

The Church: The Body of Christ

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to complete assignment 1, 2, or 4 from “Applying What You Have Learned” (page 89).
- Students were requested to read Chapter 4: The Church: The Body of Christ (pages 90–117).

Warm-up (15–20 minutes)

- As time allows, have the students share their completed assignments from “Applying What You Have Learned” in Chapter 3 (page 89). If any of the students chose to make a collage of the Holy Spirit’s activity in today’s world, be sure to post it in the room after they have had the opportunity to explain it.
- Play a name game to help students get to know one another. Sit in a circle with one student holding a ball of yarn. The first student introduces himself or herself by naming a gift or talent he or she believes he or she possesses that lends itself to community building. For example, “Hi, I’m Emma. I’m patient with others.” Holding on to the end of the yarn, the student tosses the ball to someone else in the circle. The second student re-introduces the student (name and gift/talent), introduces herself or himself in the same manner, and then tosses the ball of yarn as did the first student. Each student repeats the procedure until everyone has been introduced. Point out how a web design was formed during the activity and how it is a good sign of how everyone in the group is interconnected.
- Before doing more with the understanding of Jesus as the prime sacrament, help the students begin to understand how the Church is a sacrament. Ask if they recall the following childhood finger rhyme: “Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the door. See all the people.” See if they can do the finger rhyme. Explain that the rhyme shows us that the Church is a community of people whose purpose—like a steeple’s—is to point not to ourselves, but to Jesus and the gospel. His is the good news we have to share. His is the good work we continue in the world. We acknowledge that none of us can do this on our own. We need one another to point others to Christ’s presence, to be his sacramental presence in the world. Have the students tell about someone in the Church whose life has pointed them or others to Christ.

Part I: Lesson (30–40 minutes)

Text Reference: Where Christ Is, There Is the Church; What Is Church? More Descriptions of Church (pages 90–102)

- Call attention to the eight descriptions of Church listed in the activity “How Do You Think of the Church?” (page 93). Call on different students to share which two descriptions that best fit their idea of Church and explain why. Finally, have the students work in triads to write their definition of Church. Call on representatives to share definitions with the class. Record a sampling of the definitions, working toward a class definition of Church. Note how it compares to the definition of Church on page 92.
- Go on to ask the students to name groups to which they belong, for example, class at school, scouts, band, athletic team. Discuss what it means to belong to these groups. For example, when people are part of a band, they show up for rehearsals together, share the goal of playing harmoniously and improving as players, follow the band leader’s instructions, and practice on their own so as to contribute their best to the ensemble. Even though some band members are more committed or more talented than others, they are all members of the same band. Draw comparisons between students’ experience of belonging to a group and belonging to the Church.
- Highlight the meanings of Church mentioned on page 94:
 - The Church is a community of Catholics who assemble to worship.
 - The Church is a local gathering of Catholics in a particular neighborhood.
 - The Church is a worldwide gathering of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Compare these meanings to the class definition the students devised earlier.

- Have the students turn to “The Church as a Mystery of God’s Love” (pages 95–96). Ask the students to recall what they discovered in their previous session about the aspect of the Trinity that is revealed in human history as God acts (the Economic or Salvific Trinity): in creation; in the Word becoming flesh in Jesus and

his saving activity on our behalf; in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inspire us, sustain us, and make us holy. (Note: If you wish, have a copy of the Chapter 3 activity sheet “Our Triune God” available to illustrate the above.)

- Go on to note the roles of the Trinity in establishing the Church. Discuss similarities between the roles of people in a band with the work of God the Father, Jesus the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Comparisons could include the work of the founder of the band, an outstanding performer who inspires and teaches others, and a person who is an ongoing source of support and encouragement.
- Divide the class into five small groups. Assign each group one of the five images of Church listed on the top of page 96. Have each group create a slogan or bumper sticker that illustrates/illuminates its image. The students may use words or not. Challenge the teens to think of:
 - the qualities that go into make a good *marriage*
 - the meaning of *pilgrimage*—what it means for us to be on a journey
 - the qualities of someone tending a *farm*
 - what it means to be part of a *flock*, to be shepherded
 - the tasks of caring for a *vineyard*

When the teens complete their work, have groups share. Post completed bumper stickers/slogans in the classroom.

- Randomly assign each student the name of a classmate. Give the students three or four minutes to write a brief description of the person they have been assigned, beginning with vague points (brown hair) and ending with more specific points (volunteers at homeless shelter twice a month). Have a few students read their descriptions aloud. Ask the class if the description completely describes the person. Point out that no matter how we try, we can never completely capture a person in words. In the same way, descriptions of the Church are but an attempt to convey the reality of the Church, but they can never completely capture its complexity and beauty.
- Read aloud the definition of sacrament listed in the margin on page 96. Help the students understand that a sacrament makes God’s love visible through a sign(s) that makes real what it signifies. Talk about rituals and symbolic actions that shape our lives, that signify an invisible reality in our lives. For example: a handshake confirms reconciliation; an embrace drives out fear; a kiss promises faithfulness. Jesus knew this. That is why he made powerful human actions—washing, eating, touching, anointing—signs of God’s love. When we celebrate the sacraments, God’s love—God’s grace—is real for us.
- Write “**Jesus is the prime sacrament of God’s love**” on the board. Go on to explain that Jesus is the *perfect* sign of God’s great love for us. When we encounter Jesus we see him as a man and as more than a man. Jesus is a sign that points beyond himself and makes us aware of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Without Jesus, we could never know the loving relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. Nor could we ever know God as one with us. In Jesus, we can know the unknowable, touch the intangible, and see the invisible. Jesus is *numero uno*, the prime sacrament.
- Ask the students to name the seven sacraments. List them on the board. Point out which are sacraments of initiation, of healing, and of vocation or service. Distribute the activity sheet “The Seven Sacraments” from the end of this lesson. Have the teens draw lines to connect each sacrament to the symbol used to celebrate the sacrament and to the important reality each symbol represents. Point out the heading “Reality Re-presented” on the sheet. Explain that the use of the hyphen is meant to emphasize the *efficacy* of the sacraments—that is, how the sacraments “make present” the reality it points to. Give the teens time to make their matches, then check for accuracy. Correct matches are:

Sacrament	Symbols	Reality Re-presented
Baptism	Water, Light, White Garment	New life in grace
Confirmation	Imposition of hands	Full life in the Spirit
Eucharist	Bread and Wine	Nourishment in Christ
Penance	Confession, Absolution	Forgiveness, Reconciliation
Anointing of the Sick	Anointing, oil	Healing of spirit and body
Matrimony	Exchange of Vows	Union in marriage
Holy Orders	Imposition of hands	Priesthood in the Church

Discuss ways in which the sacraments bring about a new reality as well as showing the reality exists.

- To help the students begin to understand how the Church is a sacrament, call attention to the final paragraph of text in the first column on page 97. Read the first four sentences aloud. Remind them again of the connection with the childhood finger rhyme: “Here is the Church. Here is the steeple.”
- Take a moment to explain to the teens that the importance of the image of Church as “People of God” emerged from a crucial debate at Second Vatican Council. The bishops were determining that the traditional view of the Church as a hierarchy was secondary to a wider view that encompasses *all of us* in the Church. Explain that this image makes a great difference in the way we understand Church today. *Together* we share Jesus’ command to be light for the world, salt for the earth. One common call from Jesus is to be holy, to be his Body here on earth. Even though the Body has a variety of members, each with a special function, we are still one Body, not only pope, bishops, and priests. We all make up the one *People of God*.
- Form four small groups. Give each group the responsibility of detailing ways teens can best handle the tasks and challenges of being a People of God (pages 98–99): *message, community, service, and worship*. Encourage the students to make their suggestions specific to their peer groups. Have groups share their ideas with the entire class.
- Write “**The Church is the Body of Christ**” on the board. Ask the students to share whether this image helps them to understand better the meaning of Church and why. Make sure the students understand that the Church is more than an assembly of like-minded, like-valued folks gathered to do good. Our faith tells us that we are the Body of Christ—in essence, Jesus’ presence in the world today.
- Have the students read 1 Corinthians 12. Afterward, make sure they recognize that in the Church each and every member has a specific and important function. Christ uses us, his people, to further his work. Ask: What happens to the Church—the Body of Christ—when one of its parts (one of us) does not use his or her gifts to further Christ’s work?
- Write the phrase “**The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit**” on the board. Ask one of the students to read 1 Corinthians 3:16. Invite the students to recall some of the powerful symbols of the Holy Spirit they discovered in their last session, for example, breath, wind, fire, tongues of fire, anointing with oil, water, hand, and dove. Go on to remind the students that they also discovered that *Holy Spirit* is our way of saying that Christ still lives among us. Explain that the windy, fiery Spirit needs a hearth and home among us. It seeks to be earthed in time and place and people: “You are the temple of the living God, just as God has said: ‘I will dwell with them and walk among them I will be their God and they shall be my people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).
- Take a class survey of the images of the Church listed in the text session “Your Commitment to Christ’s Church” (page 101). Tell the students that holding up one finger signifies a strong commitment; two fingers indicates a less strong commitment; three fingers mean you want to make a commitment; four fingers means a weak or no commitment at all.

Break/Writing Exercise (10 minutes)

- Join the students in a break with refreshments.
- Have the students journal their responses to the “Discussion Questions” on page 102.

Part 2: Lesson (35–40 minutes)

Text Reference: Membership and Ministries in the Church; Marks of the Church; Ecumenism: The Church and Other Religions (pages 102–117)

- Read the following aloud to the teens: “First there is the Church.” Read it again. Stress that the Church—the Sacrament of Christ, the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit—is what comes *before* the many ministries that make up and build up the Church. Go on to write the word “**Ministry**” on the board. Ask the students what comes to mind when they hear the word. Take time to help the students recognize that there is more to “ministry” than doing something in Church. Stress that ministry is a *life* word, not just a Church word. Explain that while some of us who are Church have a specific ministries *in* the Church (e.g., deacons, priests, bishops), *all* of us who are Church are called to act as ministers with and for others.
- Briefly explain the differences among the roles of hierarchy, laity, and religious life (see page 102). Tell the students that the members of the Church celebrate by sharing in Christ’s priesthood in one of two ways:

the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood. Explain that through the sacrament of Holy Orders, some of us share in the ministerial priesthood, the priesthood of Christ that is *at the service of* the common priesthood we all share because of Baptism.

- Write the words “**Priest, Prophet, and King**” on the board. Tell the students that at Baptism the priest or deacon prays that the newly baptized may be, together with Jesus, priest, prophet, and king. Ask: How often do you think of yourselves as a priest? A prophet? A member of the royalty? Explain that it is part of the earliest tradition of the Church that we are all these things. Each person in the Church is called to be priest, prophet, and king—to worship and bless, to preach and teach, to lead by service.
- Distribute the activity sheet “Called to Be Priest, Prophet, and King” from the end of the lesson. Use the following outline to introduce each term one at a time. After each introduction and set of questions, have the students list ways people their age can exercise their vocation of priest, prophet, and king.

Priest—Emphasize to the students that the first work of the Church is to bless, to worship. Ask the students:

- How are you a blessing to others?
- What do you do to make certain that our worship is alive and relays the fire and forgiveness of God?
- What can you do to refuse—and to help others refuse—to worship at the altar of wages and to turn, instead, to the altar of God?
- Since a priest is a mediator between God and people, do you serve as mediator by praying for others?

Prophet—Remind the teens that Jesus loved prophets with a rare fondness. Explain that a prophet is someone with daring, someone willing to risk. It takes courage to speak of and for God. Then ask:

- What kind of preaching or teaching do you do through your words and, more importantly, your actions?
- Where do you wear your faith? In your pocket or on your sleeve? Why?

King—Explain that because the Church is called to re-present Christ, the Church needs leadership and order. But remember, it is a “holy” order that understands the Church is not for the Church but for the world, and that leadership is not lording over others, but helping others to love the Lord. Then, ask:

- What sort of example are you to those who look up to you?
- How involved are you in works of justice? How could you become more involved?
- What leadership/service roles in your parish are available to people your age? If only a few, how can you create more?
- Before moving on, take some time to deal with any questions the students may have about the Priest, Prophet, and King material contained in the text.
- Be ready to speak to any questions the students might have concerning the section “Explaining the Faith” (pages 107–108). Keep in mind St. Augustine’s cautionary remark: “God has many the Church does not have; the Church has many God does not have.”
- Introduce the “Marks of the Church” (pages 108–110) by having the students name qualities common in successful families. Point out that these qualities are “marks” that say a family is healthy and loving. Then ask the teen whether any family is capable of living these qualities perfectly. Clearly, no family is able to do so at all times. Therefore, these qualities, while present in families, are at the same time ideals to which families aspire. The marks of the Church are similar to these qualities in their “already-but-not-yet” presence in our midst.
- Divide the class into four small groups. Assign each group one of the following Scripture passages: 1 Corinthians 3:16; Mark 16:15; John 17:21–23; Matthew 16:18. Have each group look up its passage and tell which mark of the Church it speaks to (1 Corinthians 3:16 = *Holy*; Mark 16:15 = *Catholic*; John 17:21–23 = *One*; Matthew 16:18 = *Apostolic*). Use questions like the following to discuss the four marks:
 - Since those of us in the Church are sinners, how can we claim that the Church is “holy”? (We claim holiness because the Church is possessed, possessed by Jesus who joined the Church to himself and gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit.)
 - What does the word “catholic” mean? (universal)
 - Why is the Church considered “catholic”? (Because Jesus is present in the Church and charges the Church to spread the Good News to *all* peoples, and because the Church possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.)

- What does it mean to say the Church is “apostolic”? (*Apostolic* means “connected to the Apostles.” Jesus founded the Church on the Apostles, whose teachings are in the Bible, which the Church has preserved and handed down, guided by the successors of the Apostles, the bishop in union with the pope.)
- Introduce the material on Ecumenism by having the students name some of the different religious congregations that worship in your area. Ask the teens if they have friends or relatives who are not Catholic and, if so, to what religion or Christian denomination they belong. Finally, encourage the teens to tell how they think people of differing denominations and/or religions ought to treat one another.
- Write the word “Ecumenism” and its definition on the board: “**Ecumenism: the movement to restore the unity of Christ’s Church.**” Ask the students if they know about any ecumenical efforts in their area, for example, shared worship areas, inter-faith councils, inter-faith youth organizations. Ask:
 - Is being tolerant of other religions being true to our Catholic faith? Why or why not?
 - What values do we as Roman Catholic teens have to share with members of other religions?

Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

- Gather the students around the Paschal (Easter) Candle. Light the candle.
- Call the teens’ attention to the passage from Matthew’s Gospel on page 90. Have them proclaim it aloud together.
- Lead the group in a brief meditation on the passage:
- Note the *verbs* in the passage: *are, are, shine, see, glorify*. Jesus does not say we *have* the salt and the light. He says we *are* salt and light—spice and sparkle—for the world! Jesus challenges us to *shine*, not for ourselves but for others, so that others might *see* and, since seeing is believing, come to *glorify* God.
- Close with a prayer based on St. Teresa’s reflection *You Are Christ’s Hands* (see the feature “St. Teresa of Avila” on page 111). Have a student read St. Teresa’s reflection, and then invite students to consider the opportunities to be the spice and sparkle of Christ’s presence over the past week. Conclude with a prayer like the following:

Gracious God,
 you season us with your love-made-flesh,
 you brighten our lives with the Spirit,
 you call us your people and favor us with your Church.
 Give us generous and open hearts and hands.
 Help us to be your bright presence in the world.
 Amen.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Call attention to #5 in “Applying What You Have Learned” (page 116). Read it aloud and help the class come to a consensus on a way they can make a difference as a group.
- Invite the teens to re-read the feature “St. Teresa of Avila” on page 111 and write a journal entry in response to St. Teresa’s advice on topics such as flexibility and self-criticism. Encourage the students to be specific in applying her advice.
- Direct the students to read Chapter 5: Communion of Saints, Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal Life (pages 118–143) in preparation for the next session.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet “My Patron Saints.”

The Seven Sacraments

Sacrament	Symbols	Reality Re-presented
Baptism	Imposition of hands	Forgiveness, Reconciliation
Confirmation	Exchange of Vows	Healing of spirit and body
Eucharist	Anointing, oil	Priesthood in the Church
Penance	Water, Light, White Garment	New life in grace
Anointing of the Sick	Bread and Wine	Full life in the Spirit
Matrimony	Imposition of hands	Nourishment in Christ
Holy Orders	Confession, Absolution	Union in marriage

 Called to Be Priest, Prophet, and King

Priest — Worship and Bless

Prophet — Preach and Teach

King — Lead and Serve

My Patron Saints

(your first name)

(your middle name)

- * Use a Catholic encyclopedia, a book of saints, or an Internet site such as www.catholic.org/saints or www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm to list as many saints as you can find that share one of your names.

(your date of birth)

(date of your baptism)

- * List saints whose feast days share either your birthday or baptism date.

- * List hobbies or regular activities that are important to you.

- * List any patron saints of your hobbies or activities.

- * Discover more about one of the patron saints you listed above. On the other side of this sheet write a paragraph about him or her. Tell the saint's name, date, and place of birth. Mention whether the saint was a lifelong Catholic or a convert. Tell what the saint is best known for (e.g., St. Paul was the first great missionary), what virtues he or she exhibited, and what temptations or struggles the saint faced. Be sure to list the date and circumstances of this person's death as well as when he or she was named a saint. If a particular symbol is used to identify your saint, please identify it and tell why.