

Lesson 2 - We Are Called to Grow in the Church

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- The community of Christians is the New Covenant People of God;
- We enter this Kingdom of God through Baptism and Chrismation;
- The Church is meant to be God's witness to the world;
- The epistles were written by St Paul and other apostles to Christian communities in cities like Corinth and Ephesus to help them grow in the Christian life.

For the Catechist

While most people like to think of themselves as rather unique individuals, in fact there is little that we are or have which we have not received from others and ultimately from God. Our life in Christ is, of course from God, but it is also received from and through Christ's Body, the Church. In and through the Church we become partakers of the true life that comes from Christ. We are initiated into this life through baptism and chrismation. We are nourished in it through the Eucharist, the other mysteries and the many expressions of the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church.

This lesson summarizes what the students have learned in earlier grades. Beginning in the fourth grade, students were introduced to the Old Covenant. Israel, they learned, was the people of God, set apart for the worship of the one God in a pagan world. In Christ God entered into a New Covenant, not with one nation, but with all who would accept Him in the Church. Christ nurtures us in the Church with the holy mysteries and other aspects of its life which students reviewed in the fifth grade.

Images of the Church introduced in this lesson include biblical metaphors of growth (the construction of God's building, the temple of the Holy Spirit) through service (the Body of Christ). We strive to help the students begin to see themselves as contributing to the life of the Body as well as receiving from it.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner

Guided Reading: Easel or wall pad, markers

Activity A: New Testament Worksheets 1 and 2, pencils, *Bible Lands map*

Activity B: Icons Worksheet, pencils

Activity C: *Teaching Pics*

Activity D: Mysteries Worksheet, pencils

Icons and Pictures:

Come Bless the Lord Icon Packet: Saints Peter and Paul

Revelation in Color Icon Packet: The Kingdom of God Given to the Gentiles (# 19)
Christ the Vine (#47)

Teaching Pics: Baptism and Chrismation (S1-S8)

1. Opening Prayer

Remind the students that the Psalms are hymns from the Old Testament used in prayer for over 3000 years. **Pray the verses from Psalm 100** on page 6 in the text.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad.

Alternate: let each student briefly review one page in the text, pages 2-5.

3. Introduction

Direct the students' attention to the last two verses of Psalm 100 which you just prayed. Ask them to think about their faith. Do you truly believe that *"the Lord is good"*? *How often do you "give thanks to Him"*? *The Israelite writer of the Psalm called people to enter the temple gates with thanksgiving and praise. What are your feelings when you enter the doors of your church? Today's lesson may give us some ideas about what we should be thankful for.*

Background Reading (The Church):

"This fellowship with the Holy Trinity comes to us in the Church, the assembly of those whom God has called to be His people. While the Holy Spirit is the continuation of Christ's divine presence among us, the Church is His Body, the extension of His physical presence in the world. The Church is thus the Temple of God in which the Spirit dwells, as the human body is the dwelling place of the human spirit. The Fathers called the Church the communion in the Holy Spirit, the fellowship He builds which joins us to God in a divine community. Our mission as Church, our purpose for being, is *"to proclaim the wonderful acts of God"* (1 Pt 2:9); to be a witness of God's revealing love to all mankind. As members of the Church, we are part of Christ's Body, inseparably joined in Him to the Trinity, the living stones which make up God's temple. In this is our life" (DC 10).

4. Guided Reading, Pages 7, 8 and 9

**2 We Are Called to Grow
in the Church**



Towards the end of the Divine Liturgy the priest says a prayer which reads "Every good gift and every perfect grace is from above and comes from You, the Father of Lights." God is the "Giver of every good gift," the source of everything good in our lives. There is nothing good in us which we have not received from God, either directly or through others.

One of the greatest gifts we have received is that we have been made members of God's People, the Church. We have been brought into a community of Christians that includes people all over the world, the saints of every age and nation, and all those holy ones who have lived before us. Most importantly, this People is one with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through the Church we are connected to God.

We have learned that, in the time before Christ, the People of God was the people of Israel, one nation specially chosen to be dedicated to the worship of the one God. God made a covenant with them, the Old Covenant, and promised them a Saviour. In fact He was preparing a people to receive His own Son, Jesus Christ.

In Christ, God established the New Covenant, not just with one nation, but with all who would believe in Him. He made the Church like a nation without borders or boundaries, open to all, the Kingdom of God. All who believe in Christ and are baptized in the name

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Direct the students to **look up in the Glossary** any words they find underlined in the lesson (*People of God, Old Covenant, New Covenant, Kingdom of God, Eternal Death, Holy Chrism, Royal Priesthood*). Note that all but the last term have been used in earlier grades.

Have the students **read the text, page 7**. Divide reading styles (aloud/silent; by one/all together). Before the reading, direct the students to look for answers to the following questions:

- Name the four groups who are members of the Church (*living people, the saints, the dead, the Holy Trinity*).
- Who were the People of God in the Old Covenant? (*the Israelites*)
- Who are the People of God in the New Covenant? (*all who believe in Christ and are baptized*)

Write the main points of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

After the reading, ask the students to answer the questions above. Other questions you may ask at this time include:

- Name some of the saints you studied last year.
- In which commandment did God remind the Jews to worship Him alone? (*First Commandment: "I am the Lord. . ."*)
- Which races or ethnic groups cannot be part of God's people? (*None!*)

Background Reading (One With Christ):

"The Gospels repeatedly insist on the need for this actual grafting onto Christ through baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist; 'No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit' (Jn 3:5); 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you' (Jn 6:53). Without this actual joining to Christ through these holy mysteries, we may follow Jesus as students model themselves on their teacher, but the actual transformation of our nature, the restoring of the likeness, has not been communicated to us. Our human nature remains deficient: less than it was meant by God to be. "That this transformation is begun is assured by the power of the Holy Spirit. That it continues and matures to fruition depends on our willingness to cooperate with the Spirit who has been given us. The more the Spirit finds a home in us, the more we cooperate with the life extended to us by God, the more are we caught up in the life of God, transformed into 'sharers of the divine nature' (2Pt 1:4)" (*SBH 10*)

Read the section "**We Have Been Born Again**" (pages 8 and 9).

Talk about how life comes from being connected, even in our physical life. Sometimes that connection is physical (the child in the womb); sometimes it is emotional (an infant's need to be held, an older person depressed when separated from loved ones). Sometimes connection is spiritual (the subject of the section).

Questions on this section may include:

- How are people "born from above," according to Jesus? (*in water and the Spirit*);
- In which of the mysteries do we experience this new birth (*Baptism and Chrismation*);
- Which ceremony in Baptism represents Christ's burial and resurrection? (*immersion in water*)

Note: If you need to review the Church's mysteries see the Supplementary Section at the end of this lesson.

Before reading this section, ask: Which is the second of the holy mysteries which we receive at the same time as Baptism? (*Chrismation*)

Direct the students to **look for answers to the following question** as they read: What are three ways the Church witnesses to God in the world? (*worship, the beauty of churches, the way we treat others*)



5. A People with a Purpose (p. 9-10)

Background Reading (Body of Christ):

"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*).

6. Activity A ("The Church is Like..."):

Divide the class into two groups. Give each group a different Bible Study worksheet. Let each group read the Scripture aloud then work together on the questions provided and pick one person to report on the discussion to the whole group.

Introduce the activity by noting that:

- These epistles were written by St Paul who was most responsible for bringing Christ to the Gentiles.
- Refer to the Bible Lands map to show the location of Corinth and Ephesus in Asia Minor (now Turkey).
- Most of the Christians in Corinth and Ephesus were Gentile (foreign) converts.

7. Activity B (Icons Speak of the Church):

Divide the class into three groups give each one of the worksheets describing the icons of Saints Peter and Paul, "The Kingdom of God Given to the Gentiles" and "Christ the Vine" from the Icon Packets. Have members of each group display the icon and ask the entire class the questions on the worksheets.

Introduce the activity by noting that:

- Many icons express in color what the Bible expresses in words
- Each of these icons tells us something about the Church.

8. Activity C (Mysteries of Initiation):

Distribute *Teaching Pics* numbers S-1 through S-8 among the group and allow 5 minutes for the students to read the material on the back. Then have each display the picture and report on its meaning.

Background Reading (The Church Community):

"The very word Church literally means a gathering, a term that goes back to the days of the Jewish experience in the desert and which points to the first essential element in the Church's nature. There Moses gathered the Jews into an assembly (*qahal*), beginning the process that made of them a nation. It was in this regular coming together that the Jews received and realized their identity as the chosen people of God. Called together from their various tribes into the gathering of Israel, they became what God wanted them to be - a people one in His name.

"The Church has a similar experience. As the new people of God, it too has been called together - not simply from a few related tribes - but from the entire world, to be a people. And, as in the Old Testament, it is when the Church gathers, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, that its identity as a holy nation is realized. This is why the followers of Christ are called Church, which means 'those who have been gathered.' (WEF 66-67)

9. Activity D

If your students are unfamiliar with the Church's holy mysteries, use the **sidebar on page 8** of their text and the **worksheet for Activity D** to review them.

10. Time Line

Display the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*People of Israel, Nicodemus, Adam and Eve, St Peter, St John Chrysostom*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading.

11. Summary

End the lesson by **summarizing the lesson** from the aims on page 83, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or any other points raised in the lesson.

12. Closing Prayer

Conclude with **Psalm 23** from page 11 in the student text.

The Church Is Like ...

The New Testament gives us many images of the Church: pictures or symbols that tell us something about what the Church is meant to be. Read each passage and see what the image is pointing to. What can you do to make your parish like the biblical image of the Church?

God's Building

"For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ"

(1 Corinthians 3:9-11)

What do you think Paul means when he says, "You are God's field"?

What would you grow in the "field" that is the Church?

How are we "God's building"?

What does Paul say is the Church's foundation?

What purpose does a foundation serve in a building?

Why is this a good image for the Church?

You are a community which has received this epistle. What would you say in your answer to Paul: how are you "being careful" in serving the church?

Temple of the Holy Spirit

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

(Ephesians 2:19-22).

Who wrote this letter?

In this image what is the Church's foundation?

What is Christ's function in this image?

A capstone is the stone at the peak of a building that crowns the whole structure. What is usually placed at the peak of our church roof or the top of a dome?

Why do you think this is a good image for Christ?

This image suggests a work in process. When do you think this construction project will be finished?

The Church Is Like ...

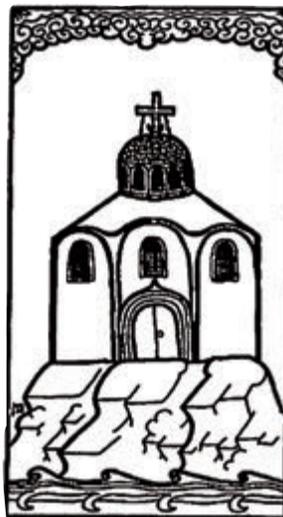
The New Testament gives us many images of the Church: pictures or symbols which tell us something about what the Church is meant to be. Read each passage and see what the image is pointing to. What can you do to make your parish like the biblical image of the Church?

Body Of Christ

"As a body is one through many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.... Now 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 it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended."

(1 Corinthians 12:12-18)

Why does the image a human body say about the Church?
Which part of the body might represent leadership?
Who would that be in the Church?
Which part of the body might represent service or work?
Which part might represent beauty?
Which part are you?



Icons Speak of the Church

Many icons tell a story. The icons described here all say something about the Church. Show the icon to your class and ask them what they see. Then explain to them what you have learned.

Christ the Vine - Jesus told His disciples, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Branches die when they are not connected to the vine; if we are not connected to Christ, we are spiritually dead.

The icon places Christ as the center of the vine and the apostles at the branches. Christ is blessing the way a bishop blesses because He is the head of the Church.

- How do people "bear fruit" in the Church?
- Can you give an example from your parish?

Saints Peter and Paul - These saints are called the "Leaders of the Apostles." They brought the Gospel to different parts of the world. At first Saint Peter preached in towns around Jerusalem and then at Antioch, the Syrian center. Saint Paul traveled to most of the important cities of the Roman Empire to spread the news of Christ. Both Apostles were martyred in Rome, the capital of the Empire.

The icon shows Peter and Paul holding a model church. This means that their ministry was like the foundation on which the Church was built.

- What did the apostles do that made them the Church's foundation?
- What do you know about the people who started your parish?

The Kingdom Given to the Gentiles - The Old Covenant was fulfilled with the coming of Christ. The People of God (Israel in the Old Covenant) would now include people of every race or ethnic group who accepted Christ (the Church in the New Covenant).

The icon shows the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 135 (lower left) to show that God was leading people beyond the Old Covenant. Saint Paul (center) preaches the Gospel to Gentiles (center left) who are baptized (center right). Now one in Christ, people of different races embrace (lower center) while Christ blesses from above. It was the prophet Isaiah (lower right) who had *prophesied hundreds of years before that Christ would be the foundation of the New Covenant.*

- What different races or ethnic groups are represented in your parish?
- How are visitors or other strangers welcomed at your parish?

The Holy Mysteries

I am the bread of life and the cup of salvation; if you receive me you share in eternal life. I am the mystery of_____.

I am the crowns of God's blessings; with me the beginning of a new family is blessed. I am the mystery of_____.

I am the gateway to salvation. When you pass through me you are born from above. You put off the old man and put on the new. I am the mystery of _____.

I am the oil of mercy. Through me comes the healing of spiritual and physical sufferings. I am the mystery of_____

I am the sign of Christ who came to serve. Through me people are sent to preach the Good News, to teach all nations, to baptize and to offer the sacrifice of praise to the Lord. I am the mystery of_____

I am the sign of God's mercy and love for all. When you come to me your baptismal garment is restored to its original beauty. I am the mystery of _____.

I am the ointment that helps you live the life of God's people. When you are anointed with me, you receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. I am the mystery of _____.

The Holy Mysteries

I am the bread of life and the cup of salvation; if you receive me you share in eternal life. I am the mystery of the Eucharist.

I am the crowns of God's blessings; with me the beginning of a new family is blessed. I am the mystery of Crowning (Marriage).

I am the gateway to salvation. When you pass through me you are born from above. You put off the old man and put on the new. I am the mystery of Baptism.

I am the oil of mercy. Through me comes the healing of spiritual and physical sufferings. I am the mystery of Holy Unction (Anointing).

I am the sign of Christ who came to serve. Through me people are sent to preach the Good News, to teach all nations, to baptize and to offer the sacrifice of praise to the Lord. I am the mystery of Holy Orders.

I am the sign of God's mercy and love for all. When you come to me your baptismal garment is restored to its original beauty. I am the mystery of Repentance (Confession).

I am the ointment that helps you live the life of God's people. When you are anointed with me, you receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. I am the mystery of Chrismation.