

Key Concepts

Church

A society of baptized Catholics professing the same faith under the authority of the invisible head (Christ) and the visible head (the pope and the bishops)

Church

A building used for public Christian worship

Catholic

‘Universal’ or ‘whole’

The 4 ‘marks’ of the Church

The Church is One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Church

The nature of the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic and Mary as a model of the Church

The meanings and significance of different understandings of the Church as the ‘Body of Christ’ and ‘the people of God’

Key Sources of Authority

“Mary responded, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.’ And then the angel left her.” (Luke 1)

“Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, ‘God has blessed you above all women...you are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.’” Luke 1

“There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.” (1 Cor 12)

“The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ...All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor 12)

Key Beliefs

The Nature of the Church (as stated in the Nicene Creed)

ONE – all believers are united by the Holy Spirit and the Trinity which are three divine persons in ONE. Catholics are united in their beliefs (Mass is the same worldwide). Jesus came to save and to unite all people.
 HOLY – Jesus is the source of all holiness. Followers of Jesus are a visible sign of holiness in the world.
 CATHOLIC – means universal. The Church’s message is for the whole world and Catholics have a duty to tell others (evangelise).
 APOSTOLIC – the apostles were sent out with a special task to preach. The Church is still doing that.

Mary as model of the Church

Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus (she was the immaculate conception). She is an example of purity (she was a virgin), faith (she did not question the angel who told her she would have a child) and discipleship (she stayed at the foot of Jesus’ cross when the disciples had fled). She teaches us how to pray (she asked Jesus for a miracle at the wedding at Cana - John 2) and acts as a mediator between us and God.

What does it mean to say the Church is the ‘Body of Christ?’

St. Paul describes the Church as the ‘Body of Christ’ showing us that Jesus’ work on earth continues through the Church and that all people in the Church have a role to play (like parts of the body). The Church is a community rather than a building. Christian people are now the body of Christ in the world, when a person is baptised they become part of this ‘body’ and a member of the ‘people of God’.

Exam Practice

Describe Catholic teaching on the nature of the Church. (5)

Explain how Catholics see Mary as a model of the Church. (8)

Key Connections

What is the link between the nature of the Church and the Catholic mission to evangelise?

Can you explain why Mary is a good example using specific bible passages?