

Faith, harmony, universality make church 'catholic,' pope says

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Oct. 9, 2013 The Francis Chronicles
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Professing that the church is "catholic" means accepting its teachings, accepting the gifts it offers to help one grow in holiness and accepting the fact that it is composed of different people with different gifts and opinions, [Pope Francis said](#) [1].

"Let's ask ourselves: Do we live in harmony in our communities? Or do we fight among ourselves?" the pope asked Wednesday as he focused his weekly general audience talk on the meaning of the creed's profession that the church is "catholic."

"Is there gossip" in the parish or movement, do people "accept each other, accept that there is a correct variety" or "do we tend to try to make everything uniform?" Pope Francis asked the estimated 60,000 visitors and pilgrims who braved the rain to join him. Many in the square had umbrellas, but Pope Francis spent almost 30 minutes in the rain, riding among the crowd in an open popemobile.

"We are not all the same and we shouldn't all be the same," he said. Each person has his or her own gifts, qualities and character, which "is one of the beauties of the church -- everyone brings what God has given him or her to enrich the others."

"When we try to impose uniformity, we kill the gifts of the Holy Spirit," the pope said. He asked people at the audience to pray that the Spirit would make all church members more "catholic."

While the word "catholic" literally means universal, it is not first of all a matter of geography, but of unity in faith, Pope Francis said. "The church is catholic because it is the space, the home in which the faith is proclaimed in its entirety, where the salvation Christ brought us is offered to all."

Each diocese, each parish can say it is "catholic" because its members are united in the faith, the sacraments, the ministry of its priests, the leadership of its bishop and its unity with the pope, he said.

Being Catholic means being part of a family, he said. No one should or can go it alone; "in a family, each one of us is given what we need to grow, mature and live. We cannot grow alone, we cannot walk alone, in isolation, but we must move forward and grow in a community."

Pope Francis asked those at the audience to consider how they accept the gifts that the church offers them to help them grow and mature, because "in the church, we find all we need to be saints."

However, he said, if people go to Mass like spectators at a ballgame or movie, or if they are too wrapped up in their own problems to accept help and offer their gifts to others, neither they nor the church will benefit.

One obligation, he said, is to share the Gospel message with others and support the church's missionary activity. "The church is catholic because it is universal, it is present in every part of the world and proclaims the Gospel

to every man and every woman."

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