

We Believe in the Church

Session Focus

This session explores images of the Church—People of God, Sacrament, and Body of Christ—and the mission and ministries of the Church—what the Church does (ministries) and why the Church acts in these ways (mission). It engages the participants in understanding how the mission of Jesus and the Early Church is being lived by the Church today. This session presents the Church as a living community through the lens of six fundamental ministries: prayer and liturgy, service to those in need, community life, teaching, care and healing, and proclaiming the Good News (evangelization).

Learning Objectives

The session on the Church guides learners of all ages to...

- describe the mission and ministries of the Church today and connect the mission of the Church with the continuation of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ
- value and appreciate the significance of the Church as the People of God, as a sign of God's presence and action in the world, and as the Body of Christ
- discover practical ways to live their baptismal call as active members of the faith community

Session Overview

Part 1. (5 minutes) Gathering and Opening Prayer Service

Part 2. (25 minutes) All Ages Learning Experience: The Church in Action

Part 3. (75-90 minutes) In Depth Learning Experience: The Mission and Ministries of the Church

- Option 1. Whole Group Format - all participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format - participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

Part 4. (15 minutes) Sharing Learning Experiences

Part 5. (15 minutes) Closing Prayer Service

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners

- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for This Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

Guest Presenter

In addition to the learning activities in this session, you might want to invite a guest presenter to speak to the adults. Use the session plan for adults as a guide to focus the speaker’s presentation and engage the adults in activities and discussion to complement the presentation.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Handout #1
- Handout #1A
- Several balls of yarn

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts #2-6
- For family learning plan: Paper, crayons, marking pens, several colored Post-It Notes for each family
- For the adolescent learning plan: newsprint and markers, paper cups or clay (play doh) for each person, creative arts materials for the “Creating an Ideal Church” activity, and colored Post-It Notes for each person
- For the adult learning plan: colored Post-It Notes for each person

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering (10 minutes)

Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. (You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.)
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session explores images of the Church—People of God, Sacrament, and Body of Christ—and the mission and ministries of the Church—what the Church does (ministries) and why the Church acts in these ways (mission). We will look at how the mission of Jesus and the Early Church is being lived by the Church today. This session presents the Church as a living community through the lens of six fundamental ministries: prayer and liturgy, service to those in need, community life, teaching, care and healing, and proclaiming the Good News (evangelization).

Present an overview and the schedule of the program.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part Three) organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults. See the session plans for adolescents and adults for more instructions on organizing groups.

Conduct an icebreaker or community building activity if you wish.

2. Opening Prayer Service

Preparation

Set up a prayer table with a tablecloth, Bible, large cross, vines, large white candle (lit), and symbols of the ministries of the Church: community life, evangelization, justice and service to those in need, pastoral care, teaching/catechesis, and liturgy, sacraments, and prayer. Have a tree or large bush next to the prayer table. Place a large free-standing cross next to it.

Have 10-20 long pieces of string or yarn ready. The pieces should be long enough to connect the furthest points of the assembly to the centerpiece where the cross and tree are located. Attach each piece of string or yarn to the cross. Prepare enough pieces of string or yarn to “envelop” the whole assembly—ten or twenty pieces.

Select people to assist you in connecting the assembly. During the prayer service each person will take one piece of string or yarn and carry it to a designated location in the meeting room.

Light the paschal candle or a large candle to begin the prayer service.

Gather

Select an appropriate song to begin prayer. Then pray:

Lord Jesus,

From the very beginning of your public ministry, you gathered a group of disciples around you. You described your relationship with them as a vine with its branches. They received life from you.

Today, as your Church, we gather together to learn and grow closer to you. We too receive life from you. Open our hearts and minds to your Word. Give us the strength to follow you and to love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

Invite the selected people to come forward and stretch the yarn or string across the whole assembly.

Listen

Proclaim John 15:1-12 (Vine and Branches)

Respond

Lord, help us to meet you in our service to the poor.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in the Eucharist where bread and wine become your body and blood.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in each other and in our parish community.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in the people who provide care and comfort to us in times of difficulty, sickness, and sorrow.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in those who proclaim your Good News and share their faith with us.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in those who teach the Catholic faith and help us to live it in our daily lives.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Go Forth

Lord, we know that you are the vine and we are the branches, that without you we cannot bear fruit but will wither and die.

Help us to abide in your love in the midst of this faith community.

Help us to recognize you in the life of the Church and grow as faithful disciples. Amen.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: The Church in Action (25 minutes)

The focus of the All Ages Learning Experience is to familiarize people with the ministries of the parish community and the ministries of the broader Church—diocesan, national, and international. Two options for conducting the All Ages Learning Experience are suggested: a “Church Ministries Exhibit” and a “Multimedia Presentation.” You can also add a “Ministries Panel” of leaders (parish staff and volunteer leaders) involved in parish ministries to either option. This would add a very personal dimension to the All Ages Learning Experience.

Option 1: Church Ministries Exhibit

Or

Option 2: Multimedia Presentation

Preparation for Both Options

Develop a one or two-page handout with the parish/congregation mission statement and brief descriptions of the major ministries of the faith community, using the six fundamental ministries:

- Community life
- Evangelization
- Justice and service to those in need
- Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
- Pastoral care
- Teaching/catechesis

Create a journal for adolescents, adults, and parents using Handout #1. The journal will be used in the All Ages Learning Experience to record reflections on the six ministries. Each ministry area includes two pages of the handout. On page one are quotes from Church documents and reflection questions for individuals/households to take notes. On page two develop a list of the examples (activities, projects, and leaders) included in each ministry exhibit or photo presentation.

Create a "Passport" booklet for children using Handout #1A. The "Passport" booklet will be used in the All Ages Learning Experience. As children learn about each ministry of the parish, they can place an image or symbol in the space provided to remember their visit. Or they can obtain signatures from the leaders of each ministry.

Option 1. Church Ministries Exhibit

Develop exhibits, similar to museum exhibits or publisher exhibits at a conference, to present and illustrate the ministries of the parish, diocese, and national and international Church agencies. The exhibits are designed to teach people about six fundamental ministries of the Church and how the Church (locally, nationally, internationally) puts these ministries into practice. (See the list of examples below.)

Utilize the following six ministries to organize your research and exhibits:

1. Community life
2. Evangelization
3. Justice and service to those in need
4. Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
5. Pastoral care
6. Teaching/catechesis

Here are examples of work that is done in each ministry:

- Justice and Service to Those in Need: parish service projects, collections for those in need, local soup kitchens and food banks, diocesan legislative advocacy efforts on justice issues, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, religious communities dedicated to serving the poor
- Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer: liturgical ministries (presider, homilist, lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, music ministers), sacramental celebrations and Church rituals (Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil, Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Funerals), diocesan liturgical celebrations (Chrism Mass, Ordination)
- Pastoral Care: counseling services (Catholic Charities), support groups (divorced, addictions), Catholic hospitals and clinics, Catholic nursing homes, care for the sick
- Evangelization: parish outreach efforts, renewal programs, RCIA, welcoming programs, missionaries, communication ministries (radio, television)
- Community Life: parish social gatherings and festivals, ethnic festivals and celebrations, small group ministries, family programs
- Teaching/Catechesis: parish catechetical programs for all ages, Catholic schools, Catholic colleges and universities

Gather documentation on each ministry by consulting magazines, promotional brochures, pamphlets, information from web sites, parish bulletins, and so on. Here are places to look for information:

- Parish: parish bulletins and announcements, annual report of parishes ministries or a parish booklet of ministries, individual program or ministry brochures

- Diocesan: web site, brochures from diocesan agencies, diocesan annual report or promotion materials used in a diocesan annual appeal
- National and international Church agencies: web sites (e.g., Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services), promotional information from organizations, information produced in connection to national collections
- National magazines (*U.S. Catholic*, *St. Anthony Messenger*, *Maryknoll Magazine*) which describe the work of the Church in the U.S. and around the world. (You can obtain sample copies of these magazines for educational use. Consult the web sites for each magazine.)

Try to blend the materials so that each exhibit contains local, diocesan and national, and international examples of Church ministries.

Create one exhibit for each ministry. Organize each ministry exhibit into three categories: parish, diocesan and national, and international. Each exhibit illustrates the leadership and work of that particular ministry area. Use photos, illustrations, brochures, pamphlets, symbols, artifacts, and so on. Mount printed materials on display boards (cardboard or foam core).

Be sure that the individual exhibits are large enough so that a group of people can view and read the displays. Set up the room with plenty of space for people to read and examine each exhibit, leaving ample room between exhibits.

Exhibits can be self-guided or staffed with leaders from that particular ministry.

Customize the journal on Handout #1 based on your research. The journal is designed as two-page handouts. On page one are quotes from Church documents and a reflection question for individuals/households to take notes. On page two develop a list of the examples (activities, projects, and leaders) included in each ministry exhibit.

For children and families, Create a “Passport” booklet for children using Handout #1A. The “Passport” booklet will be used in the All Ages Learning Experience. As children learn about each ministry of the parish, they can place an image or symbol in the space provided to remember their visit. Or they can obtain signatures from the leaders of each ministry.

Introduce the All Ages Learning Experience by saying (in your words):

Each of us has his or her own experiences of Church and belonging to this parish. Just as there are different experiences of Church, there are many ways to understand the Church. Our program today looks at the work of the Church – its mission and ministries: what the Church does and why the Church does these things. In the first part of our program, we will explore six actions of the Church, called ministries.

Assign each household an alphabet letter from A-F so that there are six groups of equal size. People will move through the six exhibits as a group. Group A will begin with exhibit 1; Group B will begin with exhibit 2; and so forth. Each group will proceed through the exhibits in order: 1-2-3-4-5-6 (Group A), 2-3-4-5-6-1 (Group B), and so forth.

If time permits, conduct a small group sharing experience. When everyone has seen the exhibits or when the presentation has finished, invite people to join their intergenerational table groups and share their responses to one or more of the following sentences:

- I discovered . . .
- I was surprised by . . .
- I already knew that . . .
- I was pleased to learn that . . .
- I did not see . . .

Option 2. Multimedia Presentation

Using the same process as Option 1, develop a PowerPoint presentation, rather than an exhibition, using photos, text, and words/music describing the six ministries in action. Locate photos of parish ministries. Check out web sites and magazines/newspapers for diocesan, national and international ministries and agencies. Download photos and information from the web sites for the presentation. (See ideas in Option 1.)

Consider inviting leaders from each of the six ministries to share reflections on their ministry with the participants throughout the presentation.

Additional Feature: Ministries Panel

Consider adding a panel feature to Options 1 and 2. Invite a representative from each of the six ministries to create a "Parish Ministry Panel." The purpose of this panel presentation is to present an overview of the six parish ministries. This is a great opportunity to hear personal stories and descriptions of the ministry in action. Consider inviting one or more people who represent diocesan, national, or international agencies.

To organize your panel, use the following process.

1. Identify one or two key individuals who are in leadership positions in each of the six ministries. These leaders can be parish staff members or volunteer leaders. You can also invite diocesan leaders to present a ministry that goes beyond the parish, such as justice ministries. In selecting leaders for the panel, try to invite people of different ages.
2. Contact the people you have selected asking about their availability and willingness to take part in an educational program. Emphasize the informal nature and brevity (3-4 minutes) of the presentation. Let them know you will provide them with several key questions to guide their presentation and that you are willing to meet or work with them as they gather their thoughts and ideas.
3. Share with the panelists an overview of the session and the role they will play in it. Meet or talk with them beforehand to make sure they are comfortable and prepared. The format around which the panelists will build their presentations is simple:
 - *Introduce yourself:* Who are you? What ministry are you involved in?

- *Describe your ministry:* What is your ministry? Whom do you serve? Why is your ministry important?
 - *Connect it to the life of Jesus:* How does your ministry continue the mission of Jesus today?
 - *Share:* Why it is important for you to be involved in this particular ministry?
4. Gather the panelists just prior to the session to meet each other and decide the order in which they will speak.
 5. Introduce the panel members to your group at the start of the panel presentation. Explain that you have asked them to describe one of the ministries of the parish community.
 6. Allow each panelist 3-4 minutes for his or her presentation.
 7. Thank the panelists for their contributions.

Part 3: In Depth Learning Experience : The Mission and Ministries of the Church (75-90 minutes)

Preparation

Make copies of Handouts #2, and #3 for families with children, Handouts #4 and #6 for adolescents, and Handouts #5 and #6 for adults.

For the family learning plan: Provide families with a handout of family faith activities for the next month: learning, rituals, prayers, service projects, and family enrichment activities. Make the handout seasonally appropriate. Handout #3 has several all-season activities.

For the adolescent learning plan: Organize the young people into at least six groups of no more than six young people, representing one of the six ministries of the Church. If you have more than 36 young people, organize additional groups. Each small group of young people should have an adult leader to help guide the work of the group. Assign each additional group one ministry in the order listed below.

1. Justice and service to those in need
2. Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
3. Pastoral care
4. Evangelization
5. Teaching/catechesis
6. Community life

Write the essential instructions for each age group on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.

In the Age Group Format, facilitators can guide the process and give presentations to the entire group.

The Church of the Home and the Parish (Families with Children_

Materials

- Paper, crayons, marking pens
- Several colored Post-It Notes for each family
- Handouts #1-3

Preparation

Provide families with a handout of family faith activities for the next month: learning, rituals, prayers, service projects, and family enrichment activities. Make the handout seasonally appropriate. Handout 3 has several all-season activities.

Guide families through the following process. The activity can be conducted as a table group activity or within individual families. Handout #2 provides the information for parents to use with their families.

1. Images of Church

Ask family members to close their eyes for a moment and picture all the things that come to mind when they hear the word, “church.” People can draw images or make a list of what they picture when they hear the word, “church.”

Invite members to share their drawings or list. Ask the group to name what images or words were repeated more than once.

Ask families to discuss:

- When you think of Church what images come to mind? What key words or “pictures” would you use to describe this image? Where did these images come from?
- What did you learn from the presentation on the “Church in Action” in the opening activity of the session? What was new? What did you already know?
- In what parish ministries or activities are you involved?

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

One of the most powerful images of Church from Vatican II was the Church as the People of God. When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. We are God’s community.

Read the description of the first Christian community in Acts 2:42-47 to your family:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time

together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Ask family members if they have ever thought of their family as a church?

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

The United States Catholic Bishops, in a pastoral letter to families, describe the family as a domestic church or church of the home. What might it mean that your family is a church of the home? Discuss this as a family.

The United States Catholic Bishops write:

Jesus promised to be where two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). We give the name church to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made known.

A family is our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home.

. . . The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church.

Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole church.

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, Washington, DC: 1994. p. 8)

2. Nurturing Faith at Home

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

So, how do you create a faith-filled family? Let's begin with how your family uses time.

We use our time for what is really important in life. Think about how your family currently spends time in a typical week. Identify the number of hours your family spends on typical daily activities. Use your Family Time Chart to draw a picture of how your family uses time. Use a typical week in your family as an example. See the example as a guide.

Together as a family complete the "Family Time Chart" (see chart on Handout 2) Create a pie chart with lines indicating the amount of time. Write in the type of activity and the amount of time (see example).

Think of a typical week and indicate the amount of time each day that you spend on:

- school or work
- sleep
- activities/sports/leisure
- entertainment/TV
- family meals/family activities
- religious activities
- other activities

After you have completed the chart, discuss the following questions:

- What are your family's most important priorities based on your use of time?
- Are there important activities you must make more time for?
- How might you make more time for these important activities?

3. Growing in Faith Now

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

So, how much time does your family typically spend on faith activities in a week or month? Below our five ways family grow in faith. Use these following examples of family faith activities to help you identify the things your family does. Work together as a family to identify things you do now.

Learning

- Reading the Bible and telling Bible stories
- Reading and talking about the Sunday Scripture readings
- Discussing religious issues
- Reading value-oriented books and watching value-oriented movies

What do we do as a family?

Celebrating Rituals

- Attending Sunday Mass or service
- Participating in Church year feasts in the parish such as Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday
- Celebrating Church year seasons at home (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter) with activities such as an Advent Wreath, Christmas crèche,
- Celebrating the religious significance of family milestone events at home such as sacramental celebrations (e.g., Baptisms, First Eucharist), birthdays, and wedding anniversaries
- Celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day

What do we do as a family?

Praying

- Morning and bedtime prayer
- Daily prayers for the Church year season (e.g., Advent and Lent)
- Prayer before meals

- Praying the Rosary and traditional Catholic prayers
- Praying for people in need, for peace and justice in our world

What do we do as a family?

Serving and Working for Justice

- Collecting food and clothing for those in need
- Preparing and serving a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Visiting the elderly at a nursing home
- Caring for the environment (e.g., recycling, cleaning parks, planting trees)
- Giving generously to those in need at home and abroad
- Participating in parish service projects

What do we do as a family?

Enriching Relationships

- Spending time as a family doing things together (e.g., watching a movie, playing games)
- Holding regular family meetings
- Participating in parish social events
- Participating in community events

What do we do as a family?

Invite families to discuss the following questions:

- How do we feel about our family's faith activities?
- How can we find time for faith sharing activities at home?
- What changes do we need to make in our Family Time Chart to include time for faith activities at home and in the parish?

4. Becoming a Faith-Filled Family

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Take a minute to review the family faith activities on Handout #3: learning, praying, celebrating rituals, serving, and enriching family relationships. Consider using these activities as you create your family plan.

Think about the many opportunities for faith activities in your family's weekly life—at home and in the parish. Use the chart as a guide for planning your week. What will you include in your typical week? Think of learning activities, service projects, rituals, prayer, and family enrichment. Make a weekly calendar (see example on Handout #2).

Think about the many opportunities for faith activities throughout the year. Use the chart as a guide for planning your year. What will you include in your annual calendar? Think of learning activities, service projects, Church year rituals and family milestone celebrations, prayer times, and family

enrichment activities. Add your family's faith activities into this annual calendar (see example on Handout #2).

Display your completed calendar on the refrigerator (or other prominent place in the house). Together as a family review your success at the end of the week, month or season and identify new faith activities to add to your calendar. Keep a record of your family's faith calendar.

Write on colored Post-It notes two or three faith activities—at home or in the parish—that your family will initiate in the coming weeks. Save these for the closing prayer.

Creating the Ideal Church (Adolescents)

Preparation

Organize the young people into at least six groups of no more than six young people, representing one of the six ministries of the Church. If you have more than 36 young people, organize additional groups. Assign each additional group one ministry in the order listed below.

1. Justice and service to those in need
2. Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
3. Pastoral care
4. Evangelization
5. Teaching/catechesis
6. Community life

Each small group of young people should have an adult leader to help guide the work of the group.

Materials Needed:

- Paper cups or clay (play doh) for each person
- Newsprint or poster board and marking pens for each work group
- Creative arts materials for the "Creating an Ideal Church" activity
- Colored Post-It Notes for each person
- Handout #1: The Ministries of the Church Journal
- Handout #4: Creating an Ideal Church
- Handout #6: Scripture Passages on Church Ministries

1. Understanding the Church

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Each of us has our own experiences of Church and belonging to this parish. Just as there are different experiences of Church, there are many ways to understand the Church. Our session today looks at the work of the Church – its mission and ministries: what the Church does and why the Church does these things. In the first part of the program, we will clarify our own understanding of the Church and then we will explore the mission (purpose) and ministries (six things the Church does to live its mission). We will create our ideal Church and figure out how we can contribute our gifts to the mission of Jesus and his Church.

The first activity helps the young people identify their image of Church.

Give each person a paper cup or clay (play doh). Ask them to shape the paper cup or clay into an image that represents what Church means to them. Prior to the session the leader should prepare his or her own image to use as an example for the teens.

Give the group several minutes to create their image. After everyone has completed the task, ask each person to share his or her creation and explain why they chose this image. This is a storytelling experience so make sure that each person has the attention of the group and hold any discussion to after everyone has shared.

Using Handout #4, ask the young people to clarify their understanding of the Church by reading the brief descriptions of the Church and asking them to select the statements which best describe their understanding of the Church. They should feel free to add descriptions of the Church, not found on the list, that reflect their own understanding.

Invite the young people to share one or two descriptions of Church which best reflect their own understanding of the Church. Discuss how they formed these understandings and how they influence their involvement in the Church.

Explain to the young people that there have been many images that Catholics have used over the centuries to describe the Church. Three images of Church stand out among this variety: People of God, Mystery or Sacrament, and Body of Christ.

Use the following information to present three understandings of Church that were emphasized at Vatican II and in subsequent Church teaching.

The People of God

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.*

(1 Peter 2:9-10)

*When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. The Catechism repeats some memorable, ancient words describing the Church and its relationship to Christ and his Spirit. The Church is 'like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun,' the Risen Jesus (CCC 748). Or again: The Church is the place 'where the Spirit flourishes' in the midst of God's people (CCC 749). (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*)*

The Church as a Mystery of Faith—A Sign of God's Presence and Action in the World

The Church is a sacrament. "A sacrament is a visible sign of God's presence and action in the world. Christ, then, is the Great Sacrament of who God is and what God is. The Church is the visible post-Resurrection sign (sacrament) of Christ's presence among his people and their union with him and

each other. The Church, then, is the sacrament of universal salvation, the sign and instrument of communion between God and humanity. (William Shannon, What is the Church?)

Simply put, the Church is a sacrament because it makes Christ present in our world. Through what we believe and how we live as Catholics, we reveal that Christ is present in us and the Church, and Christ acts through us to bring his Good News to the world. Christ works through us, his followers, to continue his mission in the world today.

The Body of Christ

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

Jesus from the very beginning of his public ministry, associated with his disciples. He describes his union with them as a vine with its branches. They receive life from him. It was Paul who used the beautiful image of the “Body of Christ” to express the union of life between Christ and his disciples (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). There is an inexpressible oneness of life in the Church that comes from Christ through his Spirit and flows to all the members – a union of life. (William Shannon, What is the Church?)

As a group discuss the following questions:

- How do these images and descriptions connect with your own images?
- How do these images clarify your own understanding of the Church?
- Consider the implications/challenges of viewing the Church in these three ways:
 - for individual Catholics
 - for the parish community
 - for the Church universal

2. The Mission and Ministries of the Church

In the All Ages Learning Experience the young people had the opportunity to see the Church in action through the work of six ministries. Invite the young people to reflect on why the Church does what it does. Ask the group to discuss the following question:

If you had to summarize the mission or purpose of the Church, what would you say? Think about why the Church does what it does. Review all of the actions and projects of the Church that you saw at the beginning of the session. Why does the Church do these things?

Using Handout #4, present the following understanding of the Church’s mission to young people. Use your own words and examples to illustrate the presentation. Conclude the presentation by asking the young people to compare and contrast their answers with your presentation.

The Church is first called and then sent. In other words, the Church is a community, or an assembly, with a mission. The Church is both a sign and an instrument of the Kingdom of God. The Church, as

the People of God, seeks to continue Christ's mission on earth. Like Christ, the Church "receives the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God" (*Lumen Gentium*).

First, the Church is sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God by word, that is, in preaching, teaching, and catechesis. Second the Church is sent to participate in Christ's worship of the Father, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church does this especially in the Eucharist. The Church also celebrates and anticipates the coming kingdom in the other sacraments and in its general prayer life. Third, the Church is sent to offer witness to the world of what it proclaims and celebrates. Because the Church is a sacrament, it has to practice what it preaches. It is not enough to be the Body of Christ; it must look and act like the Body of Christ. It must look and act like a community permeated with God's saving presence. Finally, the Church is sent to provide service to those in need, both inside and outside the Church. The Church must follow the example of the Lord himself who ministered to the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the oppressed, the socially ostracized, the sinners, and the dying.

The mission of the Church is expressed and lived through six fundamental ministries:

- Community life
- Evangelization
- Justice and service to those in need
- Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
- Pastoral care
- Teaching/catechesis

3. Creating an Ideal Church

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Your mission is to create a picture of an ideal, "perfect" Church that is living out its mission in the world today. Your task is to describe what the Church will do and why it is doing those things. Each group will focus on one of the following important actions (ministries) of the Church: community life, evangelization, justice and service, pastoral care, teaching/catechesis, and liturgy, sacraments and prayer. You will use information from New Testament Scripture passages on Handout #6 and quotes from Church documents on Handout #1, as well as the opening activity, "Church in Action." The picture you paint should focus on the parish, but include actions of the wider Church, locally and globally.

Assign one ministry to each group. Then guide the young people through the following steps to help them understand more about their ministry and create their "Ideal Church".

Ask each person in the group to read one of the Scripture passages for their ministry (see Handout #6). Divide the passages among group members. If there are less than six young people in a group, ask people to take an additional Scripture passage. Each person reads the passage and then answers the question: *What can we learn from this Scripture passage about the importance of our ministry and what an "ideal Church" looks like?*

- Evangelization: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 1:22-24, 32-42; Acts 2:43-47
- Community Life: Acts 2:43-47; Acts 4:32-37; Romans 12:1-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:1-6, 14-16
- Justice and Service: Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 16:19-31; John 13:12-17; Acts 4:32-37; James 2:14-17
- Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer: Matthew 6:5-14, 7:7-11; Luke 5:18-26; Luke 22:14-20; Luke 24:13-35; Acts 2:37-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- Pastoral Care: Matthew 4:23-25; Luke 5:12-15; Luke 8:43-48; Luke 9:37-43; Luke 18:35-43; Acts 5:12-16
- Teaching/Catechesis: Matthew 5:1-12, 7:24-29; Matthew 22:34-40; Matthew 13:3-23; Matthew 13:24-43; Luke 24:13-35; Romans 1:1-6, 16-17

Invite group members to share their reflections on the Scripture passages by briefly summarizing the passage they read and share their responses to the question: *What can we learning from this Scripture passage about the importance of our ministry and what an “ideal Church” looks like?* Have one person write the responses of group members on newsprint.

Present or have the young people read the quotes from Church documents for your ministry on Handout #1 (“The Ministries of the Church Journal”). Then review the presentation from the session’s opening activity to identify what the Church is doing in your ministry. Discuss the following question as a group: *What can we learn from the Church quotes and the ministries presentation about the importance of our ministry and what an “ideal Church” looks like?* Have one person write the responses of group members on newsprint.

Ask young people to create their portrait of an “ideal Church” living out their ministry area. They should complete the following questions to develop their presentation:

- In an ideal Church our ministry is important because . . .
(Consider Scripture, Church teaching, needs of people, etc.)
- In an ideal Church our ministry would be doing . . .
(Be specific! Give examples of what your ministry would be doing.)

There are a variety of ways they can present their “ideal Church.” Here are several examples:

- Create a parish bulletin of the future describing all of the things your ministry area is doing. Include specifics you would find in the parish bulletin such as announcements of projects, dates, how to get involved or use a service, and people to contact.
- Create an advertisement (poster, billboard, sign) that can be display at church or in the community promoting your ministry projects.
- Create a poster with artwork and text announcing your ministry in action. Use magazines for photos or illustrations.

When each group has completed their project, have them share their “ideal Church” with the group. In an Age Group Format each group can present their project. In the Whole Group Format display the presentations so that everyone can read them.

4. Called to Continue Christ's Mission

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Every Christian is called by their Baptism to take responsibility for continuing Christ's mission and service today. By virtue of baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, all the faithful are called to work together in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and one another to continue Jesus' mission on earth through lives of service.

How can you take responsibility for continuing Christ's mission today? Take a few moments to think of ways you can contribute to the building up of the ideal Church. Where can you use your God-given gifts and talents to continue Christ's mission?

Ask the young people to write on a Post-It note one way they can contribute their gifts and talents to continue Christ's mission in the parish or the broader Church. Save the Post-It Note for closing prayer.

Conclude by inviting the young people to share one way they can contribute and get involved.

Exploring the Church and its Ministries (Adults)

The adult learning plan has been created as a self-directed small group activity. Facilitators can guide the adults through the learning activities as outlined below and on Handout #4. Write the essential instructions on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.

This session plan can also be utilized as a series of large group presentations with small group discussions and activities. Presenters can utilize the commentary in the session plan as source material for their presentation. A facilitator can guide the participants through the activities and discussions in the session plan.

Materials

- Colored Post-It Note for each person
- Handout #1: The Ministries of the Church Journal
- Handout #5: Exploring the Church and its Ministries (Adult Session)
- Handout #6: Scripture Passages on Church Ministries

1. Images of the Church

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

This small group session focuses on understanding the images and ministries of the Church. Take a moment to reflect on the following questions and then share your reflections with your group. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion.

- When you think of Church what images come to mind? What is your primary image of Church today? What key words or "pictures" would you use to describe this image?
- Where did this image come from?

- How does your image influence your view of Church and your active participation in the life of the Church community?

There are many images that we have used over the centuries to describe the Church. Three images of Church stand out among this variety: People of God, Mystery or Sacrament, and Body of Christ.

The People of God

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.
(1 Peter 2:9-10)*

*When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. The Catechism repeats some memorable, ancient words describing the Church and its relationship to Christ and his Spirit. The Church is 'like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun,' the Risen Jesus (CCC 748). Or again: The Church is the place 'where the Spirit flourishes' in the midst of God's people (CCC 749). (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*)*

The Church as a Mystery of Faith—A Sign of God's Presence and Action in the World

*The Church is a sacrament. "A sacrament is a visible sign of God's presence and action in the world. Christ, then, is the Great Sacrament of who God is and what God is. The Church is the visible post-Resurrection sign (sacrament) of Christ's presence among his people and their union with him and each other. The Church, then, is the sacrament of universal salvation, the sign and instrument of communion between God and humanity. (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*)*

Simply put, the Church is a sacrament because it makes Christ present in our world. Through what we believe and how we live as Catholics, we reveal that Christ is present in us and the Church, and Christ acts through us to bring his Good News to the world. Christ works through us, his followers, to continue his mission in the world today.

The Body of Christ

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

*Jesus from the very beginning of his public ministry, associated with his disciples. He describes his union with them as a vine with its branches. They receive life from him. It was Paul who used the beautiful image of the "Body of Christ" to express the union of life between Christ and his disciples (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). There is an inexpressible oneness of life in the Church that comes from Christ through his Spirit and flows to all the members – a union of life. (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*)*

*These three images attest to the Trinitarian dimension of the Church. “First, the Church is the work of the Father, since the Father elects us to be his new people. If, in the Old Testament, God makes a covenant with Israel, in the New Testament he chooses us to be the people of the new covenant. This image is beautifully expressed in 1 Peter 2:9-10. . . Second, the church is the work of Christ. Paul develops a beautiful Christ-focused image of the church. He tells us that we are the body of Christ—Christ is the head and we are the members: ‘Just as the body is one and has many members of the body, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). . . Third, the church is the work of the Spirit. For example, Paul calls the church the temple of the Holy Spirit: ‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?’ (1 Corinthians 3:16). In other words, individual Christians bear the Spirit within themselves—as does the community. John says that in the new messianic era, we are to worship in Spirit and in truth. The Christian community has replaced the Temple of Jerusalem and the church is now God’s temple, filled with the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. (John O’Donnell, S.J., *A Faith You Can Live With*.)*

As a group discuss the following questions:

- How do these images and descriptions connect with your own images?
- How do these images clarify your own understanding of the Church?
- Consider the implications/challenges of viewing the Church in these three ways:
 - for individual Catholics
 - for the parish community
 - for the Church universal

2. When You Think of the Church. . .

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Below you will find brief descriptions of the Church. They give you a variety of ideas about what the Catholic Church is. If someone asked *you* to describe the Church to them, which of the descriptions would you use? Which of these statements best describe your understanding of the Church? Place a check beside the descriptions you would use.

The Catholic Church is...

- a place where we worship God at Mass on Sunday
- the Pope, bishops, and priests
- people who believe in Jesus Christ and do his work in the world today
- a human organization that deals with religious issues
- a sign of Jesus Christ present to us today
- a group of people who care about and accept each other
- a group of people who serve the needs of others just as Jesus did
- a community who proclaim the Good News of Jesus
- people teaching others what it means to live as Catholics
- people living their faith at home with their families, at school, and at work
- people listening to God’s Word in the Bible

What would you add to these statements?

As a group discuss the following questions:

- How adequate is your own understanding of the Catholic Church? Where do you need to grow?
- How comfortable are you in describing the Catholic Church to others?

3. Mission and Ministries of the Church

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

If you had to summarize the mission or purpose of the Church, what would you say? Think about why the Church does what it does. Review all of the actions and projects of the Church that you saw at the beginning the session. Why does the Church do these things? Then share your answers with you group

The mission of the Church is . . .

Consider these points about the Church's mission:

The Church is first called and then sent. In other words, the Church is a community, or an assembly, with a mission. The Church is both a sign and an instrument of the Kingdom of God. The Church, as the People of God, seeks to continue Christ's mission on earth. Like Christ, the Church "receives the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God" (*Lumen Gentium* 5).

First, the Church is sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God by word, that is, in preaching, teaching, and catechesis. Second the Church is sent to participate in Christ's worship of the Father, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church does this especially in the Eucharist. The Church also celebrates and anticipates the coming kingdom in the other sacraments and in its general prayer life. Third, the Church is sent to offer witness to the world of what it proclaims and celebrates. Because the Church is a sacrament, it has to practice what it preaches. It is not enough to be the Body of Christ; it must look and act like the Body of Christ. It must look and act like a community permeated with God's saving presence. Finally, the Church is sent to provide service to those in need, both inside and outside the Church. The Church must follow the example of the Lord himself who ministered to the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the oppressed, the socially ostracized, the sinners, and the dying.

The mission of the Church is expressed and lived through six fundamental ministries:

- Community life
- Evangelization
- Justice and service to those in need
- Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
- Pastoral care
- Teaching/catechesis

Each of these ministries has its roots in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Read and Reflect on the Foundations of the Ministries

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Each person in the group should read and reflect on the Scriptural basis for one of the Church's ministries (see Handout #5) and review the quotes from Church documents on the "Ministries of the Church Journal" (Handout #1) for that ministry. (If there are more than six people, team-up to form six subgroups.)

Read the Scripture passages and the quotes on the "Ministries of the Church Journal" in your ministry and then reflect on the following questions:

- What insights into the importance of our ministry have we identified by reading these Scripture passages and Church quotes?
- Why is this ministry important for the Church and its members?

Community Life: Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12:9-18, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Colossians 3:12-17

Evangelization: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 9:1-6, Acts 1:22-24, 32-42

Justice and Service: Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 4:16-21, John 13:12-17, Acts 4:32-35

Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer: Luke 22:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Luke 5:18-26, Acts 2:37-42

Pastoral Care: Matthew 4:23-25; Luke 5:12-15, Luke 8:43-48, Luke 9:37-43 or Luke 18:35-43 (select two); Acts 5:12-16

Teaching/Catechesis: Matthew 5:1-12, 7:24-29, Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 13:3-23, Luke 24:13-35

Each person or team shares with the group the passages they read and their responses to the question:

- What insights into the importance of our ministry have we identified by reading these Scripture passages and Church quotes?
- Why is this ministry important for the Church and its members?

Together as a group discuss how the Church is currently living out all six ministries. Review what you learned from the presentation of Church ministries in the session's opening activity. What would you add?

4. The Ministries of the Parish Community

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Each Church ministry traces its origin to the mission and ministry of Jesus and the early Church. *The Code of Canon Law* (Canons 528-529) spells out what the Church considers the basic pastoral work (ministries) in a parish community. Use these descriptions to identify the strengths of your parish

community. Based on your own experience and knowledge of the parish's ministries, rate each of the six ministries from 1-4: 1—needs lots of work, 2—fair, 3—good, 4—excellent.

Community Life

1 2 3 4

- Practices methods of acquaintance with parishioners, the welcoming of newcomers, home visiting, efforts at building community
- Fosters the growth of Christian life in the family
- Recognizes and promotes the specific role which the lay members of the parish have in the mission of the Church
- Fosters in parishioners concern and works which promote the community of the parish and that helps them feel themselves to be members of the diocese and the universal Church

Evangelization

1 2 3 4

- Ensures that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish
- Brings the Gospel message to those who have given up religious practice or who do not profess the true faith (outreach to inactive Catholics)

Justice and Service

1 2 3 4

- Works which promote the spirit of the Gospel, including its relevance to social justice
- Demonstrates concern and care for the poor, the suffering, the lonely, those who are exiled from their homeland, and those burdened with special difficulties

Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer

1 2 3 4

- Promotes the Eucharist as the center of the parish assembly
- Celebrates the sacraments, especially Eucharist and penance (including programs of sacramental life and preparation)
- Nourishes the prayer life of parishioners, especially within families
- Promotes active participation of parishioners in the liturgy

Pastoral Care

1 2 3 4

- Cares for the sick and especially the dying

Teaching/Catechesis

1 2 3 4

- Instructs the community in the truths of faith, especially by means of the homily and by catechetical formation
- Provides Catholic education of children and youth

Together as a group, share your rating of each ministry, one-by-one. When you have completed all six ministries, discuss the following questions:

- What are our strongest ministries in the parish?
- What ministries does the parish need to improve?
- What new ideas or projects should we initiate to improve our parish's ministries?

5. Called to Continue Christ's Mission

In your own words, or the words below, say the following:

Every Catholic is called by their Baptism to take responsibility for continuing Christ's mission and service today. By virtue of baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, all the faithful are called to work together in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and one another to continue Jesus' mission on earth through lives of service.

Take some time to reflect on your involvement in the mission and ministry of Jesus as it is being carried out by your parish and the broader Church (diocesan, national, and international). How do you and can you take responsibility for continuing Christ's mission today.

- In what ministry are you currently involved?
- If you are not currently involved, in what ministry do you want to participate? Where can you use your God-given gifts and talents to continue Christ's mission?
- What does your parish or the broader Church need you to do today?

On a Post-It note write one way you can contribute your gifts and talents to continue Christ's mission in the parish or the broader Church. Save the Post-It Note for the closing prayer.

Conclude by discussing your reflections with the entire group.

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (15 minutes)

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience.

First, ask each age group to share what they learned in their activity. For example, the family can share ideas from their faith at home activity, adolescents can share ideas from the "ideal Church" activity, and adults can share the current strengths of the parish's ministries and new ideas for developing the parish's ministries.

Present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to understand the Church and its mission and ministries. To help us take our learning from this session and live in our lives and homes reflect on the following questions and share your thoughts with your group.

- What new insights about the Church did you discover through this session?
- Do you need to revise or expand your understanding of the Church because of your learning? How will your learning influence your view of Church and your active participation in the life of the Church community?

Invite participants to take several minutes for small group sharing.

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Preparation

- Invite eight people to read 1 Corinthians 12 (see separate page with the Scripture reading). Assign each leader one of the verses from the Scripture passage.
- Create a large Body of Christ poster by developing a body outline on a large sheet of paper. Draw a large cross within the body. Make the poster large enough for all participants to place their Post-It Notes on the body drawing.

Light the paschal candle or a large candle to begin the prayer service.

Gather

When Jesus walked the earth, he chose apostles and disciples to help him proclaim God's word, heal and care for people, serve those in need, teach people how to live as his followers, pray and worship God. Jesus is calling us to help him do these same things today. He is calling us to use our special gifts, talents, and abilities. I invite you now to show your willingness to join with the entire Church in continuing Jesus' mission.

Invite families, adolescents and adults to place their Post-It notes on the Body of Christ posters.

Listen

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Reader 1: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Reader 2: Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Reader 3: And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

Reader 4: But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'

Reader 5: On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this.

Reader 6: But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one

another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Reader 7: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.

Reader 8: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Respond

For all those who work for justice and serve the needs of the poor and vulnerable

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who lead the community in prayer and the celebration of the sacraments

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who return people to health and wholeness, care for the sick, and comfort the dying

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and invite people into a loving relationship with the Lord

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who teach the Catholic faith and guide people in living the Catholic way of life

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who welcome us into the parish community, make us feel at home, and share their faith with us

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

Go Forth

Lord Jesus,

help us to recognize that we are members of your Body.

Teach us how to respect the unique gifts each of us has.

Teach us how to care for each other.

Teach us how to rely on each other for support.

Teach us how to work together as members of your Body.

Amen.