

Unit 3:

The Church Is the People of God

Getting Started

- Assign the students to read Unit 3, “The Church Is the People of God” (pages 88–123). Then ask them to read the following article.

The Story

Baptism: how to make a graceful entrance by John Shea

It is a Sunday afternoon in early December. Large, wet snowflakes drift down from a low, gray sky. We are gathered outside an old church waiting for the priest to arrive.

Read the rest of the article at http://www.theclaretians.org/site/News2?abbr=usc_&page=NewsArticle&id=7284

Discussion

- Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:
 1. The author wonders how Amy can be baptized when she can't consciously participate in the sacrament. How does he answer his own question? (He says “this type of Baptism is not about individuals coming to decision, but about persons in relationship”; i.e., the interdependency or mutual indwelling that exists between Amy and those who love her allow them to accept baptism on her behalf [see Catechism of the Catholic Church #1252–1256].)
 2. What does the sacrament of Baptism say about the responsibilities Amy's parents, godparents, and community have to her? (The parents are “to bring her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor”; the godparents “have the specific responsibility of nurturing the spiritual in Amy”; the whole community must embrace Amy, welcoming her into its living presence.)
 3. Why, according to the author, does Amy need the help of her parents and her community in order to fully realize the grace of her baptism? (She needs the community to open the closed eye of her soul; when she forgets her baptism, the community “must be there to remind her.”)
 4. Why does the assembly need to renew its baptismal vows during the sacrament of Baptism? (Doing so deepens and strengthens the grace of our Baptism, constituting us as a Christian community capable of welcoming a new member.)
 5. “There is something about Amy that is mysterious,” the author of this story says. “She is more than she appears. We intend to reveal that more.” What does baptism reveal about Amy's identity, according to the author? (“She is God's child as well as Joe and Helen's, and she is meant to continue the divine presence on earth.”)
 6. After reading this article, how would you describe the relationship between one's Christian identity and one's belonging to the People of God?

Being Church

A window onto the soul

- For this activity, you will need a sheet of newsprint or poster board for each student, and a variety of art materials (for instance, markers, crayons, glitter, construction paper, glue, scissors, old magazines for cutting up pictures). Optional: Provide meditative music to accompany the students as they work. You may find it helpful to complete the assignment yourself in order to provide the students with an example. Alternatively, find religious art on the Internet and explain the use of symbols to convey religious meaning in that art. A good resource is *Beyond the Written Word: Exploring Faith Through Christian Art*, by Eileen M. Daily (Saint Mary's Press, 2005).
- Tell the students that in this activity, they will be creating a “window onto the soul” in the form of an artistic depiction of the development of their spiritual identity.
- The students should incorporate the following elements into their artwork: 1) one to three key events in the student's life that significantly affected the development of his or her identity (e.g., baptism, the death of a friend, a powerful experience of God); 2) an expression of the student's relationship to God; 3) an expression of the student's relationship to the People of God. Advise the students that it does not matter how these elements are represented; students who are uncomfortable with artwork could use the written word, for instance. However, the students must be able to explain each element in the finished artwork.

- After the students have completed their artwork, ask for volunteers to share their work with the other students. As they do so, deepen the discussion by asking questions such as the following: What role do the sacraments have in your life? How has your community (family and friends) affected the way you understand your spiritual identity? The Church uses the words “priest, prophet, king” to describe the identity of a baptized Christian; what other words would you use to describe yourself?

Additional Activities

- Use the Journal questions on pages 94, 96, 99, 100, 103, 109, 116, 118, and 121 of the student text as discussion starters for the beginning of the session.
- Have the students discuss conflict resolution as described in the activity on page 93 of the student text.
- Hold the prayer service for unity described on page 102 of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition or the Stations of the Cross prayer service described on page 119 of the TWE.
- Have the students read about the formation of Israel’s identity as a community as described in the “Extending the Lesson” activity on page 108 of the TWE.
- Have the students answer the questions about baptism using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as described on page 109 of the TWE.
- Have the students role play the Council of Jerusalem as described in the “Extending the Lesson” activity on page 122 of the TWE.
- Have the students develop the role plays about traitors as described in the “Extending the Lesson” activity on page 126 of the TWE.
- Have students write their own personal creeds as described in the Enrichment activity on page 134 of the TWE.

Additional Resources

- Videos related to this unit include *This Sacred Place* (Twenty-Third Publications, 18 minutes) about a catechumen in the RCIA, and *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians: Part 2* (PBS, 1998, 60 minutes).
- For Internet links related to this unit, see pages 103 and 125 of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.