

## **Faith Matters # 14 – The Holy Catholic Church – June 11**

When we recite the Apostles' Creed and say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church", what goes through your mind? My Roman Catholic aunt, when she visited Erskine and heard us repeat the Creed, whispered to me, "I didn't know this was a Catholic church!" I whispered back, "Yes, it's a Presbyterian Catholic Church," – which isn't quite true, but she knows that there are Greek Catholics and Ukrainian Catholics and others as well.

Catholic really means total, complete, universal, as when we say, "He eats anything and everything; he has *catholic* tastes." So the Holy Catholic Church is all churches together which have adopted the Apostles' Creed, whether they are Roman, Orthodox, Anglican, or Protestant (including subgroups of those four).

The Apostles' Creed reminds all churches of what is central to our faith, including the belief that Christ ascended to the father, and left behind the church to continue to be his hands, feet, mouth and mind. So now, the body of Christ, that is, all branches of the universal or Catholic Church, are his hands to heal, his mouth to proclaim the Gospel, his feet to deliver the Good News everywhere.

All too often, denominations of the church think they alone are the whole church, and burn one another's church buildings, or torture others. All too often congregations forget they are to be Christ's hands and feet, mouth and mind, with the result that outsiders, as they see how we hurt one another, have good reasons to stay away.

What distinguishes the various Churches within the Catholic or universal Church is their form of government, the centrality of the Bible, and certain forms of worship especially concerning baptism and other sacraments. But at the centre of it all is Jesus Christ, the Word of God who was in the beginning with God. All branches of the Catholic or world-wide Church seek to love Him and to follow Him.

(by Rev. Willard Pottinger – Erskine Presbyterian Church, Hamilton)