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The Catholic Church Continues Christ's Mission

What Do you Think?

Imagine that talk-show hosts are interviewing you. Write your response to each of the following questions on the lines provided.

Discuss these questions with family members and friends.

Why are leaders necessary?

What are some words
that describe good leaders?



Who are some good leaders you know?

How can you develop good leadership skills?

We Will Learn...

- 1 The pope and bishops are the successors of the Apostles.
- 2 The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
- 3 Catholics worship and serve together.

1 The pope and bishops are the successors of the Apostles.

After the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the Apostles traveled from place to place teaching what Jesus had taught them. In each local community the Apostles baptized people as Jesus had commanded

Do You Know?



The bishops continue the mission of the Apostles in three important ways:

- They *teach*. The bishops are the chief teachers of the Church. They help the members of the Church know, understand, and live out the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- They *lead*. The bishops are the chief leaders and pastors of the Church. They lead their people and oversee the work of their dioceses.
- They *sanctify*. The word *sanctify* means “to make holy.” Through their prayer, preaching, and celebration of the sacraments, the bishops help all the members of the Church to live Christian lives and to grow in holiness.

them. The members of these communities looked to Peter and the other Apostles as their leaders.

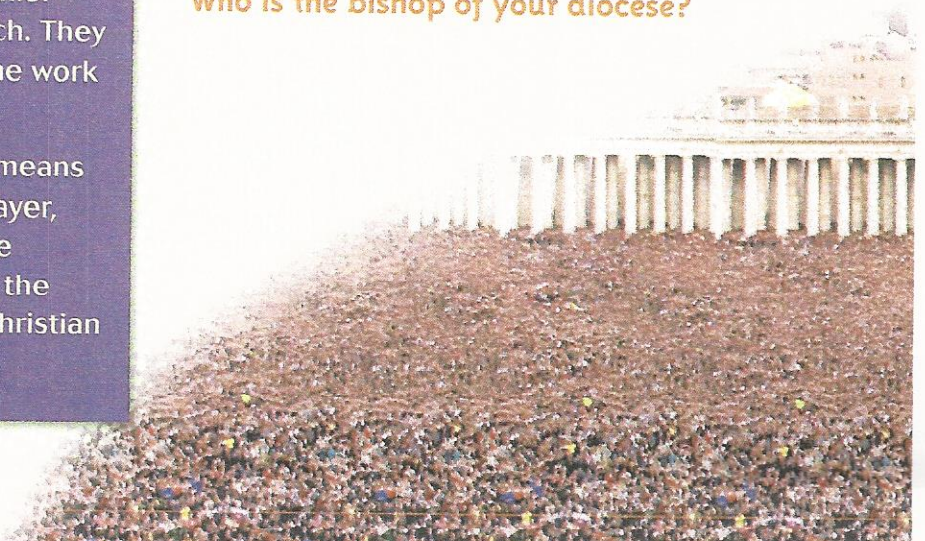
The Apostles eventually chose local leaders to serve these communities. The Apostles laid their hands on the heads of those they had chosen and asked the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide these new leaders in their work. In this way the Apostles handed on what Christ had given to them: the authority to carry on his mission.

As time passed, the leaders who succeeded, or took the place of, the Apostles were called *bishops*. **Bishops** are the successors of the Apostles and continue to lead the Church. Each local area of the Church is called a **diocese** and is led by a bishop.

The **pope** is the bishop of the diocese of Rome, Italy. He continues the leadership of the Apostle Peter, having a God-given responsibility to care for the souls of all members of the Church. Together with all the bishops, the pope leads and guides the whole Catholic Church. Under the leadership of the pope and bishops, the Church continues the work of Jesus Christ each and every day. Each of us is united with the pope and bishops in living out our faith.

Who is our present pope?

Who is the bishop of your diocese?



2 The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

In the Catholic Church, the Church of Christ is truly present although elements of goodness and truth can be found outside of her. The Catholic Church has four very special qualities or characteristics. The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These four characteristics that describe the Church are called the **Marks of the Church**.

The Church is *one*. The Church is one because all of her members believe in the one Lord, Jesus Christ. We share the same Baptism and are guided and united by the Holy Spirit. Under the leadership of the pope and bishops, we gather together to celebrate the sacraments and to live and work together as one community called together by God.

The Church is *holy*. God alone is all good and holy. But he shared his holiness with all people by sending his Son, Jesus Christ to us. As members of the Church, baptized into the Body of Christ, we, too, through the power of the Holy Spirit, share in God's life which makes us holy.

As members of the Church we grow in holiness, especially through prayer, good works, and the celebration of the sacraments.

The Church is *catholic*. The word *catholic* means "universal." The Church is universal, or open to all people, since everyone is invited and welcomed to become members of the Church. All people are invited to be followers of Jesus Christ. Today there are Catholics on every continent and in every country of the world.

The Church is *apostolic*. This means that the Church was built on the faith of the Apostles and continues to be guided by their successors, the bishops. The Church is apostolic today because the life and leadership of the Church is based on that of the Apostles' mission which was given to them by Jesus. As baptized Catholics, disciples of Jesus, we, too, share in the work of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the world.

In your own words describe what each of the Marks of the Church means.





3 Catholics worship and serve together.

A **parish** is a community of believers. It is made up of Catholics who usually live in the same town or neighborhood. A parish is part of a diocese. Members of a parish gather together in Jesus' name to worship God and to share with one another.

In parishes, members gather together to:

- celebrate Mass and the other sacraments
- pray and grow in their faith
- share what they have—money, time, talents—with one another
- care for people in need—those who are sick, poor, or hungry.

Priests work in the parishes of a diocese.

Priests preach the Gospel and serve the faithful, especially by celebrating the Eucharist and the other sacraments. They are baptized men who have been ordained to this ministry in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Priests work with the bishop of their diocese. A **pastor** is the priest who leads

the parish in worship, prayer, teaching, and service. His most important work is to lead the parish in the celebration of Mass. A parish might also have other priests who work with the pastor.

Sometimes a parish has a deacon. A **deacon** is a baptized man who in the Sacrament of Holy Orders has been ordained to serve the Church by preaching, baptizing, performing marriages, and doing acts of charity. He carries on his responsibilities under the authority of the bishop and in cooperation with the bishop and his priests.

In many parishes lay people, men and women who are not ordained, serve in various roles. Lay ecclesial ministers are lay people who serve in leadership positions and are recognized and appointed by the Church.

It is important to remember that each person is an important part of the parish.

How will you participate in the parish community this week?

Review

Write *True* or *False* next to the following sentences. On a separate piece of paper, change the false sentences to make them true.

- _____ The word *catholic* means “founded on the Apostles.”
- _____ The pope continues the leadership of the Apostle Peter.
- _____ The successors of the Apostles were given the title *deacon*.
- _____ The Catholic Church is only open to a certain number of people.

Discuss the following.

- How did the Apostles give their successors the authority Jesus had given to them?
- Name the four Marks of the Church and briefly describe each one.
- For what reasons do parish members come together?

Faith Words

bishops (page 34)

diocese (page 34)

pope (page 34)

Marks of the Church (page 35)

parish (page 36)

priests (page 36)

pastor (page 36)

deacon (page 36)

With My Family

Sharing Our Faith

- 1** The pope and bishops are the successors of the Apostles.
- 2** The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
- 3** Catholics worship and serve together.

PRAYING TOGETHER

As you pray Psalm 117, think about all the members of the Church who live in every country of the world.

**“Praise the LORD, all you nations!
Give glory, all you peoples!
The LORD’s love for us is strong;
the LORD is faithful forever.
Hallelujah!”** (Psalm 117:1–2)

Living Our Faith

This week think about ways you can participate in your parish. Decide on one or two ways that you will actually participate. Write these ways below.

Remember that one important way to participate in your parish is to pray for parish members, especially the people in need. Complete the following prayer.

Jesus, bless the members of our parish.
