

# 4—The Church Is a Community of Faith

## *Objectives*

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- define the Church as the community in which Christians live out their journey to God.
- realize that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Church as it passes on the teaching of God's truth.
- recognize that the Holy Spirit is alive and at work in the Church.

## *For the Catechists*

In the last lesson the focus was on the person following Christ. This lesson's focus is on the Church, the community of believers following Christ. Through the Church the essentials of faith taught by Jesus have been passed down. Jesus promised the Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church, and on Pentecost the Spirit came upon the Church. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. For almost 2,000 years the Holy Spirit has kept our Church alive and at work.

Helping the students realize the importance of keeping our Eastern Christian Churches alive and active is an important part of this year's lessons. Our youth are our Church today and in the future. They need to realize their commitment to our Church is important at all stages of life. Just as the Early Church continued to develop, we need to continue to develop our services and our activities. The student text identifies some of the new practices in the Early Church: the writing of the Scriptures, the teachings of the Church Fathers and the Councils, and the building of the communities.

In our 21st century, we need to respect and continue the developments that have occurred. But we need to do more than keep our Church alive. We need to realize that our church activities and our own personal actions need to show people that Christ is with us today. We are not just following guidelines of the past—we are living out our lives in Christ through the Traditions and services of the Eastern Catholic Church.

Each lesson includes a section on the "Teaching of the Church Fathers." Hearing the Church Fathers talk to us about our faith helps us realize we are connected to our roots—the basic teachings of Jesus Christ. Encourage the students to realize that Christians of the past had their own set of problems just as we have ours. The Church Fathers help us today, just as they did in the past, know that we need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus no matter what age we live in.

## *Materials Needed*

*Opening Prayer:* Prayer Page ("O Heavenly King") for your jurisdiction

*Icon:* Christ the Teacher (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #4).

*Closing Prayer:* "Nicene Creed"—in the student book

Pens, pencils, markers and white paper

**1. Opening Prayer**

- Chant or recite "O Heavenly King."

**2. Introduction**

Allow a few minutes to share ideas about all the good points about being in a family. Encourage students to share why it is good to have brothers, sisters, cousins, relatives. Make a list of the good things we learn by being in a family. Ask them to think about our church family the same way—a group of people coming together to help each.

**3. Guided Reading**

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the belief that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, our Church has been alive since Pentecost.
- For the scriptural passage from John, ask all students to read aloud together.
- Wait to read the Nicene Creed as a "Profession of Faith" for the final activity.

**4. Scriptural Reflection**

- Help students find 1 John 1:1-5.
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at picture and ask the students to see themselves listening to Jesus.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers.
- Possible answers:

Jesus

To tell us what they saw; to make visible what they saw and heard; to help us form a relationship with Christ; to complete their joy in sharing the Good News.

Heavenly Light of heaven. We can bring peace and joy to others.

- Make a list of the ways youth can share the Light God has given them.

**5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers**

- Ask one student to read the words from St. John of Damascus.
- Have the students answer the questions; then discuss their answers. Suggestions:

We might get confused.

We need money to be happy; we need to be popular; life needs to be more exciting; we can do everything on our own.

We should have friends that help us "close our ears"; we need to listen to our parents; we need to keep going to church and church retreats.

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***Background Reading (The Way)***

"Since Christ's presence is expressed in and through a body filled with sinners, not everything in the Church reflects the divine. We, its members, often do not respond to the grace of the Holy Spirit in our midst and thus produce spoiled fruit or no fruit at all. Nevertheless, the Church remains the continuation of Christ's presence among us, by which individuals find Christ, the Way to the Father" (*Journey TM 94*).

**6. Liturgical Study**

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask: "What are some ways you can keep focused during the Liturgy so that you are truly present to Christ Who is truly present for you?" (*Look at the icons; visualize Christ being there; stop thinking about other things.*)

**7. Closing Prayers**

Say the Nicene Creed found in the student book. [For the words for each jurisdiction, use the Divine Liturgy book in your church.]

Ask the students when the Nicene Creed is sung during the Liturgy? (*Before the Anaphora—the consecration of the Body and Blood of Christ*)

"Why is this prayer important during the Liturgy?" (*Everyone states at the same time what they believe before they receive the Body and Blood of Jesus and become united with Christ and each other.*)

**Supplemental Activities:**

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Have the students re-enact Acts 2:1-4.
2. Write newspaper headlines to announce the news about the gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. Write a book review (or a book cover) for the Bible. State why young people should read the Bible.
4. Create a page in your "Faith Book" (see TM Lesson 1—Supplemental Activities for details about this activity).

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***Background Reading (Community of Faith)***

"Sometimes we think of the Bible, the Church, and the Divine Liturgy as separate things. Very often we claim to be bored by history, yet it is simply the record of real events that happened to real people. History is the record of what is worth remembering. Nothing is more worth remembering than our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, the Church, and the Divine Liturgy are all ways in which we remember our Lord. However, it is more than a remembrance because Christ is among us, and it is more than his story because our salvation is still taking place" (*Journey TM 95*).