

Church

The **Church** is first and foremost the people whom God has called together through Jesus Christ. It is a sacred assembly—a community gathered by God to worship, to hear His Word, and to share in the life of Christ.

In the New Testament, the word *Church* (from the Greek *ekklesia*) refers not to a building but to a **people called together by God**. The “Church of God” describes a living community of believers who gather in faith, hope, and love.

The Church as People of God

The Church is not primarily a structure or institution, but a **living body of believers**. It is:

- A people called by God
- A community united in Christ
- A sign and instrument of salvation in the world
- The Body of Christ, with Jesus as its head

As St. Paul writes:

“You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Church Buildings

Over time, the word *church* also came to refer to the **building** where Christians gather for worship. This development became more prominent after the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D., when Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire. As a result, church buildings began to be constructed throughout the Christian world.

These sacred spaces are designed to support worship and prayer, and over the centuries they have taken many forms of architecture and artistic expression. While beautiful and important, church buildings always point to a deeper reality: the people of God gathered in Christ.

The Catholic Church

The **Catholic Church** is the worldwide community of Christians who are united in faith, sacraments, and governance under the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, who is understood as the **Successor of Saint Peter** and the **Vicar of Christ on earth**.

The Catholic Church is the largest Christian Church in the world. It exists in every nation and is made up of people from many languages, cultures, and backgrounds, all united in the same faith and sacraments.

The Church Today

The Church continues the mission of Jesus Christ in the world:

- To proclaim the Gospel
- To celebrate the sacraments
- To serve those in need
- To form disciples in faith and love

The Church is both **divine and human**—holy because Christ is her head, yet made up of imperfect people who are continually called to conversion and growth in holiness.