

The Church Is Christ's Body

How does the Church live as Christ's Body??

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the students should be able to

- explain the comparison of our body to the Church found in 1 Cor 12:12-27.
- define sin as our not being in communion with God and each other.
- identify the Mystery of Repentance as our way to reestablish our union with God.

For the Catechist

In the minds of many today, a Christian response to God can be lived in isolation. They say, "I believe in God; I don't need the Church." These people see the Church as an organization with a group of hierarchs who are meant to direct believers. This is not the Christian view of the Church.

The Church is all believers united in Christ, the head: "You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it" (1 Cor 12:27). Through the Mystery of Baptism, we become a member of the Church and have a responsibility to all the other members. As members of the Church, we are part of the Body of Christ.

The concept of the Church being the Body of Christ is not new for the students. Since Grade 3, *God Calls Us Together*, they have been asked to think about the Church working together as one. Last year, they learned that Jesus called us to follow Him, and we answered Jesus' call by being baptized and joining the Church. This year the students are learning about the importance of all Church members working together to build up the Body of Christ.

This lesson also addresses what happens when we lose our communion with each other and with God—when we sin. Since Grade 2 the students have learned that the way we turn back to God is by receiving the Mystery of Repentance. Yet, no details about the format for confession have been written in any of the texts in the *God With Us* series because of the many formulas that are followed. Catechists are encouraged to teach the format that is used in their parish.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: Prayer page

The Message: Note cards, tape player and liturgical tapes, pens or pencils.

Application: Pens or pencils

Icons and Pictures

Come Bless the Lord: Holy Trinity, Pantocrator

Teaching Pics: Holy Penance (S9, S10)

For Next Week's Lesson

Encourage the students to attend next week's class because they will be interviewing you, the catechist, and each other.

Connections

1. Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Invite the class to stand by the icon and remain silent for a few seconds before making the sign of the cross.

- Pray "All you who have been baptized ..."

(3 times) (Prayer page in lesson 3)

2. Review (Marriage) (2 minutes)

Ask: *What are some ways we show that we love our Church and that we are faithful to it?* (We go to church; we receive Communion; we help each other.)

How can this relationship be compared to the one between a loving and committed husband and wife? (They also love each other and are faithful forever.)

Alternate: If you had the students do the last lesson's supplementary activity that asked them to watch two television shows about marriage, have them share their findings now. Let them tell you what each show makes us think about marriage, and ask if either show presented the view about marriage that Jesus wants us to have. Let them explain.

3. Introduction (3 minutes)

Have the students form a circle and hold hands. Tell them to move around the room as a group. Then have them stop holding hands. Now tell them to move around the room however they want.

- *What was the difference between the two experiences?* (We had to work together in the first; in the second we did whatever we wanted.)
- *What happens as we go our own way?* (We get farther away from each other.)
- *Which way gives us an example of how we are to feel as a member of the Church? Why?* (We are working together as one.)

Connect this idea of unity to the focus of the lesson—all baptized Christians are joined together to build up the Kingdom of God.

Notes for the lesson:

(Use this space to write helpful hints to use each year)

Supplementary Activity:

For the Action Plan in Lesson 8, the students were asked to greet people you meet walking into and out of church. Ask: *Did anyone do that? How did it make you feel? Can greeting people help you feel as if you are one with other people? How?*

The Message

4. The Body of Christ (5 minutes)

a) Ask before you begin the reading: *Does anyone know how many bones make up our body's framework? (206) How many skeletal muscles do we have? (600)*

Let the students guess—the emphasis is on the fact that we have many. Remind them that all the bones and muscles have to work together all the time for us to be able to move.

b) Look at the title of the lesson and remind them that they have learned that the Church is called the Body of Christ. Ask: *Who would make up the body parts of Christ's Body? (All the people)*

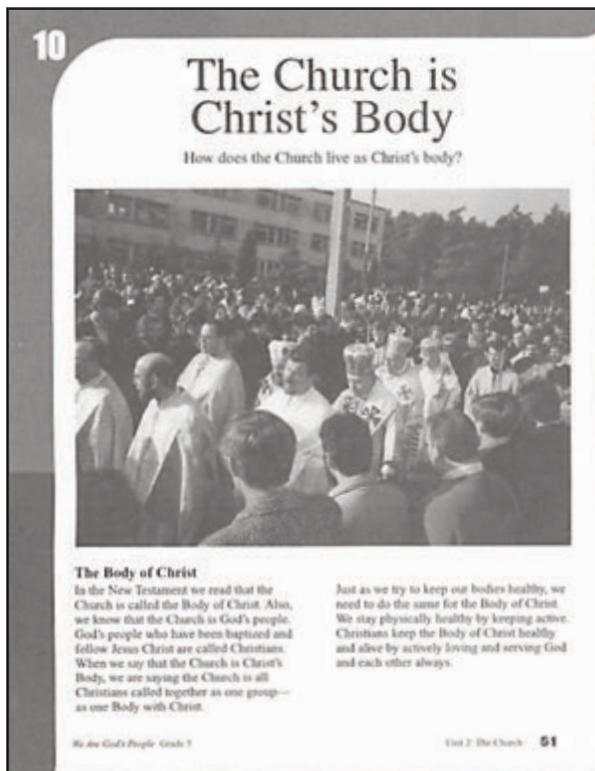
c) Read the paragraphs aloud and have the students list all the words that are used for God's people who follow Jesus as their Lord—Church, Body of Christ, Christians. Keep this list on the board for this lesson and the next or write the words on note cards and keep them handy.

d) Ask: *Have any of you ever been at a church gathering like the one in the picture? Where? What are some things you remember? [Encourage the students to share.]*

Supplementary Activity:

(Activity 1 on the back of the unit page) Write the question for this lesson on the board or on a poster board: *How does the Church live as Christ's Body?* Write the following answers when they are read in the text.

1. The Church lives as God's people.
2. God's people come together as one Body and actively love and serve God and each other.
3. We are all different but we come together as one (just like the parts of our body).
4. When we are not in communion with God, we sin. Our Church gives us the Mystery of Repentance to unite us to God again—to let us become part of the Body again.



Background Reading:

(The Church)

"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).

4. The Body of Christ

(continued)

(8 minutes)

e) Read the first two paragraphs aloud. Have the students take turns reading the scriptural passage. If a body part is mentioned in the verse, give the students time to write it on the line.

f) Finish the reading in this column. Ask: *Do you agree that "no one talent is best"?* Explain your answer.

5. Sometimes We Sin

(5 minutes)

a) Read the three paragraphs. Ask: *What is sin?* (Doing something that takes us away from being one with God and each other)

b) Ask: *Did you suffer because someone did not do what was expected—for example working on a school project or making arrangements for a family trip?* Ask them to imagine how much more the Body of Christ, the Church, suffers when people do not do what they promised—to follow Jesus in everything they do.

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students write the prayer that they say for confession on a note card. Tell them to write the date that they go to confession on it. Suggest they keep this card in a special place at home as a reminder to go to confession and to keep adding the dates for confession. Remind them that our Church expects everyone to go to confession at least once a year during the Pascha season.

Background Reading:

(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).



5. Sometimes We Sin (continued)

(3 minutes)

c) Complete the reading.

d) Have the students come to the center of the room and hold hands. Tell them to walk around in a circle. Now tell one person to stop holding hands with the person to the left. Tell them to continue walking around in a circle. Ask: *What starts to happen?* (When the circle is incomplete, it is easier to drift apart.)

Remind the students that as we break away from a strong circle, we also move away from each other. That is what happens when we sin—we move away from God and each other.

6. Mystery of Repentance (5 minutes)

a) Divide the students into groups of three. Each person reads one of the paragraphs and shares the information with the other people in the group.

b) Ask: *What happens when we go to confession?* (We are forgiven our sins, and we are united to God. We begin to build up the Body of Christ.)

7. Let's Pray (3 minutes)

Read this section aloud and have the students write their prayers.

If possible, play liturgical music as they write.

Supplementary Activity:

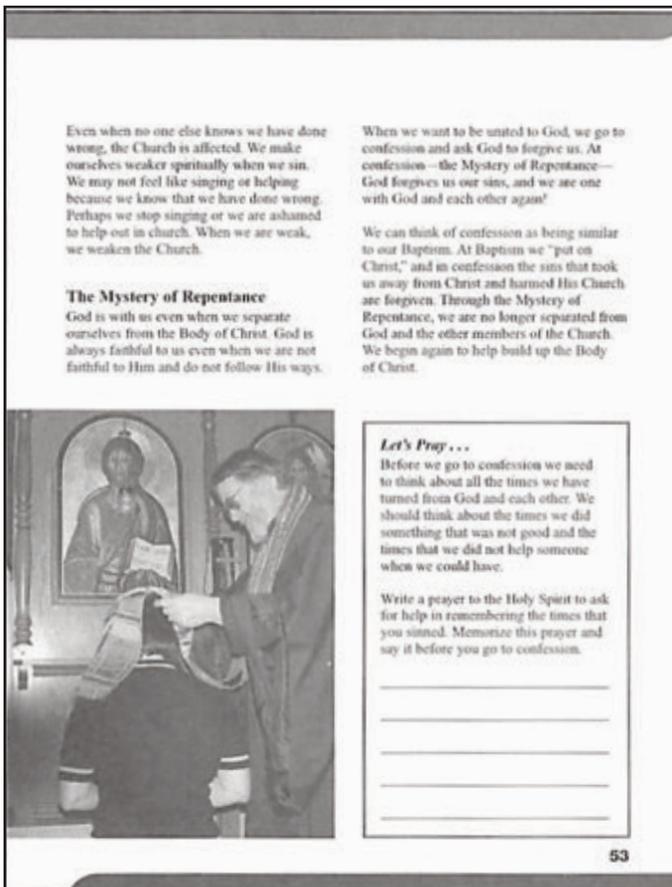
Make up a worksheet that describes the way to go to confession in your church. Review the format and prayers that they are expected to follow

Background Reading:

(Sin)

"Sin takes us away from our purpose of reflecting God and thus produces a basic distortion of our nature. As St. Maximos the Confessor notes, 'When we fail to attain the good by a movement and order which is in accordance with our nature, we are carried into an irrational, all-embracing and unreal state of non-existence which is contrary to nature.' Thus sin does not represent a simple lack of virtue in an individual, like an empty glass. Rather it signifies the breaking of its ability to fulfill its purpose, such as a crack in the glass

"People who sin may be compared to an arrow seeking to chart its own course rather than relying on the direction set by the archer. . . . Sin, then, destroys our humanity in the very act of 'trying to be me.'" (STBH 28-29).



Even when no one else knows we have done wrong, the Church is affected. We make ourselves weaker spiritually when we sin. We may not feel like singing or helping because we know that we have done wrong. Perhaps we stop singing or we are ashamed to help out in church. When we are weak, we weaken the Church.

The Mystery of Repentance
God is with us even when we separate ourselves from the Body of Christ. God is always faithful to us even when we are not faithful to Him and do not follow His ways.

When we want to be united to God, we go to confession and ask God to forgive us. At confession—the Mystery of Repentance—God forgives us our sins, and we are one with God and each other again!

We can think of confession as being similar to our Baptism. At Baptism we "put on Christ," and in confession the sins that took us away from Christ and harmed His Church are forgiven. Through the Mystery of Repentance, we are no longer separated from God and the other members of the Church. We begin again to help build up the Body of Christ.

Let's Pray...
Before we go to confession we need to think about all the times we have turned from God and each other. We should think about the times we did something that was not good and the times that we did not help someone when we could have.

Write a prayer to the Holy Spirit to ask for help in remembering the times that you sinned. Memorize this prayer and say it before you go to confession.

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Application

8. Today's Witnesses to Christ

(10 minutes)

Today the students interview an active member of the parish—an altar server, catechist, reader, custodian, or secretary. You might want to invite more than one and have the students divided into two groups.

Because each parish is unique, use your own judgment as to whom you should invite.

The catechist should contact the person in advance and give him or her the list of questions that will be asked. Also, inform them of the time they should be there. [A 10-minute interview session at the end of class would work well with the lesson plan, but you need to adjust the time accordingly.]

All the students should be prepared to take notes on the day of the interview, but have only one student ask the questions. Have a different student for each class session. At the end of the interview, that person thanks the guest and leads everyone in the singing of "God grant you many years."

Also, use one of the following ways to thank your guest:

1. Have one student write a thank-you note and everyone signs it.
2. Buy a thank-you note and have the students sign it.

If the interview is at the beginning of class, have the students complete the "What do you think?" section immediately.

If the interview is at the end, ask the students to complete this section at home. Encourage them to share their answers with their parents.

Optional Activity 1

Ask the children to interview married couples in their family members who are active in the church.

Optional Activity 2

Take a picture of the person and place it onto the copy (found at the end of this lesson) of the question and answer sheet. Have the students share the way they wrote their answers and decide on the best ones to use. Have someone with good printing skills print the answers. Place this page into a three-ring binder or a folder with clasps.

Ask the students for suggestions for the title for the booklet. At the end of the year, add this booklet to your library in the room—or even the church library.

Today's Witnesses to Christ

Our Guest, _____

As members of the Body of Christ, we have to be active in our church community. By being active, we are helping to build up the Body of Christ on earth.

Today you are going to talk to someone who is active at your church. Before you begin asking the questions, thank him or her for helping at the church.

When did you become a member of our church?

How did you get involved in helping with church activities?

What is the easiest part of your helping?

What is the most difficult part of your helping?

(Use this space to write any other questions you want to ask or to take notes.)

Is there anything people our age could do to help at our church?

What do you think?
(Answer these questions after the interview.)

What did you learn about helping in the church that surprised you?

Think about how you can help our church. Write one way that you would be willing to help at least once a month.

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9. Action Plan

(8 minutes)

Help the children recognize ways that they can help build up the Body of Christ. Have the students brainstorm together

10. Summary

(3 minutes)

Use the note cards that were made at the beginning of class. They have the words used to identify God's people: the Church, the Body of Christ, Christians. Divide the students into three groups and give each one a card. Ask them to draw on the back of the card a symbol to show the strength of God's people. Let the students share the symbol and their explanation.

Ask the students to brainstorm about what happens to these symbols of strength when we sin.

11. Closing Prayer

(2 Minutes)

Materials: Prayer Page

Pray "Prayer for Growth."

For Next Week's Lesson: Encourage the students to attend next week's class because they will be interviewing you, the catechist, and each other.

Action Plan	
<i>We Build up the Body of Christ</i>	
<p>I. We can build up the Body of Christ through our daily actions, but sometimes we do not notice the ways we can help. Just as Saint Paul said that everyone is important, so too is every action—nothing is too small or insignificant. Today make a list of some things you can do to build up the Body of Christ.</p>	
In School	At Home
1. <u><i>Be nice to students</i></u>	1. <u><i>Put my things away</i></u>
2. <u><i>Listen to the teacher</i></u>	2. <u><i>Help with the cleaning</i></u>
3. <u><i>Don't cheat</i></u>	3. <u><i>Pray at meals</i></u>
4. _____	4. _____
For My Friends	For My Family
1. <u><i>Help them make good choices</i></u>	1. <u><i>Tell my parents about school</i></u>
2. <u><i>Never make fun of them</i></u>	2. <u><i>Obey the rules and curfew</i></u>
3. <u><i>Listen to what they want to say</i></u>	3. <u><i>Visit my relatives</i></u>
4. _____	4. _____
<p>II. Choose one activity in each section. Mark an * by the four activities you chose, and plan to do them every day this week. Next week when you come to class, you will complete the rest of this action sheet. You will be asked to write your story about the way you helped to build up the Body of Christ by following through on one of the activities you marked. Remember the details so that you can write a good, true story.</p>	

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Prayer for Growth

O God, help me this day
and every day of my life
to be faithful to You.
Help me to govern my thoughts
and actions according to the
standards of Your Son Jesus.
Help me to keep ever before my
eyes the gift of Your Holy
Spirit dwelling in me.
For You are holy always,
now and ever, and
forevermore. Amen.

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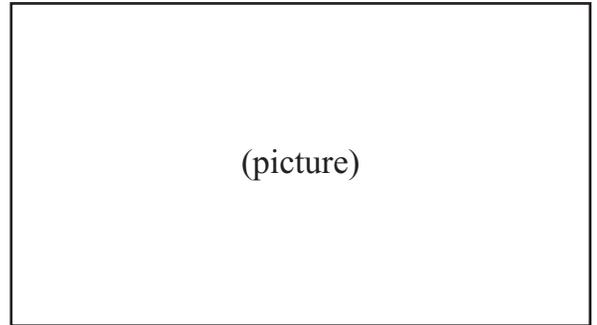
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Name:



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2. How did you get involved in helping with Church activities?
3. What is the easiest part of your helping?
4. What is the most difficult part of your helping?
5. Is there anything people our age could do to help our Church ?