

Church – Body of Christ, Sacrament and the People

Overview

The image of the Church can be found in the New Testament writings – both the Gospels and letters of Saint Paul – and more than one source. Let's examine those.



Church as the Body of Christ

Saint Paul's letters – especially that of 1 Corinthians – expresses this concept. Paul says Christ comes with a *"cup of blessings"* that unites us in his blood. In addition we are further united with Christ from the *"bread that we break"* and is together with the precious Blood of Jesus. In a special and mystical way the Body and Blood are together.

The church was as founded by Jesus. The Word was made flesh as Jesus gathered followers including the 12 Apostles who became His personal representatives for the church.

Refer to the Catechism of the Church paragraphs 805-807 for a further discussion.

Church as the Sacrament of Christ

Both Saint Paul and Pope Paul VI refer to the church as a mystery. When they used this word – mystery – it has the same meaning as a sacrament. Some theologians like to refer to the church as the 8th Sacrament – because it is a visible sign of the invisible presence of God.

In God's plan for his most precious of creations – man – the church becomes the primary visible of this sacrament. It forms an instrument of communion with God and mankind.

Refer to the Catechism of the Church paragraphs 774-776 and 780 for a further discussion.

Church as the People of God

Using this title for church as the People of God was especially proclaimed during the sessions of Vatican II. Sacred Scriptures testifies that God has a special covenant with all of mankind. This being said – the People of God image applies to a special set of New Testament followers of Jesus Christ.

An important fact of Catholic life is that we have a special sense of belonging to a worldwide family and with the history of the church. We have the testimonies of Saint Paul and those who have preceded us. All of those many generations before us stand as witnesses.

While the Catholic community is not the whole of the People of God – we are a strong an identifiable group. In Hebrews 13:14 we become aware that this life is not a lasting city – and that we long for that everlasting City of God.

Refer to the Catechism of the Church paragraphs 781-786 for a further discussion.