THE CHURCH

When the word, "church" is mentioned, one usually pictures a church building, in which faithful Christians gather to worship God. Next, one may be mindful Of a diocese or jurisdiction, a Church under a Bishop or Synod of Bishops. Furthermore, as noted by Apostle St. Pauli one's home or residence is a church. For that reason, is blessed or consecrated as a place of prayer and worship of God. The Great Apostle also speaks of the human body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit t Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Concerning this,
Origen wrote: "We are taught that our bodies are the temple of God, and that if anyone, by lust or sin, defiles the temple of God, he will himself be destroyed, as acting impiously towards the true temple. Our perfect example as a true temple of God is our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the Orthodox Church, the group of leaders and writers, who lived from the first century until 325 A.D., are spoken of as the "Ante—Nicene Fathers". In their writings, they defined and described the Church in various ways. Irenaeus (120—202 A.D.) spoke of the Church as "Truth". He wrote that "the Apostles, like a rich man... lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the Truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers." Clearly, the basis for this definition comes from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: "I am the Truth" (John 14:6. If He is the Truth, His Church must be the Truth!

Irenaeus also describes the Church as the repository of the gifts and miracles of God. He states: "It is not possible to name the number of gifts, which the Church, throughout the whole world, has received from God in the Name of Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, he does list a few, such as: the power to drive out demons, the foreknowledge of events, the healing of the sick, and the ability to perform miracles, by offering prayers to Christ.

Clement of Alexandria (153—217 A.D.), writes about the unity or oneness of the Church, as her pre—eminence, saying that "the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one, and that in her those who, according to God's purposes are just, are enrolled. For from the very reason that God is One, and the Lord is One, then, in the nature of one is associated in a joint heritage the one Church. "This thought, certainly, reflects the prayer of Christ before His arrest: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may one, as Thou, Father, are in Me, and In Thee; that they also may one in Us.(John 17:20-21).

Tertullian (145—220 A.D.)equates the Church with the Holy Spirit: “For the very Church herself Is, properly and principally, the Spirit Himself, in Whom is the Trinity of the One Divinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

He goes on to state, somewhat like Apostle St. Paul, that the members of the Church are, themselves, considered to be a church.

Origen (185—254), mentioned above, uses a description that isIn the Body of Christ, Who is the "Lover us, in the part assigned to us, can strive to achieve the harmony and unity that the Head so fervently wishes for all. We each strive in our own life, we strive in our local communities and we strive in the entire Catholic Church.

Win Mott

THE CHURCH

When the word, "church", is mentioned, one usually pictures a church building, in which faithful Christians gather to worship God. Next, one may be mindful of a diocese or jurisdiction, a Church under a Bishop or Synod of Bishops. Furthermore, as noted by Apostle St. Paul, one's home or residence is a church. For that reason, it is blessed or consecrated as a place of prayer and worship of God. The Great Apostle also speaks of the human body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Concerning this, Origen wrote: "We are taught that our bodies are the temple of God, and that if anyone, by list or sin, defiles the temple of God, he will himself be destroyed, as acting impiously towards the true temple." our perfect example as a true temple of God is our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the Orthodox Church, the group of leaders and writers, who lived from the first century until 325 A.D., are spoken of as the "Ante-Nicene Fathers". In their writings, they defined and described the Church in various ways. Irenaeus (120-202 A.D.) spoke of the Church as "Truth". He wrote that "the Apostles, like a rich man... lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the Truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and

robbers." Clearly, the basis for this definition comes from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: "I am the Truth" (John 14:6). If He is the Truth, His Church must be the Truth!

Irenaeus also describes the Church as the repository of the gifts and miracles of God. He states: "It is not possible to name the number of gifts, which the Church, throughout the whole world, has received from God in the Name of Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, he does list a few, such as: the power to drive out demons, the foreknowledge of events, the healing of the sick, and the ability to perform miracles, by offering prayers to Christ.

Clement of Alexandria (153-217 A.D.), writes about the unity or oneness of the Church, as her pre-eminence, saying that "the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one, and that in her those who, according to God's purposes are just, are enrolled. For from the very reason that God is One, and the Lord is One, then, very familiar — the Body of Christ. He writes: "We say that the Holy Scriptures declare: the Body of Christ, animated by the Son of God, to the whole Church of God, and the members of this Body - considered as a whole - to consist of those who are believers." Truly, the Holy Scriptures 1ive in the Church and the Church gives life to the Holy Scriptures!

St. Cyprian (200—258 A.D.), himself, describes the Church in various ways. Like Clement of Alexandria, he underlines the oneness of the Church, saying: "There is one God, and Christ is one, and there is one Church." In the viewpoint of St. Cyprian, anyone who is not in unity with the Church is not a Christian, because disunity serves darkness, falsehood, and the anti-Christ!

In another description, St. Cyprian ascribes to the Church the "likeness of paradise that includes in her walls fruit—bearing trees, whereof that which does not bring forth good fruit is cut off and is cast into the fire." Here, again, we see expressed the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits, you will know them" (Matthew 7: 19—20). Fruit—bearing trees require moisture. St. Cyprian states that, if we wish to be trees that bring forth good fruit in the Church, we need to be watered "with four rivers, that is, the four Gospels".

St. Cyprian, moving on in time from paradise to Noah, says that "the ark of Noah was nothing else than the sacrament of the Church, which... kept those only safe who were within the ark." In this statement, he emphasizes, again, the necessity for one to be a member of the Church. Pursuing this thought further, he makes the powerful conclusion; "He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother!"

Methodius (260—312. A.D.) adds two other female descriptions for the Church. He calls her both the wife and the bride of Christ. In this, there may be some influence from the Epistle of Apostle St. Paul to the Ephesians, which is read in the marriage service of the Orthodox Church. Apostle St. Paul therein expresses the relationship between a husband and wife as being similar to that

between Christ and the Church: "For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the Church... and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:23—25).

Another familiar way in which the Church is spoken of is as a vineyard. Our Lord, in a parable, spoke about a vineyard and vinedressers (Matthew 21:33—43). Such an idea about the Church is found in a work, which dates to the first half of the second century, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. The author writes: "The Church is the plantation of God and His beloved vineyard, containing those who have believed in His unerring Divine religion; who are the heirs by faith of His everlasting Kingdom."

As noted above, St. Cyprian refers to the Church as functioning like Noah's ark. In an early writing, "Epistle Of Clement to James", there is a beautiful description of the Church as a ship: "For the whole business of the Church is like unto a great ship, bearing through a violent storm men who are of mmny places, and who desire to inhabit the city of the good kingdom. Let, therefore, God be your shipmaster, and let the pilot be likened to Christ, the mate to be the Bishop, and the sailors to the deacons, the midshipmen to the catechists, the multitude of the brethren to the passengers, and the world to the sea."

A final thought comes from a "Second Epistle to the' Corinthians", accredited by some scholars to St. Clement of Rome (30—100 A.D.) • The author of this work declares that the Church has existed from the very beginning: "Apostles teach that the Church is not of the present, but from the beginning. For it was spiritual, as was also our Jesus, and was made manifest at the end of the days to save us. The Church, being spiritual, was made manifest in the flesh of Christ. "In other words, since the Church is the Body of Christ, then she has existed as long as Christ Himself has existed!

In closing, whatever way in which we describe or define the Church, let us be believing and active members in full unity with the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, and with every other member!

Father Mirone R. Klysh