



UNIT ONE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

LESSON 2: The Church is One: CHRIST'S BODY

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. The Church is Christ's Body. Through Baptism we became part of this body and Christ's life began to flow through us. Through the Eucharist too we become one with Christ and with each other. [CCC 787, 790]
2. Christ is the head of this body. This means that he directs us and also provides what we need to live and grow as Christians. [CCC 792, 794]
3. The Holy Spirit is the 'soul' of the Church, making it one, giving it life and making it a 'Temple of God.' [CCC 797, 813]
4. Though one, the body has diversity. The members of Christ's Body have different gifts, functions, backgrounds, cultures and are of all ages. [CCC 791, 814]
5. *The heart is a vital organ of a body; similarly in the Body of Christ, God's love is the force that motivates the whole body. Everything we do must be done out of love for Christ.*
 *We must love and accept one another in spite of our differences; 'suffer with those who suffer, rejoice when others are honored'.*
6. *We must strive for and pray for unity, (with Christians of other denominations too) since this is Christ's great desire. This is known as ECUMENISM. God's plan was one church, and this one church is the Catholic Church, established by Christ.* [CCC 791, 816, 821.]


REFERENCES: John 6:56; 17:21; 1Corinthians 12:13, 26. Ephesians 4:1-6.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; materials for posters: Card-paper, markers, crayons/paints etc.

I. STARTER:

- Today we are going to learn more about the Church. But first, I have a challenge for you.
*(Form groups of 6 students each. Ask them to choose a leader: a head. **THE CHALLENGE:** In 2 minutes, each group has to form a 'sleeping giant'. The leader must be the 'head'. If the 'giants' can do some action with their bodies, they get more points. All the members of the group must be connected. After a few minutes to practice, each team demonstrates while the others watch. Make sure their efforts are appreciated.)*
- This activity will help us understand our topic for today: The Church: the Body of Christ.
*[Write **CHURCH=BODY OF CHRIST** on the blackboard.]* Think about what we just did, and about a human body and try to explain why the Church is called this.
[Students offer suggestions. Accept their suggestions but do not elaborate.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- Let's read some quotes from the saints, the Catechism and the Bible, and try and get a better understanding.
[Give out the handouts. Students read the various quotes aloud. (Do NOT do the last section: SO... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?) Each answer is done as a class. Accept suggestions and bring out:]
1. WHO IS THE HEAD? Christ is the head of the Church. If the brain of a person stops functioning, the person is considered dead. Just as the brain directs the functions of the whole body, so Christ directs the Church. The brain is also responsible for providing all that the body needs. Christ provides all we need to live and grow as Christians.

2. WHAT ABOUT THE SOUL? The Holy Spirit is like the soul of the Church. He makes the body alive. (When a person's soul leaves the body it is dead!) The church is so special because God is truly living in it, even though it is made up of sinful human beings.
3. ONE BODY... HOW? When we were baptized, we received the Holy Spirit and the life of Christ began to flow through us. Since we all are filled with the same Spirit, we become one. When we receive the Body of Christ at Mass, he lives in us, and so we become one. (In a human body, all the parts are connected, are one.)
4. DIFFERENT, YET ONE: The various organs of a body look different, and have different functions: An eye, a hand, the liver, veins etc look different and also have different functions. The Church also consists of different parts, with different functions: the bishops, priests, religious, lay people have different functions. (We will talk about this later). We also have received different gifts by the Holy Spirit. (We already learnt about them.) The Church also has great variety in the people who belong to it: There are people of different backgrounds, cultures, languages and ages. Yet all are equal in importance and all have their own special part to play.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAAYER:

- Let us look now at ourselves. If we are part of the Body of Christ, what should we do?
[Students read the passage (Ephesians4:1-6) from the Bible and write down their responses. Bring out the following:]
- St. Therese spoke about the HEART of the Body of Christ, which is of great importance. In a human body, the heart pumps blood to all the organs and keeps them supplied with food and oxygen. God's love is what keeps us all nourished and alive.
- Whatever we do therefore, should be done out of love. If we go to Church, we go out of love for God and to build up the parish community. If we are doing housework, we do it out of love.
- We should accept others with their differences and with their faults. This is the meaning of 'bearing with one another'. It is not easy, because we feel hurt by others, or we feel irritated with each others' faults, but with God's help we can overcome negative feelings and accept each other.
- If we really accept others as part of our own body, when someone is suffering, we would feel their pain and do what we can to help. (If your little finger is cut, the whole body feels it and tries to do something to relieve the pain.) And if someone praises your hair, the whole body feels good. So if anyone is praised or honored, we do not give in to jealousy, but are happy for that person.
- Before his passion, Jesus prayed that we may be one. We must keep working for unity and peace. One great sorrow for Jesus is to see his own followers divided into different groups, suspicious of each other. Sometimes we look down on others in Church because of the way they dress or speak.
- The Church also asks us to seek unity with the other Christian churches. This is called 'Ecumenism'. We can pray for unity as well as accept other Christians as our brothers and sisters. (Although other churches have many good things, we know that the Catholic Church is truly the channel through which God saves us. It is the church that Christ established through Peter.) One day we hope that all Christians will be one.

[Students spend a few minutes in silence praying for the grace to love.]

IV. ACTIVITY:

[In the same groups as before, students make posters to spread the message of unity and love in the Body of Christ. Each group could plan 2 or 3 posters. They could use a Bible quote, sketches etc. These could be displayed around the Church.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT: ⇨ Read the handout.