

How to Explain the Church

By Deacon Tim Sullivan

Now we're going to focus on explaining in a basic way the most important aspects of our Catholic faith. We'll start with how we can understand the identity and mission of the Catholic Church.

Jesus walked the earth for 33 years. Since He was only here for such a short time, what was His plan for what would happen after He went back to heaven?

The answer is in the Gospel of John, Chapter 14, verse 18, when Jesus tells His disciples, "I will not leave you orphans." What did He mean by that?

Jesus is saying that after He returns to His Father by ascending into heaven, everything that He did, everything that He can give to humanity, will continue to be just as available as when He walked the earth. No one will be penalized by the fact that Jesus is no longer with us in the same way He was for those 33 years.

Jesus' plan for humanity was to make everything He said and did on earth available after His ascension through the Catholic Church.

So what Jesus said while He was here has been passed down to us by the Church through the Bible and what we call the Tradition of the Church. What Jesus did at the Last Supper, when He gave the apostles His Body and Blood, is available to Catholics in Holy Communion at Mass.

What Jesus did when he forgave people's sins is available to Catholics in the sacrament of Confession, or Reconciliation, when He forgives our sins through the words of our priests. What He did in healing people is available to us through the Anointing of the Sick.

We begin our new way of life as followers of Jesus when we are Baptized. Through Confirmation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to give us the power to maintain our commitment to follow Jesus. Jesus is fully with us today through the Church.

"In Jesus, you are also being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."
Ephesians 2:22