stand together and pray the Nicene Creed as our Profession of Faith. In it, we proclaim, "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church."

When we say that the Church is one, we are referring to the unity of the Church. The Church is a community of believers. It is us, and we are a unified community.

The unity of the Catholic Church goes back to its earliest roots. The Acts of the Apostles details these early days and tells us the "The community of believers was of one heart and mind." (Acts 4:32; emphasis added) Jesus had been the unifying source in the Church while he lived on earth. But Jesus knew that he would be leaving his apostles to carry on without him. He knew that they would need the presence of God to unify them in their mission to grow the Church and live as Christians. So, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to unite the Apostles and strengthen them to carry on in His name. The Holy Spirit remains the unifying force of the Church on earth today.

The Church is one because of her "soul": "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity." (CCC 813)

The role of the laity in the Catholic Church is crucial for the unity of the Church. The laity, as baptized members, share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles of Christ, working to build up the Church and bring the Gospel message to the world. This involves actively participating in the Church's life, sharing their faith, and living out their Christian vocation in their daily lives.

The laity are called to live a life of holiness, striving to imitate Christ in their daily lives and becoming models of faith for others. They are encouraged to serve others, especially those in need, reflecting the love and compassion of Christ. They are called to transform their workplaces, families, and communities, bringing the Gospel message into all areas of life.

In essence, through the Holy Spirit, the laity's role in the Catholic Church is to actively participate in the Church's mission of salvation, build up the Church's unity, and live out their faith in a way that transforms both themselves and the world around them.

Deacon John Phillips