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❖ **The Church sponsors a variety of charitable institutions that serve those in need.** Catholic hospitals and clinics provide health care, including substantial amounts of charity care. Catholic Charities offer adoption services, disaster assistance, refugee resettlement, employment assistance, aid for those dealing with addiction, and other services. Catholic parishes support homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food pantries. Catholic Relief Services helps people in other nations that suffer from the effects of drought, famine, natural disasters, and war, as well as providing development assistance. All over the world, the Church shows the face of Christ to those who are poor and vulnerable.

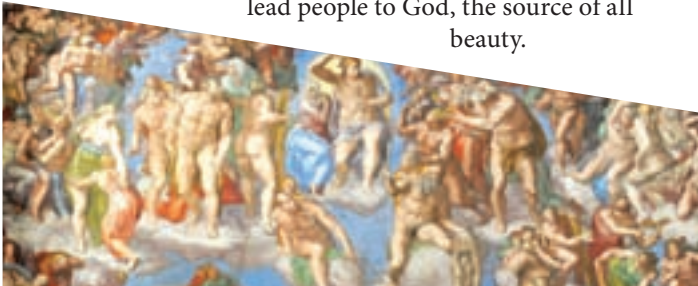
❖ **Far from treating knowledge as a threat to faith, the Church has played a significant role in education at all stages of life.** The Church was among the earliest institutions to provide education to poor children and to girls. In the United States, the parochial school system provided, and still provides, education in a Catholic context to thousands and helps the children of immigrants assimilate into American culture. This commitment to education does not end with high school graduation. Catholic colleges and universities rank among the mostly highly esteemed institutions in the United States. The Church's commitment to education continues today and spans all stages of formal education from preschool to college.



Jim Olvera

❖ **Though the Church is united and universal, it celebrates its diversity as well.** The Church's practice welcomes a variety of *schools of spirituality*, from the Benedictine focus on liturgical prayer balanced with work to the Franciscan emphasis on poverty and humility, from the Carmelite concentration on contemplation to the Ignatian embrace of the intellect and of surrender to God's will. Those who pray in the extraordinary form of the Mass are welcome as are those who participate in the charismatic movement or those who follow the Catholic Worker movement. Though Jesus is the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6), Catholics come to Jesus by a variety of routes.

❖ **For centuries, the Church was the principal patron of art and music.** Many of the most beautiful and lasting works of art, including painting, architecture, and choral works, have religious themes and were created for use in worship and teaching. For many people, the local church provided their only access to fine art and music. These works enriched the sacred liturgy and helped people learn Bible stories, the lives of the saints, and basic teachings of the faith. Rather than treating art as a purely secular pursuit or as an unnecessary extra, the Church praises artists for their role in creating things of beauty that lead people to God, the source of all beauty.



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Additional Resources

Books

- The Catholic Source Book*, Rev. Peter Klein. (Our Sunday Visitor, 2010).
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (USCCB Publishing).
- Faith Chart: Catholicism at a Glance*, Rev. Raymond Cleveland. (Our Sunday Visitor, 2006).
- How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice*, Austen Ivereigh. (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

Websites

- Ask the Experts, *Our Sunday Visitor Parish*. www.osvparish.com/AskTheExperts.aspx
- Beliefs and Teachings, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/index.cfm

To view PDFs of additional pamphlets or order bulk copies of this pamphlet, go to www.osvparish.com/pamphlets

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Why Be Catholic?

Being Catholic "is something living and all-encompassing, capable of assimilating all that is good in modern times."
— Pope Benedict XVI

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03/13 DESIGN PICS

Why be Catholic? Perhaps someone has asked you that question. Perhaps you've asked it of yourself.

It seems as though the media is filled with stories that show the Church in a bad light. Daily we are faced with the reality that the Church includes sinners as well as saints. Still, every year tens of thousands of people choose to enter the Catholic Church and millions more choose to stay, striving to live the Good News of Jesus with faithfulness and courage. The Church and its two-thousand-year heritage continues to have universal appeal, drawing people from every country in the world.

So, if someone asks you, "Why be Catholic?" here are some compelling answers you can give with confidence.

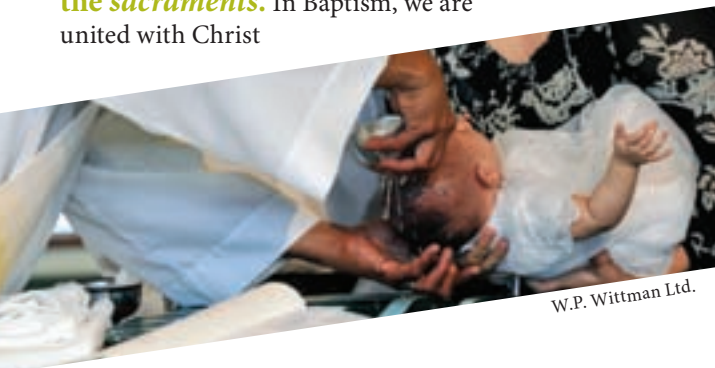
❖ **The best reason to be Catholic is because the Church leads us to Christ!**

Jesus himself founded the Church (Matthew 16:13-20) and gave the Church its mission (Matthew 28:16-20). He sent his Spirit to remain with the Church and guides its teaching and preaching (Acts 2:1-11). The Church is where we meet Jesus, discover his love for us, and learn to love him. Ultimately, the Church will lead us to eternal life with Jesus and with the Father who created and redeemed us in love.



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❖ **Catholics are strengthened in their faith and in their relationship with God through the sacraments.** In Baptism, we are united with Christ



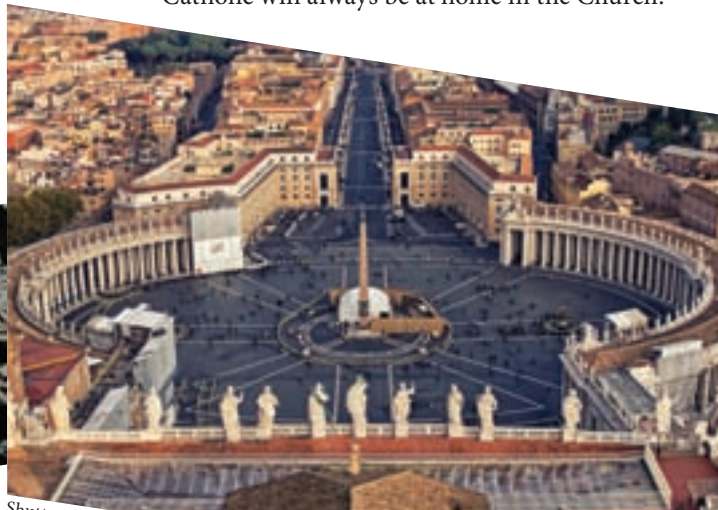
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and become part of the Church. In Confirmation, we receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the Eucharist, we receive the very Body and Blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. In Penance, God forgives our sins and strengthens us to live more faithfully. Anointing of the Sick offers strength and healing, if it is God's will, to those suffering serious illness, helping them to unite their sufferings to those of Christ. Holy Orders conforms those called by God to Christ as priests, allowing them to serve the Church and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. Marriage unites a man and woman in the indissoluble covenant of love that images the love between Christ and his Church. Through the sacraments, we encounter Christ who saves us and offers us eternal life with God.

❖ **The Catholic Church is universal.** In fact, the word "catholic" means universal. Throughout its history, the Church has spread to every corner of the world. The Church has embraced the cultures it has encountered, incorporating the best elements of each into its own practice. Yet, despite cultural differences, the Church's worship and beliefs remain the same. Even if the language is unfamiliar, the celebration of Mass is universal and invites our participation. Throughout the world, a Catholic will always be at home in the Church.



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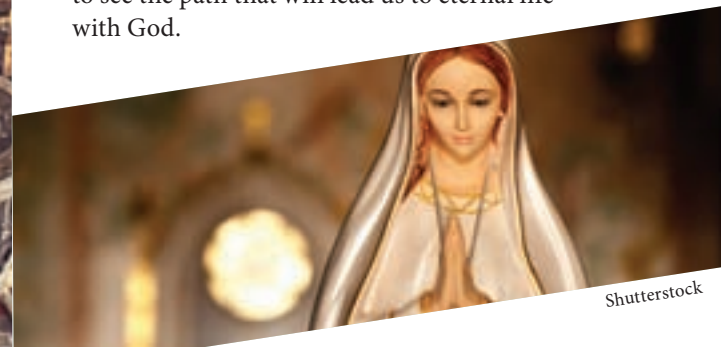
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❖ **The Creed teaches that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.**

Thus, the Church's first attribute is its **unity**. Under the leadership of the Pope, the successor of Saint Peter, and the bishops in union with him, the Church holds to one faith, expressed in all languages and cultures. Despite its diversity, the Church is not divided into a multitude of denominations and sects. Rather, throughout the world, the Church is united in its acceptance of divine revelation, expressed in Scripture and Tradition.

❖ **No member of the Catholic Church faces the struggles of life alone.**

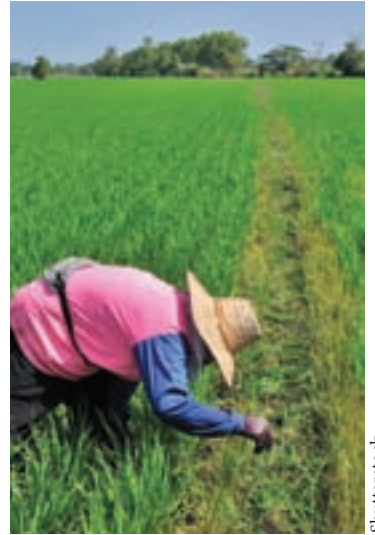
We follow those who have gone before us in faith, striving to share the Good News of Jesus through their words and actions. First among our models of faith is the **Blessed Virgin Mary**, the perfect disciple. She embraced God's will for her, kept the Word of God in her heart, and followed Jesus even to the foot of the Cross. Along with Mary, we share the fellowship of the **Communion of Saints**. The saints are men and women of all nations who lived the Christian life with fidelity and courage. They help us to see the path that will lead us to eternal life with God.



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❖ **As people of faith, the members of the Church respect the dignity of the human person in all stages and states of life.**

A person's worth derives not from who she is or what he can do, but because each person is a precious child of God, created in God's image and likeness. Following the example of Jesus, rather than deferring to the rich and powerful, the Church gives particular attention to the poor and the vulnerable. The Church speaks out on behalf of the voiceless in society: the unborn, the disabled, the refugee, the immigrant, the death row prisoner, the migrant worker, and the dying.



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❖ **The Church's teaching on human sexuality embraces the whole human person.**

It does not disdain the body, calling people to a purely spiritual existence, nor does it accept living as a slave to physical desire. The Church's teaching promotes the dignity of each individual, prohibiting treating another person as simply an object for pleasure, while providing a healthy and stable environment for children. Far from treating sex as something shameful or bad, the Church understands it as a true gift of God that allows human beings to celebrate the lifelong covenant of marriage and to share in God's creative work by conceiving and raising children.



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