



# **THE CHURCH: OUR STORY**

## **Parish Religious Education Adaptations**



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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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# Unit 1:

## What is Church?

### Getting Started

- Assign the students to read Unit 1, “What is Church?” (pages 8–33). Then ask them to read the following article.

### The Story

*World Youth Day 2002 by Maria Kemper*

*A panoply of sound and color filled the streets of Toronto during World Youth Day last July. A constant flow of pilgrims passed with striking beauty and pageantry, as flags and banners waved. Many sang traditional songs, with guitar or conga drums to accompany them.*

Read the rest of this article at <http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Oct2002/Feature3.asp>

### Discussion

- Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:
  1. Based on the author’s description of the World Youth Day celebration in Toronto, how would you answer the question, “What is the Church?”
  2. What united the diverse young people at this World Youth Day? (*Their shared faith in Jesus Christ; the pope, as their spiritual “father,” united them as one family.*)
  3. How was the holiness of the Church evident at this World Youth Day? (*For example: the camaraderie and friendship of the pilgrims; the teaching of the bishops and cardinals on love; the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Penance and the Mass; the comment of one pilgrim that “We must be saints—and not just saints when no one’s around. We have to be saints even to the folks who drive us bonkers, saints when we’re in utter pain”; the challenge of the pope for the young people to embrace holiness.*)
  4. How was the catholicity of the Church displayed at this World Youth Day? (*For example: the diversity of the pilgrims, who came from more than 170 nations around the world; the pope’s commissioning of the young people to be stewards of the Church’s mission to the whole world.*)
  5. In what ways was the apostolic nature of the Church important to the young people at World Youth Day? (*The pope served as a sort of father, uniting the diverse pilgrims as one family; together with the bishops, he taught the pilgrims about Christ and offered them encouragement and guidance on the path of holiness.*)
  6. The author of the article states that “the pope . . . needs us. The young Church . . . is the Church of the future, and even the Church of today.” What unique gifts can young people bring to the Church today?

### Being Church

*Bringing World Youth Day home*

- You will need several large sheets of paper or newsprint and drawing materials (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.).
- Divide the students into groups of about five people each.
- Explain to the students that they are invited to consider how the marks of the Church are already present in their parish, and how the marks of the Church might be made even more visible in the parish. Encourage them to use the example of World Youth Day as a starting point for brainstorming ways that the parish can become more deeply one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
- Distribute four sheets of newsprint to each group. Instruct the students to label each sheet with one of the four marks of the Church.
- Instruct the students to brainstorm two lists on each sheet. One list should describe ways in which the parish already manifests one of the marks of the Church. The other list should offer suggestions for ways that the parish could live that characteristic of the Church more vibrantly. Encourage the students to be specific and concrete with their suggestions. How would the parish look and sound different if their suggestions were implemented?
- When the groups have finished their work, post all of the sheets on the wall, grouping the sheets according to the mark of the Church they describe. Discuss the groups’ observations and suggestions. Ask the students

to choose several of their most important observations and suggestions, and write these on a new sheet of newsprint.

- Conclude by discussing the following questions: How do the marks of the Church evident in our parish enrich our faith lives? How can you “be Church today” by acting on some of your suggestions?
- If possible, have the students (or a representative of the students) present their observations and suggestions to the parish’s pastoral council for consideration.

### *Additional Activities*

- Use the Journal Questions (pages 13, 14, 17, 21, 27, and 31 of the student text) as discussion starters at the beginning of the session.
- Lead the students in one of the prayer services described in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition, either the prayer service for catechumens (page 22) or the meditation on the marks of the Church (page 39).
- Lead the students in an exploration of their beliefs, values, and relationships using the Venn diagram exercise found on page 40 of the TWE.
- Have the students respond to the scenarios on the “Marks of the Church” worksheet found on pages 327–328 of the TWE.

### *Additional Resources*

- For additional books related to this unit, see page 21 of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition; for related Internet links, see page 27 of the TWE.
- Videos related to this unit include *Work of Love* (Ikonographics, 28 minutes, 1985), which depicts the work of Mother Teresa; and *Peter, Keeper of the Keys* (Ignatius Press, 2001, The Footprints of God series).