

# The People of God: Children of God

## Romans 8:12-17



Matthew 18:3-5

People of God 2/14/2014 2:54:37 PM

# Characteristics of the People of God

- - It is the People *of God*: God is not the property of any one people. But he acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not a people: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."<sup>202</sup>
- - One becomes a *member* of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit,"<sup>203</sup> that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism.
- - This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people."

- - "The *status* of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple."
- - "Its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us." This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit.
- - Its *mission* is to be salt of the earth and light of the world. This people is "a most sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race."
- - Its *destiny*, finally, "is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by him at the end of time."

# A priestly, prophetic, and royal people

- Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them.

# THE STORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

- The Short tour of salvation history will use the lens of the covenant to focus our attention on God's steadfast love and infinite mercy for his children.
- God uses covenants in salvation history to establish intimate family communion with his family, culminating in the New Covenant worldwide family which is the Catholic Church. The imagery used to express this communion is both familial (Exodus 4:22) and nuptial (Hosea 1-3). Through covenants God unites us to himself as part of his family.

# God is Love

- Mankind is the crown of creation. God's plan has always been to give himself to us as pure gift, and so He created us in His image so that we would be able to recognize and respond to his love, and enter into the loving communion of the Trinity. From all eternity man has been called into a covenant family relationship with God. God wants to dwell in our midst and make us partakers of his own divine nature, so that we can live as part of God's family forever. The story of our salvation history begins with God's creation of the universe and of our first parents, and the covenant God established with them.

# Covenant with Adam

- God made man in his image and likeness, with intellect and free will, male and female. God created Adam and Eve and married them to each other, and established his covenant with them as a married couple. The sacredness of man and woman joined unto each other with love and fidelity forever (i.e., marriage) is the first and most basic of God's revelations. Marriage is the primordial sacrament.
- Genesis 3:15 is called the protoevangelium, or first gospel, because in it God offers us the hope of a savior through the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. His love and mercy embraced us even after we sinned. This is a constant throughout salvation history.

# Covenant with Noah

- Noah was descended from Adam through his righteous son Seth. The line of Seth carried the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 to restore family communion with his children. God saved Noah through the waters of the flood, and after the waters had receded made a covenant with Noah and his household that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood.
- This new covenant God made with Noah and his household. Like unto Adam and Eve God commanded Noah and his household “to be fruitful and multiply.”

# Patriarchs

- Covenant with Abrhaham
- Genesis 12: 1-3 is called the acorn of salvation history because it recounts God's promises to Abram including land, that he will make of him a great nation, and that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed. It is from Abram's (soon to have his name changed by God to Abraham) line that Jesus Christ would come to establish the new covenant through which all the world (Jew and Gentile) would be restored to family communion with God.

# Covenant with Moses

- After 400 years of slavery in Egypt the people of Israel cried out to God for deliverance and God remembered his covenant with them.
- Moses led the people to Mt. Sinai where God established a covenant with him and the nation of Israel. God wanted to make of his covenant family a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.
- God remembered his covenant oaths to his chosen people and was a Father to them throughout this period despite their sinfulness, dwelling with them in the ark of the covenant in the Tabernacle, and eventually bringing them out of the desert within sight of the promised land of Canaan.

# Covenant with David

- And so the kingdom of Israel is established fulfilling God's covenant oath to Abraham that "kings would stem from him" and his descendants. So God had Samuel anoint the first king of Israel, Saul. But Saul was not faithful to God, and God had Samuel anoint David, the son of Jesse, as the new King of Israel.
- The covenant oath that God swears to David is that he will make for him and his sons a kingdom that will never end. With this covenant God's family had grown from a married couple, to a household, to a tribe, to a nation, and now to a kingdom.

- God gave David a son Solomon through whom He wanted to carry out the covenant.
- Though Solomon a wise ruler having 700 foreign wives, worshipping other gods resulted in the division of Southern and Northern Kingdoms.
- Both the kingdoms were conquered and the Jerusalem temple was destroyed.
- At this point of salvation history, the people of God had lost their earthly kingdom and all political sovereignty and military power. Having lost all the blessings and promises of the covenant, the people began to realize the consequences of their sinfulness. They began to return to the Lord and worship God according to the law of the covenant.

- Thus, for the 400 years before the birth of Christ the people began to realize their need for God the Father and his friendship. And yet God through his prophets during this period foreshadowed the new Son of David that was about to enter history, as well as the new covenant that he was to establish that would fully realize the promises of the previous covenants.

## New Covenant in Christ made with God's worldwide family, the Catholic Church

- From the very beginning God sought to dwell amidst his people and God promised through Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14) that a virgin would bear a child and name him Emmanuel, which means God with us. And so in the fullness of time, after God's gradual preparation of a covenant people to receive him, God sent Jesus Christ into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to establish the new and everlasting covenant in his body and blood for the salvation of all men.

- The gospel of Matthew begins “Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham” (Matthew. 1:1). Matthew 1:1 is not only a summary of salvation history, but also a summary of how the Catholic Church came to be, through her founder and bridegroom, Jesus Christ. As the “son of Abraham,” Jesus is the “universal” or Catholic blessing promised by the Father (Genesis 22:9-18) to all the nations.

- As the “son of David,” Jesus is the Messiah-King of the house of David and Israel. It is through the Church, the restored house of David (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:15-18), that men and women are to become disciples and thereby sons and daughters of God (Matthew 16:13-20; 28:18-20).
- God said He founded His “Church,” not “churches” (Matthew 16:18-19) on Peter the “Rock,” to whom He gave special powers as the earthly head of His restored Davidic kingdom.
- The Bible refers to the Church as Christ’s bride and Christ, as a faithful Groom, is the husband of only one bride or Church, for whom He gave His life (Ephesians 5:21-33).
- St. Paul affirms elsewhere that Christ’s Church has “one faith” and “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5), providing further biblical evidence that Our Lord founded one clearly recognizable Church, not many with conflicting doctrines.

- Communion is established with God and with one another through this new covenant Passover (i.e., Eucharist) by receiving the body and blood of Christ as our spiritual food. Christ pre-presented that once for all sacrifice at the Last Supper where He instituted the Eucharist and ordained his apostles to “do this in memory of me.” That command is fulfilled by the new covenant priests and their successors during the celebration of the Eucharistic that is offered till this day in the Catholic Church.

# THE CHURCH – The People of God

- Christ Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own" (*Titus* 2:14).
- "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 *Pet* 2:9).
- One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (*LG* 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (*AG* 1).
- The Church is the Body of Christ. Through the Spirit and his action in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body.

- In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted.
- The Church is this Body of which Christ is the head: she lives from him, in him, and for him; he lives with her and in her.
- The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children.
- The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the soul, as it were, of the Mystical Body, the source of its life, of its unity in diversity, and of the riches of its gifts and charisms.
- "Hence the universal Church is seen to be 'a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'" (LG 4 citing St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat* 23: PL 4, 553).

# Conclusion

- After long preparation, God entered the world himself, suffered and died, so that we his children could find rest in him and communion with him forever. What is it that constitutes a family? **Flesh and blood ties and a shared name.** God has given us his name at baptism, and we become his flesh and blood through the Eucharist. All who become members of the Father's family through the grace bestowed upon us in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Catholic Church are truly blessed.