

The Church: A Pilgrim People

Vatican Council II opens up the meaning of the Church as a pilgrim people, the People of God who are on a journey. This worksheet provides two readings that explore the image of 'a pilgrim people' and the insights they give for our understanding the mystery of the Church.

What is your initial response to the image of the Church as 'a pilgrim people'?

Read and Reflect

Form into small groups and read each of these excerpts carefully.

Authentic knowledge of the God of mercy, the God of tender love, is a constant and inexhaustible source of conversion, not only as a momentary interior act but also as a permanent attitude, as a state of mind. Those who come to know God in this way, who 'see' him in this way, can live only in a state of being continually converted to him. They live, therefore, *in statu conversionis*; and it is this state of conversion which marks out the most profound element of the pilgrimage of every man and woman on earth *in statu viatoris*. It is obvious that the Church professes the mercy of God, revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, not only by the word of her teaching but above all through the deepest pulsation of the life of the whole People of God. By means of this testimony of life, the Church fulfils the mission proper to the People of God, the mission which is a sharing in and, in a sense, a continuation of the messianic mission of Christ Himself.

John Paul II, Rich in Mercy (*Dives in Misericordia*), no. 13

There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people, fully manifesting himself in his incarnate Son, God spoke in the context of the culture proper to each age. Similarly the Church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilised the resources of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ in its preaching, to examine and understand it more deeply, and to express it more perfectly in the liturgy and in the life of the multiform community of the faithful. Nevertheless, the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore, it is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any set of customs, ancient or modern. The Church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission; it can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves. The good news of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation and enriches them with heavenly resources, causes them to bear fruit, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ. In this way the church carries out its mission and in that very act it stimulates and advances human and civil culture, as well as contributing by its activity, including liturgical activity, to humanity's interior freedom.

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), no. 58

SECTION G | LESSON 84 | WORKSHEET 1

What do these texts tell you about the Church as a pilgrim people?

What strikes you most in each extract?

Name some similarities and/or differences between the two.

What do you agree/disagree with?

Describe how you see the Church in the world today reflecting or not reflecting the image of a pilgrim people.
