

of desire, it is true, replace Sacramental Baptism insofar as the communication of grace is concerned, but do not effect incorporation into the Church, as they do not bestow the sacramental character by which a person becomes attached formally to the Church. (2) **Open apostates and heretics.** Public heretics, even those who err in good faith (material heretics), do not belong to the body of the Church, that is to the legal commonwealth of the Church. However, this does not prevent them from belonging spiritually to the Church by their desire to belong to the Church and through this, achieving justification and salvation. (3) **Schismatics.** This includes those who fundamentally reject the Church's authority, or who dissociate themselves from the commonwealth of the faithful subject to that authority. Schismatics in good faith (material schismatics), like heretics in good faith, can, by a desire to belong to the Church, belong spiritually to the Church, and through this achieve justification and salvation. (4) **The excommunicated.** Those who for very grave crimes have been severed by the legitimate authority from the body of the Church are not members of the Church.

Membership of the Church is Necessary for All Men for Salvation

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) declared: "The universal Church of the faithful is one outside of which none is saved." This was also the teaching of the Union Council of Florence, and of Popes Innocent III and Boniface VIII in the Bull "Unam Sanctam," Clement VI, Benedict XIV, Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius XII in the Encyclical "Mystici Corporis." As against modern religious indifferentism, Pius IX declared: "By Faith it is to be firmly held that outside the Apostolic Roman Church none can achieve salvation. This is the only ark of salvation. He who does not enter into it, will perish in the flood. Nevertheless, equally certainly it is to be held that those who suffer from invincible ignorance of the true religion, are not for this reason guilty in the eyes of the Lord." The last proposition holds out the possibility that people who in fact do not belong as members to the Church can achieve salvation.

The necessity of belonging to the Church is not an absolute necessity, but a hypothetical one. In special circumstances, namely, in the case of invincible ignorance or of incapability, actual membership of the Church can be replaced by the desire for the same. This need not be expressly present but can also be included in the moral readiness faithfully to fulfill the will of God. In this manner also those who are in fact outside the Catholic Church can achieve salvation.

Christ ordained affiliation to the Church by founding the Church as an institution unto salvation for all men. He endowed the Apostles with His authority, gave them a universal mandate to teach and baptize and made eternal salvation dependent on the acceptance of His teaching and the reception of Baptism (Luke 10:16; Mt. 10:40, 18:17; 28:19; Mk. 16:15f). That those who, in innocent ignorance, do not know the true Church of Christ, but who are nevertheless ready to bow to the demands of the Divine Will, will not be cast out, springs from

the Divine Justice, and from the doctrine of God's general will of salvation, which is clearly proved in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 2:4). The Apostles teach the necessity of the Church for salvation by promulgating Faith in Christ and His Gospel as a condition for salvation. Peter confesses before the High Council: "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). Cf Gal. 1:8; Tit. 3:10f; 2 John 10f.

It is the unanimous conviction of the Fathers that salvation cannot be achieved outside the Church. This principle was extended not only to pagans but to heretics and schismatics as well. Origen formally declares: "Outside the Church nobody will be saved" (*extra ecclesiam nemo salvatur*; In Jesu Nave hom. 3:5); similarly, St. Cyprian: "Outside the Church there is no salvation" (*salus extra ecclesiam non est*; Ep. 73:21). The Fathers regard, as types of the necessity of the Church for salvation, the saving Ark of Noah and the House of Rahab (Jos. 2:18f). In the Primitive Church, the conviction of her necessity for salvation found practical expression in her missionary zeal, in the readiness of her children to suffer martyrdom, and in her battle against heresy.

In view of the stress laid upon the necessity of membership of the Church for salvation it is understandable that the possibility of salvation for those outside the Church is mentioned by the saints only hesitantly.

From the above we see that the Catholic Church is unique. She alone has a divine origin, a divine mission, divine unity, divine protection from error, and divine preservation until the end of time. She is, in fact, the sole expression of Kingdom of God on Earth and the Mystical Body of Christ and the only Ark of Salvation. There is no other. There is but "...one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, and one God, the Father of all..." (Eph. 4:6). That is why the Catholic Church holds and must proclaim again the timeless dogma that Outside the Church There is No Salvation.

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This pamphlet draws heavily from: Ott, Ludwig. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 2nd edition. Translated by Patrick Lynch, edited by J. Bastible. Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 1954. Pages 291-313. The only current edition in English of *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, is published by Baronius Press: Ott, Ludwig. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*. Translated by Patrick Lynch, edited by James Canon Bastible, fully revised and updated by Robert Fastiggi. Baronius Press, 2018. There is no significant difference in this section between these versions.

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The Necessity of the Catholic Church for Salvation



The Barque of Peter, © Cecilia Lawrence, 2015

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. -- Ephesians 4:4-6

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. -- Philippians 2:1-2

I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. -- Matthew 16:18-19

Few today know or appreciate what is known as “the Catholic Dogma” or “the Dogma of the Church.” That dogma has been captured in the Latin phrase, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, or “outside the Church there is no salvation.” It has always been the Church’s understanding of herself: she exists for the salvation of souls. But in the last 60 years religious indifference—the belief that all religions are equally valid and can lead people to salvation—has gained broad support. This belief has even spread to many Catholics and has severely undermined the Church’s mission to the world. By focusing again on proclaiming the necessity of all people to be joined to Christ in His one Mystical Body the Catholic Church, the Church will more faithfully fulfill her divine mandate to lead all souls to Heaven. The material presented below is taken extensively from book 4, part 2, chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 of Fr. Ludwig Ott’s book, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, which is widely recognized as one of the greatest summaries of Catholic dogma ever written.

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ

In the New Testament, the term “church” means the assembly or community of believers in Christ, whether individual assemblies or the universal body of believers. In this latter sense, the Roman Catechism has defined it as “The faithful of the whole world.” Another term for the Church is the “Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.” In the encyclical “*Mystici Corporis Christi*” (1943), Pope Pius XII declared: “To describe this true Church of Christ—which is the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church—there is no name more noble, none more excellent, none more divine, than the expression, ‘the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.’” St. Paul teaches that the Church, the community of believers in Christ, is the body of Christ, and that Christ is the head of the body. The term “mystical” indicates the mysterious character of the communion of grace between Christ and the faithful.

The Purpose of the Church

The Church was founded by the God-Man Jesus Christ, immediately and personally, to continue His work of redemption for all time. The establishment of the Church by Christ means that He Himself laid down the essential elements of her teaching, her liturgy (worship of God), and her constitution.

The Permanency and Infallibility of the Church

The Church is indefectible, that is, she remains and will remain the Institution of Salvation, founded by Christ, until the end of the world (Mt. 28:19). The Church is infallible in her final decisions on the formally revealed truths of Christian Doctrine concerning faith and morals.

The Visibility of the Church

The Church founded by Christ is an external, visible commonwealth. Visibility is that quality of the Church by which she appears externally to the senses. Christ appointed the Apostle Peter to be the “visible foundation” of the unity of the Church – “On this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16:18). The visible head of the Church is the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, while the invisible head is Jesus Christ Himself. The visibility of the Church is recognizable in what Catholics call “the four marks of the Church”: Unity, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity.

The Unity of the Church

The Church founded by Christ is one and unique. Unity is expressed in the fact that all members of the Church, at least implicitly, inwardly believe and outwardly confess the truths of faith proposed by the teaching office of the Church. This is in opposition to the Protestant theory of Fundamental Articles or Essentials, which demand agreement in certain basic truths of faith only, so that within the framework of the one Christian Church varying confessions of faith can exist side by side. Unity is also expressed in the Unity of Communion which consists in the subjection of the members of the Church to the authority of the bishops and of the Pope and in the binding of members among themselves to a social unity by participating in the same worship and in the same means of grace. The unity of both Faith and Communion is guaranteed by the Primacy of the Pope, the Supreme Teacher and Pastor of the Church. One is cut off from the unity of Faith by heresy and from the unity of Communion by schism.

The Holiness of the Church

The Church founded by Christ is holy in her origin, her purpose, her means, and her fruits. She is holy in her Founder and invisible Head of the Church, Christ the Lord; in her inner life-principle, the Holy Ghost; in her purpose, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of men; in the means by which she obtains her purpose, the teaching of Christ with its propositions of faith, commandments, and Holy Mass; in her laws, and in her institutions. Many members of the Church are holy in the ordinary sense of holiness, that is, being in the state of grace from the Lord. Further, the Church has never lacked examples of heroic holiness and marvelous manifestations of holiness in her saints.

The Catholicity of the Church

The Church founded by Christ is Catholic (universal) especially on account of her spatial extent over the whole earth. St. Cyril of Jerusalem refers to the catholicity of the

Church in her teachings, in the various classes of society that she brings to the veneration of God, and in the variety of virtues she possesses. By all these characteristics the true Church of Christ is distinguished from the congregations of heretics.

The Apostolicity of the Church

The Church founded by Jesus Christ is apostolic. In its origin the Church goes back to the Apostles and has always adhered to the teaching which she received from the Apostles. The Pastors of the Church, the Pope, and the bishops are connected with the Apostles by the succession of office. This succession guarantees the authentic transmission of doctrine and makes manifest the organic connection between the Church of the present day and the Church of the Apostles.

The Importance of the Four Marks of the Church

The four properties of Unity, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity, since they appear externally and are easily recognizable, are not merely properties of being, but are at the same time outer marks of the true Church of Christ. Of all the Christian confessions the Roman Catholic Church alone possesses preeminently these four characteristics.

Membership of the Church

The Church teaches infallibly that “the members of the Church are those who have validly received the Sacrament of Baptism and who are not separated from the unity of the confession of the Faith and from the union of the lawful community of the Church.” In the Encyclical “*Mystici Corporis*” Pius XII declared: “Only those are to be accounted really members of the Church who have been regenerated in the waters of Baptism and profess the true Faith, and have not cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority.” According to this declaration three conditions are to be demanded for membership in the Church: (a) the valid reception of the Sacrament of Baptism; (b) the profession of the true Faith; and (c) participation in the Communion of the Church.

On reception of Baptism, the seal of Jesus Christ, that is, the Character of Baptism is imprinted on the person. This effects the incorporation in the Body of Christ and confers the capacity and right to participate in the Christian practice. Baptism is, therefore, the real cause of our incorporation into the Church. The Confession of the true Faith and the adherence to the Communion of the Church are for adults subjective conditions for the achievement of the unhindered perpetuation of their membership in the Church, which is initiated by Baptism. Those children validly baptized outside the Church are members of the Church unless and until after reaching the use of reason they voluntarily separate themselves from the Confession of the Faith or the Communion of the Church.

Among the members of the Church are not to be counted: (1) **The unbaptized.** The so-called Baptism by blood and Baptism