

# Understanding Our Faith

April 2024 Vol. 7

## Adult Faith Formation: The Origin, Mystery & Mission of our Universal Church

To become better disciples, we all need to commit to learning more about our faith and deepening our relationship with Jesus and Mary. As a community of believers, we continue to seek opportunities to supplement our existing adult formation offerings.

This is the seventh of a series of monthly faith formation articles. The objective of the planned series of articles is to provide our parishioners with further insights on the tenets of our faith. In this article we will briefly address the origin, mystery and mission of our Church. How often do we hear the saying “I am Spiritual but not religious” or “I believe in Jesus Christ but not the Church”? In this article, we explore the origin of the “Church”, what is the Church, its mystery and its mission in today’s world.

The Church has humble beginnings. Our “Church” is not a building but rather a community of the faithful who Praise God, give Him thanks, engage with Christ through the Holy Sacraments, and who have been commissioned by Christ to share the Good News. We are the chosen People of God- the “New Israel”. Through our baptism we became adopted children of God, members of His body: the Church, and share in his divinity. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that St Paul proclaimed the Good News to small gatherings in synagogues, homes, and other meeting places. He went out to meet people where they lived and gathered. The concept of dedicated church buildings didn't even take root until the development of home churches in the mid-third century, and the repurposing of Roman basilicas in the fourth century AD. As a faith community we are called to follow Paul’s example of engaging our communities and sharing the Good News and living a life of faith that can be an example to others.



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## The Origin of the Church

Every week in the Nicene Creed we profess that we are one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. We the faithful are members of the Church with Christ as its head. Christ established the Church through his teachings, actions and promises including:

The call of the twelve apostles into a People of God and who were given a clear purpose, namely, to follow Him and announce the Kingdom of God.



Designating Peter as the rock on which he will build his church. By handing on this responsibility, he initiated apostolic succession which has been handed down in perpetuity to Bishops.

By Instituting the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper Jesus offered us His Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine. He provided us an unbloody sacrifice in sacramental remembrance of His passion and death, for our salvation.



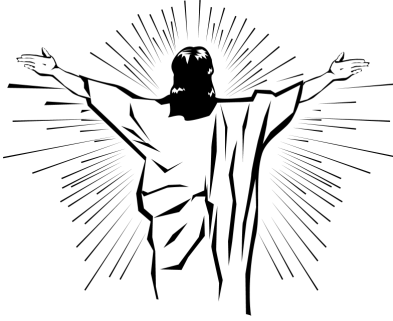
**Immaculate Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church**

1571 South Martine Avenue. Scotch Plains New Jersey 07076

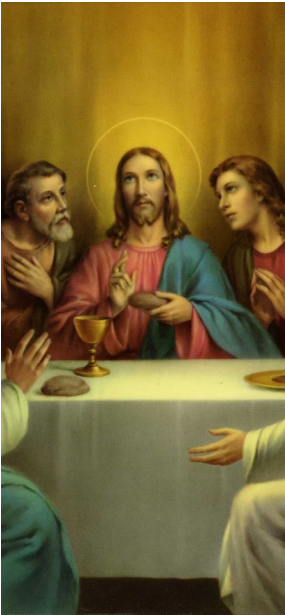
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## The Origin of the Church (continued)

Before His ascension into heaven, He gave the apostles the authority to forgive sins. He commanded them to go to all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them all He had taught them.



By sending the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on Pentecost, so they would receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and enable them to fulfill his commission to: Go to all nations, baptizing them and teaching them all He taught them. He also tells them that he would be with us until the end of the age. So, He remains ever present in us.



## The Mystery of the Church

The Pope and Bishops continue to protect and maintain the deposit of our faith, namely, the scriptures and traditions. However, the Church recognizes that our understanding of the mystery of God continues to deepen. The Holy Spirit continually gives life, unity, power to the Church guiding it in time to perfection. A state that will not be attained until the end of the age. With this guidance, the Church's teachings and practices will develop.

The Church is itself a sacrament: "The Universal Sacrament of Salvation." It is a visible entity that points to an invisible reality, i.e. the Kingdom of God. We, its members and Christ is its head. As such, our Church has a complex reality in that it is both human and divine. It exists outside the physical structures. With Christ as its head and we are its members, Christ and the Church cannot be separated.

Since the Church is both human and divine, it is a continuation of the incarnation of Our Lord as He is truly present and continues to nourish us through the Holy Spirit. It is also a continuation of the fatherhood of God as he guides us on our earthly journey until we can be re-united with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom.

## The Mission of the Church

The Church's mission in today's world is to continue to protect our faith, bringing all to faith through participation in the sacraments, encouraging all to live their lives as Jesus taught us and to proclaim the Good News of our eternal salvation.



As a community of believers, we are called by Pope Francis to take on the smell of the sheep.

In other words, our faith is one of action and our call to discipleship means we need to meet people where they are physically and spiritually, and to show them they are loved and lead them to an encounter Christ.

For more details about the IHM church community and our mission, please visit our homepage at [www.ihmparish.net](http://www.ihmparish.net)

If you have suggestion for a topic or topics you would like to be the subject of a future article or have any questions on this article please contact us via email at [engagingdisciples@ihmparish.net](mailto:engagingdisciples@ihmparish.net)