

FULL COMMUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
Being in Right Relationship with the Catholic Church
Fr. Richard Eldredge, T.O.R.

What does it mean to be in Full Communion with the Catholic Church?

- Being in Full Communion with the Catholic Church means that **one has been fully initiated into the Catholic Faith.** Such a person has been baptized in one of the Christian church traditions and has also celebrated the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
- For a married person to be in Full Communion with the Catholic Church also means being **married according to the norms of the Catholic Church.** Catholics are required to be **married by a Catholic priest or deacon,** or to have received a dispensation from the local bishop to be married in a church of the faith tradition of the person who is not Catholic.

Full Communion with the Catholic Church also *implies* that **one is a practicing Catholic** who participates at Mass regularly and is able to receive the Eucharist; one who is a registered member of a Catholic Parish and who witnesses to the Faith by one's life choices.

Why is one NOT considered to be in Full Communion with the Catholic Faith?

- One who has not celebrated all three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- A Catholic person who was not married by a Catholic priest or deacon, according to the norms of the Catholic Church, but rather by a judge, justice of the peace, or minister of another religion without a dispensation.
- Those who are not married and are living together.

It *implies* that one may or may not be participating at Mass regularly; not able to receive the Eucharist; not a registered member of a Catholic Parish; does not witness to the Faith by one's life choices.

If one is not in Full Communion with the Catholic Church, how can our parish help a person to reconcile one's life situation and be restored to Full Communion with the Catholic Church?

- If one has not been confirmed, contact Father Richard Eldredge at 817-421-1387 and he will help you through the Adult Confirmation Process.

- **If one is married but not married by a priest or deacon, please contact Debra Hawks at 817-421-1387 and she will assist you in having your marriage validated or recognized in the Catholic Church.**
- **If one has a previous marriage or marriages, please contact Debra Hawks at 817-421-1387 to receive help through our Marriage Tribunal Ministry.**
- **Full Communion with the Catholic Church means that one has already entered into a valid Catholic marriage or that one's present marriage has been validated by the Catholic Church.**
- **Persons living willfully in mortal sin or couples living without benefit of a sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church have made life choices that do not witness to their Faith. These life choices have compromised one's relationship with the Catholic Church and therefore they may not receive the Eucharist until their life situation is healed through the sacraments.**
- **After the Marriage Tribunal and validation preparations are completed the sacraments of reconciliation and marriage bring the healing necessary to receive the Eucharist. Only then is the Eucharist the ultimate healing and SIGN that a person is in Full Communion with the Catholic Church.**
- **For a person living in the state of grace, without mortal sin, or couples married according to the norms of the Catholic Church, receiving the Eucharist is a SIGN of their being a regularly practicing Catholic already in a valid marriage. Receiving Eucharist is a SIGN of the Catholic Church that such persons are in Full Communion with the Catholic Church.**
- **In the Rites of the Catholic Church at the Mass of Easter Vigil just before the "Lamb of God," the priest gives the following exhortation to the newly received Catholics: *Eucharist is the climax of your Christian initiation and the center of your whole Christian life in the Catholic Community. And, Eucharist is the clearest SIGN and the highpoint of your being in Full Communion with the Catholic Community.***
- **Persons who are living together without a sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church are invited and encouraged to worship with us at Good Shepherd Catholic Community each Sunday, but are to suspend receiving all sacraments until they are restored to full communion with the Catholic Church. In the meantime, we invite anyone not yet restored to a right relationship to come in the Communion line, place both hands over one's heart as a humble sign of asking for a blessing, but not Communion.**
- **The essential relationship between receiving Eucharist and being in Full Communion with the Catholic Church may not be taken lightly.**