



# LOCAL CHURCH



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The Church is an institution ordained by God in Jesus Christ, and its mission is directed towards the disciples, as Word teaches:

- "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH..." (Matthew 16:18).
- "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..., TEACHING THEM to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28: 19-20).
- "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41).

The Holy Scriptures Mentioned above describe the foundation and justification of the Church as a communal body made up of people who have believed in the teachings of Christ, spread by the Apostles. For didactic reasons, we will differentiate between "Church as the body of Christ", "local church" and "church as place of worship" before going into the development of the subject.

The Church body of Christ, gathering together all who have believed, is defined in 1Corinthians 12:13, when the Apostle Paul says: " For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

The Church Body of Christ is the spiritual aspect of the Church, uniting in one Spirit, in Christ, all those who believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, and who hope in eternal life. This immaterial body is the foundation of the Church Assembly of the faithful, which in turn is a social body called the Local Church.

The local church generally gathers in a customary place set aside for worshipping God; this is the church - temple, cathedral, synagogue, chapel... -. The church - the place of worship - is regularly written with a lower-case "c" for stylistic convenience, to differentiate it from the Church body of Christ and the local Church, which are written with a capital "C".

## 1. Definition and role of the local church

A. The local Church is a community of people who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, accepted Christ's life and teachings as respectively a model and source of rules for their life on earth, and live in the hope of eternal life. Therefore, these people are disciples of Christ, commonly called Christians, and form a hierarchically organized social body to teach salvation to mankind. The Book of Revelation gives us a concrete example of the local Church when it speaks of seven (7) in Asia Minor.

### B. Role of the local church:

- Spiritual role: to teach and prepare God's people for eternal life; to set apart his chosen ones called before the foundation of the world to be his children.
- Social role: to constitute a Priesthood to serve God and be His witnesses to mankind; to provide pastoral care to the community and build up fellowship for mutual sharing and social support.

### C. Church organization:

**The Church is structured as follows:**

**1. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. He watches over the sheep for the fulfilment of what He Himself promised: "And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

**2. The disciples ("followers")**

**All disciples, with no exception, are actively called to the work, i.e. to the service of divine worship. Indeed, through Faith, all disciples are consecrated to the government of the local Church, according to the graces that God has granted each one. Some disciples are called to serve in specific known and regularly performed offices, without making them special or superior to others; they are disciples ensuring the permanence and continuity of service.**

**This call to ecclesiastical offices is more a duty than a privilege. They are: Pastor and his assistants, Elders, Deacons and leaders of various departments.**

**The members of the local church who do not have current or permanent responsibilities are nevertheless called upon to participate in the service of worship and**

**to share fellowship, without having a formal commitment to the ecclesial order. Circumstantially, however, they may work and take action in the celebration of worship or the organization of ecclesiastical community life.**

**These members of the Church should all work within the various departments and in the elevation of the ministry of Faith, according to the gifts that God has given to each one (doctor, gift of miracles, healing, social assistance, exhortation, speaking in various languages, singing, liberality, maintenance of the place of worship...).**

**Therefore, the local Church, in its organization and functioning, is called to prepare the bride to present her to the bridegroom without blemish. Every initiative taken within this community must be dictated by this obligation. May the Lord God teach His people, and may the Holy Spirit remind us that we are but servants in the service of Christ, owner and master of the Church. Like Eliezer of Damascus, who, taking Rebecca to Isaac, spoke to her only of Isaac, we too, who are called to the work, must step aside to teach only Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour.**