

“Year of the Eucharist”—“What does THAT word mean?” (Pt. 3)—Fr. Steve Lape

For the past 2 weeks, we’ve discussed certain difficult words from Mass that may not be easy for us to quickly define. Today, I’d like to break open a word that we say together in the Creed at Mass: “apostolic.” The first image that may come to our minds when we hear that word is the apostles that Jesus chose, according to the Gospels. As written in Mark’s Gospel, which is considered to be the earliest of the 4 Gospels found in the Bible (written sometime around 65 and 70 A.D.), “Jesus appointed twelve whom he named apostles that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: Simon, whom he named Peter, James, son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James,...Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew (who some scholars have suggested is also known as Nathanael, as mentioned in John’s Gospel, chapter 1), Matthew, Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus (also known as Jude or Judas Thaddeus), Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.” (Mk 3:14-19) After Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and hung himself, Matthias was chosen to replace him, as recorded in chapter 1 of the Acts of the Apostles. St. Paul is also considered an apostle of Christ, although he was not one of those originally called by Jesus.

The word “apostle” means one who is sent or called for a certain mission. It applies only to those select few who were specifically called by Jesus to preach in His name, to share in His power to heal and to cast out demons, as the New Testament attests (especially in the Acts of the Apostles), and who were eyewitnesses to our Lord in His resurrected body. When we say in the

Creed that the Church is “apostolic,” we mean that we, as baptized into the one Church which is the Body of Christ, share in and continue the same mission as the original apostles: to share the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, that Jesus has risen from the dead, that we are to live according to the ways and teachings of Christ, and that the hope of eternal heaven awaits all those who accept this free gift of salvation by living accordingly. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains: “The Church is apostolic because she is founded on the apostles, in three ways: (1)--she was and remains built on ‘the foundation of the Apostles,’ the witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ himself; (2)--with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching,...the (good) words she has heard from the apostles; and (3)—she continues to be taught, sanctified (meaning “purified, blessed, or made holy”), and guided by the apostles until Christ’s return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, ‘assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter (the Pope), the Church’s supreme pastor’.” (#857)

