

The Founding of the Church

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus called 12 men to follow Him in a special way. These men spent every moment with Jesus over the three years of His public ministry. In that time, Jesus revealed personal knowledge about Himself and gave them in depth instructions on how to follow Him. These 12 are called apostles, which mean emissaries, because they were tasked with the mission of representing Christ to the world.

Jesus, knowing that He would soon ascend to the right hand of the Father and intending that His saving work be carried on in the world, gave His apostles the authority¹ to carry out His work under the guidance of St. Peter.² In handing on authority to the apostles, Jesus Christ founded a Church on the authority who functioned as a college under the authority of St. Peter.

50 days after Easter and only 10 days after Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, on the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles huddled in the upper room and they received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. From that moment on the apostles went out to publicly proclaim Christ and bring others to Him through baptism.³

From the upper room, the apostles went out to every corner of the known world and began spreading the message of Jesus Christ. As the Church was established in different places, the apostles choose leaders of each local church and laid hands on them, ordaining them bishops. In this ancient gesture of laying on hands, the apostles handed on the authority they received from Jesus Christ to the next generation of leaders in the Church. Those men in turn laid hands on other men, who in turn laid hands upon other men on down until today. Every Catholic bishop through history has a direct line of succession to one of the 11 apostles who received their authority directly from Christ. Through this apostolic succession, the Holy Spirit has remained with the Catholic Church guiding her down through the centuries as she continues to carry out Christ's saving mission in the world.

Today, the Church continues to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the bishops in union with the Pope, the successor to St. Peter. While many different Christian churches have formed through the ages, all of them ultimately broke away from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church continues to authentically hand down the saving message of Jesus Christ through

¹ 1 Cor 11:23-26

² Mt 16:18

³ Acts 2: 1-47

her teaching in an unbroken and divinely protected lineage tracing itself back directly to Christ who first founded the Catholic Church and promised to remain with it always.⁴

⁴ Mt 28:20