

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B, Intermediate

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Tue, 04/28/2015 - 20:00

Intermediate Session

Acts 9:26-31

John 15:1-8

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

We thank you God, for drawing us together to form one Body in Christ.

Help us to love one another and treat one another fairly.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

The topic for today is the Church as the Body of Christ. To begin, write each letter of the word UNITY on separate sheets of white paper. Divide the children into small groups and give each group a letter. Invite the groups to work together to find out what word the letters spell. Discuss:

- What does it mean to live in unity?
- How can people work together to build peace and unity?
- How can people work against peace and unity?

Allow time for discussion. As Christians we are united with one another in Christ. The Church is also called the Body of Christ. We are Christ's body and Christ is the head of the body, the Church.

Listening to the Word of God

In the first reading from Acts of the Apostles, listen to how the Holy Spirit helps members of the early church live together in unity.

Read Acts 9:26-31.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- What happens when Barnabas brings Paul to the apostles?
- How are members of the early church challenged to live together?
- How does the Holy Spirit help the early church?

In today's gospel listen to learn what image Jesus uses to show his followers that they are united in him.

Read John 15:1-8.

Allow for silence.

- How does Jesus represent the true vine?
- Who are the branches?
- What will happen to those who are connected to Jesus, the true vine?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the **Catechist Background** section.

In the first reading from Acts of the Apostles we learn about the joys and pains of a growing Church. Paul is introduced to the community in Jerusalem by Barnabas. But, because Paul was once an enemy of the Christians, the other disciples are afraid of him. Barnabas tells the others that Paul has seen Jesus and is now a devoted follower who is preaching the good news. Today's passage points out that the Body of Christ is building up and flourishing with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In today's gospel Jesus uses the image of a vine and branches to show the importance of being united in faith. Jesus is the vine and God is the vine grower. We are the branches. This image points out that staying connected to Jesus helps us to grow. Together with Jesus we bear fruit and offer our gifts to the world. Apart from Jesus we wither and die. The vine and branches in today's gospel represent Jesus' relationship with the Church. Jesus is the head of the Body of Christ the Church. As members of the Church we give glory to God when we love and care for one another.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- How do members of the Church care for one another?
- How can you stay connected to Jesus?
- What does it mean to bear fruit?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life**.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

The Church as Body of Christ

We believe that the Church is a gathering of people brought together by the saving action of Christ. The Church is the gathering place where all men and women are called by God to rediscover their unity and salvation in Christ. The Church is not a building; it is a body, the Body of Christ. Believers form one Body and Christ is the head. Just as the head is connected to the body, the people of God are one with Christ.

God's loving plan draws all people into the one Body. The Church is made up of all living members and all those who have gone before us in faith. Individual members bring their different gifts and with the help of the Holy Spirit, all build up the Church as the one Body of Christ.

- What is the Church?
- Why is the Body of Christ another name for the Church?
- How are we called to live as members of the one Body of Christ?

Sacrament Connection

In the Sacrament of Eucharist we celebrate our unity as members of the one Body of Christ. The Eucharist unites us with the Holy Trinity and with one another.

The Gospel in Life

If a single part of the human body is sore, the whole person suffers. When one member of the Body of Christ is in pain, we all suffer. How can you care for someone who is hurting this week?



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