

AGGIE CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS TEAM

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence...
1 Peter 3:15

<http://www.aggiecatholic.org/aggiecat>

aggiecat@aggiecatholic.org

The Church is Apostolic

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Presented by: Mike Pratt
m-pratt@ttimail.tamu.edu

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” –Acts 1:8

In brief

- Apostolic = rooted in the apostles
- The bishops are the successors of the apostles
- The Pope is the successor of Peter, the first Pope
- Scriptural basis
 - Power to loose and bind (Matthew 16:18-19, Matthew 18:18)
 - Keys to the Kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19)
 - These gifts come from God, not man (Matthew 16:17)
 - Church’s mission begins after the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13)

What is the Church’s mission?

Preach and baptize

- Jesus’ last words in Matthew: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” –Matthew 28:19-20
- Jesus’ last words before the Ascension: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” –Acts 1:8
- 3 stages of preaching
 - Jerusalem – the Jews
 - Judea and Samaria – the lost of Israel
 - The ends of the earth – the Gentiles

Guide everyone to the truth

- Jesus did not leave us orphans, but promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to lead us to all truth (John 14:26, part of the Last Supper discourse)

- Old Testament images of the Church included Noah's ark (Genesis 6) and the pillars of clouds (wind) and fire that led the Israelites through the desert (Exodus 13:21-22)
- Note the symbols of wind and fire again appearing at Pentecost (Acts 2)
- St. Paul describes the Church as the "pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).
- God gave us the Church to teach and guide us. "In an institution established by God for the salvation of men, error in doctrine is unthinkable" (Melvin Sickler, Michael magazine).

Limits of the Church's mission

- No temporal limits—once started, the Church's mission continues "to the end of the age"
- No spatial limits—the Church is catholic (universal)

How do we see the Church's authority demonstrated in Scripture?

Key book: Acts of the Apostles

- Early example of apostolic succession: Matthias chosen to succeed Judas (1:15-26)
- The Church immediately begins preaching when it receives the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- Peter and the apostles preached and cured like Jesus did
- Stephen preached the truth even unto death, and prayed for his killers, like Jesus did
- Mass (2:42-47) and special collections to help those in need (11:27-30)
- Development of clergy—deacons (6:1-7) and priests ("presbyters" – 11:30, 14:30, 15:22)
- Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) shows us the first Church council and Peter's primary role—he said that salvation comes from the grace of Christ, not the Mosaic Law, and the rest fell silent
- James, one of the first bishops, guided his community to continue to observe parts of the Mosaic Law, not because it was necessary for salvation, but because he didn't want to scandalize Jewish Christians

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