

Lesson 6 – The Church – People of God; Body of Christ

1) The Church is a Body, a living organism

- a) “I am the vine and you are the branches” (Jn. 15)
- b) “Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, you do to me” (Matt. 25)
- c) Jesus to Saul: “Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:3-4)

2) The Church takes Christ’s life to the nations

- a) Proclamation and evangelization
- b) Renewal of the temporal order

3) What does being part of a Church really do for me ?

- a) The best moments in our life, ... alone or with others who care for us ?
- b) We cannot make this faith journey, ... alone.
- c) Folks in Church need you and me.
- d) When we share faith, we carry each other.

Four Marks of the Church

e) One

- i) The Church is one because God is one
- ii) The Church works to unite the world in God
- iii) The Church works to heal division (ecumenism)

f) Holy

- i) The Church is holy because her head, Christ, is holy
- ii) The Church contains sinners, but is herself holy
- iii) The Church is made holy by God’s grace

g) Catholic

- i) *Kata holos* = “according to the whole”
- ii) The Church is the new Israel, universal
- iii) The Church transcends cultures, languages, nationalism

h) Apostolic

- i) From the lives, witness, and teachings of the apostles
- ii) The Church hands on Tradition

BELONGING TO THE CHURCH

Vatican City, 25 June 2014 (VIS) – This morning in St. Peter's Square the Holy Father, in his general audience, continued to speak about the **People of God**, a theme that he began to explore last Wednesday. Today he highlighted the importance for a Christian of belonging to this people, and reiterated that we are not isolated Christians. “Belonging is our identity”, he said. “We are Christians because we belong to the Church. It is like a surname: if our name is 'I am Christian', our surname is 'I belong to the Church'.

“No-one becomes a Christian alone; we must think first, with gratitude, of all those who have preceded us”, he continued. “If we believe, if we pray, if we know the Lord and are able to listen to His Word, we feel close to Him and recognize Him in our brethren, and because others before us have lived faith and transmitted it to us, have taught us. The Church is a family in which one is welcomed and learns to live as believers and disciples of the Lord Jesus”. The Pope explained that this is a path that one may undertake not thanks to others, **but rather united with others**, and emphasized that a “do-it-yourself Church” does not exist.

“How many times did Benedict XVI describe the Church as an ecclesiastical 'we'? Often we hear people say, 'I believe in God, I believe in Jesus, but I am not interested in the Church...’. There are those who believe they can have a personal relationship, direct and immediate, with Jesus Christ removed from communion and the mediation of the Church. They are dangerous and damaging temptations. They are, as the great Paul VI said, absurd dichotomies. It is true that to walk together is challenging and difficult. ... But the Lord has entrusted his message of salvation to human beings, to all of us, as witnesses; and it is in our brothers and sisters, with their gifts and their limits, that it comes towards us and is revealed to us. And this is what belonging to the Church means. Remember: being Christian means belonging to the Church”.

Before concluding, the Pope asked that the Lord, by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, might grant us the grace never to give in to the temptation to think we can do without other people, that we can do without the Church and save ourselves alone, that we can be 'laboratory Christians'. On the contrary, it is not possible to love God without loving one's brethren, it is not possible to love God outside the Church; it is not possible to be in communion with God without being in communion with the Church, and we cannot be good Christians other than by staying together with those who follow the Lord Jesus, as one people, a single body”.