

KEY CONCEPTS			
POPE	The Bishop of Rome, head of the Catholic Church.	ICTHUS	The Greek word for fish, ICTHUS, made an acronym for Christ. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour.
INFALLIBLE	Without error. The belief that, under strict conditions, the teaching of the Pope on behalf of the Church is protected from error.	CHI RHO	A Christian symbol consisting of the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P), which are the first two letters of ‘Christ’ in Greek.
VENERATION	Regarding something with utmost respect and reverence; honouring, but not worshipping, a saint or a very holy person.	RETREATS	Taking time out of ordinary daily life to focus on God, religion and spirituality; taking time to communicate with God through prayer and reflection.
RELIGIOUS VOWS	Sacred promises of poverty, chastity and obedience, made by monks and nuns.	APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION	The line of Catholic bishops, going back to Jesus’ apostles.
A RELIGIOUS	A person who has taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	The belief that God preserved the Virgin Mary from Original Sin from the moment of her conception.
THEOTOKOS	‘God-bearer’; the title given to the Virgin Mary, bearer of Christ.	CRUCIFIX	A representation of the cross with a figure of the crucified Jesus on it.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Members of the Roman Catholic Church recite the Nicene Creed during weekly Mass. A creed is a statement of faith, and within this particular creed is a clear statement about the nature of the Church. The Church is described as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. These are often said to be the four marks of the Church. The four marks of the Church are important because they remind Catholics that there is one faith and the Catholic Church has continued that faith. The Church is holy because it comes from God, it does not belong to any one nation or culture, and it can trace itself back to the Apostles through the line of bishops.

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

“This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission.” (CCC 811)

“I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” (The Nicene Creed)

The Church is ONE

The Church comes from the **Trinity**; a perfect unity of three persons in one God. The founder of the Church is **Jesus Christ**, who, through his death on the cross, came to reconcile all people. It is guided and inspired by the **Holy Spirit**, who dwells in the souls of the faithful and unites them into one communion of believers.

The Church shares one faith, as declared in the Creeds. Wherever a believer attends Mass in the world, the structure, readings and prayers will be the same, showing unity across the world. Believers have different gifts and talents, and are called to serve God in different ways, but all work together as one to continue Jesus’ mission.

The Church is HOLY

God created the Church and anything that comes from God is seen as holy. Through its ministry and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ blesses the faithful, especially through the sacraments. Therefore, guided by the Holy Spirit and through teaching, prayer, worship, and good works, the Church is a visible sign of holiness.

The Church is CATHOLIC

St. Ignatius of Antioch used the word catholic, meaning ‘universal’, to describe the Church. The Church is spread throughout the world, and its message is for all people, regardless of race, age or gender. Jesus Christ is universally present in the Church and has commissioned believers to evangelise:

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations’ (Matthew 28:19).

The Church is APOSTOLIC

The authority to lead the Church on earth was given to the first disciples (apostles) by Jesus. A special authority was given to St. Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, to act as Jesus’ vicar here on earth. This authority has been handed down through generations of Popes and bishops by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This is called Apostolic Succession. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the faith and teachings found in both Scripture and Sacred Tradition have been preserved, taught and handed on by the apostles. Therefore, the Church is Apostolic.