

## Lesson 5

# The Church



The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. There are many ways to describe the Church. The Church is the living body of Christ on earth. The People of God are the Church. The Church is the Bride of Christ and Jesus is the Bridegroom. Like any marriage, the bride and groom become one. For the Church will become one with Christ in his fullness in the eternal wedding feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church is the Universal Sacrament of Salvation.

Often, people look at the Church as a hospital for the sick since it cares for and heals sinners (*those who are spiritually ill*). The Church is seen as a museum since it contains statues of saints and spiritual artwork. But it is unfair to limit the Church with a comparison that focuses on only one aspect of her beauty. The Church is the House of God and the Kingdom of Christ on earth and as such she is an inexhaustible mystery.

Willed by God the Father, the Church founded by Jesus Christ enjoys the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Church that God carries out His plan of salvation for all people.

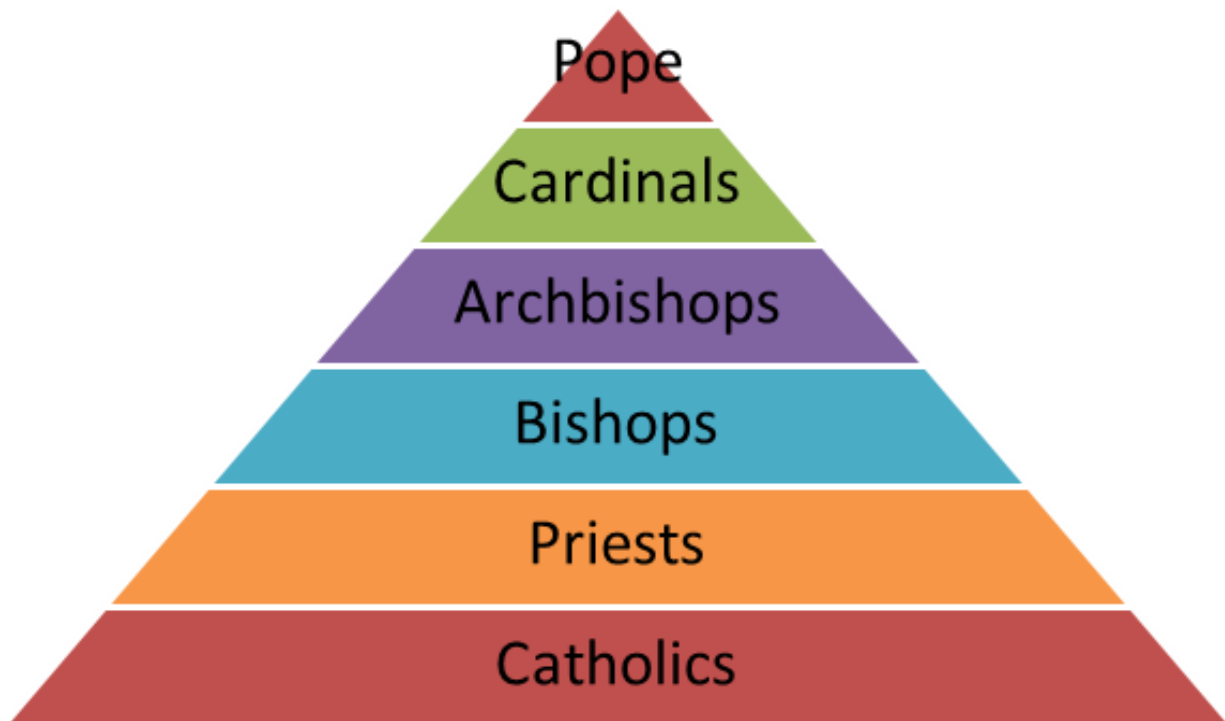
Jesus gave the Apostles the task to build his Church on earth. He gave the keys to the kingdom to Peter and his successors (*the popes*), thus giving them supreme authority in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Church is to spread the Gospel (*the Good News of Jesus Christ*). The Church demonstrates the love and joy of Jesus Christ in a world that is broken by sin. The Church looks after the poor and needy, educates people in the faith, and administers the sacraments for the spiritual well-being of her members. The Church is a community of love which seeks to serve God through works of mercy and charity.



## **The Hierarchy of the Church**

The Church has a hierarchical structure. This type of structure is like a pyramid with the pope at the top and the people of God at the foundation. This structure allows for the Holy Spirit to work freely within the Church.



## The Pope

The pope is “the Bishop of Rome” and Saint Peter’s Successor. The pope is elected by the College of Cardinals. He is the visible head and foundation of unity in the Church. The pope has full, supreme, and universal authority over the whole flock. In other words, the pope is the supreme shepherd of the flock, the people of God. The pope is preserved from error when making solemn definitions “*ex cathedra*” (*from the chair*) regarding faith and morals. This is the “Principle of Infallibility,” which states the pope and the Church cannot err when teaching on faith and morals. In short, the pope administers Church affairs and is the universal teacher of religious truth.

The election process for a new pope consists of the following steps:

1. Traditionally, each cardinal votes four times a day (*twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon*) until they reach a two-thirds majority of votes. The votes are read aloud before the College of Cardinals.
2. If this majority is not reached, the ballots (*which are destroyed after each voting round*) are burned in a way to create black smoke, which exits the roof of the Vatican to inform the world that no pope has been selected at that time.
3. If voting continues to be unsuccessful for 10 days, the cardinals may agree to a simple majority vote (*50% of votes plus 1*).
4. When a majority is reached, the new pope chooses a name and the final ballots are burned in a way to make white smoke, which exits the roof of the Vatican to inform the world that a new pope has been selected.
5. The camerlengo (*Italian for “chamberlain”*) announces on the balcony of the Vatican, “Habeum papam!” (*which means “We have a pope”*) and the new pontiff appears and gives his blessing to the world.

## Cardinals

A cardinal is a senior ecclesiastical (*Church*) leader, often referred to as a “Prince of the Church.” A cardinal is usually an ordained bishop of the Roman Catholic Church. The cardinals of the Church are collectively known as the “College of Cardinals.” The duties of the cardinals include attending the meetings of the College of Cardinals and making themselves available individually or in groups to the pope as requested. Most have additional duties, such as leading a diocese (*or archdiocese*) or managing a department of the Roman Curia. A cardinal's primary duty is electing the Bishop of Rome (*the new pope*) when the see (*the pope’s office*) becomes vacant. During the period between a pope's death or resignation and the election of his successor, the day-to-day governance of the Holy See is in the hands of the College of Cardinals. The right to enter the “conclave of cardinals” (*where the pope is elected*) is limited to those who have not reached the age of 80 years by the day the vacancy occurs. In short, cardinals are chosen by the pope to serve as his advisors and to help administer Church affairs.



## Archbishops

An archbishop is a bishop of higher rank or office and is the leader of an archdiocese. In short, archbishops are the chief bishops overseeing affairs of the chief diocese in an area.

## Bishops

Bishops claim “apostolic succession” (*a direct historical lineage dating back to the original Twelve Apostles*). They are seen as those who possess the full priesthood and can ordain clergy – including another bishop. They are modern day apostles due to their apostolic succession. Bishops, along with the pope and cardinals, comprise the “Magisterium of the Church” (*the teaching authority of the Catholic Church*). Therefore, they are infallible when they teach together with Peter’s successor (*the pope*) in an ecumenical council. Bishops are the visible sources of unity in their own dioceses. In short, bishops are the successors to apostolic powers. They are appointed by the pope. With him, they share major responsibility for preserving truth and unity of belief in the Church. Bishops administer the affairs of a diocese.

## Priests

Priests are co-workers with the bishop. Their main purpose is to dispense the sacraments and minister to the spiritual needs of the people of God. In short, priests are ministers ordained to celebrate Mass, administer sacraments, and teach the word of God. Priests are responsible to the bishop and their parish communities. Pastors are priests who the bishop designates to run a parish within the diocese.

## Deacons

Deacons are responsible to the bishop. They are ordained to a “ministry of service,” especially to preach the Gospel and baptize. Deacons are usually assigned to a particular parish by the bishop to assist the priests.

## Catholics (*The Laity or The People of God*)

This group consists of the People of God and includes all those who are not in Holy Orders or members of religious institutions in the Church. This group is often called “the laity.” Their main purpose is to pass on the gift of the faith to their family and the world. In short, the laity take part in parish ministries and work to build up the parish community. The members of the laity are called to practice the faith in all aspects of their lives.

## The Marks of the Church

There are four Marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. We recite the Marks of the Church when we say the Creed at Mass.

<b>One</b>	Catholics everywhere profess one faith, receive the same seven sacraments, worship in the same way ( <i>Mass</i> ), and are united under the authority of the one Pope.
<b>Holy</b>	Christ sanctified his bride ( <i>the Church</i> ) and made her holy through the Holy Spirit; through Christ and with him, the Church sanctifies her members, and we achieve holiness by the grace of God at work in the Church.
<b>Catholic</b>	Catholic means “universal”; the Church has received from Christ the fullness of the means of salvation and has been sent by him to gather the whole human race into the one People of God.
<b>Apostolic</b>	The Church is founded on the apostles; she faithfully guards the deposit of faith and is guided by Saint Peter’s successor ( <i>the pope</i> ).

## The Three States of the Church

There are three states in which the Church exists: the Church Militant, the Church Penitent, and the Church Triumphant. Each state is unique and necessary.

1. The **Church Militant** which consists of Christians on earth who struggle as Soldiers of Christ against sin, evil, and the devil. This stage of the Church deals with our daily struggle between good and evil.

2. The **Church Penitent**, also called the **Church Suffering**, consists of the souls in Purgatory, the state of purification of souls in preparation for their entrance into Heaven. The pains of Purgatory are from the soul's intense desire to be with God, but are unable to do so until it is purified (*made holy*). This is why it is important for us to pray for the souls in Purgatory.
3. The **Church Triumphant** which consists of the saints in heaven.

## The Precepts of the Church

The Precepts of the Church provide the faithful with a foundation for living a Catholic life. These rules describe the minimum effort we must make in prayer and in living a moral life. All Catholics are called to move beyond the minimum by growing in love of God and love of neighbor. The Precepts of the Church are shown in the chart below:



## Church Related Buildings

<b>Rectory</b>	The residence of the parish priests.
<b>Parish Center</b>	A building, or large space, where parish activities are held.
<b>Monastery</b>	The place where communities of religious men or women live.
<b>Convent</b>	The place where religious sisters ( <i>nuns</i> ) live.
<b>Cloister</b>	The living area and adjoining property of religious orders who restrict their contact with the outside world.
<b>Cathedral</b>	The official church of the bishop of a diocese. It gets its name from the bishop's chair ( <i>the "cathedra"</i> ) which is located in the sanctuary.
<b>Chancery</b>	The building where the bishop has his office. It is also home to the diocesan offices.
<b>Basilica</b>	A church designated as a place of special importance.
<b>Shrine</b>	A shrine is a place that has a holy object, like a statue, picture, or relic that is important to Catholics. A shrine is also a place dedicated to a particular belief or devotion that inspires Catholics. The faithful often make pilgrimages ( <i>spiritual journeys</i> ) to a shrine.

## Church Related Territories

<b>Diocese</b>	A portion of the people of God that is entrusted for its pastoral care to a bishop. A diocese is divided into smaller territorial regions known as deaneries and each deanery is comprised of parishes.
<b>Mission Territory</b>	A geographical location where the Gospel has not yet been preached or where the response to the Gospel has not been sufficient for the local church community there to be considered self-sustaining.
<b>Vatican City</b>	A 108-acre plot of land in Rome, Italy, that serves as the worldwide headquarters of the Catholic Church and is the official residence of the pope. Vatican City is a recognized "state," with the pope as its temporal leader, and it has diplomatic relations with many countries.

## 5 Things You Might Not Know About the Catholic Church:

1. The ONLY Christian church in existence for the first 1,000 years of Christian history was the Roman Catholic Church. All other Christian churches which exist today can trace their lineage back to the Roman Catholic Church.
2. The Catholic Church consists of more than just the Roman Catholic Church. There are 22 Eastern Rites that are in full communion with Rome and although they go by different names, they are every bit as much a part of the Catholic Church.
3. The Catholic Church is entirely responsible for the composition of the Bible, which books are included, as well as the breakup of the chapters and verses. Protestants have removed some books of the Bible because some of the verses were inconsistent with their theology. Martin Luther was a prime offender in this regard, removing Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch. He also made an effort to remove James and Revelations, but this was rejected by his followers and those two books were kept.
4. About 15 percent of all hospitals in the United States are Catholic hospitals. In some parts of the world, the Catholic Church provides the only healthcare, education, and social services available to people.
5. The pope is protected by the Swiss Papal Guard. Wearing uniforms designed by Michelangelo. Each member is Catholic, male, and Swiss, and must complete military training in Switzerland. They must demonstrate good conduct and be at least five-foot-eight in height. Those who are chosen are granted a private audience with the pope along with their families. In extreme circumstances, they are expected to guard the Holy Father with their lives. The Swiss Papal Guard is the oldest active military unit in continual existence since 1506.

