



The People of God —The Church

RCIA St. Thomas More Parish
12 November 2015

People Of God—The Church

*"You shall be My people
and I shall be your God" (Ex 19:5-6)*

- “Let us make man”—God must have someone to whom He can show his love.
- Humanity receives a call from God to enter into intimate communion with Him.
- As man multiplies, God chooses one “people” of all the people in the world to be “His people”.
- This “special people” was to be the means of bringing salvation to everyone else in the world.
- His people were the people of Israel.



People Of God—The Church

Three key points in God's calling of his chosen people:

1. God called them a qahal (a community called together to hear the voice of the Lord and to walk in his ways—church).
2. God always dealt with them through one man whom he appointed as head and as representative—Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Jacob, Kings, Prophets.
3. He made a covenant with them.



People of God—The Church

- The struggle to live out the covenant is the history of the Old Testament.
- The new covenant is the fulfillment of the old covenant when God the Son takes on human nature and human flesh and makes perfect what sinful man could not—this was Jesus Christ.
- Through the new covenant Christ established His Church.



The People Of God

God's Family



God's Family by Covenant

Covenant = *convenire* (Latin) = come together = to agree

In modern secular law a covenant is similar to a contract.

In biblical terms a covenant and a contract are distinctly different.

Source: Hahn, Scott. A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture. Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.



God's Family by Covenant

Contract

- An exchange of property in the form of goods or services
- Made with a promise (I give you my word)
- Made binding by your signature
- A transaction

Covenant

- An exchange of persons (I am yours and you are mine)
- Made by swearing an oath (sacramentum)
- Made by invoking God's name for assistance or blessing ("So help me God")
- Oath-swearer places himself under divine judgment ("I'll be damned")
- Blessings and curses

Source: Hahn, Scott. A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture. Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.



God's Family by Covenant

In every age, God has used covenants to forge family bonds with his people.

To understand what it means to be people of God think:

- Covenant *not* contract
- Father *not* judge
- Family room *not* courtroom

I will be their God, and they shall be my people...I shall be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

Source: Hahn, Scott. *A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture.* Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.



God's Family by Covenant

“The Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) is the eternal and original covenant family.”

Pope St. John Paul II wrote: “God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself Fatherhood, sonship and the essence of family which is love.”

**“Covenant is *what* God does because
Covenant is *who* God is.”**

Source: Hahn, Scott. A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture. Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.



People Of God – Covenants In The Old Testament

The People of God are traced in the Old Testament through covenant history:

| Mediator | Adam | Noah | Abram | Moses | David |
|----------|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Role | Husband | Father | Chief | Judge | King |
| Form | Marriage | Family | Tribe | Nation | World kingdom |
| Promise | To deliver us from our sins. | Preserve marriage/ family. Never to destroy humanity. | To meet our needs and bless Abram and his descendents. | To make us strong, free from bondage and a holy nation. | To unite us to others in a global kingdom ruling with wisdom. |
| Sign | Sabbath | Rainbow | Circumcision | Passover | Throne |

Source: Hahn, Scott. *A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture*. Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.



Christ Establishes The New Covenant

The People of God grow – each stage of covenant history includes a larger group of people as we “mature”



| | | | | | |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|---------------|---|
| Adam | Noah | Abram | Moses | David | Jesus |
| Husband | Father | Chief | Judge | King | Royal High Priest |
| Marriage | Family | Tribe | Nation | World Kingdom | Catholic (Universal) Church—His Church |

In the New Testament, Christ comes to perfect – not to replace – these older covenants

Source: Hahn, Scott. *A Father who Keeps his Promises. God's Covenantal Love in Scripture.* Cincinnati Ohio: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. Nihil obstat.

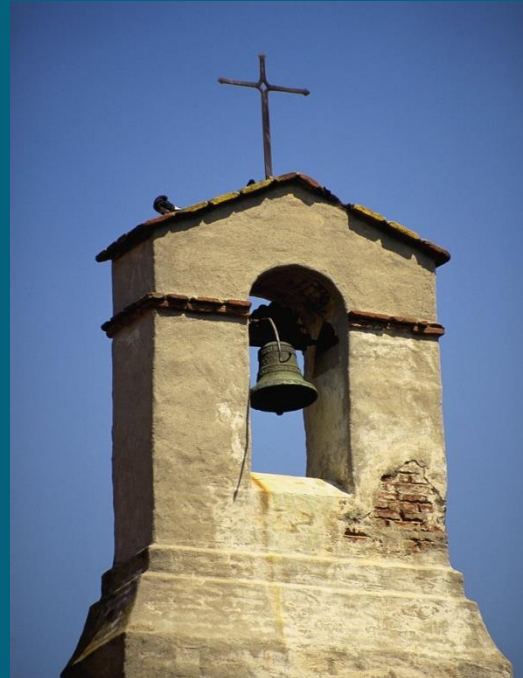


The Church



The People of God → Covenant Community → The Church

people of God → Covenant Community → Qahal (Hebrew) → Ecclesia (Greek) → Church



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. *Your Life is Worth Living*. Pennsylvania: St. Andrews Press, 2001. Nihil obstat.



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Christ Establishes His Church

(Matthew 16:13-18)

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.



"The Gates Of Hades will not Prevail Against It (My Church)"

- "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." (John 14:16-17)
- The Gates of Hades will not prevail ...

The Holy Spirit ensures that :

- the Church will continue to proclaim the truth as it has from the beginning
- that the Church will always exist because it is protected by the Holy Spirit (2000 years so far)



The Church in the New Covenant

- In Christ's Church, the People of God are not based on birth, but open to all people
 - **Who do you say that I am? "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."**
 - **Become People of God through saying YES to God → Baptism**
- "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God." *John 1:12-13*





*“All are welcome in the Church;
but, on the Christ’s terms and
not their own.”*

~Cardinal Francis George

Head and Body Of the Church

Jesus is the Head of His Church, the Head of His Body

- “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”
(Ephesians 1:22-23)
- “He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church;”
(Col 1:18)
- Jesus said “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.”
(John 6:56)



His Hands And Feet

- During Christ's Ministry, He directly acted and spoke on Earth.
- Now we are charged to do it, in His name.

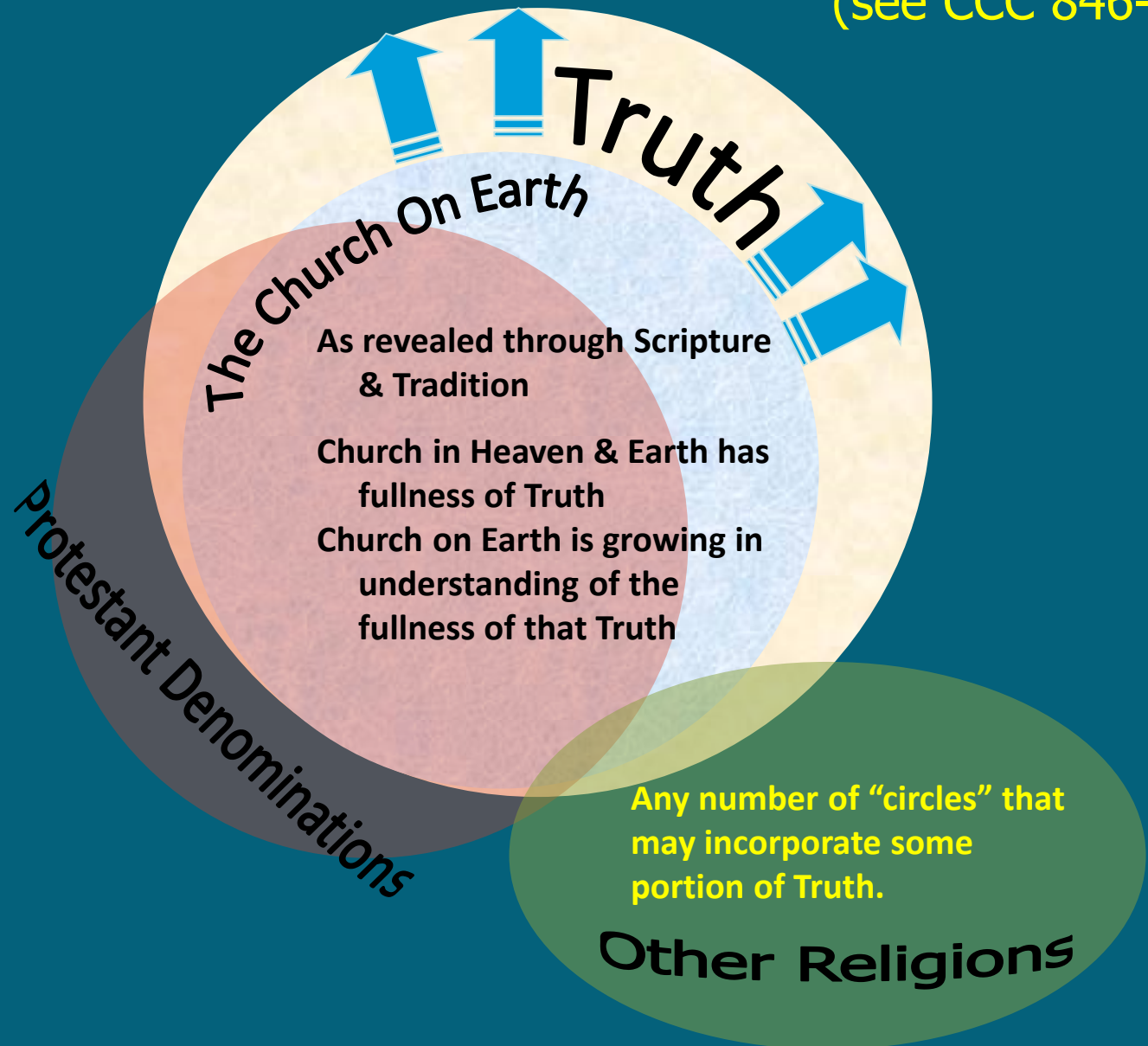
**Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which He looks
compassion on this world
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.**

*attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)
Carmelite nun, Doctor of the Church, monastic
reformer, mystic, writer*



The "Fullness Of Truth"

(see CCC 846-7)

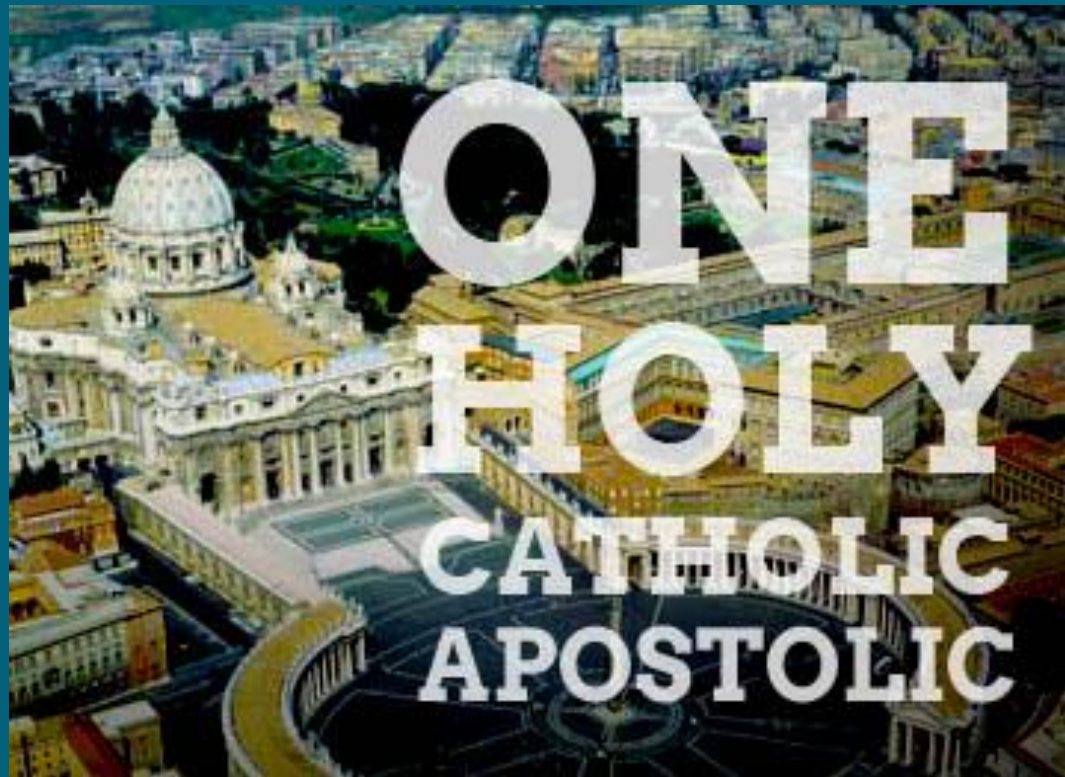


Salvation Outside of the Catholic Church

- Those who through no fault of their own do not know either the Gospel of Christ or His Church, can achieve salvation by seeking God (the Truth) with a sincere heart and by trying to do God's will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience (Second Vatican Council).
- Although God can lead all people to salvation, the Church still has the duty to spread the Gospel (the Good News) to all men. CCC 848



Characteristics (“Marks”) of the Church



The Church Is One

- God is ONE in the mystery of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We are bonded together as ONE – through the profession of faith, the common celebration of the Mass and the sacraments, and through apostolic succession.
- Church includes a great diversity of peoples and cultures.
- Wounds to Unity – through sinful nature of man, our “oneness” is challenged.
- Duty of Christians to work to overcome these divisions – ecumenism—Jesus prayed for unity (John 17).

THE CHURCH IS ONE



(Romans 12:5, 1 Cor 10:17, 12:13,
Eph 4:4-6, CCC 813-822)



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The Church Is Holy

Holy = “Set apart” to the service or worship of God; hallowed; sacred

- The Church is ‘the holy People of God’ and her members are called ‘Saints’. CCC 823
- In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospels until the end of time. CCC 827
- As people, we sin – but this sin is not part of the Church. The Church is holy.
- Jesus died for our sins, and through him and his Church we can be purified if we desire to turn to Him and away from sin.



The Church Is catholic.

Catholic – “universal” or “in keeping with the whole”. CCC 830-831

The Church is Catholic in 2 ways:

1. “In keeping with the whole”— Christ is present in His Church—We are united in Christ. We are part of His Body and He is our head. We submit to the whole of what the Church teaches.
2. “Universal”— She has a mission to proclaim the gospel to the whole world and is open to all.



The Church Is Apostolic

Apostolic—directly descended from the Apostles—apostolic succession



- Holy Spirit ensures the faith is passed on.
- The Faith is protected, guided, taught by the successors to the Apostles (the Pope and the College of Bishops) with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



On What Basis Can the Church Claim to have Authority?

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

(Matt 28:18,19)



What is Authority?

*Authority: from the Latin
Auctoritas meaning **authorship**
Augere meaning **augmentation***

Founding event (**authorship of the Church**) is the New Covenant of Christ and His Church—established by His death and resurrection.

Apostles were chosen by Christ to witness and participate in the founding event, then to provide testimony to the world (**to augment**).

Joyce Little. The Church and the Culture War: Secular Anarchy or Sacred Order. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1995.



What is Authority?

- The testimony or tradition is handed down to each new generation of bishops. It is apostolic.
- Every generation of bishops is linked to the original eyewitnesses (the apostles) of the founding event of the Church.
- The Pope and the bishops preserve and interpret the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (the founding event) and transmit it to the faithful. They don't make up new things. They too are obedient to Christ, the head of the Church.
- The Pope is the **"Defender of Christian Memory"**

Joyce Little. The Church and the Culture War: Secular Anarchy or Sacred Order. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1995.



Authority is for Love and Service

- Because we start with the person of Christ, when we submit to the authority of the Christ and His Church, the basis of our obedience is not fear, but **love**.
- Christ gave Peter the authority to govern His Church (to feed His sheep—**to love and to serve the flock**) after Peter told our Lord three times that he loved Him.
(John 21:16)

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. *Your Life is Worth Living*. Pennsylvania: St. Andrews Press, 2001. *Nihil obstat*.





† Loved by God

† Called together from the beginning to listen to His Voice and walk in His ways

† Through the love of Christ, able to call God our Father and to live as His sons and daughters

† Through the love of Christ, incorporated into the fullness of His Truth

† Through the love of Christ, incorporated into His body

† Called to the sacraments to remember, renew and live in the covenant

† Called to be holy

† Called to be Christ's hands and feet

† Called to submit in humility to the loving authority of Christ the Good Shepherd and the Shepherd who Christ appointed here on Earth

† Called to follow...

...We are

The People of God—The Church

WE WILL NEVER
CHANGE THE WORLD
BY GOING TO CHURCH.
WE WILL ONLY
CHANGE THE WORLD
BY BEING THE CHURCH.



Discussion Questions:

1. You have learned about covenants. How does what you have learned affect your understanding of God's relationship with you and your relationship with God?
2. As members of the Body of Christ, we are his hands and his feet on earth:
 - Where have you found Jesus Christ present in His Church?
 - How has God asked you to make Christ present in the world?
3. The Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.
Which of the 4 "marks" of the Church stand out for you? Why?
4. How is the understanding of authority in our world today different from the Church's understanding of authority?