

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
<b>Part 1: The Sacramental Nature of the Church</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
<b>1 Sacrament: Visible Sign, Invisible Grace</b> . . . . .	<b>10</b>
Excerpt from <i>The Sentences: Book 4</i> , by Peter Lombard	
<b>2 The Sacraments: Union with Christ.</b> . . . .	<b>16</b>
Excerpt from <i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)</i> , by the Second Vatican Council	
<b>3 The Sacraments: Encounters with Christ</b> . . . . .	<b>23</b>
Excerpt from <i>Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God</i> , by Edward Schillebeeckx	
<b>4 The Church as Sacrament.</b> . . . .	<b>29</b>
Excerpt from <i>Models of the Church</i> , by Avery Dulles	
<b>5 Sacraments and Liturgy.</b> . . . .	<b>35</b>
Excerpt from <i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)</i> , by the Second Vatican Council	
<b>6 Liturgical Prayer</b> . . . . .	<b>41</b>
Excerpt from <i>The Spirit of the Liturgy</i> , by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)	
<b>7 The Liturgy and Personal Prayer</b> . . . . .	<b>47</b>
Excerpt from <i>Dialogues</i> , by Saint Catherine of Siena	

**Part 2: The Sacraments of Christian Initiation . . . . . 53**

**8 Christian Initiation: The Beginning of Christian Life . . . 54**

Excerpt from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, by the Second Vatican Council

Excerpt from "Christian Initiation: Gate to Salvation," by Monika Hellwig

Excerpt from *A Rite of Passage*, by Aidan Kavanaugh

**9 The Sacrament of Baptism . . . . . 64**

Excerpt from the Ecumenical Council of Florence, and from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, by the Second Vatican Council

Excerpt from "Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Feast of the Baptism of the Lord," by Pope Benedict XVI

Excerpt from *Pastoral Foundations of the Sacraments: A Catholic Perspective*, by Gregory L. Klein and Robert A. Wolfe

**10 The Sacrament of Confirmation . . . . . 76**

Excerpt from "Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation," by Pope Paul VI

Excerpt from "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the Occasion of the 23rd World Youth Day, 2008," by Pope Benedict XVI

Excerpts from "What Difference Does Confirmation Make?" by Joseph Martos

**11 The Sacrament of the Eucharist. . . . . 88**

Excerpt from *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, by the Council of Trent

Excerpt from "Concerning the Holy and Immaculate Mysteries of the Lord," *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book 4, Chapter 13, by Saint John Damascene

**Part 4: The Sacraments at the Service of Communion . . . . 137**

**15 The Baptismal Call to Holiness and Service. . . . . 138**

Excerpt from "The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church," from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, by the Second Vatican Council

Excerpt from "Apostolic Letter, *Dilecti Amici*, of Pope John Paul II to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of International Youth Year," by Pope John Paul II

Excerpt from "Vocation Story," by Gale Hammerschmidt

Excerpt from "The Future of Marriage," by Natalie Kertes Weaver, PhD

**16 The Sacrament of Holy Orders . . . . . 151**

Excerpt from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, by the Second Vatican Council

Excerpt from *On the Priesthood*, by Saint John Chrysostom

Excerpt from "From Communist Militant to Underground Priest: Father Bao's China Odyssey," by Bao Yuanjin

**17 The Sacrament of Matrimony. . . . . 163**

Excerpt from *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, by the Second Vatican Council

Excerpt from the Apostolic Exhortation *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*, by Pope John Paul II

Excerpt from "CB and Helen," from *Pastoral Foundations of the Sacraments: A Catholic Perspective*, by Gregory L. Klein and Robert A. Wolfe

**For Further Reading . . . . . 175**

**Acknowledgments . . . . . 179**

## 2 The Sacraments: Union with Christ

### Introduction

“Christ is the Light of nations”: this quotation begins *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium, 1964)*. When the Church issues a dogmatic statement such as this, the statement represents an unchanging statement of truth. This document from the Second Vatican Council is the Church’s authoritative teaching about the Church’s self-identity. It begins with a statement about Christ because he is the reason for the Church. Jesus lived and taught among the Apostles, and he left them with ways to continue his presence throughout the ages. If Christ is the light of the nations, then the Church, the People of God, is the light as well, because Christ has entrusted us with his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and reconciling all people to God.

This document on the Church makes clear its two purposes. First, it intends to reflect upon the nature of the Church and uses images of stability, unity, and dynamism to describe this nature. It affirms that there has been an unbroken line from Jesus, to the Apostles, to the Pope and bishops, to the Church of today. This unbroken line indicates the Church’s stability and endurance despite times of great difficulty. In highlighting the Church’s unity, this document describes the Church as the Body of Christ and also as the Bride of Christ. There is only one, single Body of Christ or Bride of Christ. Therefore, there is an essential unity among the members of the Church. Finally, the Church is dynamic and alive with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit has been given to the Church, and this same Spirit, as the soul of the Body of Christ (see *Lumen Gentium, 7*), moves its members, especially through the Sacraments, to Christlike holiness.

The second purpose of this document is to describe the mission of the Church, which is essentially a mission of unity and reconciliation. Just as the Holy Spirit rests within the Church to make its members holy, it also drives the members of the Body of Christ to continue the work of Christ. God's desire is to draw every person into unity and to share the very life of God with each person. This document on the Church describes God as a Father who has a single desire: to draw all people into his loving embrace. This is the reason he sent his Son, Jesus, and that is why Jesus established the Church. Acting as a sacrament of Christ, a sign and instrument of unity in Christ, the Church, being true to its nature and identity in the unity of the Holy Spirit, must work without ceasing to draw all people to the Father by proclaiming Jesus Christ as the way to the Father.

*Note:* This document and others in this book, according to the practice of previous times, uses the word *man* and *men* in a universal context to mean both men and women.

## **Excerpt from *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)***

### **By the Second Vatican Council**

1. Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, (Cf. Mk. 16:15.) to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission.

2. The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view

### **Divine Life**

There are many differing thoughts about what Heaven is. Although there is much to speculate about, one clear thing in the Church's teaching is that Heaven is entering into the life of God. Being united with Jesus means we enjoy that same relationship with God the Father that Jesus has through the power of the Holy Spirit. This will be a sharing of the divine life.

of Christ, the Redeemer "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." (Col. 1:15.) All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and pre-destined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29.) He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared

in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect,"<sup>1</sup> will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.

3. The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things. (Cf. Eph. 1:4-5 and 10.) To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, (Cf. Jn. 19:34.) and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (Jn. 12:32.) As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, (1 Cor. 5:7.) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried

on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:17.) is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.

4. When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (Cf. Jn. 17:4.) was accom-

plished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have

*“All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.”*

access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. (Cf. Eph. 1:18.) He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal. (Cf. Jn. 4:14; 7:38–39.) To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies. (Cf. Rom. 8:10–11.) The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. (Cf. Cor. 3:16; 6:19.) In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons. (Cf. Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15–16 and 26.) The Church, which the Spirit guides in [the] way of all truth (Cf. Jn. 16:13.) and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with **hierarchical** and **charismatic** gifts and adorns with His fruits. (Cf. Eph. 1:11–12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal. 5:22.) By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, “Come!” (Rev. 22:17.)

Thus, the Church has been seen as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

**hierarchical** Related to the visible structure of service and teaching authority to the Body of Christ, with the bishops as shepherds and the Pope as the chief shepherd. Within this orderly structure, the Holy Spirit is active.

**charismatic** Referring to the gifts, or charisms, of the Holy Spirit that move all members of the Body of Christ.

5. The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation. The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15; cf. Mt. 4:17.). In the word, in the works, and in the presence of Christ, this kingdom was clearly open to the view of men. . . .

When Jesus, who had suffered the death of the cross for mankind, had risen, He appeared as the one constituted as Lord, Christ and eternal Priest, (Cf. Acts 2:36; Heb. 5:6; 7:17-21.) and He poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father. (Cf. Acts 2:33.) From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.

7. In the human nature united to Himself[,] the Son of God, by overcoming death through His own death and resurrection, redeemed man and re-molded him into a new creation. (Cf. Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17.) By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body.

In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13.) In this sacred rite a oneness with Christ's death and resurrection is both symbolized and brought about: "For we were buried with Him by means of Baptism into death"; and if "we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be so in the likeness of His resurrection also." (Rom. 6:15.) Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread." (1 Cor. 10:17.) In this way all of us are made members of His Body, (Cf. 1 Cor 12:27.) "but severally



members one of another.” (Rom. 12:5.)

As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ. (Cf. 1 Cor 12:12.) Also, in the building up of Christ’s Body various members and functions have their part to play. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:1–11.) What has a special place among these gifts is the grace of the apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjected even those who were endowed with **charisms**. (Cf. 1 Cor 14.) Giving the body unity through Himself and through His power and inner joining of the members, this same Spirit produces and urges love among the believers. From all this it follows that if one member endures anything, all the members co-endure it, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:26.)

The Head of this Body is Christ. He is the image of the invisible God and in Him all things came into being. He is before all creatures and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the Body which is the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the first place. (Cf. Col. 1:15–18.) By the greatness of His power He rules the things in heaven and the things on earth, and with His all-surpassing perfection and way of acting He fills the whole body with the riches of His glory.

All the members ought to be molded in the likeness of Him, until Christ be formed in them. (Cf. Gal. 4:19.) For this reason we, who have been made to conform with Him, who have died with Him and risen with Him, are taken up into the mysteries of His life, until we will reign together with Him. (Cf. Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12 etc.) On earth, still as pilgrims in a strange land, tracing in trial and in oppression the paths He trod, we are made one with His sufferings like the body is one with the Head, suffering with Him, that with Him we may be glorified. (Cf. Rom. 8:17.)

From Him “the whole body, supplied and built up by joints and ligaments,

**charism** A special gift or grace of the Holy Spirit given to an individual Christian or community, commonly for the benefit and building up of the entire Church.

attains a growth that is of God.” (Col. 2:19.) He continually distributes in His body, that is, in the Church, gifts of ministries in which, by His own power, we serve each other unto salvation so that, carrying out the truth in love, we might through all things grow unto Him who is our Head. (Cf. Eph. 4:11–16.)

In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in Him, (Cf. Eph. 4:23.) He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the Head and in the members, gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body.

Christ loves the Church as His bride, having become the model of a man loving his wife as his body; (Cf. Eph. 5:25–28.) the Church, indeed, is subject to its Head. (Ibid. 23–24.) “Because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Col. 2:9.) He fills the Church, which is His body and His fullness, with His divine gifts (Cf. Eph. 1:22–23.) so that it may expand and reach all the fullness of God. (Cf. Eph. 3:19.)

## Endnotes

1. Cfr. S. Gregorius M., *Hom in Evang.* 19, 1: PL 76, 1154 B. S. Augustinus, *Serm.* 341, 9, 11: PL 39, 1499 s. S. Io. Damascenus, *Adv. Iconocl.* 11: PG 96, 1357.
2. S. Cyprianus, *De Orat Dom.* 23: PL 4, 553, Hartel, III A, p. 285. S. Augustinus, *Serm.* 71, 20, 33: PL 38, 463 s. S. Io. Damascenus, *Adv. Iconocl.* 12: PG 96, 1358 D.

## For Reflection

---

1. After reading this excerpt from *Lumen Gentium*, how would you describe the Church’s mission?
2. Describe, in your own words, the Body of Christ, the Church, and how we participate in it through the Sacraments.
3. The Church has the mission of drawing all people into unity. What do you think causes division within your community? What do you think you can do to break down those divisions?