

Journey OF Faith

The Church as Community

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"I know," said Mrs. Evans. "But you won't be graded. I just want to see what you think makes a Church."



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What do you think makes up a Church? Circle one answer for each question below and then share your answers with the group.

What Is the Church?

1. You are going to build a Church. What do you need to get started?

- A. Bricks
- B. Lots of money
- C. People

2. What would you do first?

- A. Hire a contractor
- B. Dig a foundation
- C. Gather your people

3. How can you be sure your Church will be strong?

- A. Reinforce it with steel beams
- B. Buy church insurance
- C. Teach your people to love one another

4. What will you do to protect your Church?

- A. Hire an armed guard
- B. Build a wall around it
- C. Place it in God's hands

5. How can you build a Church that will last forever?

- A. Use super bricks
- B. Hire a maintenance staff
- C. Promise to be with your Church always

Jesus and His Church

If Jesus had answered these questions, he would have circled "C" every time.

Sometimes when we hear the word *church*, we think of a building filled with things that remind us of God. Or we think about the place we go to pray. That building is church with a lowercase "c." But the Church Jesus came to build was Church with a capital "C."



The True Meaning of Church

Jesus chose his apostles and taught them about God's love. He was preparing them to build the Church. When Jesus returned to heaven, the apostles started teaching others what Jesus taught them. They gathered people together to worship God. That's how they started the Church. The Church kept growing from there! God's word continues to be passed on today.

This is why the Church means more than a building. The Church is more than rules, even though some rules are necessary. The Church is more than the pope or bishops. The true meaning of *Church* is "people"; all the people who have faith in Jesus. The Church is a community of everyone who has been called to share God's life through Jesus.

Sometimes, people call this community a family. That's because God is our Father, and we are all sisters and brothers in God's family. If we want to get to know our family, we have to spend time with them. It's the same with our Church family. We have to spend time getting to know the Church for our love to grow.

That's why we go to Mass on Sundays. It's like a big family meal. Everyone gets together, hears the same readings, participates in the same prayers, and shares the same heavenly meal.



How is your parish like a family?

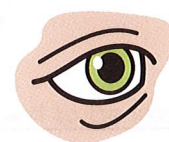
The Body of Christ

Saint Paul had an interesting way of thinking about the community of Jesus' followers. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, he called the community "the body of Christ." Once Jesus ascended into heaven, he was no longer physically here on earth. That meant that his followers had to be his "body" on earth. We had to be the people who took care of others and loved them—just as Jesus did.



Saint Paul said each of us is like a different part of the body. Some people are the hands of the Church. These people help those in need and do good works. Some people are the ears of the Church. These people

listen to others with kindness. Some people are the brains of the Church. These people write books or help explain Church rules.

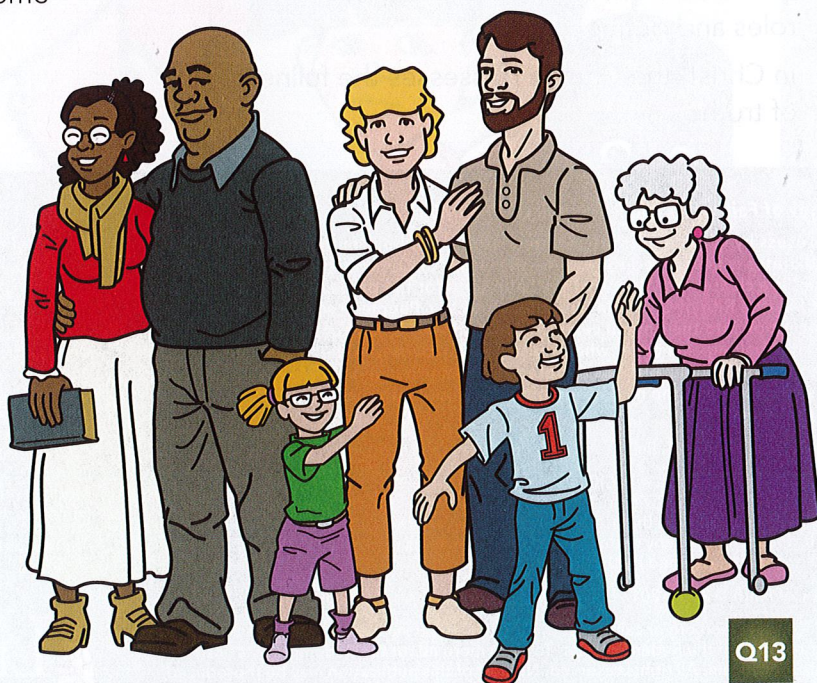


What gifts did God give you?

A body needs all its parts to work well. Just like the body of Christ needs all of its people to really work in the world. We need each other, and everyone brings something new to the body of Christ. In fact, the Church even needs people who aren't with us on earth.

All those souls in heaven or in purgatory are part of our Church, too. We call all the members of the Church—living, in purgatory, and in heaven—the **communion of saints**.

God gives all of us gifts like special skills or talents. We're supposed to use these gifts to help build up the body. Someone with a beautiful voice might help the Church by singing in the choir. Someone who's really friendly might volunteer to be an usher. Someone else might be good at building things, so she or he might volunteer to help fix things around the church building.





WE ARE JESUS' BODY

Finish the following sentences by naming something you can do to help the Church.

I am Jesus' hands when I _____.

I am Jesus' mouth when I _____.

I am Jesus' heart when I _____.

I am Jesus' feet when I _____.

I am Jesus' eyes when I _____.

In Short

- All Catholics are part of Christ's body.
- Catholics work together with unique roles and duties.
- In Christ, the Church possesses the fullness of truth.



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The process by which adults are initiated into the Catholic faith throughout the United States is now called the OCIA—the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. "Order" is a clearer translation of the Latin term for the process formerly known as the RCIA—the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. People preparing for baptism and reception into the Church celebrate several rites as part of the order to which those rites belong—an order whose mission is to journey in the faith. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the name change in 2021, with American dioceses introducing the name thereafter. For more information, please contact your local diocese.

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