



The term **“Ekklesia Kata Holos”** is a Greek expression that literally means “the assembly according to the whole” or “the universal community.” This concept lies at the heart of the identity of the Catholic Church, whose name stems from this very root: **“catholic,”** meaning universal. But what does the Bible tell us about this universal Church and its role in God’s plan? In this article, we will explore how Scripture establishes and reveals the essence of the Catholic Church, how it has been understood throughout history, and what this concept means for believers today.

1. The Church in the Old Testament: Preparing God’s People

Although the term “ekklesia” does not appear in the Old Testament, the idea of a people called by God is deeply rooted in Hebrew Scriptures. God called Abraham to form a nation that would be His people (Gn 12:1-3). Israel was chosen as the sacred assembly (**qahal**) meant to reflect God’s holiness and be a light to the nations (Is 49:6).

The **Exodus** is a key moment in this story: God delivers His people from slavery so they can serve Him as a united community under the Covenant. This **assembly at Mount Sinai** (Ex 19:1-8) prefigures the Church, where believers are called to live under the new and definitive covenant in Christ.

2. “Ekklesia” in the New Testament: Fulfillment in Christ

The term **“ekklesia”** appears for the first time in the New Testament, where it takes on its full meaning in Christ. Jesus establishes the Church as both a visible and spiritual community, rooted in His person and mission.

a) The foundation of the Church in the Gospels

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says to Peter:

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”



Here, the word “Church” (**ekklesia**) designates the community of believers who will live in communion with Him. This passage highlights two essential aspects: the Church is Christ’s work, and it is built on Peter’s faith and authority as the first Pope.

b) The universal mission of the Church

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gives the missionary mandate:

| *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).*

The universality of the Church is evident here. It is not a community limited by geographical, cultural, or ethnic boundaries but an assembly that gathers all people under Christ’s lordship.

c) The Church as the Body of Christ

St. Paul uses the image of the **Body of Christ** to describe the Church (1 Cor 12:12-27). This analogy emphasizes the unity and diversity within the ecclesial community: every member has a unique role, but all are united in Christ, who is the head.

3. The Catholic Church: Meaning and Historical Development

The term “**catholic**” first appears in an ecclesiastical context in the second century when St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote:

| *“Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church.”*

From its beginnings, the Church has identified itself as universal, in continuity with the mission entrusted by Christ to the apostles.

a) Apostolic succession

The Church’s universality is not only geographical but also doctrinal and spiritual. Through apostolic succession, bishops, as the successors of the apostles, have ensured the faithful



transmission of the Gospel.

b) **The Council of Jerusalem: A model of unity**

In Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem addresses a central question: should Gentiles observe the Mosaic Law to be part of the Church? This event shows how the early Church worked in communion to resolve conflicts, a model that continues in ecumenical councils.

4. **Theological Relevance Today: What Does It Mean to Be Catholic?**

In a world marked by individualism and fragmentation, the call to live as members of a universal Church is more crucial than ever. Being part of the Catholic Church means:

a) **Living in communion**

The Church is not a social club or a human institution. It is the Body of Christ, where each of us finds our place in a global spiritual family. This invites us to overcome divisions and build bridges, following Jesus' example.

b) **Being witnesses of the Gospel**

As members of the universal Church, we are called to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. This includes defending human dignity, promoting justice, and caring for the most vulnerable.

c) **Participating in the sacraments**

The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are the heart of Catholic life. In the Mass, we unite with the entire Church in heaven and on earth, celebrating universal communion in Christ.

5. **Practical Applications: Living “Catholic” in Daily Life**

How can we live out this universal call in our daily lives?

1. **Strengthen family and community unity:** The Church begins at home. Cultivate relationships based on love, forgiveness, and solidarity.
2. **Pray for the universal Church:** Remember that we are part of a global community. Pray for persecuted Christians and for the unity of all believers.



3. **Evangelize with love:** Share your faith not only through words but also through your example of life.
4. **Participate actively in your parish:** Engage in the activities of your local community, which is a manifestation of the universal Church.

6. Conclusion: A Call to Universal Holiness

“Ekklesia Kata Holos” is not just a theological concept but a living reality that invites every believer to be part of something greater than themselves: God’s plan for humanity’s salvation. The Catholic Church, founded by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, calls us to live in communion, to be witnesses of the Gospel, and to work for unity and peace.

Now more than ever, let us respond to the call to be true Catholics: members of a universal Church that proclaims Christ as the light of the world.