

Class 12
Who / What is the Church

1. What is the Church
 - a. a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*
 - i. refers to a group of persons that were called together for a specific purpose
 - ii. derived from the Greek *Kuriakos*
 1. means belonging to the Lord
 - iii. The Church is thus an assembly that has been called together to be the Lord's people
2. The Catholic Church as the people of God
 - a. Throughout History God calls certain people to Himself
 - i. God formed a covenant relationship with all of humanity. (Gen 8-9)
 - ii. God formed a special covenant with the Jewish People (Ex6:7, Lv 26:12, Jer 30:33)
 - iii. Forms a new covenant with the New Testament Followers (Mt 28:19-20)
 1. The Church is composed of every ethnic and national group, united under Christ
 2. The family line extends back to the earliest Christians
 3. The Catholic community is a core group of God's people oriented towards the same goal of eternal life
3. The forming of the Church
 - a. Jesus choose an inner circle of 12 men (Mt 10:1-4)
 - i. Prepared them to lead the Church
 - ii. These 12 men were called apostles
 1. apostle = emissary
 - iii. Jesus gives them full authority
 1. To bind and loose sins (Mt 18:18)
 2. To celebrate the Eucharist (Lk 22:14-20)
 - iv. Jesus intends for His work to be carried on
 1. The apostles handed on the authority (1 Cor 11:23 – 26)
 2. St. Peter was given special charge of the college of Apostles (Mt:16:18)
 - b. Jesus gave the privilege of participating in and continuing His ministry until the end of time.
 - i. Mt 10:1-4, Lk 9:1, Lk 10:19, Lk 10:16, Jn 16:14-15, Eph 20:20
 - c. Pentecost is the Birthday of the Church
 - i. The day the Church has shown itself to be a divine-human reality
 1. a combination of the Holy Spirit working and people striving to cooperate with the gift of His presence
4. What is the Church
 - a. 3 different meanings
 - i. The Catholic Church

1. the persons who are baptized and believe and follow the teachings and practice of the Catholic Faith as the Church Jesus Christ founded
 2. The Church is a visible society
 - a. She contains the fullness of truth
 - ii. All baptized persons
 1. We recognize that, while the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ founded, ever validly baptized person (every Christian) who professes belief in Jesus Christ in some way has a relationship with and to the Church
 - iii. Specific churches
 1. a particular group within the larger ecclesial body
 - a. a specific parish, diocese, country etc.
 - b. The Church is made up of sinful members but herself is a perfect Divine institution
 - c. The Church as a mystery
 - i. It is a visible sign of God's invisible presence
 - ii. The primary instrument through which the Spirit brings about the total oneness that lies in store for all of us
 - d. Helpful paradigms for understanding the Church
 - i. The Church as Communion
 1. The Church is a sign of communion with God and of unity among all believers
 2. God calls all people together to be in communion with Him
 - ii. The Church as the People of God
 1. Highlights the fact that the Church is a visible community with a hierarchical structure and laws similar to any earthly nation
 2. The Church is on her journey toward the eternal home of heaven
 - iii. The Church as the Mystical Body of Christ
 1. Christ is the head of the Body (Col 1:18)
 2. We are all united in Christ as different parts of the same Body (Rom 12:4-5)
 - iv. The Church as the Bride of Christ
 1. Just as husbands and wives sacrifice for one another so Jesus has offered Himself for His bride the Church
 - a. Why the Church is referred to her as a she
5. The work of the Church
- a. Jesus ministered in the roles of Priest, Prophet, and King
 - b. The apostles and their successors the bishops continue this saving work
 - i. Bishops are men who are consecrated and normally appointed to lead a specific territorial area
 - ii. They have a direct line of succession to the apostles called apostolic succession
 - c. Priestly Office

- i. the office of sanctifying
- d. Prophetic Office
 - i. the office exercised by the Pope and the bishops in communion with him and under the faithful teaching of the whole content of Divine Revelation
 - ii. the teaching is understood as the defending, guarding, and interpreting of what is contained in divine Revelation
 - iii. The Church is meant to be a teacher to help all Christians know the truth
 - iv. The Magisterium
 - 1. The teaching body of the Church
 - a. contains the Pope and bishops in union with him
 - b. as successors to the apostles, the bishops are entrusted with and guided by the teaching authority of Jesus Christ Himself
 - 2. Infallibility
 - a. Christ guarantees that the Pope, in his exercise of the Magisterium would teach free from error on matters pertaining to faith and morals
 - i. This is a work of the Holy Spirit within the Church
 - ii. Mt 28:18-20
 - iii. My 16:18
 - iv. Jn 14:16-17
 - v. 1 Tim 3:15
 - b. Conditions for Infallibility
 - i. When the Pope acting as the Supreme Teacher of the Faith makes a declaration regarding faith or Morals by a definitive act
 - ii. When the Pope, together with the bishops exercises the Magisterium particularly in an ecumenical council
 - iii. When the Pope proposes a doctrine “for belief as divinely revealed”
 - iv. when the bishops, in communion with the Pope, propose a teaching that leads to a better understanding of Revelation in a matter of faith and morals
 - 3. Not all teachings are infallible but all teachings of the Church oblige our assent of belief
 - a. we should believe everything that the Church proposes for our belief
 - b. Our faith has not changed that much in its almost 2,000 year existence
- e. The Pastoral Office

- i. The authority given to the Church that is exercised by the bishops in their effort to guide the faithful on the path to salvation
 - 1. Jesus gives the apostles the authority to legislate and discipline
 - a. Mt 18:17-18, Mt 16:18, Lk 10:16
 - ii. Different ecclesiastical laws are promulgated that guide the practice of the Faith and the administration of the Church
6. The role of the laity
 - a. a lay person is any individual in the Church who is neither in Holy Orders (bishop, priest, or deacon) or in religious life
 - b. The lay faithful are called to seek holiness and work for the growth and spreading of the faith within their daily life
 - c. Priest, Prophet, and King
 - i. All baptized persons participate in Christ's offices of priest, prophet and king but in a manner essentially different than those who are in Holy Orders
 - ii. Priest
 - 1. the lay faithful participate in the priestly office when, in union with the Sacrifice of Christ made present at Mass, they offer up their professional, familial and personal lives to God and seek to live them with perfection
 - iii. Prophet
 - 1. By helping others understand the truths of the faith
 - a. requires seeking formation through learning, reading etc.
 - iv. King (pastoral)
 - 1. helping society and our world become more just and Christian
 - 2. Combating sin and promoting the values of the Kingdom of God
7. Summary
 - a. The Church is the people of God called together to be the instrument for the salvation of all people
 - b. Jesus Christ founded the Church while He lived on earth
 - c. Jesus passed the responsibility for the Church and His authority to the Apostles, particularly to St. Peter, who was given a special role as the head
 - d. This same Church exists today in an unbroken line of belief and succession from St. Peter and the Apostles until to today
 - e. The Church continues Christ's work of teaching, governing, sanctifying Her members so that they may achieve salvation
 - f. All persons play an important role in the Church and the lay faithful have the unique role of sanctifying the world in which they live through the daily witness of their lives.