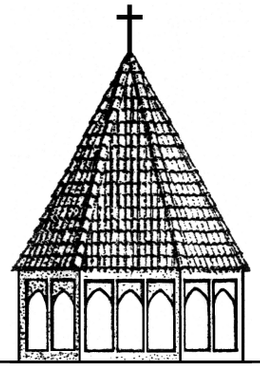
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The *Winnowing Fan* hopes "...to do what little it could to solve the evils that beset the Church."
St. Teresa of Avila



Winnowing Fan

The Spiritual Life according to the Fathers and Saints of the Catholic Church in preparation for Christ's Second Coming.

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The Marks of the True Catholic Church (1)

The Catholic Church is being beset by many problems today. There is the problematic priest in the US that had caused the diocese to go bankrupt, there are the aberosexual priests and bishops, the child molesters, the married priests, etc. But the greatest problem is the fact that most priests and bishops cannot prove themselves to be Catholics.

This is a situation not only in the Philippines but around the whole world; that most bishops cannot prove that their diocese is truly a Catholic community. Neither can most of the parish priests prove that their parish is truly a Catholic parish.

And yet, the Catholic Church alone has the infallible proof that it is the only Church instituted by Christ on earth. At the same time, the proofs show that there can be no other true Church because it would be philosophically impossible to have two opposite Churches. The Catechism gives the four visible signs of the true Church as found in the Nicene Creed. These four signs are very convincing, using one's common sense, one's philosophical reasoning; and if possible using one's theological skills aided by Divine Grace.

The four visible signs are visible signs available to all men to check and counter check their religions against the Catholic Religion. The Catholic Church will come out winner as the only possible Church that a true God would institute. Other religions and other gods will appear to be made by mere men and, therefore, cannot be religions or churches.

The four visible signs enumerated in the Nicene Creed are natural visible signs. But they have an equivalent spiritual or invisible interpretation. Mature Faith is needed to interpret the invisible meaning of these signs; this is the reason few really understand the four visible signs and even fewer can apply them to certain dioceses and parishes. So ask any parish priest or any bishop to prove, using these visible signs, that their parish or diocese is Catholic and they will not be able to do so.

This is the cause of great anxiety for all Catholics; that we are told that we are Catholics, that we belong to a Catholic parish and a Catholic diocese but cannot prove in any way that they are Catholics. That means only one thing; that if we die we are not sure we are going to heaven because we do not know if we are inside or outside the Catholic Church.

So, we would like to review the four visible signs of true Catholicism. These are the signs that prove that a diocese is Catholic; that the parish is Catholic, that a husband, wife and their children are Catholics. And that if we die we would go to heaven because we are sure that we are inside the Catholic Church.

The four visible signs enumerated in the Nicene Creed that we recite every Sunday are: I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. These four visible signs are difficult to explain. So let us study the expanded 15 Marks of the Church described by the Doctor of the Church St. Robert Bellarmine which is an expanded version of the four visible signs. Since it is expanded into 15 Marks, it is easier to understand and it is easier to apply to our parish, our diocese and even to ourselves.....after all what interests us most is whether we are Catholics or not.

Besides, we cannot judge if our parish or diocese is Catholic unless we first know if we ourselves are Catholics or not. We have to analyze ourselves first before we can analyze others.

The air which we breathe, the bread which we eat, the heart which throbs in our bosoms, are not more necessary for man that he may live as a human being, than is prayer for the Christian that he may live as a Christian.

St. John Eudes

THE FENCE.

The parable describes the Catholic Church as a vineyard. The vineyard has a fence; it, also, has a vat, an altar and a tower.

But if the fence is tall, we can hardly see the vat, the altar and the tower. We can only see the fence. But that is enough. As long as our parish is completely ruled by the commands of Christ in the New Testament and as interpreted by the Fathers of the Church, we can be sure that our parish is truly Catholic.

Of course, further into the fence will show us the vat and the tower. Participating in those activities will further assure us that we are Catholics.



THE WINEPRESS.

Within the vineyard is a winepress. The winepress is the life of asceticism that transform grapes into wine. It transforms people from people of many minds and will into a community where the people are of one mind and one will; and these faculties are in union with the mind and will of God.

Thus we do not have a family of five with their own minds; but a family of five with one mind, all united with the mind of Christ. That is the winepress.

The winepress crushes the grapes and it turns into grape juice. The individual minds and will are crushed with humility to be transformed into grape juice; placed in a vat and fermented to be transformed into wine. This is the wine that will be consecrated to be united with Christ and become the Catholic Church; all souls with one mind and heart united with Christ make up the Catholic Church.



THE TOWER.

The tower is the compilation of the knowledge learned from Scriptures and the Fathers. Together it can give the soul a knowledge on how soon the Second Coming of Christ would come. Thus the soul looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ with joyful heart as we recite this prayer every Sunday after the Our Father at Mass. Because being inside the Church we know our everlasting life is assured.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

While Christ describes the true Church as the kingdom of God here on earth, He, also, describes the bad things around the Church. The bad things, strictly speaking, are not inside the Church, though some time they are described as inside the Church as is the case of the cockles. Strictly speaking the cockles are outside the Church because the true Church is Holy.

So let us describe some bad things outside the Church but surrounds the Church. These are allowed by God to torment the Church to test the members of the Church. Like for instance, the devils. They are all around the Church to test the Church. God allows it. The devil will always be the main protagonist against the true Church; and he will be using everything else to try to destroy the Church. He cannot destroy the Church but he can cause a lot of collateral damage on those outside the Church. So the great need of protecting ourselves by making sure we are inside the safety of the Catholic Church.

We can only be victorious against the powers of darkness if we fight within the safety of the Church.

The Prophecies of Scriptures.

The Liturgy are lessons on prophecy. The Liturgy tells us what Scripture tells us in the past, how it takes place in history and how it is fulfilled in the future.

And the importance of the Post-Easter and Pentecost Liturgy is that it describes how the Catholic Church will look today, compared to how it looked before.

An example is this; In the Gospels, the Church before looked like the apostolic boat ride in Genesareth. But the Church today should look like the Gospel story of the apostolic boat ride in Tiberias. There are a lot of differences between the two images of the same Catholic Church; but it is essentially the same Catholic Church.

Because many Catholics do not know difference today, they do not know where the true Church is because it looks different. It is not different; she has just matured and has turned into a beautiful bride ready for her wedding in heaven.

> You cannot be half a saint. You must be a whole saint or no saint at all.
>
> **St. Therese of Lisieux**

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