

# **THE CHURCH**

## ***One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic***

### **Texts from the**

#### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***



### **THE CHURCH IS HOLY**

#### ***Because of Christ and the Holy Spirit***

“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.” The Church, then, is “the holy People of God”, and her members are called “saints”. (Vat II, the Church) (823)

#### ***The Church is sanctified by her union with Christ***

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.” It is in the Church that “the fullness of the means of salvation” has been deposited. It is in her that “by the grace of God we acquire holiness”. (Vat II, the Church) (824)

#### ***Real holiness but imperfect***

The Church... is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect. In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired: “Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, 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.” (825)

#### ***Love - the soul of holiness***

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

“If the Church was a body composed of different members, it couldn't lack the noblest of all; *it must have a Heart, and a Heart burning with love*. And I realised that this love alone was the true motive force which enabled the other members of the Church to act; if it ceased to function, the Apostles would forget to preach the gospel, the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. *Love, in fact, is the vocation which includes all others; it's a universe of its own, comprising all time and space - it's eternal!*” (St Therese of Lisieux) (825)

#### ***Sinners on the way to holiness***

“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.” All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness: (827)

“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. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offences, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Pope Paul VI) (827)

### ***The heroic virtue of the saints***

By *canonising* some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practised heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognises 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. "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history." Indeed, "holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of her apostolic activity and missionary zeal." (828)

### ***Mary, the model of holiness***

"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". (829)

## **IN BRIEF**

**The Church is holy: the Most Holy God is her author; Christ, her bridegroom, gave himself up to make her holy; the Spirit of holiness gives her life. Since she still includes sinners, she is "the sinless one made up of sinners". Her holiness shines in the saints; in Mary she is already all-holy. (867)**

