



## THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH – IV

1. **Catholic Unity:** The Catholic Church has always been characterized by unity of faith, worship, and government. The Catholic Faith is the same the world over; the same Mass is offered and the same Sacraments are administered by members of the same priesthood. Her members acknowledge the same spiritual authority. There are no divisions in belief, authority, and worship in the Catholic Church.
2. **Catholic Holiness:** The holiness of the Catholic Church is evident in the person of Christ, her founder. The Church gives us the means of holiness in the Mass, the Sacraments and the teachings of Christ. If her doctrine is accepted, it will produce holiness in the souls of men. Many great examples of holiness are found in her members. It does not mean that every person in the Catholic Church is holy, some are far from it, but the Church gives us the means of holiness. For some not to enter the Church because of some of the bad examples of some of her members is like judging a university only the people that fail. So the means to sainthood is there, but not all use it.
3. **Catholic Apostolicity:** The Catholic Church bears an apostolic signature. Pope Benedict XVI is a direct successor to St. Peter, the other bishops of the Church are direct descendants in ordination of Paul, John, Matthew, James and the other Apostles. Even after twenty-one centuries, the Catholic Church does not differ from the Apostolic Church in any one essential. Her creed, her code of morals, and her worship – ever her organizational structure – is the same.
4. **Catholic Universality (catholicity):** The very name the Church bears – Catholic- means universal. She is a universal Church. Spread throughout the entire world, She appeals to all men and women. She preaches the complete Gospel of Christ. There has been no time since the days of Christ when She has failed to exercise her universal mission. She is universal or catholic in time, space and doctrine. The Catholicity of the Church emphasizes the mark of unity. Such unbroken unity in an institution spread over the entire world, and working in many different cultures, can only be the work of God. In human affairs, division usually rules. The records of war in history prove that. The story of empires, institutions, peoples and religions show a crazy-quilt pattern of division and sub-division. The Catholic Church alone, of all institutions (it's more than an institution; it is the Mystical Body of Christ) has survived the many changes of history. Numbering over a billion in her world-wide communion, and facing constant challenge and hostility, even in America, the Catholic Church has been marked out by constant and complete agreement on religion – the most difficult of all things to agree upon. The unity of the Universal Church is a miracle of the moral order which can only be explained by the efficacy of Christ's prayer: "That they all may be as one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee, that they also be one in Us" (John 17:21).

The Catholic Church, therefore, possesses the four essential marks which were part of the Church which Christ founded. This fact when added to the testimony of history is another proof of the Church's claim that She is the one, true Church established by Christ. The four marks are further sign-posts assuring those who survey them that they are on the road to truth. The oneness of the Catholic Church's faith, the universality of her mission, the apostolicity of her origin, and the holiness of its founder and mission and purposes proclaim that She belongs to Christ.

Protestant Churches do not possess apostolicity because the oldest of them does not date past the sixteenth century. Unity is also missing as there are many divisions within each Protestant denomination which hold radically different beliefs. Universality is missing. It wasn't until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that missionary activity was entered into. In many instances the fullness of holiness is missing as well. Look at the lives of Martin Luther and Henry VIII. Some of the later reformers were good and sincere men, but their goodness was as nothing compared with the holiness of Christ Who founded the Catholic Church. In rejecting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and many of the Sacraments, these Churches lost the principal means of holiness given by Our Lord. None possess the four marks which the Church of Christ must have. Only the Catholic Church carries the four characteristics which prove it to be the genuine Church of Christ.

In this article I mentioned several Protestant Churches. A thorough consideration of the facts necessitated it. These references were necessary in order to solve the problem which was presented in the first part of the article. I never speak from hate, only love. I have but one interest in Catholic instructions – to give the full truth of Christ. No catechist desires to destroy the positive beliefs which a sincere person possesses. On the other hand, no catechist can rightly refuse an obligation which is that of helping people to complete their possession of religious truth. We had to speak of the Marks of the Church. We have seen that only the Catholic Church possesses the four essential characteristics which Christ gave to His Church in all their fullness. They are clear sign-posts which mark out the avenue of religious truth to be found in the Catholic Church.