

The catholic Church: House of Harmony

Pope Francis

The Church is catholic because she is the space, the home in which the faith is proclaimed to us in its entirety, in which the salvation brought to us by Christ is offered to everyone. The Church enables us to encounter the mercy of God, which transforms us, for in her Jesus Christ is present who has given her the true confession of faith, the fullness of the sacramental life, and the authenticity of the ordained ministry. In the Church each one of us finds what is needed to believe, to live as Christians, to become holy, and to journey to every place and through every age. To give an example, we can say that it is like family life. In the family, everything that enables us to grow, to mature, and to live is given to each of us. We cannot grow up by ourselves, we cannot journey on our own, in isolation; rather, we journey and grow in a community, in a family. And so it is in the Church! In the Church we can listen to the Word of God with the assurance that it is the message that the Lord has given us; in the Church we can encounter the Lord in the sacraments, which are the open windows through which the light of God is given to us, streams from which we can draw God's very life; in the Church we learn to live in the communion and love that come from God. Each one of us can ask himself or herself today: How do I live in the Church? When I go to church, is it as though I were at the stadium, at a football match? Is it as though I were at the cinema? No, it is something else. How do I go to church? How do I receive the gifts that the Church offers me to grow and mature as a Christian? Do I participate in the life of the community, or do I go to church and withdraw into my own problems, isolating myself from others? In this sense, the Church is catholic because she is everyone's home. Everyone is a child of the Church, and in her all find their home.

The Church is catholic because she is the "home of harmony," where unity and diversity know how to merge in order to become a great source of wealth. Let us think about the image of a symphony, which implies accord, harmony, various instruments playing together. Each one preserves its own unmistakable timbre, and the sounds characteristic of each blend together around a common theme. Then there is the one who directs it, the conductor, and as the symphony is performed all play together in harmony,

but the timbre of each individual instrument is never eliminated; indeed, the uniqueness of each is greatly enhanced! This is a beautiful image illustrating that the Church is like a great orchestra in which there is great variety. We are not all the same, and we do not all have to be the same. We are all different, varied, each of us with our own special qualities. And this is the beauty of the Church: everyone brings their own gifts, which God has given, for the sake of enriching others. And between the various components there is diversity; however, it is a diversity that does not enter into conflict and opposition. It is a variety that allows the Holy Spirit to blend it into harmony. He is the true “Maestro.” He is harmony. And here let us ask ourselves: In our communities do we live in harmony or do we argue among ourselves? In my parish community, in my movement, in the place where I am part of the Church, is there gossip? If there is gossip, there is no harmony but rather conflict. And this is not the Church. The Church is everyone in harmony— never gossip about others, never argue! Let us accept others; let us accept that there is a fitting variety, that this person is different, that this person thinks about things in this way or that— that within one and the same faith we can think about things differently. Or do we tend to make everything uniform? But uniformity kills life. The life of the Church is variety, and when we want to impose this uniformity on everyone, we kill the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit, who is truly the author of this unity in variety, of this harmony, that he might make us ever more “catholic” in this Church that is catholic and universal!