

Jesus Founded the Church on Peter and the Apostles. The Pope and Bishops are their Successors. (CCC 857-862)

"...the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1Timothy 3:15).

I. Jesus called the Twelve Apostles (Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph # 880)

- a) Jesus began preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God
- b) Jesus *"named twelve as His companions whom He would send to preach the good news; they were likewise to have authority to expel demons. He appointed the Twelve as follows: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James, son of Zebedee; and John the brother of James. . . ; Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus, Simon of the Zealot party and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him"* (Mark 3:13-19).
- c) Jesus gave the Apostles the teachings of His Kingdom
"To you has been given to know the secrets of the mysteries of the Kingdom, but it has not been given to the others" (Matthew 13:11).

II. Jesus founded the Church with a Structure (CCC 881-882)

- a) The Church has a human structure that is hierarchical by divine choice
(See Acts 6:1-6 and 1Timothy 3:1-13)
- b) Jesus chose Peter and empowered him with supreme authority (see Jn 21:15-17)
Jesus gave to Peter alone the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven
Jesus replied, *" . . . I for my part declare to you, you are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in Heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in Heaven"* (Matthew 16: 18-19). The Church founded by Christ is a Divine Institution.
- c) Jesus made Peter the first Pope.
Our Lord would return to Heaven. To make sure that His Church would have a supreme leader, who would be His representative on earth, Jesus chose Peter. Jesus made Peter the head of all the Apostles and of the Church.
They listened to Peter and obeyed his decisions, just as they had done to Jesus
- d) Jesus gave to Peter the role of strengthening his brother bishops (see Lk 22:31-32)

III. Jesus gave the Apostles His Authority (CCC 763-766, 883-894)

- a) Jesus prepared the Apostles for their roles of leadership in His Church. He shared His authority with all of them, giving them special spiritual gifts that would help them carry out the mission of teaching, governing (serving) and sanctifying (making holy)
- b) Jesus mandated the mission of His Church before His Ascension into Heaven:
"Full authority has been given to Me both in Heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name 'of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20).



IV. Jesus made the Apostles the first bishops of the Church.

(CCC 857-860, 888-895)

- a) Jesus gave the Apostles responsibilities, making them shepherds of His flock. The Apostles were to be Christ's voice, teaching the good news to all nations: *"He who hears you, hears Me. He who rejects you, rejects Me"* (Luke 10:16).
- b) The Bishops were to make rules, based upon the teachings of Christ, that would protect the goodness of the Christian way of life, such as the Precepts: *"You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor."* *"You shall confess your sins at least once a year."* (See CCC 2041-2043)
- c) The Apostles were to help the Christians to become holy by forgiving their sins: *"If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound"* (John 20:20). (CCC 981-987)
- d) The Apostles were to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and the other six Sacraments through which we receive sanctifying grace, a share in God's Divine Life. Sanctifying grace strengthens us, supernaturally, to be able to live the Christian life. At the Last Supper, Jesus said, *"Take this and eat it, this is My Body which will be given up for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. This is My Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant, which will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of Me"* (see Matthew 26:26-28).

V. Jesus sent God the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (CCC 731-732)

- a) Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to enlighten and empower the Apostles with supernatural grace to preach, to baptize and to guard the Church from error. *"I will not leave you orphans."* *"But when He comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth."* (John 14:18; John 16:13)
Before the Ascension, Jesus *"told them not to leave Jerusalem: 'Wait, rather, for the fulfillment of my Father's promise...'"* *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:4, 8).

VI. The Apostles appointed successors

(CCC 860-862)

- a) The successors to Peter and the Apostles are the Pope and the Bishops; the Pope is the visible sign of unity of the Catholic Church. The Bishops have, by divine institution, taken the place of the Apostles as pastors of the Church. Each bishop in the world can trace his line of succession back to the Apostles. St. Paul said, *"Keep watch over yourselves, and over the whole flock the Holy Spirit has given you to guard. Shepherd the Church of God, which He has acquired at the price of His own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

VII. Each bishop is a shepherd, deriving his authority from Christ.

- a) Under Jesus' commission to teach the world, the Pope and the bishops constitute the living teaching office of the Church, the Magisterium, so that we may have a sure guide to know for certain what is true and what is good. (C 888-890)
- b) The Church is the only institution that has the fullness of truth, given and protected by the Holy Spirit. (CCC 891-892)

