

‘I believe in the holy Catholic Church’ Part 2

n. 811-870

I. The Church is One n.813-822

- The Church is One because there is One Source, One Word, One Spirit
n. 813

n. 814

- Communion, not uniformity – Diversity of various churches. Need to ‘make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’(Ephesians 4:3).

n. 815

- Bonds of Faith, Hope, Love, Liturgy, Order.

n. 816

- The Church ‘subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him’(LG 8§2).

n. 817-818

- When unity is broken ‘often enough both sides are to blame’. Present members are not to be blamed for past breaks. We are to accept each other as brothers and sisters. Need for renewal, conversion, knowledge, dialogue, prayer together, working together. n. 821

‘I ask ... on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.

I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.’

- ‘Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all’(Ephesians 4:3-6).
 - Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism [Unitatis Redintegratio’ 21/11/64]

- ‘While preserving unity in essentials, let everyone in the Church, according to the office entrusted to him, preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in the variety of liturgical rites, and even in the theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. If they are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church’[1.4]

‘In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith’[2.11].

‘We Christians are on the whole too blind or too lazy to recognise the latent ‘Christianness’ in the history of human existence, or religion in general and of philosophy. Unconsciously we are often guilty of living in the selfish narrow-mindedness of those who think their knowledge is more valuable and more blessed with grace if it is possessed only by a few; we rather foolishly think that God himself only makes an impression on men with his truth when we have already made an impression on them with our thematic and sociologico-official and explicit form of this truth’(Karl Rahner ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in Theological Investigations VI).

‘We Christians today readily admit that other Christians live in the grace of God, that they are filled with the Holy Spirit, are justified, are children of God and are united with Jesus Christ, and that in the ecclesial and social dimension too they are united in very many respects with all other Christians and with all other denominations. Without doubt, then, much more and much more fundamental things unite Christians of the different churches than divide them’(Karl Rahner ‘Foundations of Christian Faith’ page 356).

- **Paul VI Homily** on occasion of canonisation of 40 English and Welsh martyrs (Oct 25th 1970).
A paragraph added by his own hand.

‘May the blood of these martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted on God's Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church ... Their devotion to their country gives us the assurance that on that day, when – God willing – the unity of faith and life is restored, no offence will be inflicted on the honour and integrity of a great country such as England. There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church – this humble "servant of the servants of God" – is able to embrace firmly her ever-beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and faith, a communion of priesthood and rule, a communion of saints in the freedom and love of the spirit of Jesus.’

The Pope begins and ends his letter by mentioning the unity we already experience in the shared sanctity of Christians of all churches who have given their lives for Christ. This gives him hope that we can overcome what he calls the 'burden of long-standing misgivings inherited from the past' the 'mutual misunderstandings and prejudices', the 'complacency', 'indifference' and 'insufficient knowledge of one another'(n.2) that 'openly contradict the will of Christ, scandalise the world, and damage that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature'(n.6).

He acknowledges the sins of the members of the Catholic Church and humbly asks all to join in asking for his own conversion (n.4).

He also asks forgiveness for the hurts caused by the way in which popes have misused their ministry (n.88).

The central section of the Encyclical is a record of the advances that have taken place in the last 30 to 40 years. He speaks for example, of the profound impression made upon him when, during his visit to Sweden, the Lutheran bishops approached him as he was distributing communion. They did not request communion, but they did ask for a blessing, thus expressing their deep longing for the day when full unity will be expressed in shared communion (n.72).

Sharing their longing the Pope writes: 'It is now necessary to advance towards visible unity ... so that the Churches may truly become a sign of that full communion in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church which will be expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist'(n.78).

'This council declares that it realises that the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ transcends human powers and gifts. It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. 'And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'(Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism UR §24).

‘The Christian enterprise is not a book or a club for religious do-it-yourself enthusiasts, but a movement, a stream of life passing through different ages and cultures. In mid-stream are those Christians in communion with Rome. That stream has encountered log-jams of rubbish, the product of human sin and inertia. So I can understand frustrated reformers who have felt compelled to divert from the main stream. Yet I have come to see that such separation is ultimately destructive and diminishing. Christian creativity lies in unity. Variety is the spice of Christian life, but this variety must be held together in a coherent fellowship. We need one another’s gifts to be balanced followers of Christ. For Christian unity I have always longed and prayed, a unity which is more like marriage than simply the friendly relations of good neighbours, a unity with bonds strong enough to hold together the lively treasures of human life ... For my part, I can no longer see any reason of substance and principle to hold apart from the main stream. Life is too short, the Gospel too precious, the human issues too serious to waste time thinking up reasons for preserving division’(page 138-139).

2. The Church is holy n.823-829

- God alone is holy (see 1.8 Transcendence)
- The Church is holy because God has chosen the Church as his Temple: ‘God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple’(1Corinthians 3:17).
- There are sinners in the Church because ‘the Church clasps sinner to her bosom.’ (Luke 15:1-2). God does the pruning and purifying. n. 827
- ‘The holiness of the Church is constantly shown forth in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful. And so it must be. It is expressed in many ways by those who, each in his or her own state of life, tend to the perfection of love’(Vatican II, LG 39). The holiness of the Church is the holiness of love. It is the Spirit of communion between Jesus and God that is the soul and the heart of the Church. The holiness of the Church has its source in this Spirit. ‘I live, no longer I, for it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I live now is by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’(Galatians 2:20).

3. The Church is catholic n. 830-856

- **n. 849** ‘Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always to the end of the age’(Matthew 28:19-20).
- **n. 835** ‘The rich variety of ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites and theological and spiritual heritages proper to the local churches, unified in a common mission, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided church.’
- **n. 836** ‘All people are called to this catholic unity of the People of God ... And to it, in different ways belong or are ordered: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and every human being called to salvation by God’s grace.’
- **n. 850** ‘The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make people share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.’

- n. 837** 'Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who,
1. possess the Spirit of Christ,
 2. accept all the means of salvation given to the Church
together with her entire organisation,
 3. by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments,
ecclesiastical government, and communion
are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ,
who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops.

Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not persevere in charity remains in the bosom of the Church, but in body not heart.'

n. 838 Real, though imperfect communion with other Christians,
especially the Orthodox

1. The Assyrian Church in the East (550,000)

- Nestorians fled to Persia (Iran & Iraq) where they had to show loyalty by distancing themselves from the Catholic Faith of the Roman Empire
- Chaldean **Catholic** Church (c.500,000)
Syro-Malabar **Catholic** Church (c.3 million)

2. Oriental Orthodox Churches (opposed the formula of Chalcedon 451)

- Armenian Apostolic Church (6 million) (**Catholic** 150,000)
- Coptic Orthodox Church (4 million) (**Catholic** 150,000)
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church (16 million) (**Catholic** 120,000)
- Syrian Orthodox Church (250,000 + Million in India) (**Catholic** 100,000)
- Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (1 million) (**Catholic** 280,000)

3. Orthodox Church (recognise Chalcedon)

There are 13 fully independent Churches in full sacramental and canonical communion

- Patriarchate of Constantinople (3,500,000)
- Patriarchate of Alexandria (350,000)
- Patriarchate of Antioch (750,000) (Melkite **Catholic** 1 million)
- Patriarchate of Jerusalem (260,000)
- Orthodox Church of Russia (50 million) (Ukrainian **Catholic** 4 million)
- Orthodox Church of Serbia (8 million) (**Catholic** 50,000)
- Orthodox Church of Romania (17 million) (**Catholic** 1,500,000)
- Orthodox Church of Bulgaria 8 million) (**Catholic** 15,000)
(Hungarian **Catholic** 270,000)
- Orthodox Church of Georgia (5 million)
- Orthodox Church of Cyprus (440,000)
- Orthodox Church of Greece (9 million) (**Catholic** 2,300)
- Orthodox Church of Poland (1 million) (Ruthenian **Catholic** 700.000)
- Orthodox Church of Albania (200,000)
- ? Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia (150,000) (**Catholic** 400,000)
- ? Orthodox Church of America (1 million)

n. 839 Links with Jews

n. 841 Links with Muslims

n. 845 ‘The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation.’

n. 856 Dialogue to better understand the elements of truth and grace found
n. 870 in the other communities.

4. The Church is apostolic n.857-870

- Our faith is based on the faith of those who experienced Jesus during his public ministry, and who recognised his presence and action in their post-crucifixion experiences.

n. 813

‘Father, you are the eternal shepherd who never leaves his flock untended. Through the apostles you watch over us and protect us always. You made them shepherds of the flock to share in the work of your Son, and from their place in heaven they guide us still’(Preface of Apostles).

n. 850, 860-862

The apostles appointed successors to be pastors of the flock

n. 863 ‘The whole Church is apostolic in that it remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with its origin, and in that it is sent out to the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways.’

n. 864 ‘The fruitfulness of apostolate depends on their vital union with Christ. ... Charity, drawn above all from the Eucharist, is always, as it were, the soul of the apostolate.’



In clearer light

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Who will welcome in
when doors are knocking?
Who will feed the hungry
deep inside?
Who will heal
forgiving hands outreaching?
Who will breathe the Spirit,
new and bright?
Who will smooth
in sickness and in sorrow?
Who will bind
as two hearts live as one?
Who will teach the truth
of people's story?
Who will bridge the real
with dreams unsung?



Where can deeper longings
make connection?

When can fractured spirits
head for home?

Why delay when grace
can run so freely?

How can new-found stories
make their claim?

Listen for the heart
that love breaks open.

Learn and look
beyond what's gone before.

Let God's gifts run free
in every culture,
anointed hands held ready

to be called



God provides the home
for all our longing.
Let the Church release
God's saving dream.
Holding back no avenue
to freedom.

Love and truth
in clearer light we see.

Come the day uncluttered
hearts are sharing,
given wholly to God's
ancient song.

Come the day when light
bursts from the shadows,
and priestly people