

One church with divine roles

Why Catholic?

Journey Through the Catechism

I love being Roman Catholic! I love being part of the multitude of cultures which make up the church. In the Archdiocese of Baltimore alone, the Catholic population includes people of European, Asian and African descent who speak many languages and embrace numerous cultural traditions. I love being Catholic because, in a world that is often torn apart by ethnic and political differences, we stand united in the mission of our church and understand that we are able to use our gifts and cultural customs to help fulfill that mission.

We are united in faith. We are united in our diversity. We are connected to one another through our baptism, confirmation and common worship. We are connected through the blood of Christ and all that the paschal mystery means to us as individuals and as a worshipping community.

Each week we stand together and pray, “We believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” In so doing, we are proclaiming that we believe that the church is “One in source, founder and soul. The source of the church is the mystery of the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The founder of the church is Jesus Christ who restored the unity of all in one people and one body. And the soul of the church is the Holy Spirit which dwells in all who believe ... it is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe ... 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.” (Catechism 813)

United in Spirit, we have been entrusted with the continuation of Christ’s mission to offer salvation to the world. We share in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office and are “called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one.” (Catechism 871) No matter what our state of life, we are to be living examples of Jesus’ love and charity. We are to place the gifts bestowed on us by God in service to the Gospel message. We are to proclaim the good news in word and action. We are called to

work to bring about the reign of God.

Some of us have official titles, offices and roles in the church. Some of us are consecrated religious, ordained priests and deacons. The vast majority of us are laity – single and married men and women with families and “regular” jobs striving to live a good life. We are all Christians. No matter what our state of life, we are all responsible for the mission of the church.

The pope and bishops have been entrusted by Christ, through the apostles, with the care of the church. They are the consistent visible source and foundation of the church’s unity in the world. They are responsible for teaching, sanctifying and leading the church.

The priests are the stewards of the mystery of faith. The priest makes Christ present through the seven sacraments and proclaims and preaches the word of God. Sisters and brothers, consecrated religious, serve as public witnesses to God’s love. Through the gifts of their communal charism and missionary work, they serve the people of God.

The witness of the lay faithful is unique. We participate in the saving mission of the church. Using our diverse gifts, we are called to minister to our families, friends and communities. We are called to permeate the social, political and economic spheres of society with our Christian values.

The Roman Catholic Church is truly one body with many parts with Christ as our head. No one part is greater than any other part. No one part is the same as any other part. We each have a different function but the same mission. We stand before the world, united, serving God and our church. This is why I love being Catholic.

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The fourth topic of the six-week spring series of Why Catholic? is “One Church with Divine Roles.” Next week, Sister Constance Gilder, S.S.J., assistant to the eastern vicar, will write about “Mary Mother of the Church.”