

You Belong - July 17-23

Q 54. What do you believe concerning “the holy catholic church”?

A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

Memory Verse: He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. (Colossians 1:18)

Devotion 1: On most Sundays we stand up as a community during worship and recite the Apostles’ Creed. Because of the Creed we say, “I believe in the holy, catholic church.” If I have been asked once I have been asked 1000 times, “Why do we use the word “catholic?”

It has always surprised me that fewer people are not concerned by the use of the word “holy” to describe the church. The word “catholic” seems to draw most of the attention. Most people hear the word “catholic” and immediately assume Roman Catholic. They think the pope and the Vatican and Mary. The word “catholic” as we use it on Sunday mornings is a synonym for the word “universal.” We don’t mean Roman Catholic we mean all Christians from all times and in all places.

In Colossians 1:18 we read, “He is head of the body, the church...” The church is the body of Christ and there are all kinds of members of the body. Just like a body has a hand and a foot, an ear and eye, each are necessary members of the body but different. Similarly the church has reformed and Anglican, Methodist and Pentecostal. They are not the same but they are all important members of the one body of whom Jesus Christ is the head. Jesus is the one that has the hand wave and the foot walk. Jesus is the one who makes the ear listen and the eye see. Jesus is the head. When we say, “I believe in the holy, catholic church” we are acknowledging the lordship of Christ over the entirety of the diversity of the church. What a beautiful thing to say.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for gathering the wide group of people from all places and in all times together as one body. Help us to celebrate our value as a member of body, humbly acknowledge the value of another member and always look to you, who are the head.

You Belong - July 9 - July 15

Devotion 2: “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.” What an exciting phrase. “He is the beginning.” Just as Christ was with the Father as the Spirit was hovering over pre-creation nothingness speaking life into existence so Jesus by his life, death and resurrection is the beginning of new life for all who believe. “He is the firstborn from the dead.” When Christ took on the cross and went to the grave he defeated sin and death so that death wouldn’t have the last word in our lives and we’d be assured of the resurrection too. “So that he might come to have first place in everything.” When Christ defeated death by death and promised the resurrection because he was raised he earned “first place in everything.” He is the winner. He gets the prize. He is the gold medalist and invites us on to the winner’s platform with him.

This is what the catechism has in mind when it offers, “I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith.” Christ is first place in everything and out of his generous kindness offers to us the benefits of his life. We really do serve a remarkable God who is so relentless in his commitment to us that he would send his son to gather, protect and preserve his children. The Father loves you. Jesus cares for you. The Spirit preserves you in life. Praise be to God.

Prayer: Thank you Father for gathering, protecting and preserving your children by your Son and Spirit. Amen.