



### Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### HG167 *The Apostles Creed: I Believe In ...* **The Catholic Church / Communion Of Saints**

Matthew 28:16-20 & Acts 4:32-37

Home Group Study Notes

24 June 2018 - Hilary Porritt



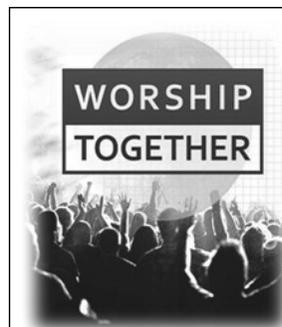
**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



### **Welcome** (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

Share with the group a time when you attended a church service that was very different from Emmanuel. What did you find difficult, and what did you enjoy?



### **Looking Upwards** (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...

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HG166 *The Apostles Creed: I Believe In ...*  
**The Catholic Church / Communion Of Saints**

Matthew 28:16-20 & Acts 4:32-37

Home Group Sermon

24 June 2018 - Hilary Porritt

### Introduction

When we say in the Apostles' Creed that we believe in the holy catholic Church, we are saying that despite appearances, despite our differences and disagreements, despite our lack of understanding of each other, we actually believe in unity, in something we share, in what we agree on - in one church.

*Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. Matt 28:16*

### Gathered

At its simplest, a church is just a gathering of people. The disciples were confused, miserable, unsure ... but they got together. They met on a mountain, not in a building, which reminds us that the church is a gathering of people, not a building.

### Jesus focused

*When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Matt 28:17*

A church is a place where Jesus is, a place where we see Jesus, and a place where we respond to him. Our response to Jesus might look very different, and we see here that the disciples had very different reactions to seeing Jesus again. Some of the disciples worshipped him: sadly, worship can be one of the things that divides us.

Some of the disciples doubted. What a good reminder of the truth that we don't have to believe before we come to church. Messy church can be actually very messy- but also, the name is a reminder that we can be in a mess, but God still loves us, and we can still be part of His church.

### Time

Read Hebrews 12:1,2

"I believe in the communion of saints" Share with the group how you have been inspired, encouraged or challenged by Christians from the past. This could be through their prayers, hymns, art, biographies etc.

### Truth

Read again Matthew 28: 19,20

How important are the ideas of baptism and the Trinity? Does someone have to understand them before they become a Christian?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

By the end of the fourth century, the church was describing itself as *ecclesia catholica* or the catholic church. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote of the 4 aspects of what this term ‘catholic’ means, and our Home Group questions explore what these might mean for us today.

### Place

Read Matthew 28:19

Do you know much about Christianity in other countries? Share with the group any links you have, through prayer, missionary support or personal experience of the church in different places. Perhaps as a group you might adopt a country or mission organisation to pray for?

### People

Read Galatians 3:26-29

Do you think the way we do church could leave some people out? What could we change?

We don't all have to worship in the same way. We don't even all have to worship. Church is simply a place where we meet with Jesus.

### Holy

So what does it mean when we say we believe in a holy church? The church is holy not because we are special, perfect people. Scripture teaches us that we are all sinners....

*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23,24*

Holy means set apart for God's purposes - we are holy because God has called us, and He is in the business of making us holy. We'll be looking in our next homegroup sermon at how this works when we consider the very next line of the creed - I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

### Direction

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. Matt 28:19*

The church is not supposed to be a “holy huddle”, a cosy place where we get together with a few of our friends to feel good about ourselves. We recognize Pentecost as the birth of the church - when these same miserable, confused disciples were filled with the Spirit and began to share their faith enthusiastically, passionately and at every opportunity. Our second reading today was a picture of that early church:

*Acts 4: 32-37*

The church is to be a place facing outwards, where we are equipped to be salt and light to the world. I've been inspired by Emmanuel's heart for this community here in Billericay - there are Gigs in the Rectory, a Community Garden, people who are going into schools and prisons, and so much more. You are a people who are going in the right direction!

### Truth

*... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matt 28:19*

This is where the Apostles creed starts - by proclaiming our belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This is the bare minimum of belief- for a church to be a **church**, and not a discussion group, a group seeking answers, a vaguely spiritual group centred around mindfulness.....none of these things are bad things, they might be steps towards church in fact, but a church does stand for something. It does unashamedly proclaim that it believes in something- even if that certainty can be dismissed as dogmatism, as arrogance, as political incorrectness. Paul writes:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16*

The church is a place that proclaims the gospel  
Even if some bits are uncomfortable  
Even if some bits are difficult to understand  
Even if sometimes it makes people turn and walk away

This **is** what we believe

### **Orthodoxy**

*...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.  
Matt 28:20*

This is the sticky part ... we can't agree on what obedience looks like.

We've seen an example in the news recently from America- where the Attorney General quoted Romans 13 to justify separating Immigrant children from their parents at the border. Many Christians have vigorously and publicly disagreed with him.

And the history of the church has been full of disagreements- about confessions and forgiveness, about roles of men and women, about baptizing children, about gifts of the Spirit, and so many more.

How can we say we believe in a catholic church when it seems so divided?

A few weeks ago I went to St Paul's to hear Bishop Sarah, the new bishop of London. She said "Peace in the world begins with us finding peace with each other. We should be able to disagree with love."

Peace is not the same as agreement. We can learn to respect others with different opinions from us, to seek to understand them, to have sometimes difficult and challenging conversations with them, and be prepared to admit that they might sometimes be right!

It's worth noticing that this passage from Matthew focuses on only a very few things that the church should agree on, and mentions none of the issues that we can get so worked up about. Perhaps the things we disagree on are not as important as the things we agree on? That the church should be:

Gathered  
Jesus-focused  
Holy  
Direction  
Truth  
Orthodoxy

### **Promise**

*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matt 28:20*

We are back where we started- that when we say "I believe in the holy catholic church", we are sharing our belief that church is a place where people gather together to seek Jesus, to worship as we are able, to confess our sins and ask for God's forgiveness, and to be filled with the power of His Spirit so that we might be people who make a difference to our world.

