

Parish Family and Parish Community

Parish Family

Persons are related by birth (Holy Baptism); they are “blood relatives.”

Persons are accepted because of *who they are* (“blood relatives”).

A parish family is broadly inclusive of most of the ways the human family exists: gender, age, race, ethnicity, etc.

A parish family (which is the local presence of the whole Catholic Church) gives persons a sense of identity, core culture, and core values.

A parish family is where persons maintain their identity, core culture, and core values. (St Paul’s core culture is Catholicism in the Benedictine tradition.

A parish family is centered in corporate prayer and the seven Sacraments. They are the core and irreducible minimum required for active status in the family.

A parish family as the local presence of the Universal Church is infinitely wide in scope, encompassing the whole Catholic Church: Militant on earth, Expectant in Paradise, and Triumphant in Heaven.

Parish Community

Persons are related by common interests, activities, and lifestyle possibilities.

Persons are accepted because of *what they do*.

Parish communities are restricted to persons with a specific commonality.

Parish communities are where persons can live out that identity and formation.

Parish communities are where persons find close personal relationships.

Parish communities are centered in pursuing common mission, activities, or programs.

Many types of parish communities can exist within a parish family.

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Parish Family

Historically, Catholics have had a much clearer understanding of the Church as a universal family than have Protestants. (In the past, all often Catholic laypersons have had fewer Church communities than Protestants – except religious orders – in which to be a participant; and thus Catholic parishes could seem more impersonal.)

Parish Community

Historically, Protestants have had a much clearer understanding of Church communities than have Catholics. (In the past, all too often Protestants have had congregations that were communities-of-the-whole. Thus they could seem to be self-contained religious organizations focused solely on the local place and that particular group of people and hence could seem to be exclusionary of anyone not “exactly like us.”)

If persons are to practice the Christian Faith fully, they need to have in their lives both a church family – and through it the whole Catholic Church – and a church community.