



Welcome to the Apostolic Old Catholic Mission

“Christ at the centre. Everyone at the Table.”

This is our motto. It expresses everything we are striving to be:

- **Christ at the centre** – Our worship, teaching, sacraments, and life are grounded in Jesus Christ—not in ideology, institutions, or personalities.
- **Everyone at the Table** – We believe the Church is called to radical welcome. All who hunger for grace, healing, truth, or belonging should find a place here.

Whether you are confident in your faith or unsure where you stand, this ministry is here for you.

Table of Contents

1.	Welcome	3
2.	Who We Are	3
3.	A Church for All People	4
4.	What We Believe	4
5.	Apostolic Succession and the Sacraments.....	5
5.1.	Apostolic Succession: What It Is and Why It Matters.....	5
5.2.	The Seven Sacraments	7
6.	How Other Churches View Our Sacraments	7
6.1.	Baptism	7
6.2.	The Eucharist	8
6.3.	Other Sacraments.....	9
7.	How We Worship.....	9
8.	Language and Atmosphere	10
9.	Style and Symbols	10
10.	What Should I Wear?	11
11.	A Community of Hope	11
12.	Come and See	12
13.	Our Theology and Calling.....	12
14.	Recognition, Apostolic Succession and Ordination.....	13
14.1.	Recognition is meaningful—but it is not what makes a sacrament valid. 13	
14.2.	When People Ask: “Is This a Real Church?”	14
15.	Mary and the Saints	14
16.	What We Believe	15
16.1.	About the Trinity	15
16.2.	Heaven, Hell, and the Life to Come.....	15
16.3.	The End Times	16
17.	Unity and Peace with Other Churches.....	16
	A Final Word on Our Theology	17

1. Welcome

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey—whether you are exploring Christianity for the first time, returning after time away, carrying wounds from past church experiences, or simply longing for deeper faith—you are welcome.

This English-speaking ministry is part of the **Apostolic Old Catholic Mission (AOCM)**:

- A Catholic Christian community rooted in the early and undivided Church,
- Open to all who seek the truth of the Gospel,
- Dedicated to sacramental worship, thoughtful teaching, and compassionate belonging.

We are just beginning, and we may gather in different ways—in person or online, weekly or occasionally, locally or across borders—but always around the same centre: **Jesus Christ**.

Whether you are based in Bulgaria or abroad, searching or settled, this is a space where you can belong.

2. Who We Are

We are a **Catholic Church**, but we are not Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Anglican. We are part of the **Old Catholic tradition**, which holds to the ancient faith and sacraments of the early Church while remaining free from later dogmas such as papal infallibility.

Our foundations are:

- The **Holy Scriptures**, interpreted in the context of community and tradition,
- The **Nicene and Apostles' Creeds**,
- The **Seven Ecumenical Councils of the early Church**,
- And the ongoing movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We are committed to:

- Worship that is reverent but accessible,
- Teaching that is faithful but not rigid,
- A community where grace, honesty, and inclusion go hand in hand.

We do not exist in protest or pride, but in response to the Gospel call to create space for all to encounter Christ.

3. A Church for All People

While many who find us have been hurt or excluded by other churches, we do not exist only for the wounded.

Some come with deep questions. Others come seeking order, structure, and beauty. Many come simply because they want to grow in faith.

Here, you are welcome if you are:

- Longing for reverent worship and rootedness,
- Curious about the mystery of the sacraments,
- A seeker, a sceptic, or someone starting again,
- An experienced Christian looking for a new home,
- Or simply someone unsure where they belong.

This is not a church that demands perfection.

It is a community where **you are invited to bring your full self**—your doubts and dreams, your history and hope—and encounter Christ in a Church that welcomes you just as you are.

4. What We Believe

Our faith is not complicated, but it is rich. We proclaim the core message of Christianity as it was handed down from the apostles and safeguarded by the early Church:

- That **God is One**, revealed as **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.
- That **Jesus Christ**, the eternal Son of God, became fully human to save us, lived a life of perfect love, died for us, rose again, and ascended into glory.
- That the **Holy Spirit** continues Christ's work in the world—breathing life into the Church, guiding us in truth, empowering us in holiness, and interceding for us with groans too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

We believe that:

- The **Holy Scriptures** are the inspired witness of God's saving work and are central to our faith and worship.
- The **Nicene Creed, Apostles' Creed**, and the **Seven Ecumenical Councils** express the shared faith of the early, undivided Church.
- The Church is called to be **one, holy, catholic, and apostolic**—bearing witness to Christ in all times and places.

We also affirm the role of:

- **The Blessed Virgin Mary**, honoured as the Mother of God (Theotokos), a model of obedience, humility, and faith,
- **The saints**, who are companions in the faith and reminders of God's transforming power in every generation.

At the same time, we do **not** require belief in later developments like papal infallibility, indulgences, or purgatory.

We trust, as Jesus said, *“Today you will be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43)—that salvation is by grace through faith, and that God’s mercy cannot be controlled by human systems.

Our faith is rooted in the **ancient Church**, but it speaks boldly into the present.

5. Apostolic Succession and the Sacraments

The sacraments we celebrate are not innovations or personal expressions. They are part of the ancient faith of the Church—**gifts entrusted by Christ to His people**, carried forward from generation to generation with reverence and care.

We do not claim ownership of grace, but we receive and offer these sacraments with humility, in continuity with the early Church.

5.1. Apostolic Succession: What It Is and Why It Matters

Apostolic succession means that the ministry of our bishops and priests has been passed down through the centuries by the laying on of hands, beginning with the apostles themselves.

It’s not a human invention.

It’s part of how the Church has always ensured faithfulness to the Gospel.

In our case:

- Our bishops and clergy stand within the **historic Catholic tradition**,
- They have been ordained through **lines of succession that include bishops from the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht**, a communion recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as having valid orders and sacraments,
- And the **necessary elements of valid ordination** are present:
 1. **Proper matter**: the laying on of hands on a baptized believer,
 2. **Proper form**: the ancient prayers and rites of ordination,
 3. **Proper intention**: the clear desire to carry forward the ministry of Christ in His Church.

Because of this, we can say with confidence—not pride—that the sacraments offered in this ministry are **true, valid**, and **grace-filled**.

We do not depend on recognition from human institutions, but on the promise of Christ to remain present in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

5.2. The Seven Sacraments

We affirm and celebrate the **seven historic sacraments** of the Church, as practiced since the earliest centuries:

- **Baptism** – the beginning of new life in Christ.
- **Confirmation** – the strengthening of the Holy Spirit through prayer and laying on of hands.
- **Holy Eucharist** – the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine; the heart of Christian worship.
- **Reconciliation (Confession)** – the healing of sin through honest repentance and divine mercy.
- **Anointing of the Sick** – comfort and prayer in times of weakness, illness, or dying.
- **Marriage** – the sacred union of two people in a lifelong covenant of faithfulness.
- **Holy Orders** – the setting apart of ministers to serve and shepherd the Church.

Not all sacraments are celebrated in every place or at every time, but all are treated with deep reverence and care.

Where possible, sacraments are offered **with preparation, pastoral support, and open communication**—especially for those seeking them for the first time or returning after time away.

6. How Other Churches View Our Sacraments

We know that many people who find their way here come with important questions—questions that matter deeply to faith, family, and personal integrity:

“Will my baptism here be recognised by other churches?”

“If I receive Communion with you, what does that mean for my Catholic background?”

“Can I be married here and still be accepted by other traditions?”

We take those questions seriously. We offer what we can with honesty and care.

6.1. Baptism

If someone is baptised here:

- Using **water**,
- In the **name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**,
- With the intention to do what the Church has always done

Then that baptism is *considered **valid** in the eyes of almost all major Christian traditions*.

This includes:

- The **Roman Catholic Church**,
- The **Eastern Orthodox churches**,
- The **Anglican Communion**,
- And nearly all **mainline Protestant churches** (including Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed).

We record every baptism and offer formal certificates for those who may need them for future recognition—whether for school enrolment, Confirmation, or another sacramental milestone.

6.2. The Eucharist

The Eucharist (also called Holy Communion or the Mass) is the **centre of our worship** and the **sacrament that most visibly expresses our unity in Christ**.

We celebrate it with full conviction in:

- The **Real Presence** of Christ in the bread and wine,
- The ancient and reverent form of the liturgy,
- The apostolic succession of the clergy who preside at the altar.

However:

- We are **not in communion** with the **Roman Catholic Church**, the **Eastern Orthodox churches**, or the **Anglican Communion**.
- As a result, those churches generally **do not formally recognize** our Eucharist or our clergy.
- That said, **many individuals within those traditions**—clergy and laity alike—do acknowledge the seriousness and reverence of our sacramental life, and may personally view it as **valid but irregular**.

If someone chooses to receive Communion here while remaining part of another tradition, we do not pressure, interfere, or judge.

We trust in their conscience, and we trust in the mercy of God.

6.3. Other Sacraments

- **Confirmation** and **marriage** celebrated here are **valid within our church**, but may not automatically be recognized by other denominations, depending on their internal policies.
- **Confession (Reconciliation)** is offered as a sacred space for honesty, prayer, and spiritual healing.
However, for Roman Catholics, confession in a community not in communion with Rome is **not counted as sacramentally valid** under canon law.
- Whenever needed, we are glad to support individuals in navigating recognition or documentation—especially for those returning to or entering other traditions later in life.

We do not claim more than we can. But neither do we claim less.

We believe the sacraments celebrated in this ministry are **real, effective, and offered in faith**—because **Christ is faithful**, and the Church belongs to Him.

We offer this not with arrogance or apology, but with confidence in the Holy Spirit, who continues to breathe life into the Body of Christ in many places, including here.

7. How We Worship

Worship is the heartbeat of Christian life. It is where we come to meet God—not in theory, but in experience. It is how we are formed in love, reminded of who we are, and sent back into the world with renewed grace.

In this ministry, our worship is centred on the **Holy Eucharist**—also known as the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, or Communion.

When we gather, we follow the rhythm of the ancient Church:

- **We read Scripture** from both the Old and New Testaments.
- **We preach the Gospel** in language that is faithful, thoughtful, and accessible.
- **We pray together** for the needs of the Church and the world.
- **We offer bread and wine**, giving thanks in the great Eucharistic prayer.
- **We receive Communion**, feeding on the real presence of Christ in love and humility.

8. Language and Atmosphere

Our liturgy is celebrated in **clear, welcoming English**. We use language that is both reverent and understandable—rooted in tradition, but always open to the living needs of the community.

Music may vary:

- Sometimes there may be simple chants, quiet reflective songs, or traditional hymns.
- Sometimes we may choose silence, allowing the Spirit to speak in stillness.
- As the community grows, we may incorporate bilingual elements or invite different forms of prayerful expression.

9. Style and Symbols

We hold a deep respect for the **mystery and beauty** of Christian worship. Many people today are rediscovering the richness of:

- Ancient prayers,
- Sacred rhythms,
- Liturgical structure,
- And the dignity of vestments or symbolic actions.

While our current gatherings may begin simply, our worship draws on the depth of Catholic tradition.

Over time, you may experience:

- The use of vestments for clergy on holy days,
- Simple signs and symbols that point beyond themselves to the mystery of God,
- And the steady, ordered flow of liturgy that allows us to rest in something greater than ourselves.

We do not aim for performance. We aim for sacred space.

Whether gathered in a quiet room, a chapel, or online, our goal is to **worship in spirit and truth**—with awe, honesty, and joy.

10. What Should I Wear?

We have **no dress code**.

Some people arrive in jeans and a jumper, others choose to dress more formally. Both are welcome.

We only ask one thing: **be mindful**.

This is a sacred space. We come together to meet Christ and to honour one another.

We encourage everyone to wear clothing that is:

- **Comfortable,**
- **Respectful of the setting,** and
- **Considerate of others.**

We don't judge what people wear. But we also value the beauty and dignity of our gathering.

In practical terms, this means avoiding clothing that is **overly revealing or likely to distract**, while encouraging everyone to feel at ease and at home.

Come thoughtfully. Come with care. Come ready to meet the living God.

11. A Community of Hope

The Church is not a building or a brand.

It is a **living community**, made up of real people—called, flawed, forgiven, and loved.

This English-speaking ministry of the AOCM exists to be just that:

A space where people can grow in faith, receive the sacraments, explore the mystery of Christ, and belong without fear.

We welcome:

- The devout and the doubting,
- The lifelong Catholic and the curious newcomer,
- The confident and the wounded,
- The structured and the searching.

We believe the Church is **at its best when it is both ancient and alive**—when it holds fast to sacred tradition and extends that tradition with warmth, humanity, and grace.

We are not perfect. We are not large or flashy. But we are real. And we are here.

Whether you join us regularly or only once, in person or online, whether you're nearby or far away, you are part of the journey.

12. Come and See

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” – Matthew 11:28

“Today you will be with Me in paradise.” – Luke 23:43

These are not future promises. They are present realities.

Jesus still welcomes. Still feeds. Still forgives. Still heals.

If you are looking for **a place to rest, to grow, to pray, or to begin again**—this is your invitation.

- ✓ **You don't need to have everything sorted.**
- ✓ **You don't need to leave parts of yourself behind.**
- ✓ **You are welcome at the Table.**

13. Our Theology and Calling

We believe that the Church is more than an organisation.

It is the **Body of Christ**, living and active in the world, called together by God, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and entrusted with the message of salvation.

It is not human structures or titles that make a church legitimate.

It is **faith in Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the sacraments, and the faithful care of God's people.**

14. Recognition, Apostolic Succession and Ordination

From the beginning, the Church passed on its leadership through the laying on of hands—from the apostles to bishops, from bishops to priests and deacons. This is what we call **apostolic succession**.

This ministry was never meant to belong to political power or institutional control. It was always the work of the **Holy Spirit**, calling and equipping people to preach, baptize, break bread, anoint, teach, and shepherd others in Christ's name.

We stand within that tradition:

- Our bishops were consecrated by those who trace their own ordinations through the **historic Old Catholic Church**, whose sacraments are recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.
- Our clergy have received ordination through the **laying on of hands, the ancient prayers, and the clear intention** to continue the ministry of the apostles.

14.1. Recognition is meaningful—but it is not what makes a sacrament valid.

A valid ordination does not require permission from a particular institution. It requires the elements that the Church has always held essential: **form, matter, and intent**. These are present here.

We are not self-ordained. We are not inventing something new.

We have received what the Church has always received—and we carry it forward with reverence and responsibility.

14.2. When People Ask: “Is This a Real Church?”

Some will say: *“You're not part of Rome. You're not under Canterbury. You're not Orthodox. So are you even a real church?”*

We answer this with love, clarity, and quiet confidence:

- We preach the same Gospel the apostles preached.
- We celebrate the same sacraments the early Church celebrated.
- We trace our ministry through the same lines of apostolic succession.
- We hold the same creeds, the same Scriptures, and the same mission: to make Christ known and to care for His people.

The Church is not made “real” by recognition. It is made real by **faithfulness**—to Christ, to the Gospel, and to the people entrusted to our care.

We do not judge others, and we don't need to defend ourselves.

We stand, as best we can, in the stream of the Church that has flowed for 2,000 years—without grandiosity, without fear, and with deep hope.

15. Mary and the Saints

We honour **Mary, the Mother of Jesus**, as the first to say “yes” to God's plan. She is a model of courage, humility, and faith.

We may speak of her as “Mother of God” (*Theotokos*), because this affirms that Jesus, her Son, is fully God and fully human.

But we do not worship her.

We do not pray to her as a divine figure. We do not teach that she stands between us and Christ.

Likewise, we honour the **saints**—those holy men and women in every age whose lives point us to Christ.

We do not worship them or expect them to take the place of Jesus.

But we may remember them, learn from them, and give thanks for their witness.

If you're unsure about this, or if past experiences have made these topics uncomfortable, you are not alone. We hold space for honest questions and different levels of comfort.

In all things, we seek to keep our eyes on **Christ alone**—the only mediator, the only redeemer, the only centre.

16. What We Believe

16.1. About the Trinity

We believe in **One God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is not a puzzle to be solved, but a mystery to be worshipped.

God is not distant or divided—God is **communion, relationship, and love**.

- **The Father** is the source of all life, who creates and sustains the world.
- **The Son**, Jesus Christ, is the eternal Word of God, who became flesh, lived among us, died for us, rose again, and ascended into glory.
- **The Holy Spirit** is the breath of God, poured out on the Church, guiding us in truth, empowering us in holiness, and interceding for us with groans too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

We affirm the Nicene Creed, which proclaims this shared faith:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty... and in one Lord Jesus Christ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...”

16.2. Heaven, Hell, and the Life to Come

We believe in the **resurrection of the dead**, and the **life of the world to come**.

Eternal life is not merely something we wait for after death—it is something Christ offers **now**, to all who live in Him.

As Jesus says:

“Whoever hears my word and believes... has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

We also believe that God honours human freedom.

Love cannot be forced. And so, we believe in the possibility of **eternal separation from God**—what has historically been called *hell*.

But we do not teach this with threats or fear. We teach it as the tragic possibility of rejecting grace.

We believe God's **desire is always to save**, not to condemn (1 Timothy 2:4), and that no one is beyond His mercy.

16.3. The End Times

We believe that **Christ will come again**, as the Church has always confessed. But we do not chase predictions or speculation.

We reject fear-based religion and end-times sensationalism.

Instead, we affirm with the early Church:

- That **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again**,
- That the **kingdom of God is already among us**, though not yet fully revealed,
- And that **we live in hope**, not fear.

As Jesus said:

“No one knows the day or the hour... So be ready, for the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.” (Matthew 24:36, 44)

Our focus is not on signs and timelines, but on **living faithfully now**, and working with God for the renewal of the world.

17. Unity and Peace with Other Churches

We are confident in our identity—but we are **not interested in conflict**.

We do not define ourselves against others. We do not argue about legitimacy. We live what we believe.

Jesus Himself said:

- *“Whoever is not against you is for you.”* (Luke 9:50)
- *“I am the vine; you are the branches... no branch can bear fruit by itself.”* (John 15:5)
- *“The body is not made up of one part but of many... If the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not, for that reason, stop being part of the body.”* (1 Corinthians 12:14–16)

We are part of the wider Body of Christ.

We may not be in communion with every other church, but we are not in competition with them.

We believe the Holy Spirit is working in many places—not just ours.
And we commit ourselves to a posture of humility, dialogue, and peaceful witness.

A Final Word on Our Theology

We are not trying to be unique.

We are trying to be **faithful**—to Christ, to the Gospel, and to the Church that has passed through centuries and cultures with grace and struggle.

Our theology is not built on trends, politics, or personality.

It is built on **the creeds, the Scriptures, the sacraments, and the quiet confidence that Christ is still present in His Church.**

We offer the gifts we’ve received:

- **A valid and reverent sacramental life,**
- **A deeply rooted but open-hearted theology,**
- **A space for honest questions,** faithful worship, and generous belonging.

We do not claim to be the only Church.

We do not seek to prove ourselves.

We simply open the doors, set the Table, and invite you to come and see.

We believe that in every generation, God calls people to renew what has been forgotten, and to offer the faith in ways that are real, ancient, and alive.

We believe this is one of those moments. And we're honoured to be part of it.

Christ at the centre. Everyone at the Table.

This is who we are.

This is what we hope to become.

And this is your invitation to take your place.