

GOAL

The goal of this Lesson is to help the teens understand that the Church was planned by the God, the Father and founded by Jesus Christ to continue His work of salvation in the world. The teens will also recognize that they play a part in the Church's mission to make disciples.

DESCRIPTION

The goal of the night is to help the teens understand that the Church was founded by Christ to continue his work of salvation in the world. The lesson seeks to introduce the teens to the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel message and making disciples. It begins with a group competition to create blueprint plans for an improved church building. The competition steers the group into a teaching on the Father's plan for the Church and Jesus Christ's fulfillment and establishment of the Church on earth. The House Discussions will give the teens a chance to discuss the teaching among their House members. The evening will end with prayer asking God to bless our parish community.

CATECHISM : #759; #760-766; #787-789; #792; #796

ECCLESIAL DOCUMENTS: Gaudium et Spes, 22; Lumen Gentium 2

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:16; John 21:15; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Colossians 1:3-8; 1 Timothy 4:12

KEY CONCEPTS:

1. Christ established the Church to continue His presence in the world
2. A church is not made up of a physical building. It is made of the People of God coming together to worship God.
3. The mission of the Church is to make disciples.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Poster board
- Drawing tools: pencils, markers, pens, etc.
- Large "blue print" paper (Easel paper)
- T-squares, triangles, rulers
- Compass
- Rubber bands
- Drafting tape
- Drafting table
- Drafting table stool
- Prayer table focal point
- Candles

- Saints icons
- Bible
- Bible stand

ENVIRONMENT:

The environment for the parish center should resemble an architecture studio. In the front of the room have a drafting table covered with white paper. Have pencils and other art supplies on the tables. Trace a few blueprint designs onto paper using a light table or window.

FORMAT AND LESSON SEQUENCE:

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Dinner**
3. **Opening Activity:** *(This activity is directly relevant to the Lesson and is not to be changed)*
 - a. The Lead Catechist should instruct the teens to get into a group with their House Peer Team Leader. Each Peer Team Leader should have one large piece of poster board or piece of Easel Paper, drawing and drafting materials (markers, pencils, crayons, etc.).
 - b. The Leader Catechist should explain that the pastor wants to update the Church and has asked the teens to submit their ideas on how to make the church building more modern, convenient and welcoming.
 - c. The Lead Catechist then continues to explain that each small group has ten minutes to create a "blueprint" for the updated church along with a quick explanation on how it will look and improve the existing building.
 - d. After ten minutes, each group will present their inventions. Adult Core Team Members will then vote on the most creative ideas.
 - e. Award the winning group a prize.
4. **Lesson** - *Use the following or similar words:*

CHRIST ESTABLISHED HIS ONE CHURCH TO CONTINUE HIS PRESENCE AND HIS WORK

Our Church has been around for nearly 2000 years and over the past two millennia, she has grown and has developed into what we know today. There are things in our Church today that would be foreign to the Apostles and the Church Fathers. In time, a variety of architecture, music, art, language, and technology have made their way into our worship by way of culture. However these things are non-essential to our faith. In short, Jesus wasn't sent into the world to teach us what kind of music to use at Mass. The Church also seems to have a particular voice in this dawn of the third millennium. She is not silent. In the past decade alone, we can find many decrees on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, contraception, homosexuality, social justice, immigration, health care, women's rights... the list is virtually endless.

The heart of the Church - the strength and source of beauty of our Church - is the same today as it has always been. It is the truth of Jesus Christ and His Passion, death, and Resurrection. It is the Paschal Mystery. It is the saving work of our Lord. As the Apostles branched out into the world, they preached the Gospel of the Lord - *the good news of salvation*. They baptized and sealed the members of the early Church with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Most importantly, they gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist - the true presence of the second person of the Blessed Trinity, offered as a sacrifice of His Body and Blood, the same Body and Blood on the cross of Calvary. This community continues to gather today and is continually shepherded by the successors of the first Apostles of Christ. This community continues to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

THE ORIGIN, FOUNDATION, AND MANIFESTATION OF THE CHURCH

God as our creator has a vested interest in the well-being of His creation. He has chosen to reveal Himself to us that we may gain an authentic knowledge of ourselves and recognize that it is Him in whom we find our ultimate purpose. It's reasonable to believe that this Lord would provide a means by which we can come to know Him, a means by which we might become a people of God. Scripture explains how when humans lost their communion with the Lord, God promised a Redeemer, a *new Adam* who would be the "first-born of many brethren." These "brethren" are co-heirs to share in the Son's inheritance. These brethren make up the people of God as parts of the body make up the whole person.

This family of God has been planned by the Father since before the time of the Church. We can see how, "this Church was prepared in marvelous fashion in the history of the people of Israel." The Lord began calling a people to Himself through covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Our Lord formed a people of worship through the Law handed down from Moses. Our Father even prefigured the kingship of His Divine Son by sending David to be the God's earthly vicar on earth for the Jewish people. "This 'family of God' is gradually formed and takes shape during the stages of human history, in keeping with the Father's plan."

Part of Jesus' public ministry was spent teaching His disciples about the Good News. He taught His followers the Beatitudes and about holiness; He taught them to go out and be the light of the world and salt of the earth; He taught them how to pray and how to prepare for the Kingdom of God. Our Lord teaches us about the Father and gives us the Eucharist.

Our Lord, before He ascended to Heaven, commissioned a divinely established hierarchy of apostles lead by St. Peter to baptize nations, to forgive sins, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to preach the Gospel. By this ministry, the Church was made known throughout the world. This structure was intentionally established. Our Lord uses clear and direct language when He affirms Peter's role as the chief shepherd of the Christian people. Thus, we can know and follow Christ's message through the teachings and

traditions handed down through the hierarchy. Jesus tells his friends, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love....My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...This is my command: Love each other."

Jesus entrusted this early Church with the same mission she bears today: salvation of all members. God gave His Son for this sole purpose. Through the Church, this is made known, and the saving work of the Cross is made present in our world through the Paschal Mystery present within the Eucharist. The Church is the pillar and foundation of the knowable truth of God. It is the product of revelation.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives us an account of the life, teachings, Passion, death, Resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, which together function as the paradigm of the New Testament and the Church. This Gospel is predominantly given to us in four written sources in Sacred Scripture and through the teachings of the Apostles.

Jesus stressed the importance of His followers and the need to be united to Himself. He tells the Apostles, "Abide in me, and I in you...I am the vine, you are the branches." In order to make this teaching a reality, Jesus gives us Himself in the Eucharist as he affirms, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." Before Jesus departed from the midst of the Apostles, He emphasized the unity that He desired and the presence of the Lord that the followers would continue to enjoy even after the Ascension. All those joined with Him in faith are also joined with Him sacramentally.

The Apostles serve as the chosen witnesses to Jesus' works, His teachings, and His Passion, death, and Resurrection. These men have carried the work to the rest of the world, through the commissioning and consecration of new bishops as their successors. Through this structure, Christ retains His rule over the entire Church, united in Him.

As chosen witnesses of Christ, the teachings of the Apostles are preserved as special sources of God's revelation. Every church community founded by the Apostles or their successors was given this truth by maintaining the traditions they were taught by the Apostles. Some of the Lord's Apostles would write these things down, which would later become the New Testament. This source would go on to become the heart of all theological endeavors. The written Word of God contains a wealth of information pertaining to the Christian message and the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, "the Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful...to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, through frequent reading of the Sacred

Scripture.” As St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

THE PURPOSE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The language used by Christ to found the Church through St. Peter and the Apostles is very direct, as we have seen. Christ wants to be joined in unity with the human race that we may be one in Him. This is why He took on human flesh and joined us in solidarity of suffering, of death, through the Paschal Mystery. It should make sense that there is a Church on earth to bring this message to the faithful that they may one day be with our Lord in heaven. "God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life." Those people who share in this union with God are who make up the Church.

This Church on earth does not claim to be her own authority in the world. She is made up of people who govern and who shepherd the flock, but the primary leader is always Christ. "The Church 'is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery.'" To aid in this ministry, "the Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved." This structure is founded upon Jesus' actions in history, yet He remains present throughout all time - *His grace transcends time and history.*

Today the Church's mission is no different. The Church stands firm in truth, calling all people to know and to love the truth. The Church teaches how this truth means that there is a right way to live, and there is a wrong way to live - that the good life in Christ leads to one's transformation or conversion, and the bad life leads only to death. The present age bombards us with new ideas and attractive distractions. The present age always wants us to turn away from others and focus on ourselves.

The Church however, teaches us the truth of Jesus' words, "If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." Our Church's mission is to spread the gospel and to bring all men, all peoples, all souls, to the love and the mercy that is only found in Christ Jesus.

5. House Discussions – led by Peer Team Leaders for each House

- What do you think of when someone says the word "church"? What are your impressions of church?
- Why do you think Christ established the Church?
- What is the best part about being a member of Christ's one true Church? What is one thing you really struggle with?
- How have you seen the Church work as Christ's Body in the world? Be specific.
- The mission of the Church is to make disciples. How are you/can you be a part of that mission?

6. Closing Prayer – *preferably in the main Church*

Use the following or similar words:

This church is very familiar to us. Many of us see it every week. We know where the Fr. Reagan or Fr. Bill sits; we know how to walk up to Communion; we have stared at the art where the choir sits and at the St John Neumann painting or the Divine Mercy painting and at the statues of Mary and St. Joseph, and we probably even have a place we like to sit.

This is our church. As Catholic-Christians, it is easy to limit our experience of church to what we experience here. The Church isn't just our building, though. The Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ, is made up of a community of believers all over the world who come together to worship God. We want to spend some quiet time now thanking God for the gift of His Church – and particularly for the gift of our parish community.

(Give teens about 2 or 3 minutes of silence)

Closing Prayer:

Let us give glory to the Father
Through the Son
In the Holy Spirit,
For God has made us His people, His Church,
And calls us to sing His praises.

All honor and glory and thanks are His,
And praise and worship belong to Him.
To God be glory in His Church
For ever and ever!

Amen!