

## Ten After Ten, Session43: The Church Is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

811 These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission... it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

812 Only faith can recognize that the Church possesses these properties from her divine source. But their historical manifestations are signs that also speak clearly to human reason.

### One

813 The Church is one because of her source;...The Church is one because of her founder;...The Church is one because of her “soul”...Unity is of the essence of the Church.

814 From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great diversity which comes from both the variety of God’s gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church’s members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life.

815 What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity “binds everything together in perfect harmony.” But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

—profession of one faith received from the Apostles

—common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;

—apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God’s family.

816 “The sole Church of Christ [is that] which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it.... This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, **subsists in** the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.”

817 In fact, in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts...in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame.

818 “However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers.”

819 “Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth” are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church... Christ’s Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to “Catholic unity.

820 Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the

end of time. Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her.

822 Concern for achieving unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike.

### **Holy**

823 The Church... is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.

824 United with Christ, the Church is sanctified by him; through him and with him she becomes sanctifying. All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God.

825 The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect...all the faithful, whatever their condition or state—though each in his own way—are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.

826 Charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it "governs, shapes, and perfects all the means of sanctification."

827 Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal...The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity

828 By canonizing some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors.

829 But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary: in her, the Church is already the "all-holy."