

One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Here's a familiar phrase. You've said it aloud something like 52 times a year since 1969, or since you were old enough to read a missalette, whichever is longer.... And I've said maybe 5 times as many times, since for most of my career, I've been a part of about five weekend Masses every week.

There could be a whole semester's worth of material in sorting out the depth of meaning in this phrase. We will have to make do with a sentence or two for now, however.

The Church is Holy, not because its members are inherently holy, though we are called to strive for holiness. The Church is holy because it is founded on the Gospel, because it is the Body of Christ on earth, and because it is animated by the Holy Spirit. The Church is Holy in spite of the grievous sins committed by its members, including at times the clergy and hierarchy. Human weakness, even depravity, offends the holiness of the Church, which is from God, but it does not counteract it.

The Church is catholic (small "c") because it includes a wide diversity of members. There are some 20 different "rites" within the Roman Church — churches that are as Catholic as ours, but who worship and pray somewhat differently from us. The liturgical traditions or rites presently in use in the Church are the Latin (that's ours), the Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite and Chaldean rites. (See Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1203). We are not monolithic or even homogenous; we are catholic.

The Church is Apostolic because it's hierarchical leaders are considered to be descended from the Apostles. Bishop Paul Bradley is considered to be a successor to one of the apostles. Pope Francis is the successor of the apostle Peter and the bishop of Rome, which is the "mother" diocese or church to all the rest.

The Church is One because it, as a body of believers, has one head, which is Christ.

Last week, Pope Francis mentioned that his own spirituality was formed by the Second Vatican Council. Somehow, to some people, that was a controversial statement.

The Second Vatican Council is by far the most complete and profound expression of the Magisterium of the Church in the Church's history: every bishop in the world who could get out of bed (some 2500 in all) was present at St. Peter's Basilica for its four sessions. Your spirituality and mine, along with that of Pope Francis, and a billion other people, is formed in large part by the work of this council.

To every council, there has been resistance, especially when reform of the Church has been a part of its work. Some scholars say that a schism follows every council, as there will always be those who refuse to accept renewal, reform, or revision of anything having to do with faith or the Church.

Yet, if we believe that we are apostolic, catholic, and holy, it seems we could also believe that we are one as the Spirit works in and through the Church, her leaders, and the councils in which all the successors of the apostles gather as one.

AS PROMISED at last week's Masses, here is the link where you can see a complete explanation and comparison of the Eucharistic Prayers used in the Mass. This site also includes information I haven't shared yet in the "Walk through the Mass" talks, so when you hear it, please act surprised..

[Eucharistic Prayers I-IV \(catholic-resources.org\)](http://catholic-resources.org)