



English Martyrs Catholic Church

2 Mitcham Lane, London SW16 6NN



CONFIRMATION 2018 - the Church

"I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH"

Paragraph 2. The Church - People of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit

I. THE CHURCH - PEOPLE OF GOD

781 "At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him. He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.

Characteristics of the People of God

782 - It is the *People of God*: God is not the property of any one people.

- One becomes a *member* of this people not by physical birth, but by being "born anew," in Baptism.
- This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people."
- "The *status* of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God...
- "Its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us."
- Its *mission* is to be salt of the earth and light of the world.
- Its *destiny* - "is the Kingdom of God" begun on earth, brought to perfection the end of time."²⁰⁷

A priestly, prophetic, and royal people

783 Christ: priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices

II. THE CHURCH - BODY OF CHRIST

The Church is communion with Jesus

787 Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion: I am the vine, you are the branches."

Communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood"

788 His visible presence was taken – He sent them his Spirit.²¹⁸ As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."²¹⁹

789 The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered *around him*; she is united *in him*, in his body: the unity of all her members; Christ as head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.

790 Believers become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification."²²⁰ This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist

791 The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members:

"Christ is the Head of this Body"

792 Christ "is the head of the body, the Church."²²⁵ He is the principle of creation and redemption.

793 *Christ unites us with his Passover*: all his members must strive to resemble him, "until Christ be formed" in them.²²⁷ "For this reason we . . . are taken up into the mysteries of his life, . . . associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, with him we may be glorified."²²⁸

794 *Christ provides for our growth*: to make us grow toward him, our head,²²⁹ he provides in his Body, the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation.

795 Christ and his Church thus together make up the "whole Christ" (*Christus totus*). The Church is one with Christ. The saints are acutely aware of this unity:

Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself. Do you understand and grasp, brethren, God's grace toward us? Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members; he and we together are the whole man. . . . The fullness of Christ then is the head and the members. But what does "head and members" mean? Christ and the Church.²³⁰

Our redeemer has shown himself to be one person with the holy Church whom he has taken to himself.²³¹ Head and members form as it were one and the same mystical person.²³²

A reply of St. Joan of Arc to her judges sums up the faith of the holy doctors and the good sense of the believer: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter."²³³

The Church is the Bride of Christ

796 The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride.

The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb.²³⁷ "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her."²³⁸ He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body:²³⁹

This is the whole Christ, head and body, one formed from many . . . whether the head or members speak, it is Christ who speaks. He speaks in his role as the head (*ex persona capitis*) and in his role as body (*ex persona corporis*). What does this mean? "The two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church."²⁴⁰ And the Lord himself says in the Gospel: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."²⁴¹ They are, in fact, two different persons, yet they are one in the conjugal union, . . . *as head, he calls himself the bridegroom, as body, he calls himself "bride."*²⁴²

III. THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

797 "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church."²⁴³ "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members."²⁴⁴ The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God":²⁴⁵

Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted. . . . In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God. . . . For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace.²⁴⁶

798 The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body." He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity:²⁴⁸ by God's Word "which is able to build you up";²⁴⁹ by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body;²⁵⁰ by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts";²⁵¹ by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."²⁵²