

Vocabulary for Unit 4

apostolic succession: The uninterrupted passing on of authority from the Apostles directly to all bishops. It is accomplished through the laying on of hands when a bishop is ordained.

Body of Christ: A term which, when capitalized, designates Jesus' body in the Eucharist, or the entire Church, which is also referred to as the Mystical Body of Christ.

charism: A special gift or grace of the Holy Spirit given to an individual Christian or a community, commonly for the benefit and building up of the entire Church.

canonization: The official proclamation by the Pope that a deceased member of the Church is to be recognized as a saint and may serve as a model of the Christian ideal for all believers; also the name of the process by which one is found worthy of such recognition.

college of bishops: The assembly of bishops, headed by the Pope, that holds the teaching authority and responsibility in the Church.

consecrated life: A state of life recognized by the official Church in which a person publicly professes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

doctrine: An official teaching of the Church based on the Revelation of God by and through Christ.

dogma: Those teachings that are recognized as central to Church teaching, defined by the Magisterium, and accorded the fullest weight and authority.

ecumenism: The movement to restore unity among the Christian churches and, ultimately, of all humans throughout "the whole wide world" (the literal meaning of the word).

encyclical: A letter written by the Pope and sent to the whole world; commonly focused on Church teaching regarding a particular issue or currently important matter.

hierarchy: In general, the line of authority in the Church; more narrowly, the Pope and bishops, as successors of the Apostles, in their authoritative roles as leaders of the Church.

infallibility: The gift of the Spirit to the whole Church by which the leaders of the Church—the Pope and the bishops in union with him—are protected from fundamental error when formulating a specific teaching on a matter of faith and morals.



Islam: Founded by the prophet Muhammad, it is one of the three great religions of the Western world, with connections to both Judaism and Christianity. The holy scriptures of the faith are gathered in the Qur'an.

Judaism: The religious practices, beliefs, perspectives, and philosophies of the Jewish people. The biblical roots are in the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly the Torah (which is also the first five books of the Bible). The Jews also have a rich wisdom tradition handed down to them from their rabbis (teachers).

laity: All members of the Church, with the exception of those who are ordained. The laity share in Christ's role as priest, prophet, and king, witnessing to God's love and power in the world.

Magisterium: The name given to the official teaching authority of the Church, whose task is to interpret and preserve the truths of the Church revealed in both the Scriptures and Tradition.

marks of the Church: The four characteristics of the true Church of Jesus Christ: one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic. These marks are recited at Mass as part of the Nicene Creed.

People of God: The biblical image for the Church. Those who share in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king.

religious life: A permanent state of life and an organized group of Christians, recognized by the Church, who have taken vows to live in community and to observe the disciplines of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Religious men are often called brothers, monks, or friars; religious women, sisters or nuns.

religious vows: The vows, or promises, made by a person who becomes a full member of a religious community. Traditionally there are three vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

