

SEGMENT EIGHTEEN

**THEME: CHURCH TOUR, SIGN OF THE CROSS,
MASS RESPONSES, CREED**

OPENING PRAYER / SCRIPTURE READING:

1 Peter 2: 4-5

Psalm 122

INSTRUCTORS' SUMMARY STATEMENTS:

The word “Church” comes from the Greek *kuriakos* meaning “of the Lord.” The church building is not simply a gathering place but signifies and make visible the Church in a particular place, the dwelling place of God with humanity reconciled and united in Jesus Christ.

The Church is a house of prayer where the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble for sacramental celebrations and where the presence of Jesus is worshipped and revered. Finally, the church is the *house of God*, a symbol of that eternal home prepared by God for all those who are journeying in faith.

Liturgical signs and gestures such as the “Sign of the Cross,” and the Mass responses of the faithful are sacramental signs that signify the people’s full, conscious and active participation in the Eucharist.

From the very beginning of Christianity, summaries of Christian faith or “Creeds” were developed and handed down from generation to generation. The “Creed” begins with the words “I believe” and it is a symbol of faith, a sign of recognition and communion among believers, and a summary of Christian beliefs. The first “profession of faith,” in the recitation of the Creed is made at Baptism.

- ❖ A Church, “a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Savior, offered for us on the sacrificial altar for the help and consolation of the faithful – this house ought to be in good taste and a worthy place for prayer and sacred ceremonial.” In this “house of God” the truth and the harmony of signs that make it up should show Christ to be present and active in this place” (CCC 1181)
- ❖ “In its earthly state the Church needs places where the community can gather together. Our visible churches, holy places, are images of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which we are making our way on pilgrimage.” (CCC 1198)
- ❖ In church the community “celebrates public worship to the glory of the Holy Trinity, hears the Word of God and sings his praise, lifts up her prayer, and offers the sacrifice of Christ sacramentally present in the midst of the assembly. These churches are also places of recollection and personal prayer. (CCC 1199)
- ❖ “To enter into the house of God, we must cross a *threshold*, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all are called. The visible church is a symbol of the Father’s house toward which the People of God is journeying...for this reason, the Church is the house of *all* God’s children, open and welcoming. (CCC 1186)
- ❖ In the sacred space of a church prominence is given to some of the following areas: the altar, the tabernacle, the sacred chrism, the priests’ chair, the lectern or ambo, the baptistery, and the confessional. (CCC 1182 – 1185)
- ❖ Sacred images – icons, statues and paintings of saints, and stained glass are all meant to move the faithful to contemplation on the Word of God and on the mysteries of Christ through visible images of beauty. Just as the invisible God was made visible in Jesus Christ, Christian images make visible invisible mysteries of faith. (CCC1159 – 1162, 2500 – 2503)
- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Word* is an integral part of sacramental celebrations. To nourish our faith the signs which accompany the Word of God are emphasized: the book of the Word (a lectionary or book of the Gospels); its veneration (procession, incense and candles), the place of its proclamation (lectern), and the responses of the

- assembly in acclamations, responsorial psalms, litanies and the Creed (CCC 1154)
- ❖ The Order of Mass is composed of the *Liturgy of the Word* and the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. The Eucharistic celebration moves from the gathering of the assembly to the *Liturgy of the Word*, the presentation of the offerings (*Offertory*) to the *Eucharistic Prayer* and Communion. (CCC 1345 – 1355)
 - ❖ The Church begins liturgical prayers with the “Sign of the Cross,” i.e. in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and ends with the word “Amen,” which comes from the same root as the word “believe.” The word “Amen” expresses faithfulness, belief, and trust in God’s faithfulness towards us. (CCC 1061 – 1065)
 - ❖ From the beginning, the Church of the apostles expressed and handed on her faith in brief formulas or summaries. Essential elements of faith in Jesus Christ were summarized into Creeds, intended specially for candidates for baptism. They are called “Creeds” because their first word in Latin is usually *credo* (“I believe”). (CCC 185 – 188)
 - ❖ The first profession of faith is made during baptism and renewed at Sunday Eucharist. Since baptism is given “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the faith professed in baptism is articulated in terms of the three divine persons of the Trinity. (CCC 189 – 192)
 - ❖ Among all the creeds, two occupy a special place: The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed (CCC 193 – 197)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions may be used by the RCIA team to guide large or small group discussions during weekly RCIA meetings. They may also be given to the participants as a basis for personal reflection during the week.

1. Discuss the value and importance of the Church as a sacred space?
2. How do liturgical responses and gestures help to focus our attention on the Mass?
3. How does our profession of faith in the Creed affect our daily lives?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES/QUOTATIONS:

1 Peter 2:4

Romans 6:17; 19

1 Cor 15: 3-5

2 Cor 6:16

Heb 13:10

Matthew 38:19

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Universal Catechism, CCC 1179 – 1193

Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 2002

CLOSING PRAYER

The Creed