

The Organizational Structures of the Church

By Dan Jones March 2019

I. Background

a. Biblical

i. Genesis – Abraham

- 1. Patriarch** – “father of the nations” – Gen 17:5
- 2. Intercessors for sinners (Sodom)** – Gen 18
- 3. Father of Faith** – Matthew, Hebrews

ii. Exodus

1. Moses – Ex 3

- a. Prophet**
- b. Messenger**
- c. Instrument of Grace**

2. Aaron – Ex 28; priests of the holy place, dressed for the altar to minister in the sanctuary in the presence of God

iii. Joshua - prophet, messenger, leader, judge

iv. Judges

- 1. Ehud**
- 2. Deborah**
- 3. Gideon**
- 4. Elon**
- 5. Samson**
- 6. even so, the tribes warred against each other nearly leading to total loss with only the tribe of Israel measurably remaining**

v. Samuel – Eli and the continued Priesthood

- 1. anointing prophets**
- 2. anointing kings**

b. Historical

i. Rabbis – Sanhedrin

ii. Pharisees, Sadducees

iii. “Kings”

iv. Temple Faith – Second Temple Faith – Rabbinic Faith

II. The Foundation of the Church

- a. The Church is the people/tribe/nation/creation in communion with God’s divine life from the very beginning**
- b. 1 Peter 2:9 “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people”**
- c. When Jesus established His Church in Peter and the Apostles He created a divinely inspired structure for His Kingdom UNTIL His Kingdom is FULLY ACHIEVED in creation**
- d. Jesus chose The Twelve and Peter as their “head”**
- e. A historical beginning that transcends history/time**

III. As The Body of Christ

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- a. The Church was established both from Christ's words and from His Body and Blood on the Cross (pierced side; flowing water and blood)
- b. The Church is both visible (tangible, observable) and invisible (spiritual; living)
- c. It is a society structured by hierarchical organs and the mystical Body of Christ – the Body of which Christ is the Head
- d. The Church is a visible society and spiritual communion/community
- e. The Church is both earthly and heavenly
- f. This is the Mystery of the Church (both/and)

IV. The Sacramental Church

- a. The Church is like a sacrament in that it is both a sign of God's grace and mercy and the instrument to deliver grace and mercy
- b. The Church is The Body of Christ – now – and through the Eucharist will grow “through all the ages”
- c. The Church is the Bride of Christ who loved her and sacrificed Himself for her to purify and make her whole; He makes her fruitful so as to be The Mother of all of God's children

V. The Creed

- a. The Church is One
- b. The Church is Holy
- c. The Church is Catholic – universal, according to the totality of, in keeping with the whole
- d. The Church is Apostolic
- e. All by vocation and mission

VI. Organization

- a. The Particular Church – diocese, bishop, community
 - i. In communion through the practice of the Faith and Sacraments
 - ii. In communion with the Church of Rome
- b. Membership – Who belongs?
 - i. All people are called to belong
 - ii. Does belonging mean “saved?”
 - iii. Protestants?
 - iv. Jews?
 - v. Muslims?
 - vi. Non-Trinitarian Christians?
 - vii. Other Religions?
 - viii. Non-religious – unaffiliated, atheists?
 - ix. “Outside the church there is no salvation.”
- c. Hierarchy → Authority, Mission, Direction, Goal
 - i. The Pope ← → The Episcopal College ← → Bishops
 - ii. Bishops and Priests
 - 1. for sanctifying the church
 - 2. for governing the church

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- iii. All above represent the living magisterium
- iv. The supreme Magisterium acts as an official Ecumenical Council called and affirmed with the Pope declaring for the Church defined doctrine – Magisterium holds the true teachings of the Church
- v. The Lay Faithful
 - 1. all those Baptized except those given Holy Orders
 - 2. they work in ways the apostolate of the ordained cannot
 - a. Evangelization
 - b. Faith Formation
 - c. Teaching
 - d. Governance
 - e. Acts of Justice, Acts of Charity
- vi. The Consecrated Life – those called to do all of the above while practicing celibate chastity as toward the Kingdom, poverty, and obedience

- “There are not a hundred people in America who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions of people who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church — which is, of course, quite a different thing.” - **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

- “As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the **chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the church is built!**” – **St. Jerome**

- “The True Church can never fail. For it is based upon a rock.” – **T.S. Eliot**

- “You can be committed to Church but not committed to Christ, but you cannot be committed to Christ and not committed to church.” – **Joel Osteen**

- “To be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant.” - **Blessed John Henry Newman**

- “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose.” - **C.S. Lewis**

- “Protestants do not very often disagree with what Catholics believe, but they do very often disagree with what they think Catholics believe.” - **Father Dwight Longenecker**

- “About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they’re just one thing, and we shouldn’t complicate the matter.” - **Saint Joan of Arc**

- “I talk about the “cuteness” and the “niceness” of the Church a lot – and how I hate it.” - **Father Mike Schmitz**

- “It is not hard to obey when we love the one whom we obey.” - **Saint Ignatius of Loyola**

- “Whoever is separated from the church and is joined to an adulteress [that is, to a false church], is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother. If anyone could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the church.” - **St. Cyprian of Carthage**