

Why a Church?

Jesus did not leave us alone.

In short. The Church teaches that Jesus himself founded the Church, giving his community a structure with the Twelve and Peter as their head.^{1,2} It is the Body of Christ, professed in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.^{3,4}

Key points

- Jesus founded a community and chose the Twelve, with Peter as their head.²
- The Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is its head.⁵
- It is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.⁴
- It is at once holy and always in need of purification.⁶

Try this, this week

1. **Read Acts 2:42–47.** Notice what the first Christians did together.
2. **Visit a parish once, just to look.** Sit at the back. Nobody will ask you to do anything.
3. **Name the people who passed faith to you.** A grandparent, a friend, a teacher.
4. **Say what hurts, if something does.** A good priest will want to hear it.

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 16:18, Douay–Rheims

Watch out: what this does not mean

- The Church is not a club of the perfect: all members, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners.⁶
- Belonging to the Church does not replace a personal relationship with God; the Church teaches that the faithful are to live from the mystery of faith in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God.¹²

Common questions

Can’t I just follow Jesus on my own?

The Church teaches that faith is a personal act, but not an isolated one: “No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone.”⁷ The Catechism calls believing an ecclesial act, because the Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our own.⁸

Why does the Church have a Pope?

The Catechism teaches that the Lord made Simon, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church and gave him the keys.^{9,10} The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of unity for the bishops and the whole company of the faithful.¹¹

Remember: No one comes to faith alone.

Sources

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| 1. CCC 763 | 7. CCC 166 |
| 2. CCC 765 | 8. CCC 181 |
| 3. CCC 787 | 9. CCC 881 |
| 4. CCC 811 | 10. Matthew 16:18–19 (Douay–Rheims) |
| 5. CCC 792 | 11. CCC 882 |
| 6. CCC 827 | 12. CCC 2558 |

Quotation above: Matthew 16:18, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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