

The Church: Together We are the Body of Christ

Lesson # 14 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

I Corinthians 12: verses 12 – 20 and 27 (Romans 12: 4 – 5)

Lesson Goal & Objectives

Goal

- The students will understand their place as members of the Body of Christ, which is His Church in this world – not merely an organization. Each is uniquely gifted for his or her own role and function, yet all are joined together as one in Christ.

Objectives

- The students will verbally identify one or more gifts or talents each one has to contribute to the mission of the Church.
- The students will write a paragraph, or draw a picture expressing the idea that all of us are joined together as unique parts of the Body of Christ.

Introduction and Teacher Background

By His life, passion, death and resurrection, Jesus has accomplished salvation which is available to all. That is, He has made it possible for everyone to be restored to a fully open, loving relationship with God. In order for all people to receive this salvation it is necessary for us to carry on Jesus' work in bringing the world to the knowledge of His redeeming Love. Christians do the physical work of speaking and acting to bring Christ to the world in real and concrete ways. We do not do this as isolated individuals, but as members of His Body. Together we live *in* Christ, and He lives in us. We are joined together and united by the Holy Spirit to present Jesus Christ to the world. As a church we *are* His feet, hands and mouth to go out to touch the world and speak His words.

The Church has two aspects – there are two sides to the one reality of the Church. From a merely human point of view, the Church is an organization. It has human structures with offices and functions which allow it to maintain its life and work in a practical sense. But more truly, the Church is also a spiritual reality which depends on the living and active presence of the Holy Spirit to make the life and work of Jesus Christ really present in this world. We can easily see the practical, physical nature of the Church when we look at things like the church building, the diocesan offices or the meeting of the diocesan convention. However, we must always be aware that these structures only serve to help the mission of the church function efficiently from a practical standpoint. The real mission of the Church – to bring people into a saving relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit – can only be accomplished if we see past the simple practicalities to realize that Jesus Himself is present and working in us and through us with the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit. Only this spiritual reality truly accomplishes Christ's work in the world.

No one person can accomplish this mission alone. St. Paul explains to us in his First Letter to the Corinthians (chapter 12) that each member of a body is essential for the whole body to be complete and to function properly. Eyes and ears, hands and feet, stomachs and brains are all needed in a body for that body to live and work properly. Each of us forms a necessary part of the Body of Christ. Each of us has particular talents, gifts and abilities which are essential for the Body of Christ to live and work in this world. As hands, feet, eyes, ears, stomachs and brains all work together in a human body, so each of us also works together with all our fellow members of the Body of Christ for Jesus' mission in the world to be alive and effective. Each person is necessary for the fitting together of all the parts of the Body to work.

This means that it is essential for each one of us to realize that we live our lives *in* Jesus Christ, and He lives His life in and through us. We are not isolated individuals, we are part of a whole. We cannot form this whole by our own efforts, but only by staying in vital contact with Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Becoming a member of His Body begins with our Baptism when we are baptized *into* Christ. We maintain our life in Him, and allow Him to live His Life in us through participating actively in the worship of the Church, in our frequent participation in the sacraments, and through our own daily prayer. In these ways we allow God's Grace to grow in us, and we grow in our awareness of God's presence in us. As we grow, we come to realize more and more that Jesus' life is lived in us and through us so that we can reach out to serve others and share God's love with them. Only the life of the Holy Spirit in us can cause us to grow in this awareness, presence and power. It is the Holy Spirit in us Who makes us into the Body of Christ in the world. The more we cooperate with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, the more we are able to recognize that we do indeed live in Christ and He lives in us. We then grow into our life and function as uniquely gifted members of His one Body in the world.

Materials Needed for Lesson

- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Markers
- Song "We are the Body" by Casting Crowns

Opening Prayer

BCP page 528: the collect at the top and/or the prayer for the Church

BCP page 816 # 7

{Father Ted Monaca's song for diocesan convention: "We are the Body of Christ"

Give the students some time to add prayers of thanksgiving and petition.

Review (5min.)

- Review the last lesson
- Last lesson we talked about grapes. What part is Jesus?
- What is your relationship with Jesus?
- Did you think about this since the last lesson?

Introductory Activity (5-10 Min.)

The students will spend about 5 or 6 minutes playing the game, “Make a machine.” First, they discuss and decide what job their machine is supposed to accomplish. Then every student must become one part of the machine that will do this job. The parts of the machine need to be touching or connected (although not every student has to be touching every other student) so that each one is involved in a function that contributes to the success of the machine as a whole. After the machine demonstrates its function successfully, discuss (4 – 5 minutes) some of the ways that human bodies are like a machine, and also how human bodies are different from machines.

Lesson (20-25 min.)

Read the passage from I Corinthians 12: verses 12 – 20 & 27. St. Paul says that we are each like one part of a body. Discuss: how do the parts of a body work together and rely on each other? What happens when one part of a body is injured or sick?

The Church is called the “Body of Christ” in many of St. Paul’s letters. Discuss: Identify some of the particular roles and functions of various people who are involved in the church. (After they mention the clergy [the most obvious]) encourage them to name and appreciate all the various lay people who serve their parish in any capacity. What would happen to our parish if any of these people were no longer actively participating in the service they do: who might take their places? What would happen if no one took their places?

Being a member of the Body of Christ is more than just doing jobs. We all need each other. Identify some of the ways we relate with one another in our parish. How do parishes relate to one another in our diocese? How does praying for one another make a difference?

When we are baptized we not only join the church, we are made members of Christ’s Body. How can we experience this reality ourselves? (Some examples: getting to know Who Jesus is through Scripture reading and prayer; experiencing the sacraments, especially holy Communion; actively participating in worship together with others.)

Reflection (10-15 min.)

Think about your own life. What kinds of activities are you good at – what do you most enjoy doing? How can you use your abilities to contribute to the life and mission of our parish? Dream a little about the future: what would you like to be able to do to help the Church accomplish its mission of bringing Jesus’ love and salvation to the world?

Draw a picture or write a paragraph explaining why/how we can say that the Church is the Body of Christ.

Take-home Activity (5 min.)

Sometime during this week, do something – even if it is a small act – in which you actively express your place as a member of the Body of Christ. (Some examples: prayer, worship, sacraments, acts of kindness, sharing your faith, helping with a parish project). Write down a couple of sentences describing what you did so that you can share this information at the beginning of next week’s class.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

Teacher: begin the prayer by thanking God for making us all a part of the Body of Christ. Open up the prayer to allow the students to spontaneously pray for one another and their own needs.

Scripture References

- I Corinthians 12
- Ephesians 2
- Galatians 3
- Colossians 3

Resources

“We are the Body” by Casting Crowns