Week 5

Catholicity: Creed and Apostolic Succession

# Course Overview

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This week we look at the word CATHOLICITY and how it is important to the church. This isn’t just a term that just applies to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This term deals with two words: Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy. It also deals with the four marks of Catholicity for the Church – ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC.

We will look again at CONTINUITY and how it is important to CATHOLICITY.

Remember Protestants broke with the CONTINUITY of the Roman Church, but maintain it is still fully CATHOLIC base on the understanding of the early church usage of the word CATHOLICITY.

We will also look briefly at the CREEDS of the Church that defined the FAITH of the CHURCH.

We will also again visit the topic of APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

# Course Materials and other Resources

Provided on the Website – ***“The Meaning and Importance of Catholicity and the Local Church”***  
 ***Is Apostolic Succession Biblical?*** By Archbishop Thomas Henry Jr

# Read the following Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Matthew 16:18-19; 1 Timothy 3:15

# Course Study Guide

Let’s begin by defining a few words that we will be using in our discussion this week.

**Continuity** – the unbroken and consistent existence or operation of something over a period of time. With the Church it would mean the unbroken and consistent beliefs, faith, practice and organization of the church.

**Catholicity** – The ancient Church understood catholicity to mean wholeness, fullness, integrity, and "totality." Catholic in the early church meant the “fullness of Truth.” The idea of catholic meaning “universal” came much later into the church usage; around the 5th century.

**Orthodoxy** – Right Faith or belief

**Orthopraxy** – Right Practice or right actions

Though traditionally Christianity is seen as primarily orthodoxical, some Christian denominations and leaders today, from Roman Catholic to Evangelical Christians, have started to describe their religions as both orthodoxical and orthopraxic. The premise is "correct belief" compels "correct action," and incorrect action is caused by incorrect beliefs.

**Read *“The Meaning and Importance of Catholicity and the Local Church”* for this week Lesson.**

**What are the four marks of the Church Catholicity?**

**One** – "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 4:5-6

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" – Galatians 3:28

Though we are many members, we are yet ONE body.

**Holy** – The word holy means set apart for a special purpose by and for God. It does not imply that the members of the Church are free from sin, nor that the institution of the Church cannot sin. Christ's Church is holy because it is Christ's Church: "...upon this rock I will build my Church” – Matthew 16:18

**Catholic** – The word "catholic" is derived from the Greek adjective καθολικός (katholikos), meaning "general", "universal", "according to the whole", "entirely", or "in general", a combination of the preposition κατά meaning "according to" and the adjective ὅλος meaning "whole." It carries with it the idea of having the fullness of the Faith. The faith once delivered unto the saints – Jude

For his subjects, Emperor Theodosius I restricted to believers in "the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity" the term "Catholic Christians", and applied the name "heretics" to others (Edict of Thessalonica of 27 February 380).

**Apostolic** – This describes the Church's origin and beliefs as rooted and continuing in the living Tradition of the Apostles of Jesus. Most protestants express this as what preserves apostolic continuity is the written word: as Bruce Milne put it, "A church is apostolic as it recognizes in practice the supreme authority of the apostolic scriptures. [Bruce Milne, "Know the Truth" (2nd edition). (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 271.]

**The Break with Continuity with the Roman Church**

Doctrine of Salvation – specifically the doctrine of Justification

Doctrine of the priesthood of all believers

The Authority of Scriptures

Emphasis on the Sacraments

Reformed Worship – The Confessions, The Hymns, The Focus on Preaching and etc.

The Gathered Church

Credo-Baptism versus Paedo-Baptism

Doctrine of Ministry

Apostolic Succession

# Orthodoxy versus Orthopraxy

There are some who do not care about how one practice their faith as long as they have the right belief. While others maintain that right practice is indicative of one having the right faith.

Most protestants allow for variation in practice as long as the core central beliefs are ascribed to.

Not all religions, however, emphasize correct belief or measure a member by their beliefs. Instead, they focus primarily on orthopraxy, the idea of correct practice rather than correct belief.

For Example, Jews and Judaism. While Christianity is strongly orthodox, its predecessor, Judaism, is strongly orthopraxic. Religious Jews obviously do have some common beliefs, but their primary concern is correct behavior: eating kosher, avoiding various purity taboos, honoring the Sabbath and so on. A Jew is unlikely to be criticized for believing incorrectly, but he might be accused of behaving badly.

Scientology as "something you do, not something you believe in."

Orthopraxy comes from Greek and is translated as right action. Orthodoxy also comes from the Greek and means right belief. These terms are applied frequently to describe Judaism’s, Christianity’s, and Islam’s main religious focus. Judaism and Islam are primarily orthopraxic in nature. It is much more important that a person do what is right than think what is right.

In Judaism, to be a good Jew (speaking generally of course) one should observe kosher laws, cover one’s head when praying if a man or not if a woman, attend synagogue, celebrate the Passover, etc. In Islam, (again, being general, it differs between groups) this involves keeping dietary laws, praying facing Mecca five times a day at prescribed times, attend Mosque, etc.

In Christianity, the focus is much more on what one believes than what one does. At the heart of this for most Christians is a belief in the Trinity and that Jesus is Lord. Catholics and Protestants are and have been at arms over how to understand things like the doctrine of justification, the nature of God, the nature of Jesus suffering, etc.

In both cases the other side is present but is much less dominant. In Islam you must believe that God is One; in Judaism that Moses is God’s prophet; in Christianity one must confess that Jesus is Lord. – [***Orthodoxy vs Orthopraxy***, [www.patheos.org](http://www.patheos.org) February 2007]

"Correct belief" compels "correct action," and incorrect action is caused by incorrect beliefs is the mindset of some today.

# The Ecumenical 3 Creeds

The 3 creeds are the Apostles’ Creed (Baptismal Creed), The Nicene Creed (Statement of Christian Faith and Doctrine) and the Athanasian Creed (Defines the Trinity). Some list four ecumenical creeds which would also include the Chalcedonian Creed (Christ is 'acknowledged in two natures', which 'come together into one person and one hypostasis').

A creed by definition is a summary or statement of what one believes. It originates from the Latin credo meaning "I Believe."

Not all of the creeds above are used by all Christian Churches. Some churches use only one of the creeds, while others make use of two of the creeds without defining what the creeds they don’t use says.

Some rejects the Chalcedonian Creed because they do not see two natures in Christ and confesses ONE nature in Christ – that is birth out of two natures.

Hypostatic union – describe the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, or individual existence

**Course Schedule**

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| Week | Subject | Course Information |
| 1 | The Holy Scriptures | Inspiration, The Canon, Original text |
| 2 | Sacramental Theology | Reformed verses Roman Catholic View of Sacraments |
| 3 | Church History Overview | Ages of Church, Continuity, Reformation |
| Week | Subject | |
| 3 | Exam on Holy Scriptures and Sacraments (Online) Feb 29th | |
| 4 | The Liturgy and the Bishop | |
| 5 | Catholicity: Creed and Apostolic Succession | |
| 6 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 1 - 4 | |
| 7 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 5 - 6 | |
| 8 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 7 - 9 | |
| 9 | Review | |
| 10 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 10 - 13 | |
| 11 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 14 - 16 | |
| 12 | Episcopal Formation Chapters 17 - 20 | |
| 13 | Review | |
| 14 | Program Review | |

# Homework

**Answer the following:**

What is the original meaning of catholic? By the fifth Century, what did the meaning changed to?

Describe Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy.

List and briefly describe the ecumenical creeds

Describe briefly how Protestants broke Continuity with the Roman Church