Lightning Apologetics



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THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

The truth of Christianity is clearly proved by the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ was God. His religion is the religion of God. The two truths are one!

However Christianity is a house divided into many Christian sects. A confusion of claims and counter-claims don't help the Christian world. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Christian religions, there are over 30,000 different Christian denominations, and yet, they differ essentially from one another. Contradictions in doctrine, in forms of worship, and, in many instances, in basic moral evaluations are more common than mutual agreement.

Unfortunately, discordant claims and contradictory teachings have confused and bewildered many people. Some, despairing of ever discovering religious truth, have abandoned themselves to religious indifferentism, or they have settled down into an agnostic secularism. The person who hopes to find Christ must not succumb to these easy alternatives. The confusion in the religious scene should serve as a challenge rather than a sedative. If the search for truth is difficult, its discovery is rewarding. A person who wishes to follow Christ cannot afford the luxury of indifference in religion. He must be resolute in his demands for truth.

If we are to discover the Church of Jesus Christ among the many Christian Churches in today's world, we must ask ourselves two questions:

- 1. Did Christ establish one Church or many Churches?
- 2. If He established one Church, which one of the Christian Churches in existence can prove that it is the one genuine Church which He founded?

Thus we begin our study of the Four Marks of the Church. You state your belief in these four marks every Sunday at Mass when you say the Nicene Creed. Did you know that?

One Church

Even a superficial glance at the Gospels will convince a fair minded inquirer (yes, inquiring minds want to know!) of two facts: Christ did establish a Church, and He established one Church—not many Churches.

Let's investigate. The first thing we need to do is understand the precise meaning of the word, church. In the Old Testament the word, church, was used to describe a gathering of men called together by a magistrate. The word was also applied either to the place of the meeting or to the meeting itself. Webster defines a church as "building used for public worship, especially Christian worship, or, the collective body of Christians, a body of Christian believers having the same creed and rites."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "The Church is the congregation of all who profess the faith fo Christ, partake of the same Sacraments, and are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head." So the Church is composed of many members –it is a congregation, and the members of this congregation are joined by a common bond – a profession of faith in Christ and the reception of the Sacraments. There is also a common authority, i.e., government by lawful pastors under one visible head, and there is a common purpose, which is the personal sanctification and salvation by belief and communion in the Sacraments.

In other words, the Church is a true religious society of men and women forming a fellowship of belief, action, and worship which is centered in God. We may now ask: did Christ establish such a religious society among us? He did, and He called the society which He established, His Church. This is a much needed topic to be understood. The Catholic Church is not just one church among many, but THE Church established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Next week we'll go over the facts. God Bless!