

God's People Are the Church

Objective: The students will be able to 1) state the Church is formed by the followers of Jesus Christ and 2) identify the importance of every person's talent in the Church.

For the Catechist

People are often accustomed to think of Church as a building where they worship. Others think of it as a structured organization in which they are some insignificant part. For a complete understanding of Church we turn to both biblical and traditional teaching. The Church is living, not as an object but as people joined in relationship with one another in the Holy Spirit.

As Church we form a pilgrimage that is directed to the Kingdom of God. The Bible incorporates many descriptive images for the Church: "the Body of Christ," "a royal priesthood," "a flock whose shepherd is God," "a vineyard to be cultivated by the heavenly vine dresser," and "an edifice of the Spirit."

The Second Vatican Council emphasizes the unity of the Church with the statement: "It has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness . . ."

"God has gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and has established them as the Church . . ." (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #9-10).

This concept was introduced in the last lesson: The followers of Jesus joined together to form the Church. As the Body of Christ the people worked to "make disciples of all nations." As disciples of Jesus Christ we want to be united to God and be granted eternal life. This lesson builds on the fact that we individuals are important in helping each other gain salvation. We as the Church must work together to form the Body of Christ.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "O Only-begotten Son"

Introduction: Discussion of the importance of everyone's talents **Need:** "Puzzle" worksheet

Read Text Aloud: Have students volunteer to read the text. Use questions in the teacher manual to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* Our Church Family
- *Group:* "Our Church" Paper Chain
- *Craft:* "Thank You" Cards

Closing: "O Only-begotten Son"

Icon Packets:

Packet II: Great Commissioning

Teaching Pics:

House Blessing (F14)

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

The Church, the Body of Christ

"Another dimension of liturgical piety is rooted in our understanding of liturgy as an action of the community. Any act of liturgical worship, no matter how small, is a gathering of the Body with Christ its Head. As such it stands as a witness against the strong trend toward individualism and privacy which diminishes the communal dimension of human life. God, however, has created and called us from all the nations and races of the earth to be one people: 'Once you were no people, but now you are God's people' (1 Pt 2:10). Our Lord prayed that we be a people whose unity reflects the oneness of God: '...one, even as we [the Father and Jesus] are one' (Jn 17:11). It is in this context that St. Augustine is reputed to have said, 'A solitary Christian is not a Christian.' Liturgical piety acknowledges that every liturgical assembly is an affirmation and strengthening of the Church as one Body in Christ: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst (Mt. 18:20)'" (LLII 98-99).

We Grow in Faith

"The Scriptural word for the way the believer puts one faith in God is *eis* ('into'). Our Lord told the apostles to 'baptize [all nations] into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 28:19). Accordingly at every baptism we sing, "All of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, alleluia" (cf Gal 3:27). Baptism *into* means most accurately that we belong to Him in whose name we have been baptized. We more than belong; we 'become' Christ as if we were embraced by Him. We express a faith that is more than just a belief in a set of propositions. It is a process of becoming what we believe, of moving towards union with the Trinity to whom we belong by baptism" (LLI 2). "Faith requires a commitment to Christ and also to His Church, since the Lord identified Himself with His people, the Church. '[God] has put all things under Christ's feet and has made Him, thus exalted, head of the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills the universe in all its parts' (Eph 1:22-23 NAB). Thus faith leading to baptism, expressed in a positive way, forms 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people claimed for God's own (1 Pt 2:9)'" (LLI 4-5).

The Image of the Body

"St. Paul connects two aspects of Christian life with this image of the body. First of all he notes that the members of the Church, each with their different gifts, complement one another like the organs of the body. They are interrelated and live as a whole, rather than compete for greater recognition. St. John Chrysostom was to elaborate on this idea in his commentary on this epistle. He notes that there must be differences of gift and function in the Church or it would not be a body, only a single cell. An organism demands that its elements be distinct; yet if they are not all in harmony, the whole is not what it was meant to be:

'What is more lowly in the body than hair? Yet were you to remove the hair from the eyebrows and lashes, you would have destroyed the beauty of the entire face. ... Even though the harm is slight, the whole appearance had been destroyed.' 30 Homily on 1 Corinthians

"Because the Church is a body, St. Paul reminds us, there are different parts or functions in it; not all are exactly the same. And because the Church is the body of Christ, these roles and tasks are of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Paul insists, there is no place for competition or envy in the body. All its members serve important purposes" (WEF 73).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's pray using our prayer books we started last week. Let's pray, "O, only-begotten Son....."
[Modify text according to your jurisdiction.]

Introduction

Before we start class today, I need your help with this puzzle. Here are the pieces. Let's see if we can put it together. [If you have many students, make more than one copy of the pieces. Take out one of the pieces from each set.] It seems as if a piece is missing. Does that ever happen to you at home? What do you do? I guess we just have to put the puzzle aside until we find the other piece. [Go to your desk and find the piece.] Look what I found. Who wants to put it in? But this puzzle has no picture or words, but it does have a shape. What does it look like? (A church) Let's add some words. [Take the puzzle apart and give each child a piece.]

Before we add words, let's talk about what we learned about the Church.

What is a disciple? (A follower of Jesus) The disciples told the people about the Good News. What is the Good News? (Jesus united us with God and gave us eternal life.) The people who listened to the disciples wanted to join them and the Church. What did they have to do to join the Church? (They had to be baptized.) All of us are members of the Church, and last week we talked about our baptism. We are member of a specific church here in ____ [say the name of your town]. What is the name of our church?

Now we can finish our puzzle. I want us to think of all the people who go to our church. We join together to make ____ [say the name of your church]. special. We have our priest, Father ____; our deacon, ____; our cantor, _____. Can you name some other people who are part of our church? [Possibilities: baking ladies, altar servers, custodian, choir members, parishioners. You don't have to have their specific names.] Now we can finish our puzzle. Let's write one name on each piece. [Assign names or have the names written on papers and have the students glue them to the puzzle pieces.] Now we can do our puzzle again.

Puzzles are fun to put together because we get to see the whole picture when we are done. Now we have ____ [say the name of your church] .
We are people working and praying together to be one with God.

Let's turn to our lesson.

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God's People Are the Church



As members of the Church, we are followers of Jesus. There is a special name given to us followers. We are called Christians. The word **Christ** is in the name **Christian**. A Christian believes in Jesus Christ and has been baptized.

The followers of Jesus, the early Christians, formed the Church. The Church is the people of God who follow Jesus Christ as their Lord. These followers joined together to form the Body of Christ, another name for the Church. Even though every member of the Church is different, the Holy Spirit helps us grow together as one body.

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Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

*Where do you think this picture was taken? (In Church)
Every time we come to church, we unite ourselves with God and with each other. Let's learn how the people in the Church become the Body of Christ.*

Even though every member of the Church is different, the Holy Spirit helps us grow together as one body.

What is a Christian? (A person who believes in Jesus Christ) What is the Church called? (The Body of Christ)

He wanted the people to know they need each other.

Who wrote a letter about working together? (St. Paul)

But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

Did you ever have a cold? What happens to the way food tastes when you have a cold? (Nothing tastes right or good) Scientists tell us smelling our food is important for tasting it. Maybe the food doesn't taste good because we can't smell it; both work together. That is another way to describe what St. Paul is saying in his letter. What is he trying to teach the people? (We need to work together.) Was St. Paul's description a good way to teach the people?

At times, it is hard to have everyone agree and work together. That is what happened during Saint Paul's time. When he heard that people were angry with each other, Saint Paul wrote them a letter. In it, he compared the members of the Church to different parts of our body. He wanted the people to know they need each other.

Let's read Saint Paul's words that were in a letter to the Corinthians.

 **N**ow the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Saint Paul's letter is also important today. He reminds us that each of us has a special talent, and each one is important to the Church. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us work together as one. Let's think about all the people in our church and the way we work together.

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Every person's talent is important in the Church.

Who are some of the members of our church? (Priest, nuns, cantor, catechists, custodians, all the people who participate in the church services and activities) Why are these people important? What do you do in our church?

[Encourage the children to discover ways they help the community—being in church to sing and pray, participating in the Divine Liturgy, greeting people, listening to the priest, helping at festivals or with church projects.]

Let's review: *Are we Christian? (Yes) Why? (We follow Jesus.) How did we become a member of the Church? (We were baptized.) What does Saint Paul ask us to do? (Work together as one body.) We are called to form the Body of Christ. We must offer our talents to [say the name of your parish].*

The priest and deacon serve the Divine Liturgy and lead us in worship.

The cantor leads the singing.

The sisters and catechists teach us about God.

The altar servers help the priest and the deacon.

The custodian cleans and cares for the church building.

The church members participate in liturgical services and activities.

The people working together with the Holy Spirit form the Church. Every person's talent is important in the Church.

Words to Remember:
Christians: The followers of Jesus Christ who believe in Him and have been baptized.
Church: The Church is the people of God who follow Jesus as their Lord.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: Our Church Family

Today we learned that all of us are important in our church. Now we are going to list some of the names of the people whom we know in our church. [If possible, find the correct spelling of the names of the people. Some parishes might have a directory that would even include a picture. If possible invite some of these people into the classroom—maybe one person a week for one month. Have the students remember that person in their prayers for one week.]

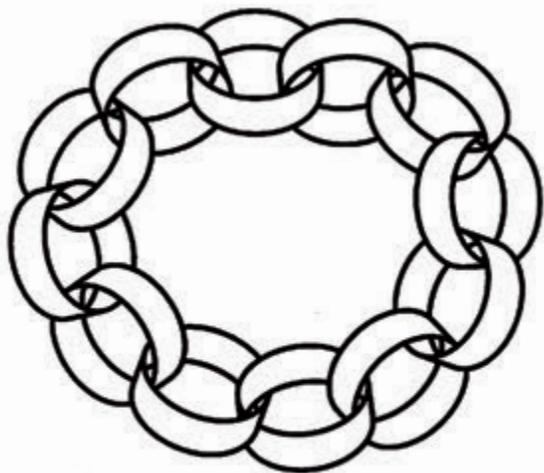
Our Church Family

Just as all the parts of our body need each other to work together to make our whole body, the different members of the Church need to work together to form the Body of Christ, the Church. List by name all the people you know that work together in your church (your priest, deacon, cantor, religious, catechists, custodians, other church members).

Our church's name is _____

I am thankful to God for the following members of our church:

Group: "Our Church" Paper Chain



Materials: 6" x 1/2" strips of construction paper, markers, stapler or glue, masking tape, poster board.

We learned that the Church is the people of God who follow Jesus Christ as their Lord. We people have to learn how to work together so that we can form one body, the "Body of Christ."

Today we are going to show how connected we are here at _____ Church. Let's link together the names of some of the people in our church. [Give each child a strip of construction paper.] Let's look at our activity page to see some of the names we have listed. Write one of those names on your paper. [Assign names to include everyone. Have one link that says "People who come to church" and have the students add their names and/or their family members' names.] We will staple the names together to make a chain. Let's connect the chain to form a circle and hang it on our poster board. [Write the name of your church at the top of the poster board.] Let's hang our poster in the room to show how all of us work together to form our church.

Craft: "Thank You" Cards



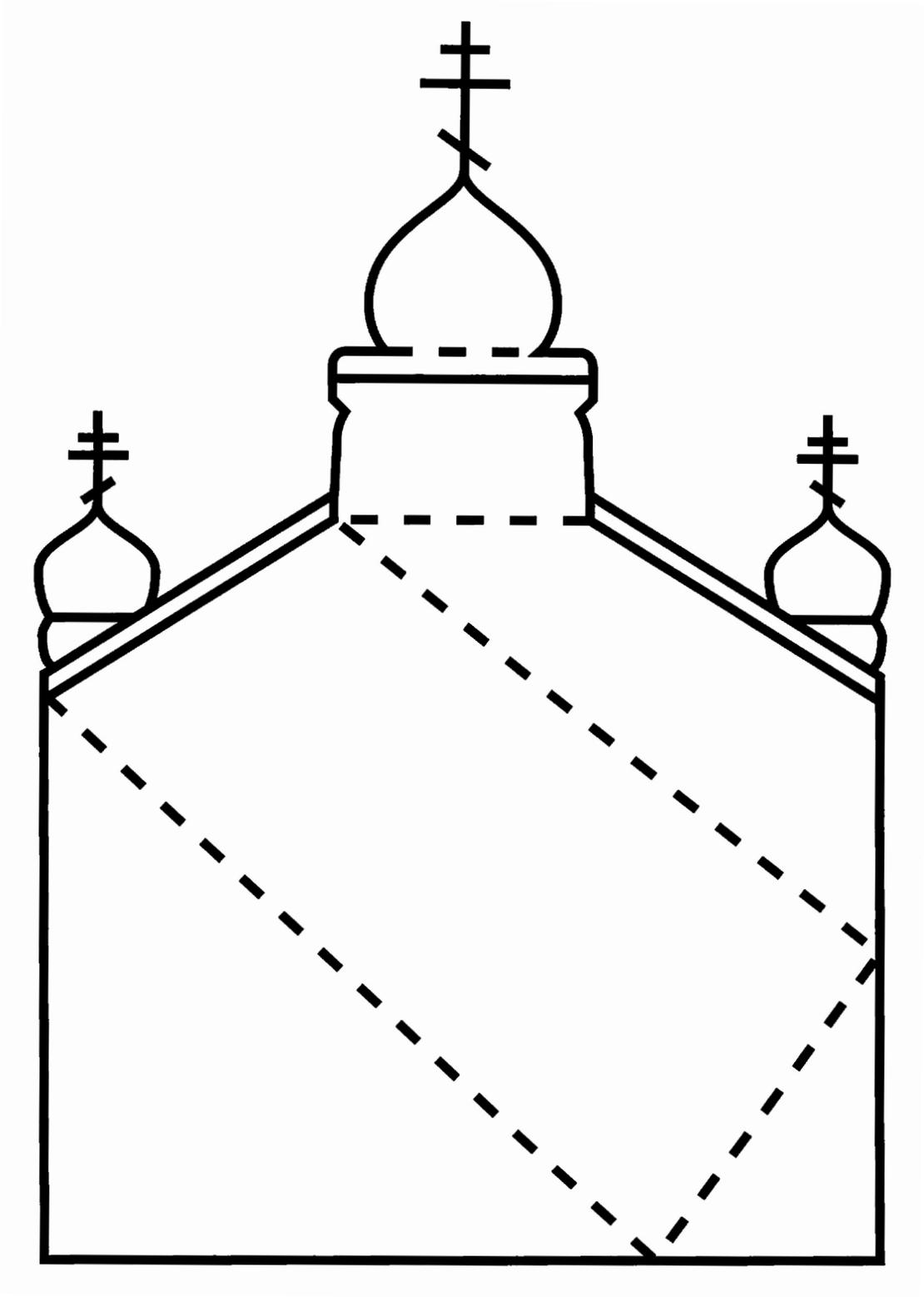
Materials: "Thank you cards" worksheet, markers, stickers and envelopes (optional)

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we are going to make thank you cards for all the people we have listed on our activity page. We want them to know we appreciate everything they do for us. On the inside of the card, let's thank them for what they do and sign our names. [If there is time, let the children decorate the cards with pictures or stickers. Mail the cards or have the students give them if the people are available. If you invite the people into your classroom, you can give them out then.]*

Closing

Let's see if we can say our prayer, "O, only-begotten Son... ." without looking at our prayer page. Next week we will begin learning a new prayer.

(Cut out the outline of the church. Paste onto heavier paper. Cut on dotted lines to make puzzle pieces.)



Thank You

Thank You