

Mission and Ministry of the Church

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, it is through your Church that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom is made known to the world. Guide us as we strive to do our part to build this Kingdom and make real the sacrament of Christ to all that we meet. Amen.

Scripture

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." (*Philippians 2: 1-2*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

Church means different things to many people. The Church's mission and ministry has been shaped by the many images that have been presented throughout history. No matter what image a person has in regard to the church, its mission and ministry is born out of a relationship with others as we live and proclaim the Gospels. This program will explore the different ways that church can be experienced.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

The entire life of Jesus was the foundation of the Church. As he gathered his followers and revealed himself to them, the Church was being born. Early growth climaxed at the Last Supper and was strengthened with the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Since those times, the church has grown in its understanding of how to express the Word of God to others. Today its mission encompasses a set of images born out of both the Old and New Testaments and a rich history which includes teachers, servants, martyrs and great writers. The most prominent images from the Catechism of the Catholic Church present us with a framework that defines our experience of being church as the Body Christ, the People of God, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Similar statements can be found in many Church documents. A few are listed here.

"...For, those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the Word of the living God (cf. 1 Peter 1: 23), not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3: 5-6), are finally established as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people' ... You who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God." (1 Peter 2: 9-10) (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #9*)

"... drawing on a rich biblical and historical tradition, gives marvelous expression to the role of the Church as the sign of the Kingdom of God. It was this Kingdom which Jesus came to announce and to inaugurate by his life, death, and resurrection...Jesus established the Church to bear witness to God's Kingdom especially by the ways his followers would live as the People of God." (*Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Nov. 13, 1980*)

“The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which insofar as they are united to their pastor, are also quite appropriately called Churches in the New Testament In them, the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the Diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is constituted.” LG 26. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #832)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. With the different images of the church presented in the catechism, which are you most comfortable with? Least comfortable with?
2. What is the mission and ministry of the church?
3. As a Serran, how do you personally, actively minister to the world around you?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

From the very beginning of his public life, Jesus invited people to follow him. As they listened to his message about God, the coming of the kingdom, and the promise of new life these followers formed the communities that became our Church. The Church grew as an assembly of those who were baptized in Christ, accepted the beliefs, participated in the sacraments, and engaged in ministry. The unifying goal was to make Jesus present in the world and point to the Kingdom of God. Today we carry out our relationship with God by the way we treat one another. We will continually be challenged to see our parish community or our Serra Club as an expression of our larger Church.

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