

## Francis: “The Church is a big and varied orchestra”



Pope Francis was driven into a rainy St. Peter's Square in the white jeep without an umbrella. He went on a long ride round the square, greeting faithful and kissing children and catching hats and jumpers that were being thrown at him. “It was courageous of you to come out in this bad weather. Well done,” the Pope told them.

Francis then resumed his catechesis on the Church and “catholicity”. He explained that “the meaning of Catholic” “derives from the Greek phrase ‘kath’olòn’ which means “according to everything”, the totality. How does this totality apply to the Church? When we say the Church is Catholic, what do we mean? I would say three things,” Francis said.

Firstly, the Church is called Catholic “because it is the space, the house, in which the entire faith is announced, in which the salvation brought to us by Christ is offered to everyone. Through the Church we find God’s mercy which transforms us because Jesus Christ is present in it. Jesus Christ is the figure who gives the Church its true faith, a full sacramental life and the authenticity of the ordained ministry.” In the Church “each of us finds all that is necessary to believe, to live as Christians, to become saints and to walk in every place and in every age.”

Francis gave an example: “ We could compare it to family life; in the family we are given all that we need to grow, mature and live. We can’t grow by ourselves, we can’t walk by ourselves, isolating ourselves. People walk and grow inside a community, within a family”. In the Church we can “hear the Word of God and be certain that this message was sent to us by the Lord; in the Church we meet the Lord in the Sacraments which are open windows through which we receive the light of God; they are streams from which we collect God’s life; in the Church we learn to live in communion and to experience God’s love.” The Pope suggested some questions we should ask ourselves: “When I go to Church is it like being at a football game at the stadium? Is it like being at the cinema? No! It’s different!” So “according to this first meaning, the Church is Catholic because it’s everyone’s Church”.

The second meaning is universality: The Church is Catholic because it is universal, it is present in all corners of the world and announces the Gospel to all men and women.” The Church “is not an élite group. It is not just a place for a few select people. The Church is not closed, it is called to include everyone, the entire human race. And the single Church is present in its smallest parts. So faithful can say: “the Catholic Church is present in my parish because it is also part of the universal Church.” Francis then went on to say: “Being in communion with all Churches and Catholic communities, whether big or small, in the world is a wonderful feeling! Feeling that we are all on a mission, whether we are a small community or a large one, we all have to open our doors and go out to announce the Gospel.”



Finally, “the Church is Catholic because it is t “House of Harmony”, where unity and diversity merge together to become a strength.” The Pope used the image of a symphony to illustrate the meaning of harmony. In a symphony, different instruments are played simultaneously; each musician has their own unique timber and the notes of their particular instrument are composed for one common piece of music. Then there’s the conductor who leads the symphony, ensuring harmony. But each instrument maintains its timber, its unique sound, getting the best out of it!”

The image described by the Pope “tells us that the Church is like a grand orchestra, full of variety: we are not all the same and we don’t all need to be the same. We are all diverse and different and each of us has their own qualities, that’s what’s so great about the Church: each of us brings something different to the Church, what God has given us, enriching others.” “Let us ask ourselves this: Do we live in harmony in our communities or do we fight? Is there gossip? If there’s gossip, there’s no harmony: there’s a struggle. And that’s not what the Church is: the Church is everyone being in harmony. Never gossip about each other, never argue. Let us accept one another and accept variety,” the Pope urged faithful. “Uniformity kills life. And when we try to force this uniformity on everyone, we kill the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” he added.

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