

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The Nicene Creed

At the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople in the fourth century CE, Church leaders agreed upon a single statement of faith called the Nicene Creed. It identifies four marks, or distinguishing qualities, of the Church. The 'four marks' of the Church are that it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.



The Nicene Creed

Catholics recite this every Sunday. A creed is a statement of belief. A council of bishops met in a place called Nicea, in Turkey, to settle the question of how Christians should speak about God. In this creed it is clear that Christians believe in:

- ✓ One God
- ✓ But also in the 'Son of God' who is equal with the Father
- ✓ And in the Holy Spirit who is 'adored and glorified' with the Father and the Son
- ✓ One, holy, catholic and apostolic Church
- ✓ Forgiveness and Resurrection

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

God the Father

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.

God the Son

I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

God the Holy Spirit

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.



One, holy, catholic & apostolic Church

"...one, holy, catholic and apostolic"

The four marks of the Church (The Nicene Creed)



One



Holy

Catholics believe Jesus is the source of all holiness. Jesus makes the Church holy and the Church makes people holy through its teaching, prayer, worship and good works. Catholics believe that each member of the Church has been called to holiness. This means that through baptism, a Catholic has been freed from original sin, filled with God's grace, and become a member of the holy People of God.

'Holy' doesn't mean that there are no sinners in the Church. Catholics recognise that they are weak human beings, and at times they sin and fall short of what God wants them to be. They are taught to ask for God's forgiveness and try again. In a sense, the Church considers itself to be a Church of sinners, rather than of the self-righteous. One of the prayers of the Mass asks:

"Lord, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church."



Catholic

Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-108CE) used this word, meaning 'universal' or 'whole', to describe the Church. The Church is Catholic in that Christ is universally present (present everywhere) in the Church, and because he has given the Church the task of 'evangelising' which means telling the whole world the message of Jesus. The Church is Catholic because Jesus gives the Church everything they need to be saved.



Apostolic

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ founded the Church and gave his authority to his apostles – these were the 12 men he called to follow him. He entrusted a special authority to St Peter, the leader of the Apostles, to act as his representation on earth. Peter was the first pope. The Church is apostolic means that the faith that Catholics have has been handed down from the first apostles, through the pope and bishops right up to the present day.

Knowledge Check

1. What are the 'four marks' of the Church?
2. When is the Nicene Creed recited?
3. Who do Catholics believe is the source of all holiness?
4. How does the Church make people holy?
5. Define the term *Catholic*
6. Define the term *evangelising*
7. What does it mean that the Church is apostolic?
8. What is the Greek word for Church?

Choose a Task

1. Create a detailed mind-map (try to make this visual)
2. Create a multiple-choice quiz (aim for at least 10 questions)
3. Create a poster/leaflet

CHALLENGE!

Turn over the mat and try to complete your task without looking at the information. Then refer back to the task mat to see what you have missed/could have included.

Exam Question

c) Explain the importance of belief in the four marks of the Church [8]



Church

In Greek, 'ecclesia' is the word for Church. It means assembly, or gathering together of God's people. The Church *is* the people of God gathered together. The word *church* with a small c is used to refer to building where Christians come to pray. When it is written with a capital C, Catholics mean everyone who is a member of the Church, all believers together. The Church is an important idea to Catholics.