

KEEPING THE FAITH

It starts with Baptism

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; **we become members of Christ**, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word.”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1213)

What is meant by “Church”?

In Christian usage, the word “church” designates the liturgical assembly, but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. “The Church” is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ’s Body.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 752)

What is meant by “Church”?

In short, **we are the Church**. It is not simply an institution. We, as Catholics, are charged with accomplishing “the Church’s” mission.

What is the Church's Mission?

.... the Church in her very nature is missionary, **sent by Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them.** So that she can fulfill her mission, the Holy Spirit “bestows upon [the Church] varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her.” “Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives **the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth the seed and the beginning of that kingdom.**”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 767-768)

What is the Church's Mission?

We, as Catholics, are charged with spreading the gospel to all the nations and bring them to God. This is not solely responsibility of the institutional Church, but of every member of the Church.

This includes taking ownership of our institutional Church by....

1. Holding the institutional church accountable for its failures by speaking out and demanding reform.
 - a. This process is under way in the institutional Church (but must continue) with reforms developed in 2002 that have become known as the Dallas Charter. These reforms include:

- i. All dioceses and religious orders, as well as the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, have lay review boards with judges, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, human resource professionals and law enforcement officers, reviewing every and all cases of reported clerical problem behavior.

- ii. All church workers, including clerics and lay volunteers, must participate in safe environment training that highlights signs and symptoms of abuse and details policies and procedures for keeping children safe and reporting clerical misbehavior.

- iii. An independent auditing firm conducts yearly audits to ensure that all dioceses follow these guidelines and then make their findings publicly known.

- iv. A zero-tolerance policy is now in effect such that any credible accusation of abuse is reported to law enforcement, the offending party is pulled from ministry and evaluated, and if accusations are found to be credible then the offending party never returns to ministry ever again.

2. Holding individual members of the institutional church accountable for criminal acts. If you see something, say something.

3. Recognize that the high visibility of the institutional church reflects on you and when it is seen as hypocritical and immoral, you are seen as hypocritical and immoral.

4. Recognize that the institutional Church is managed by human beings who are just as sinful as we are and, as a result, need to be corrected and redirected from time to time.

5. When the institutional Church is under attack for its failings, don't run from your faith when challenged by others, **run to it**. When the institutional Church is deserving of criticism, share in that criticism, but remind people that for all the institutional Church's failings (and there are plenty) when it is following the teachings of Christ, it performs incredible acts of love and charity every single day. For example:

- a. 96,573 Catholic Elementary Schools worldwide (2016)
(Cara.georgetown.edu)
- b. 35.1M students enrolled in Catholic elementary schools worldwide (2016) (Cara.georgetown.edu)
- c. 47,862 Catholic secondary schools worldwide (2016)
(Cara.georgetown.edu)
- d. 19.9M students in Catholic secondary schools worldwide (2016) (Cara.georgetown.edu)

- e. 8.3M people served by Catholic Charities in the US (2017) (Cara.georgetown.edu)
- f. 3.12B Value of money spent by Catholic Charities in the US alone (2017) (Cara.georgetown.edu)
- g. The Catholic Church manages 26 percent of all healthcare facilities in the world, including 117,000 hospitals, clinics, orphanages, as well as 18,000 pharmacies and 512 centers for the care of those with leprosy. (2010) (Catholicnewsagency.com)
- h. Catholic Relief Services has an A+ rating with the American Institute of Philanthropy spending 92% of its funding on programs to help those in need. (Charitywatch.org)

"If in 1,800 years we clergy have failed to destroy the Church, do you really think that you'll be able to do it?"

Ercole Cardinal Consalvi (1757-1824)



Questions?