

# HOLY/UNIVERSAL

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## THE LESSON: EPHESIANS 2+4

*That it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church universal in the right way,  
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

Two creeds are found in our Book of Common Prayer which date back to the earliest days of Church history and are still recognized today as concise statements of what Christians believe.

The Nicene Creed sets out four defining characteristics (or “marks”) of the Church when it states, “we believe *one holy catholic* (which means universal) and *apostolic* Church”. The Apostles’ Creed uses a shortened version that includes only “holy” and “catholic” – words that are echoed in the petition from the Litany. In brief, these defining characteristics tell us that the Church is a unified whole, called out from the world and set apart by God, comprised of faithful Christians in all times and places, and rooted in the teachings of the apostles.

As we reflect on the nature of the Church, we are reminded that “the Christian life is not a solitary walk but a pilgrimage undertaken with other Christians. Even if you set off alone, you will soon find that you are journeying onward to heaven in the company of many fellow pilgrims. You will help to uphold them as they stumble and struggle, and they will bear you up along the way” (Sue Careless).

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In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul manages to touch on each one of the four “marks” listed above. Notice how he emphasizes the spiritual reality of the invisible Church, while also addressing the struggles and deficiencies that can characterize our visible churches.

## AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Spend time each day this week praying for the requests of your group member on the paper you selected.  
Remember that someone else in your group is praying for your requests.

- OPTIONAL -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth; in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where any thing is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is in want, furnish it; where it is divided and rent asunder, make it whole again; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL, BCP PAGE 39)

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## EPHESIANS 2+4: **WALKING TOGETHER**

**2** <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

<sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit...

**4** <sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift... <sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.