

2011 SERMON #4 I BELIEVE—HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Hebrews 10:15-27

Continuing our series on the Apostles Creed

We look at the phrase.

I believe in the **Holy catholic Church,**

The **Communion of Saints.**

There is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding

Surrounding this phrase in the Apostles creed.

Many Protestants stumble over the c word.

catholic church.

Because it makes them feel vaguely uncomfortable

As if were saying something we shouldn't be saying.

Partly because of the past battles of catholic and protestants.

I was reading of a Irish catholic Policeman who was talking to a man about to jump from a bridge in new York. He said to him. Don't jump man think of your father. He said I don't have a father. Then the policeman goes though a list of his relatives. Think of your mother, brothers, sisters, children. Each time the man said: I don't have one. Then the cop said: think of the Blessed virgin Mary. The man said: Whose that. The cop said: "Jump, protestant, you're blocking traffic."

We have been fighting over the word catholic for centuries.

Who gets to claim it?

The word catholic here refers to those who have been called out

Of the world by God, to join in fellowship with Jesus.

Now there are a lot of people who don't agree with church.

"I believe in God, but I don't believe in the church.

"I'm spiritual but I'm not religious so I don't go to church."

"I believe in my own way, I don't need church to tell me what to believe."

The problem is that God believed in the church.

He created it and

Jesus was a member of it and said

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

Martin Luther went so far as to say: "Apart from the church, salvation is impossible."

Not that the church provides salvation; God does.

But because the "saved" can't fulfill what it means

to be a Christian apart from the church,

membership becomes the indispensable mark of salvation.

I believe in the holy catholic Church.

Now the church is not the building.

That is what the word catholic comes in to clarify.

"Catholic" means universal.

It is not building of bricks and mortar.

I Peter 2:5 The church is made of living stones.

4 As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him -5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.I Peter 2:4-6

It's interesting up to this point that the creed
Is asking us to believe in a God we can't see,
A Holy Spirit that we can't see,
Even in Jesus who walked on this earth
Rose from the dead, who we can't see,
But now were asked to believe in an institution we can see,
The church
Which too often seem unworthy of our trust.

Men have killed each other mercilessly in the name of Jesus Christ.
Too many Religious leaders today have fallen to immorality and greed.
Sex abuse crises in the priesthood has
tarnished the church as an institution and,
Church fights still continue today.

Not long ago in Landover, Maryland, the papers reported that 100 years of Christian fellowship, unity, and community outreach ended in an act of congregational discord. Holy Creek Baptist Church was split into multiple factions. The source of the dissension was a piano bench which sits behind the 1923 Steinway piano. Now Holy Creek Congregation has four different services each Sunday, each with a different pastor — and the piano bench will be put in a different place at each service. The services are far enough apart that neither group will come into contact with the other. An outside party moves the piano bench to different locations and appropriate positions, between services, so as to please all sides, and avoid any further conflict that could result in violence.

It's gotten so bad that our society no longer looks
To the church to provide moral and ethical leadership.
Sad to say,
It's not just been the pastors and leaders,
It's been the lay person in the pews.
Cheating in their business practices,
Marriages, and in personal relationships
Being mean spirited, critical, and cantankerous

We're all sinners in need of God's grace.
But it sure takes away from that child
Folding his hands together
Here is the church,
Here is the steeple
Open the door
And see all the people
SEE all the people.
Well,
That's the problem - people,
That's all the challenge- people,

That's also the blessing and hope of the church- people
 The people of the church
 The people of God
 The people Jesus redeemed
 Inside.

We have to get smart
 And live smart.

Like the father of a family - who is a big-time techie – he got his oldest daughter an iPhone for her birthday. He got his second son an iPad for his birthday, and later he bought an iPod for his youngest daughter. And when his anniversary rolled around he got his wife an iRon for their anniversary. That's when the fight began.

If it weren't for us humans the church would have a solid
 Basis for its Christian unity.
 Paul used the word one seven times in Ephesians.

“There is one body and one spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6

Now the creed adds a word to catholic or universal church
Holy

Holy catholic church.

Holy refers to anything that belongs to God.

We call the bible, the Holy Bible

Because it comes from God.

Remember those days when it was the Holy Bible,

Not the American Standard, the Revised Version, the New International, the Message bible, or the New paraphrased living,

Should we not put on all bibles, of any translation?

This is the Holy Bible

Maybe we have been our own worst enemies shifting the
 Belief that this is the Holy Book come from God.

We are a holy nation.

The church is holy because God created it and called it.

Because of the blood of Christ and the virtue of our redemption

We are a Holy catholic Church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, I Peter 2:9

WHY are we a chosen holy nation a holy church?

The verse goes on:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. I Peter 2:9b

It is through the church

And in the church and

By the church that

The gospel goes out into the world.

Cyprian an early church father said:

“He who has God for his father has the church for his mother.”

I believe in the holy catholic church
I believe in the

II. COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Now I know when you look around its hard to think of us as saints.
Especially the one your living with?

Like one man who was sitting at the breakfast table reading the paper. He came across an articles about a beautiful actress who was about to marry a football player. The player was known primarily for his lack of IQ, common sense, and good looks. He turned to his wife: "You know, I'll never understand why the biggest, ugliest jerks always get the most attractive wives. "His wife replied, "Why thank you, dear!"

The **holy Catholic Church** teaches us that the church spans the globe
The **communion of saints** teaches us that the church transcends time.

Communion is Greek word koinonia
Which means fellowship or partnership.
The communion of saints connects us to
A family of believers even beyond the grave.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1

The cloud of witnesses are the saints who have gone before us.
Heaven is a real place.
It is where the saints are right now.
And in some mysterious way we are connected.

Great Hymn states:

**Yet she on earth hath union
With God the three in One
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won;
O Happy one and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we.
Like them, the meek and lowly
On high may dwell with thee.**

Every person who accepts Christ has been transformed.
From this earthly estate into a holy estate.

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. I Petere 2:10

What the Apostles creed is saying.
Is that death cannot destroy our fellowship with the saints of God.
We may not be able to communicate with them.
The bible forbids that,
But we do have the memory of their spirit.
That mystic sweet communion
That someday we shall all be together.

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches

he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Ephesians 3:14-17a

Today,
Being here in church put you
Right smack in the middle of the communion of saints.
And something is taking place right now
that doesn't happen when were alone.

Together we get something that we can't get alone.
That is a deeper insight about Christ
And about Christian living.
And because you're here today I get a deeper insight to God.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." -- Ephesians 3:17b-19.

When you and I alone try to see God, or worship God
Our humanity gets in the way
Our sin and error blurs the image of who God is.
Just like my binoculars might have a dirty or blurred lens.
I can't see clearly but you can.
And because you can see clearly
I benefit from your insight.

Think about it this ways:
If you want to see a different side of your children.
Go watch them at preschool,
Or daycare, or school or church event.
We really get to see them interacting with others
And that gives us another view or side of their lives.
an added dimension that we didn't have with them alone.

So it is in church.
When you are here,
Just because we haven't had a miracle of healing.
Doesn't mean we haven't seen one in a friend.
When God touches someone else
He reveals himself to me.
We see a soul saved,
A marriage reunited
A child repentant.
A body healed.
An addiction broken.
It may not be our miracle, but we rejoice in the same.

Our Thursday Prayer Group is praying for a man who lost his eyesight to cancer.
to have it return.
Our men have been praying for 3 weeks.
Sight is coming back.

Friends,
 Miracles are happening in the church around the world
 Even as I speak.
 God is active in our behalf.
 That which is dead is alive.

Mud become flesh
 Flesh becomes spirit.
 Spirit is of God.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! II Corinthians 5:17

If you're not a part of the church the fellowship of believers
 You will miss seeing God in a way he wants to be seen.

**Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.
 Hebrews 10:23**

But he is faithful in the body of believers

That's why he says;

**²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
 Hebrews 10:24-25**

**When we are faithful to the Holy Catholic Church
 And the Communion of saints.
 Things happen.**

Together we make a difference.

Because it ties us to the Heavenly Father and to Jesus Christ his son.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. I John 1:3

And because of this fellowship, working together, it makes

We write this to make our joy complete. I John 1:4

Did you hear about the farmer in Nebraska? Floodwater kept getting into his barn so he decided to move it 143 feet to higher ground. So he build the foundation but had no idea how to actually move the barn over there. His son had an idea, "Let's get all of our friends and just pick it up and move it." His son then put steel tubing al around the barn with handles on it. The farmer knowing that the barn weighed about seventeen thousand pounds, or about 9 tons was doubtful that the plan could work. But the son persisted and they rounded up 344 of their friends and each one grabbed a handle. They lifted at the same time and moved that barn 143 feet in the span of three minutes. Together each carried about 50 lbs, but that the kind of thing that happens when everybody pitches in .

No matter what skin color, Social status, Family background,
 Language, Culture, Education or age.

Without the church we could never be in communion with God, and

Without the church we could never stay in true communion with God.

Without the church working together we will never accomplish the will of God

I believe in the Holy catholic Church, and the Communion of saints.