

We Are Not Alone

By Deacon Mario Lopez

It seems that many people have a fascination with the concept that...We are not alone?

And truthfully, every time that I hear someone, say this as a statement or as a question, my mind (just like others) begins to race around the Universe—outer space.

Why just the other day they were reporting that three other earth-like (size) planets that were discovered and immediately everybody reengages the conversation...one more time. *Are we alone?*

I presume that they are inquiring about ‘other life forms’ that may or may not exist ...and knowing that most of us usually think alike...I know that you understand where I am coming from.

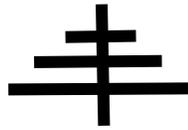
However, if you presume that this is where I am going with this article...than I invite you to hang-around and find out...where I am really headed.

Hopefully, as we go through the inaugural phase of unfolding our ‘*New St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Website*’ the focus of this article (and of the following articles) will lead us to know the truth of who we are as Church, as well as, the fact that...we are not alone.

I will give you an example, when most of us hear someone speaking about the Catholic Church we immediately turn our attention to the Catholic Church that we know...the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church...*us*. However, in truth the Roman/Latin Rite of the Catholic Church is one of six major rites. Now it is important for us to understand that, a Church is not the same as a rite. When we speak about the Catholic Church, we are actually speaking 22 autonomous Churches that are part of the six major rites that comprise the Universal Catholic church.



They are in lineage from Jesus to present time:



Jesus

Apostles

Rome – Antioch – Jerusalem – Alexandria - Constantinople

Eastern Rite Churches				Western Rite Churches	
<u>Antiochene</u>	<u>Alexandrian</u>	<u>Armenian</u>	<u>Chaldean</u>	<u>Byzantine</u>	<u>Latin</u>
(W. Syriac) Malankar Maronite Syrian	Coptic Ethiopian	Armenian	(E. Syriac) Chaldean Malabar	Albanian Bulgarian Byelorussian Greek (not orthodox) Hungarian Italo-Albanian Melkite Ruthenian Romanian Russian Slovak Ukrainian Yugoslav	Ambrosian Gallican Mozarabic Roman

So it is that, when we are speaking about the Catholic Church, we are actually speaking about a Universal Church that is more than just the Latin Rite/Church, which is only one of the 22 autonomous Churches, that follow one the six Major Rites that are all in union with Rome, under the authority of the Holy Father and are considered Catholic.

Together we celebrate:

- Apostolic Faith
- Mysteries / Sacraments
- Unity with the Pope (Successor of Peter)



Each Church has its own:

- Liturgy—activity for accomplishing God’s work for salvation
- Theology—study of relations between God and humans
- Spirituality—the living out of a faith experience
- Law—the principles for ordering church life

We could (*and probably should*) ask; what is meant by the expression each “Church” in the Catholic Church?

A Church is:

- A universal community of faith
- Having a distinct tradition
- Founded by an apostle or successor and guided by an autonomous hierarchy
- By which various nations and peoples have been converted to and nurtured by...
- The teachings of Jesus Christ.

That is to say that, each church encompasses a unique liturgy, theology, spirituality and law and is characterized by its own cultural and linguistic influences.

Each church enjoys an autonomy from its sister churches, and is guided by its patriarch and bishops in unity with the successor of Peter.

So you see, we are not alone...in our love and worship of God (*universally*), we are together as a Church founded by Jesus Christ, Priest, Prophet, and King.

One - In faith, morals, mission and goal

Holy - In the ministry of saving the whole world

Catholic - In sharing the new life gifted by Jesus to all

Apostolic - In tracing its teachings, traditions and authority to Jesus through the apostles

The Church is a Universal Church (*meaning of the word Catholic*) community of believers called to:

- **Service** - living the Gospel as a prophetic people in words and deeds
- **Worship** - praising the Trinity as a priestly people and interceding on behalf of creation
- **Fellowship** - living with one another in truth, justice and love as a kingly people united in Christ.

Together, in the Most Perfect Prayer we will ever pray - the Holy Mass - we join the entire Church in the Profession of Faith - the Creed of our Faith.

▪ **We believe in God as...**

Mystery ever beyond our understanding, yet Creator of the universe in his image and likeness Father and lover of all humankind...

▪ **We believe in Jesus as**

Son of God and Son of Mary...

Word of God through whom all things were made...

Christ, who by power of the Spirit became human, died, rose and ascended to the Father...

Lord, who will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead...,

▪ **We believe in the Holy Spirit as**

Fountain of love...

Giver of life...

Advocate, who has spoken through the prophets and extends the risen presence of Christ to the Church...,

▪ **We believe in the Church as**

One, holy, catholic, apostolic...

▪ **We believe in a**

Baptism of forgiveness... Resurrection from the dead... Communion of the saints... Life in the kingdom to come...

So, just when we thought that we were alone... we find out that we are not.