

Contents

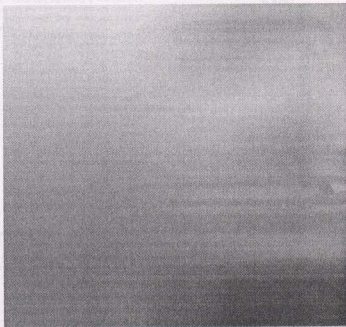
Introduction to the Teacher's Wraparound Edition	6
Foreword	18
Unit 1: What Is Church?	20
1.1 A House on a Rock	22
Unit 2: The Church Is Mystery	46
2.1 Enduring and Developing	48
2.2 Permanent and Unchanging	70
Unit 3: The Church Is the People of God	100
3.1 Together as One	102
3.2 Who Is Catholic?	118
Unit 4: The Church Is Teacher	136
4.1 Creeds, Laws, Dogmas, and Doctrines	138
4.2 The Good News Proclaimed	162
Unit 5: The Church Is Sacrament	186
5.1 A Sign and Source of God's Grace	188
5.2 Sacraments for God's Faithful	206
Unit 6: The Church Is Servant	226
6.1 The Social Doctrine of the Church	228
6.2 Responding to Those in Need	248
Unit 7: The Church Is a Communion of Saints	268
7.1 Who Are the Saints?	270
7.2 Mary: Model and Mother of the Church	288
Unit 8: The Church Is	302
8.1 Review and Preview	306
Resources	325
Catholic Handbook for Faith	326
Handouts	327
Tests	349

UNIT 2

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

Introducing Unit 2

The Church is both a visible and spiritual reality. This is the main lesson of Unit 2 and the reason why the Church can be called a "mystery." The mystery of the Church can never be exhausted. However, there are elements within the Church that remain permanent and unchanged. This two-chapter unit explores the themes introduced in this short introductory lesson.



Extending the Lesson

Show the video presentation "The Mystery of God: Jesus" (Oblate Media, 1997, 28 minutes). It helps to answer the questions: How do we know who God is? How do we learn to listen when God speaks to us? It shows how God is revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

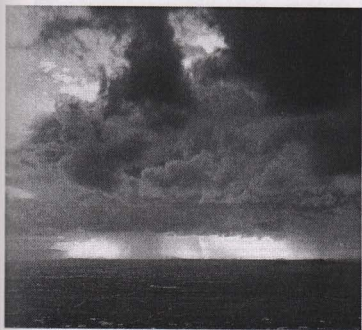
Background Information

More on the Church as Mystery

In the New Testament, mystery refers to God's plan of salvation. In Colossians 1:1–2:6 and Ephesians 1–3, St. Paul recounts salvation history by describing it as a mystery—"the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past"—but which has now been revealed in Christ (Col 1:26). In Ephesians, he writes: "In [Christ] we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and earth" (Eph 1:7–10).

UNIT TWO

THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY



Teaching Approaches

1. Play a brief round of word association with the term "mystery." Call on students to suggest words that come to mind, for example: unknown, puzzle, fearful, strange, or hidden.
2. Note the title of Unit 2, "The Church Is Mystery," and ask the students to suggest how the term "mystery" might apply to the meaning of Church. Share some of the answers from the opening text on page 36:
 - **The Church is both a visible and spiritual reality.**
 - **It is a mystery of man's union with God.**
 - **The term mystery is associated with the Latin word for sacrament, something that points out the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation.**
 - **Jesus himself is the mystery of salvation.**
 - **The Church can never be fully expressed from a single viewpoint.**
3. Point out each of the student objectives that are to be accomplished in Unit 2.

Bibliography Specific to Unit 2

McBrien, Richard P. 1973. *The Remaking of the Church*. New York: Harper and Row.

Dulles, Avery. 1982. *A Church to Believe In*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Further references are located on pages 56 and 87 of the Student Text.

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

2.1 ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

Introducing Chapter 2.1

Chapter 2.1 opens with the story of a parish divided by differing views of what it means to be Church. One side emphasizes the human dimension of the Church, particularly the need for authoritative teachers of faith and morals to counter the human reality of sin. The other side emphasizes the divine dimension of the Church, particularly the reality of grace that reaches out in love and mercy to the whole body of Christ. As the chapter unfolds, it explains that both views of the Church are necessary to understand its nature.

The Church is a mystery of faith; its nature cannot be grasped by reason alone. It is a mystery because it is a human institution whose members are sinful, yet God works through it to do things that no group of humans could accomplish on their own.

God works through the Church to accomplish his plan of salvation. The Church is called the “culmination of salvation history” because through it, humans are able to participate in divine life. The Church is necessary for salvation because Christ is necessary for salvation, and Christ is present in the Church. The relationship between Christ and the Church is similar to a marriage covenant: By surrendering completely to one another, the Church and Christ become one, so that the true identity of each cannot be known apart from the other. This is why the Church is called the “bride of Christ.”

The Church is unchanging, because the truths that God revealed to humanity through Jesus Christ are complete and unchanging. At the same time, the Church is constantly developing a deeper understanding of God’s revelation in Christ.

The Church possesses a permanent constitution or structure, which was established by Jesus when he gave his apostles the responsibility and authority to teach and baptize in his name. This responsibility and authority was handed on to the apostles’ successors, the bishops.

The Church possesses a permanent ethic because certain acts always undermine the human relationship with God, regardless of the reasons for doing them. Also, certain Catholic moral teachings can never be changed, because they are essential formulations of God’s revelation in Jesus.

The Church possesses a permanent body of dogma because it has been revealed to us by Jesus, or has been inferred from the truths revealed by him.

THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

Though the Church is in historical time, it also transcends history. The Church is both part of human history and surpasses our human comprehension. Only in faith can one see the Church as the bearer of divine life along with its place in history.

The Church is both a visible and spiritual reality. As the Second Vatican Council documents teach, it is

- a society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ;
- the visible society and the spiritual community;

the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches (Lumen Gentium, 8). The Church is also a mystery of man’s union with God. “It is in the Church that Christ fulfills and reveals his own mystery as the purpose of God’s plan: ‘to unite all things to him’ (CCC, 722). God established the Church for the holiness of its members. Mary, the Mother of God, leads the Church as a model of holiness.

The Greek word for mystery—*mysterion*—was translated by two Latin terms: *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. A sacrament points out the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation offered by Jesus and the Church. Christ himself is the mystery of salvation. The Church, too, is like a sacrament—“a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity of all men” (Lumen Gentium, 1).

Unit 2 teaches that the Church is a mystery that can never fully be expressed from a single viewpoint. However, there are things within the Church which cannot and will not change and can be understood. The Church has a permanent body of dogma, a permanent ethic, and a permanent constitution. Chapter 2.2 demonstrates how through history the Church has remained permanent and unchanging. The chapter also points out how the Church has used different images to explain how the Church is relevant to the world and at the same time separate from the world.

When you hear something Unit 2 says, ask yourself these questions:

- explain why we say the Church is a mystery;
- illustrate some of the ways in which the mystery of the Church is reflected in the life of the Church;
- identify the place of the Church in Salvation History;
- demonstrate why and how the Church is necessary for salvation;
- name and describe the three things in the Church which cannot and will not change;
- describe the role of the magisterium within the Church;
- demonstrate a knowledge of the progression of Church history and the time frame of key events within the Church;
- identify the images or understandings of the nature of the Church that dominated different periods of Church history;
- appreciate the way in which the Church of today is informed and shaped by the Church of other periods in history;
- identify the images of the Church which you see in operation in your local community.

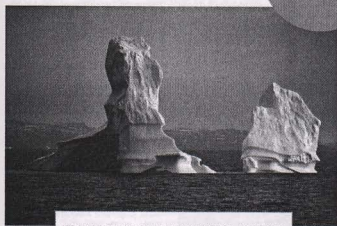
Key Concepts

- The Church is a mystery that can never be fully expressed from a single viewpoint.
- The Church is a joining of the human and divine. Although individual members and groups in the Church may act in a way that is contrary to the will of God, the Church itself can never be in opposition to God.
- It is through the Church that the will of God—the foundation of the kingdom—may be most reliably known.
- The Church is the culmination of salvation history. Since the creation of the world, God has intended human beings to share in the divine life. In the Church, this sharing finally becomes a reality. It is primarily through the Church that God chooses to be made known, present, and tangible in the world.
- We say that the Church is necessary for salvation because Jesus is necessary for salvation, and Jesus chooses to be present on earth in the Church. Without Jesus, who has chosen the Church as his body, there would be no salvation. All who recognize that the Church is the body of Christ are called to be part of that Church. If they reject the Church knowing that it is the body of Christ, they are rejecting salvation. This does not mean that those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ or his Church have rejected salvation. Jesus and the Church are necessary to God’s plan for salvation; however, God can lead those who know neither Jesus nor the Church to unity with God.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

ENDURING and DEVELOPING

2.1



LET THERE BE UNITY IN WHAT IS NECESSARY, FREEDOM IN WHAT IS DOUTIFUL, AND CHARITY IN EVERYTHING.

—Gaudium et Spes, #92

UNIT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Key Concepts (continued)

- According to a Catholic understanding of the Church, there are three elements within the Church that cannot and will not change: The Church has a permanent body of dogma, a permanent ethic, and a permanent constitution.
- The Church is the whole body of Christ: laity, clergy, and religious. The Magisterium is essential in the Church. The Magisterium is the authentic interpreter of Scripture and of the doctrinal and moral teachings which have been passed on from generation to generation. The Magisterium is always the authoritative voice concerning what is genuinely Catholic at any particular point in time.
- The laity are immersed in the secular world; they have been called to transform that world by their presence. The Magisterium has been called to stand slightly apart from the secular world. It is the task of the Magisterium to remind the laity of their call to shape the world and to help the laity find the spiritual aid which they need to answer that call.

Prayer Service

Pray for the Church. Ask the students to write their own petitions for people who belong to their parish, as well as for those people who are separated from the Church. Arrange the class in a circle. Darken the room and pass a lit candle around the circle, allowing each person to offer their petition or to pray in silence for the intended person. At the end of the service, choose a reader to lead the prayer found on page 56 of the Student Text, the reading from Ephesians. Finally, have the students join hands and pray the Our Father.

Relevant Teachings from Church Documents

- Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, [the Council] teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (124 cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5) and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. (*Lumen Gentium*, 14)
- Those also can attain salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. (*Lumen Gentium*, 16)
- The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 6:14 and Tit. 2:13). (*Dei Verbum* 4)
- This tradition which comes from the Apostles developed in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. (5 cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 4, "On Faith and Reason:" Denzinger 1800 (3020).) For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her. (*Dei Verbum* 8)

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

What's Really Catholic? Why the Church Is a Mystery

Objectives

In this lesson, students will be able to:

- note that people represent the Catholic Church in different ways;
- realize that the Church is a mystery of faith that can never be fully expressed from any single viewpoint;
- know that the Church is a joining of the human and divine and is essentially both.

Advance Preparation

- Make available several art supplies, including drawing paper, paints, markers, colored pencils, posterboard, clay, and others of your choice.

Preview

The opening story under "What's Really Catholic?" compares two priests who serve at the same parish and their different styles of ministry and belief, ultimately coming to the conclusion that both in their own way represent what it means to be Catholic. The story is a lead-in to the text section "Why the Church Is a Mystery." The message in this section is that the Church is a mystery and that, in the words of Pope John XIII, "everything, even human differences leads to the greater good of the Church."

WHAT'S REALLY CATHOLIC?

Tonia has been a Catholic youth minister for almost ten years. When she was asked what the statement, "the Church is a mystery," meant to her, she told the following story.¹

I can still remember a particular incident after my very first youth group meeting. The pastor of the parish, Father Kelly, came down the stairs just as the door closed behind the last high school student. He growled out a loud "Hmph!" and then said, "I must say I was surprised to see Sara O'Rourke here today. She



was one of the last kids I thought you'd get out for a youth group. Her parents haven't darkened the door of the church since my first month here. They are old Father Dave groups who act as if I'm the devil incarnate. If I were you I'd be prepared for trouble. They may have ideas about using the youth group as a new platform for their wacky ideas."

His words didn't shock me. Even in my short time at St. Pius parish I had grown used

to Father Kelly's "my way or the highway" talk. In fact, I'd come to realize that his gruff attitude was more a front than anything. But his final warning about Sara did start me thinking again. I had hoped to stay out of the ever present, rarely escalated conflict in our parish, but Father Kelly's comments made me realize that was probably not possible. Everything I did was going to be interpreted as my taking one "side" or the other. I needed to do more thinking about what those sides were.

The problem was, Father Kelly and the pastor who had been at St. Pius before him—Father Dave—approached their ministries from very different perspectives. The parish was now divided between those parishioners who were angry that Father Dave had been transferred and those who were thankful that Father Kelly had come.

In one of our first conversations, Father Kelly explained his ministerial approach to me: "I'm the quarterback. I call the plays. Then I hand the ball off to someone else to run them. When I came here there were too many people trying to be the quarterback and not enough who were prepared to run, block, and receive. Nothing ever got done. Even worse, people were doing all kinds of crazy things in the name of the Church. Catholicism was equated with every half-baked idea that came through this town! My job is to make sure that what happens here is genuinely Catholic."

Father Kelly believed that the Church should call people to accept their responsibilities. He challenged people to live up to their commitments, beginning with their commitment to the Church. "Being a member of the Church isn't about feeling all warm and fuzzy inside," he told me when I interviewed for the job. "It is about making a commitment to God. You don't come to Mass because of what you get out of it. You come because Sunday worship is part of your commitment."

Internet Links

www.vatican2andbutler.org/butwrite/church_myst.htm

Here you will find Bishop Christopher Butler's essay, "The Church a Mystery." Butler, an influential participant in the Second Vatican Council, reflects on what it meant for the Council to frame *Lumen Gentium* in the terms of mystery rather than the Church militant.

www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CI/ac0601.asp

Catholic Update examines tensions in different conceptions of the Church, and how these tensions might produce a richer understanding of Church, in "How the Spirit Guides the Church: Two Views in Matthew and John," by William H. Shannon.

<http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ315.HTM>

Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., traces the historical development of the doctrine of the Church's necessity for salvation.

www.americamagazine.org/articles/orisy.htm

Do the bishops receive their power and authority from God or the pope? In his *America* article, "Who Are the Bishops?" Ladislav Orsy, S.J., explains how the Church's historical engagement with this question provides theological insight on its constitution.

www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CI/ac1282.asp

Catholic Update explores the relationship between conscience and Church teaching in "Your Conscience and Church Teaching: How Do They Fit Together?" by Nicholas Lohkamp, O.E.M.

www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CI/ac1086.asp

Catholic Update summarizes key dogmas of the Church in popular language in "What Catholics Believe: A Popular Overview of Catholic Teaching," by Leonard Foley, O.E.M.

Father Kelly wouldn't baptize kids, except in emergencies, unless their parents were regular churchgoers. ("How can they make promises for other people that they don't even keep themselves?") He also wouldn't let people receive their first communion or be confirmed if he thought they weren't taking their responsibility to the Church seriously enough. Every kid in the parish school and every kid in religious education classes was given a set of envelopes. They were to put an envelope in the basket every Sunday, with or without money. If people were preparing for first communion or Confirmation but weren't putting envelopes in the basket every Sunday, Father Kelly would tell them that they had to wait another year to receive the sacraments. He also refused to preside at weddings if the couple was already living together.

Father Kelly believed in rules, structure, and Church hierarchy. "If you take these things away people start thinking that 'anything goes.' And go it does, straight to hell." He was fond of saying, "If you run the Church as a democracy, ignorance and sin will win every election."

Another Perspective on Church and Ministry

I never met Father Dave, but I know that his understanding of Catholicism was completely different. I can't count the number of times I heard people say to Father Kelly, "Father Dave always

said that we are the Church. The Spirit moves in each one of us and all of us together. The Church is not the same thing as the magisterium." According to Father Dave, the job of a pastor was to make people believe in themselves and their gifts. The parish council during Father Dave's tenure had been a large group with representatives from every segment of the parish. The council's primary focus had been on making St. Pius a welcoming community with opportunities for everyone to get involved.

When Father Dave was the pastor at St. Pius, homilies had been about love, acceptance, and forgiveness. There had been very few rules about who could receive the sacraments. Father Dave actually had a reputation for accepting weddings that other priests refused. His philosophy was, "Maybe the wedding will be the beginning of their return to the Church."

Father Dave believed that every person was a necessary part of the body of Christ, the Church. When any person was separated from the body, the whole body suffered. Father Dave also believed that every person was called to be part of the body of Christ, but he felt that the greatest harm to the body came not from the absence of some members, but from the presence of others who were not living and acting as they should.

The parishioners of St. Pius, like the parishioners of so many parishes in North America, were divided between these two

magisterium—The bishop, acting in union with the pope, by virtue of their ordination, constitute the magisterium. The magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church.



Bell-Ringers

1. Call on students to work in six groups and come up with profiles of "what it means to be Catholic." Only tell a group its own person to profile. Don't let them know the categories of the other groups. Each group should discuss and develop one profile for a typical Catholic in each of these areas:

- a Catholic politician
- a Catholic grandparent
- a Catholic second-grader
- a Catholic entertainer
- a Catholic high school student
- a Catholic priest or nun

The groups should develop a list of first-person statements about "what Catholics believe." For example, a Catholic politician might say, "I am personally opposed to abortion. But I am elected to serve my constituency, so I respect a woman's right to choose." A Catholic second-grader might say, "I believe Jesus is in the bread I will receive at First Communion." A high-school student, "All religions have something to offer."

2. After preparation time, have the groups choose one person to represent the Catholic they are profiling. Have them come in front of the class and speak in character explaining "why they are Catholic."
3. Assign for reading "What's Really Catholic?" (pages 38–40).

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY



Teaching Approaches

1. Discuss Tonia's story from the text. Compare Tonia's experiences of Catholics with the students' own experiences, especially as represented in the characterizations from the Bell-Ringer activities.
2. Discuss Tonia's conclusion about the "mystery of the Church" from the final paragraph in the text section (page 40). Ask: "Do you agree or disagree with Tonia's perspective? Explain."
3. Allow a few minutes for the students to work on the Journal Assignment on page 40. As a follow-up to the opening story, call on a few volunteers to share what they wrote.
4. The text section "Why the Church Is a Mystery" helps to answer the questions posed in the opening story, that is, how more than one viewpoint can represent what it means to be Catholic. Highlight the first part of the section (pages 40–41) to the subsection, "The Church and God's Kingdom."

THE CHURCH: OUR STORY

viewpoints. There were people in each group who were hurt and angry because they felt that the true Catholic Church was being threatened. People from both groups turned to me as the newest member of the parish staff and ask me to support them and help move the Church and particularly the youth in the "right" direction, their direction.

I realized that if I was going to be effective I had to answer the questions for myself: "What is the 'right' direction?" And, "Who

really represents the 'true' Catholic Church?" The more time I spent listening and praying, the more I realized that both Father Kelly and Father Dave represented the "true" Catholic Church. Both of them were right about who we are and who we are called to be. The Catholic Church has room for and need for both Father Kelly and his supporters and Father Dave and his supporters. That, for me, is part of the mystery of the Church!

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

- HOW DO YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION "WHO REALLY REPRESENTS THE 'TRUE' CATHOLIC CHURCH?"

WHY THE CHURCH IS A MYSTERY

In his opening address to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII said, "everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church." Although the tensions at St. Pius and in many other Catholic parishes are sometimes painful and uncomfortable, they can also enrich our faith and our understanding of the Church. In fact, a certain amount of tension among believers concerning the nature of the Church is inevitable. The Church is a mystery of faith that can never be fully expressed from any single viewpoint. It is only when we share and explore our different understandings of the Church that the mystery of the Church begins to unfold for us.

To say that the Church is a mystery is to say that its nature can never be grasped by the power of reason alone. The Church is a visible, tangible, historical reality, but it has

been permeated by the Spirit of the invisible, intangible, and timeless God. The spiritual essence of the Church—its inner truth—is not something that can be scientifically observed or measured. It is something which can only be known because it has been revealed by God. God's Revelation allows us to see that the Church is different from other human institutions. Through the eyes of faith, we can see the hand of God accomplishing things in the Church that could not be done by humans alone.

As Catholics we believe that the Church is far more than the sum of all its members. The Church is a joining of the human and the divine, and is essentially both. Although individual members and groups within the Church may act in a way that is contrary to God, the Church itself can never be in opposition to God. For this reason, we are never called to separate ourselves from the Church no matter what is being done by some in the name of the Church? God may call us to challenge others within the Church

40

Extending the Lesson

1. Have the students select an item related to a controversial issue (e.g., the treatment of the poor, a medical issue, etc.) from a Catholic newspaper, magazine, or television program; or, select an item from the general media which deals specifically with the Catholic response to some issue.
2. Instruct the students to analyze the story using the following process. Summarize: Identify the perspective(s) from which the situation is being analyzed and list the strengths and weaknesses of each viewpoint. Ask: What understanding of Catholicism is contained in this viewpoint? What understanding of Catholicism (if any) is being ignored? What questions does this story raise about what it means to be Catholic today? What emotional response do you have to this story? Why? What conclusions might be drawn about the Catholic Church based on this story?
3. Compare this account with coverage of the same event from a different news source.

or to disassociate ourselves from certain actions done in the name of the Church. God will not call us to abandon the Church, because the Church is not merely human; it is also divine.

The Church is a mystery because it holds apparent opposites together. Within the Church is the human and sinful, and the divine and holy. Within the Church is the visible and changeable, and the invisible and permanent. Within the Church is the earthly and the heavenly, the "already" and the "not yet."

The Church and God's Kingdom

Through the Incarnation of Jesus, the kingdom of God broke into human history. The barrier between the divine and the human, which had been in place since Adam and Eve and the fall of humanity, was shattered. God's kingdom, the realm in which God's will is done, was opened to humanity. In Jesus' death and resurrection earthly life was permanently linked to this kingdom, but no one on earth will experience the kingdom fully until Jesus' second coming. The Church is the focal point of the kingdom's presence on earth. The Church is also the place where we are most acutely aware of the fact that we still await the fullness of the kingdom.

The Church is the focal point of the kingdom's presence because it is through the Church that the will of God—the foundation of the kingdom—may be most reliably known. The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of the faithful and

speaks the will of God to them. The Spirit does not, however, speak to human beings in the same way that we speak to one another. The Spirit reveals God to us primarily through signs and symbols. The Church makes these signs and symbols available and helps us recognize and interpret them. So, for example, it is in the Church, and most particularly in the Eucharist, that we hear the call to be one with God and one with each other.

The Holy Spirit not only speaks to us through signs and symbols; the Spirit also transforms us through the power of those signs and symbols. Thus the Church not only calls us to reconciliation and peace, but also gives us the confidence to believe that reconciliation and peace are possible, and the Church gives us the strength and the courage to work for them. The Church is the focal point of the kingdom's presence, because in the Church God's will is not only manifested; it is also accessible.

But even as God's will is made accessible to us we are brought face to face with the great distance between God's will and our behavior. Week by week we are asked to acknowledge our own failings and our own sinfulness and to seek forgiveness for the ways in which we have chosen to hinder God's plan for peace, justice, unity, and love. The Church is the place where forgiveness and hope are already present; it is also the place where we come to recognize how much we still need forgiveness and hope.

So we return to Tomia's question: "Who speaks for the 'true' Church? Those who remain



SURVEY OF OPINION

Interview at least five Catholics who know of different ages. Ask them their opinion on this dilemma:

A mother and father bring their infant child to your parish for Baptism. The father has never practiced a religion. The mother was baptized a Catholic but eventually stopped going to Church. If you were the pastor, would you allow the baby to be baptized? If not, why? If so, would there be any requirements you would ask of the couple? What would they be?

Write a summary of each person's opinion. Then offer your own opinion on what you would do in this situation.

Kingdom of God—The reign or rule of God. The kingdom of God has begun with the coming of Jesus. It will exist in its perfect form at the end of time.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

5. Highlight these points from the *Catechism* (771).

The Church is a mystery because:

- she is part of human history, yet surpasses human understanding;
- she is a hierarchical institution, yet the Mystical Body of Christ;
- she is both a visible and spiritual community;
- she is both of earth and of heaven;
- she is the divinely appointed means for the sanctification of the faithful.

6. The subsection "The Church and God's Kingdom" (pages 41–42) compares the meaning of the Church with God's kingdom. To enhance the discussion, allow the students to work individually or in small groups to use various art media to represent their idea of God's kingdom. Display and share the finished work as you have time.

Background Information

The Church and the Kingdom Are Related

"To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of the Father. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly in the world through the power of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 3).

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

7. Point out the separate feature "Mystagogia" (page 42). Add to the text material more information about the time of mystagogia (see Background Information, below).

8. Homework Assignment:

- Write answers to the Study Questions and Journal Assignment on page 42.
- Read the text sections "The Church Is the Culmination of Salvation History" and "The Church Is Necessary for Salvation" (pages 43–46).
- Do at least one of the activities suggested in the feature "We Are Christ's Body" on page 44. Plan to share what you did at the next class session.

THE CHURCH IS OUR STORY

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)—The process through which non-Catholic adults learn about and join in full communion with the Catholic Church by receiving the sacraments of Baptism (if they have not already received Christian Baptism), Confirmation, and Eucharist.

mystagogia—Unfolding of the mystery. This is the name given to the period following the Baptism of adults. During this time, the newly baptized are to open themselves more fully to the graces received in Baptism.

us of our sins and our need to change? Or those who offer us unconditional acceptance, love, and hope?" The answer, as Tertius herself said, is "both do." The world must hear both voices if it is to be transformed. When Father Dave invited people to know God's forgiveness and acceptance and to embrace the hope which the Church offers, he was moving people in the "right" direction. He was helping them to understand that in the "true" Church the kingdom of God—the kingdom in which none will be excluded—is already present. When Father Kelly called people to greater personal responsibility, when he challenged them to confess their sins and repent, he too was moving people in the "right" direction. He was helping them to understand that in the "true" Church we all must come face to face with our own need for forgiveness and the ways in which we personally have kept the kingdom of God from being present in its fullness.

MYSTAGOGIA

The final stage of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is known as **mystagogia**, that is, "the unfolding of the mystery." During this period, the neophytes ("newly baptized") and their sponsors continue to meet and to reflect upon their life in the Church. As they participate in the sacramental life of the Church, these new Catholics "raise more intimately the good word of God" and come to discover the goodness of that word in a new and more profound way. A deeper understanding of the faith, the Church, and the world becomes available to them, and they are invited to express and embrace it. If the Church recognizes that the process of becoming a Catholic is begun but not completed in the Sacraments of Initiation, those who join the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil cannot themselves to the faith expressed in the creed and to life shared with a community that is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" nevertheless it will take a lifetime of prayer and study to fully understand what this commitment means.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY?
- HOW IS THE CHURCH "THE FOCAL POINT OF THE KINGDOM'S PRESENCE"?

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

- WHO ARE SOME PEOPLE IN YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY WHO HELP MOVE YOU IN THE "RIGHT" DIRECTION TOWARD GOD'S KINGDOM? HOW ARE THEY DOING THIS?

STUDY QUESTIONS ANSWERS

Page 42 Study Questions Answers

- *What does it mean to say that the Church is mystery?*

The spiritual essence of the Church—its inner truth—is not something that can be scientifically observed or measured. To say that the Church is mystery is to say that its nature can never be grasped by the power of reason alone.

- *How is the Church "the focal point of the kingdom's presence"?*

The Church is the focal point of the kingdom's presence because it is through the Church that the will of God—the foundation of the kingdom—may be most reliably known.

Background Information

Mystagogia

"The neophytes are, as the term 'mystagogia' suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel messages they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received. For they have truly been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God's word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world" (*Rite of Christian Initiation*, 245).

THE CHURCH IS THE CULMINATION OF SALVATION HISTORY

"The world was created for the sake of the Church." This phrase was used by Christians of the first centuries to express their understanding of the role of the Church in God's plan for the world.³ The Church is the culmination of Salvation History. From the creation of the world, God has intended human beings to share in divine life. In the Church this sharing finally becomes a reality.

The call to "be the Church" highlights God's invitation to enter into dialogue with him. In the Church we are invited to relate to the Father, not merely as God's lowly creatures, but as his sons and daughters. The call to be the Church is an incredible gift and an incredible trust. The Church is the summation of all of God's gifts throughout history. Despite our weaknesses and our many failings, God has never abandoned us or despised of us. Despite the many times that human beings have violated God's trust, God has offered us the most precious gift of the Church. In order to better understand this, it will be helpful to consider some of the other ways God has invited and trusted humanity throughout the course of Salvation History.



At the beginning of human history God invited man and woman to be co-creators with him. In the name of all humanity Adam and Eve were given dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28). All people are invited by God to use their own talents and efforts to perfect and complete the work of creation.⁴ In spite of human sinfulness, God has never taken away our roles of co-creator or caretaker for the world.

Later, God invited a particular people to do more than care for the earth. The Israelites were called to enter into a mutually binding, covenant relationship with God. God willingly bound himself forever to a group of people and gave them a unique and pivotal role in his plan for the world. Although the Israelites broke the covenant over and over again, God never gave up on them or abandoned them. In fact, God trusted them as the faith community from which God's own Son, Jesus, would be born.

When the time was right, God himself became a member of that

Salvation History—The story of God's action in human history. Salvation history refers to the events through which God makes humanity aware of and brings humanity into the kingdom of God. It begins with the creation of the world and will end with the Second Coming of Christ.

Covenant—The partnership between God and humanity which God has established out of love. The new covenant is offered through Christ. The blood which Christ shed on the cross is a sign of the new covenant.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

The Church Is the Culmination of Salvation History The Church Is Necessary for Salvation

Objectives

In this lesson, students will be able to:

- see that the Church is the culmination of salvation history;
- know that God remains incarnate in the Church, that the Church is the Body of Christ on earth;
- understand that salvation comes to the world through Jesus, who is present in the Church.

Preview

The Church was "a plan born in the Father's heart." The Church began with the sin of Adam and Eve after God promised a Redeemer. The formation of the Church took place with the call of Abraham and the Chosen People and it was established when Christ called his apostles and put Peter at the head. The lessons remind the students of the Church's foundation as well as Christ's ongoing presence in the Church. Also, because Christ is necessary for our salvation and Christ is present in the Church, the statement that Christ is necessary for salvation remains true.



Bell-Ringers

1. Discuss the actions the students did as homework as part of "We Are Christ's Body" (page 44). Call on students to describe the circumstances of their actions and the reactions by those they served.
2. Ask the students to pair up with someone whom they rarely talk with. Allow about 10 minutes for give-and-take conversation between the students, suggesting they discuss each other's interests, four-year plans, life plans, and family backgrounds.
3. Connect the discussion experience with the understanding that "we bring Christ to one another." Introduce the lesson by emphasizing that the Church is the body of Christ.
4. Collect and correct the students' homework assignment.

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY



Teaching Approaches

1. Create a timeline of salvation history to show how God created the world for the sake of the Church. For example, include the following events:

- When Adam and Eve sinned, God immediately formed a covenant with a people, through Abraham.
- In Moses, God gave the people a binding Law.
- Through the family of David, God promised a Messiah.
- At the Incarnation, God himself became part of the human community he had formed.
- Jesus chose Apostles, named a leader, and founded a Church.
- The Holy Spirit keeps the presence of Jesus alive in the Church.

2. **Quiz:** Have the students close their books. Assign the Study Questions on page 45 as a quiz. Have the students write their answers.

3. Connect the "We Are Christ's Body" exercise to the quote by St. Teresa of Avila.

4. Explain that the statement "The Church is necessary for salvation" has sparked a need for careful explanation by the Catholic Church, so as not to be misunderstood as applying to people who belong to other Christian denominations and who are of other faiths. The Second Vatican Council offers a detailed explanation of how the Church recognizes the link of Baptism with the Christians. Quoting in part: "Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power" (*Lumen Gentium* 15).

WE ARE CHRIST'S BODY
Do at least one of the following actions for Christ today:

- Invite a lonely classmate to join you for study or lunch.
- Help a classmate with special needs.
- Be extra courteous to a retail worker.
- Visit with an older neighbor or relative.
- Babysit a young child without charging money.

What are some other actions you can do for Christ today?



community. Jesus, the Son of God, was born as a helpless baby completely dependent upon the love, support, and care of the people around him. God entrusted his own Son, his very self, to human beings. What is more, in the person of Jesus God chose to bind the divine nature with human nature so that the two became one.

Body of Christ on Earth

Yet even the union of human nature and divine nature in the person of Jesus was not the final gift of God to humanity, nor was it God's final effort to unite humanity in partnership with God. Even after becoming human, even after living, suffering, and dying as a human and for the sake of humanity, God still had more to offer us. The depth and breadth of God's love for humanity and trust in humanity is revealed beyond Jesus' death—and even beyond the resurrection—in the establishment of the Church.⁶ Following his resurrection Jesus returned to the Father, but his ascension did not mark the end of God's tangible involvement in history. On the day of Pentecost a new era in God's relationship with humanity began.

The Holy Spirit was given to the Church from the Father and the Son so that the Church could

continue the work of Christ in proclaiming and establishing the kingdom.

This means that God remains incarnate in history in the Church. The Church itself has become the body of Christ on earth, and each member of the Church is a member of that body. Now it is primarily through the Church that God chooses to be made known, present, and tangible. It is primarily through the Church that God communicates truth and grace.⁷ The Church is the "sacrament of salvation," pointing people toward God and making God an accessible reality for them.⁸ The miracle of the Church is that despite all of humanity's failings and weaknesses, God loves us so much and places so much trust in us that he is willing to act and to be known through us.

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) calls us all to remember our role as Church:

Christ has no body now on earth; but yours, yours are the only hands with which he can do his work. Yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world. Yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can look upon the world. Christ has no body on earth, but yours.



6-7

For Enrichment

Assign the students to develop a display or presentation aimed at helping people understand and appreciate the variety of understandings of the Church that are found in the Catholic Church, and the ways in which the diversity in the Church serves to enrich our understanding and awareness of God.

Background Information

St. Teresa of Avila

Teresa was born in 1515 in Avila, Spain. She entered the Carmelite convent in Avila in 1535. At first, she continued to live a worldly life, having some possessions and also some contact with the other sisters. However, in 1555 she had a conversion while praying before a statue of the scourged Christ. From then on, she progressed as a mystic. She had several occasions of visions and images of Christ while in prayer. Teresa died in 1582 and was canonized in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. In 1970, Pope Paul VI named her the first woman doctor of the Church.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- WHAT DID EARLY CHRISTIANS MEAN BY THE PHRASE "THE WORLD IS CREATED FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH"?
- HOW DOES GOD REMAIN INCARNATE IN HUMAN HISTORY?

THE CHURCH IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Saint Teresa of Avila's words help us to understand the mystery of the Church's necessity. The official teaching of the Catholic Church has long stated that the Church is necessary for salvation and that "outside of the Church there is no salvation." Salvation comes to the world only through Jesus. Jesus remains present in the world through his body, the Church. We say that the Church is necessary for salvation because Jesus is necessary for salvation. Without Jesus, who has chosen the Church as his body, there is no salvation.

All who recognize that the Church is the body of Christ are called to be a part of that Church. If they reject the Church, knowing that it is the body of Christ, they are rejecting salvation. This does not mean that those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ or his Church have rejected salvation. Jesus and the Church are necessary to God's plan for salvation; however, through ways known only to God, the Holy Spirit can lead those who know

neither Jesus or the Church to unity with the Father.³⁹

In order to be faithful to Christ and to truly be his body on earth, the Church must reach out with compassion to everyone; the Church must also challenge its own members to live as Christ lived. The Church must be willing to say that certain things are not compatible with a total surrender to Christ. The Church is the sign and instrument of God's love for humanity. As the sign, the Church must strive for perfection; as the instrument, the Church must offer God's all-encompassing love. The true Church is critical and accepting at the same time. This is part of the Church's mystery.

What Is the True Church?

Return once more to Tonia's question. What attitude is necessary if we are to be the body of Christ on earth and continue Christ's work of bringing salvation to the world? Is it the attitude of Father Kelly or of Father Dave?

Truly, the answer is both attitudes. Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34). Those who prefer Father Dave's approach have recognized the importance of showing everyone the love and acceptance which

salvation—true, complete, and permanent unity with God and with one another. Salvation is the end goal of all creation. It refers to the fulfillment of the human desire for ultimate truth and goodness. Salvation is made possible by Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

5. Select a conflict or tension within the Church which involves a difference in understanding the nature and role of the Church. Have the students use role-play, a letter to a newspaper editor, or a panel debate to see the value of the position of those on the other side. Highlight the ways in which the two different understandings of the Church and its role can move us to a deeper appreciation of the true nature of the Church. (The focus should be on different understandings of the role of the Church, not on different responses to particular moral issues. For example, the Church's response to couples who are living together may be discussed, but not the morality of couples living together.)

6. Homework Assignment:

- Complete the Study Questions and Journal Assignment on page 46. You will not have to share the Journal Assignment with anyone else. Use initials rather than names to designate who is "in" or "out" of the circle.
- Read the text section, "The Church Is the Bride of Christ" (pages 46–47).
- Work with a partner to complete the "Survey of Opinion" exercise on page 41.
- Begin work on the Learn By Doing assignment, page 56.

STUDY QUESTIONS ANSWERS

Page 45 Study Questions Answers

- What did early Christians mean by the phrase "the world is created for the sake of the Church"?

Early Christians understood this phrase to express the role of the Church in God's plan for the world. In the Church, human beings can share the divine life.

- How does God remain incarnate in human history?

The Church is the body of Christ on earth and each member of the Church is a member of that body.

Background Information

Parents and Infant Baptism

In reference to the importance of the faith lives of parents who wish to have their child baptized, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them (CCC, 1251).

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe (CCC, 1253).

For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized—child or adult—on the road of Christian life (CCC, 1255).

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

The Church Is the Bride of Christ

Objectives

In this lesson, students will be able to:

- grasp the image of the Church as the bride of Christ;
- note the similarities between the relationship of a husband and wife and Christ and the Church;
- hear the fruits of Christian marriage in a class presentation.

Preview

This lesson covers a very short text section. This will allow for the class to hear a presentation on marriage from one or more Catholic couples, focusing on how their close relationship compares with the relationship that Christ holds with his Church.

Advance Preparation

- Arrange for at least one (but preferably two) Catholic married couple to address the class. Ideally, one couple should be newly married (0 to 5 years), the other longtime married. When you invite the couple, give them a copy of the "Marriage Discussion Preparation Sheet" (page 329 of the TWE) to help them plan their talk.



Bell-Ringers

1. Refer to the assignment, "Survey of Opinion." Divide the class into the two majority opinions: 1) that the baby should be allowed Baptism and 2) that the baby should not be allowed Baptism (or only if the parents meet certain requirements). Allow both groups to debate the issue back and forth.
2. Continue the discussion. Call on volunteers to summarize some of the results of their survey of five people from outside of class on this issue. Print some of the responses on the board. Make sure to point out that while Baptism should not be denied to anyone willing to make a profession (including godparents and parents for an infant), in the case of infants catechesis for the parents prior to Baptism and catechesis for the infant after Baptism is essential.



STUDY QUESTIONS ANSWERS

Page 46 Study Questions Answers

- Explain the statement "the Church is necessary for salvation."

Salvation comes through Jesus. We say that the Church is necessary for salvation because Jesus is necessary for salvation. Without Jesus, who has chosen the Church as his body, there is no salvation.

- Name an example from recent news in which the Church has had to speak out because it was not compatible with the gospel and total surrender to Christ.

For example, war, capital punishment, stem cell research, euthanasia, abortion, and many other issues.

THE CHURCH IS OUR STORY

Jesus showed to sinners. They are speaking as the "true" Church when they share God's healing and forgiveness with others. They are truly acting as the body of Christ when they place people above rules. Jesus also said, "Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Furthermore, Jesus tells people that when members of the community sin they should be approached and corrected by one person; then, if necessary, by several; and finally, if still needed, by the whole Church. Any who

refuse to listen to the Church should then be treated like outsiders (Matthew 18:15-20). Those who are more comfortable with Father Kelly's approach have recognized that being a member of the body of Christ is a great responsibility. They are speaking as the "true" Church when they insist that one's membership in the body of Christ should be evident in a person's priorities and behaviors. They are truly acting as the body of Christ when they stress the importance of doing what God would have us do.



STUDY QUESTIONS

- EXPLAIN THE STATEMENT "THE CHURCH IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION."
- NAME AN EXAMPLE FROM THE RECENT NEWS IN WHICH THE CHURCH HAS HAD TO SPEAK OUT BECAUSE IT WAS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE GOSPEL AND TOTAL SURRENDER TO CHRIST.

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

- DRAW A CIRCLE. PUT CHRIST IN THE CENTER. THEN ADD THE INITIALS OF SEVERAL PEOPLE YOU KNOW OR KNOW OF IN RELATION TO WHERE THEY ARE IN (OR OUT) OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING.

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The loving relationship of Christ and the Church also acknowledges a distinction between Christ (the head) and the Church (the body). The image of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride was prepared by the Old Testament prophets and announced by John the Baptist. In explaining

why he wasn't the Messiah, John named Jesus as the bridegroom, "the one who has the bride" (John 3:29). The Church is Jesus' bride.¹¹

In the letter to the Ephesians (5:29-32), Saint Paul talks about the relationship between Christ and the Church by using the passage from Genesis which speaks of a husband and wife becoming one flesh. In Paul's understanding of marriage a husband and wife belong completely to each other.¹²

6.5

Although they remain separate people they have surrendered themselves to each other. Their marriage is a relationship as God intended it to be, to the extent that the husband and wife are no longer two but one—one in will and one in action. In choosing the Church to be his body on earth, Paul writes of the whole Church, the members of the body, as a bride “betrothed” to Christ, the groom, so as to become one with him. Christ has entered a similar marriage covenant with the Church, and has filled the Church with his grace. Christ has surrendered himself to the Church, allowing the Church to express his will to the world.



The Church in turn must surrender itself to Christ. In order to be Christ's body on earth, the Church must make Jesus' will its own. The Church honors its covenant with Christ and truly acts as his body when its members

live as Christ lived, following the principles of charity, humility, and self-denial.¹⁵

The Church that is not identical to Christ is nonetheless the body of Christ because it has been joined to Christ in a true marriage covenant. The Church and Christ have become one. The true identity of both Christ and the Church can now be known only in the other.

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT



- IN YOUR OWN WORDS, EXPLAIN HOW CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH IS LIKE A HUSBAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS WIFE.

THE CHURCH IS UNCHANGING YET DEVELOPING

The Church is mystery in that it is unchanging and yet it doesn't look the same in every period in history.

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is the absolute self-communication of God to humanity. Nothing new will be revealed to us that has not already been revealed in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and in his sending of the Holy Spirit. We also believe that our understanding of Jesus and the truth which he revealed is constantly growing and deepening.¹⁶

47

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING



Teaching Approaches

1. Summarize the text section, “The Church Is the Bride of Christ” (pages 46–47), highlighting how the relationship between Christ and the Church is much like that of a husband and a wife.
2. Focus on the passage from the letter to the Ephesians (5:29–32). The passage points out how a wife should serve her husband in the same way the Church serves Christ. Likewise, a husband should care for his wife as Christ cares for his Church. Emphasize the points made in the final paragraph of the section, especially: “The identity of both Christ and the Church can now be known only in the other.”
3. Set up chairs facing the class. Welcome the married couples you have invited. Using the format suggested on the handout on page 329 of the TWE, 1) ask each couple to introduce themselves and provide a brief history of their marriage; 2) have each couple share a brief reflection on the marriage issues listed on the handout; 3) address questions on marriage to the panel members.
4. After the panel presentation has concluded, call on three or four students to come before the class and take turns answering, in their own words, the Journal Assignment on page 47.
5. **Homework Assignment:**
Read the text section “The Church Is Unchanging Yet Developing” through the subsection “The Church Has a Permanent Constitution” (pages 47–49).

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

The Church Is Unchanging Yet Developing

The Church Has a Permanent Constitution

Objectives

In this lesson, students will be able to:

- know three things within the Church which cannot and will not change;
- focus on the permanent constitution of the Church;
- understand the meaning of the Magisterium and how it is essential to the Church.

Preview

"The Church is unchanging yet developing" is the thesis for this and the following lesson. It is supported by the understanding that the Church has a permanent body of dogma, a permanent ethic, and a permanent constitution that cannot change through time. Though this is true and God's revelation is complete in Jesus Christ, this section points out that our understanding and expression of the revelation can and do change. This lesson focuses specifically on the permanent constitution of the Church, that is, its basic form and makeup.

Advance Preparation

- Arrange to have available for video presentation *Peter, Keeper of the Keys*, which is the first in *The Footprints of God: The Story of Salvation from Abraham to Augustine* series available from Vision Video. Cue the video to a part near the beginning that covers Jesus' call to Peter and his establishment as the rock on which the Church was founded.

THE CHURCH OUR STORY

apostle—One who is sent. It is the name used for the twelve men whom Jesus chose and who the Church believes were given authority by Christ.

The role of the Church as the body of Christ guided by the Holy Spirit is to continue to reveal the presence of God and to lead all people to unity with the Father just as Jesus did. It is the task of the Church to interpret what is going on in today's world in light of the gospel.¹⁵ We reveal what has been revealed to us through who we are, through what we say, and through what we do. Though Revelation is complete in Jesus, our understanding and expression of the Revelation can and do develop and change.

According to a Catholic understanding of the Church, there are three things within the Church which cannot and will not change:

1. The Church has a permanent constitution.
2. The Church has a permanent ethic.
3. The Church has a permanent body of dogma.

We will examine each one of these in more detail and consider some of the implications of saying that these are permanent.

The Church Has a Permanent Constitution

When we speak of the permanent constitution of the Church, we are speaking about its basic form and makeup; we are referring to the structure that makes it possible for the Church to be the Church. This structure has been part of the Church from the beginning. It is not something which has been superimposed on the Church any more than our bodies are things which have been

superimposed on us. The Church's structure is an essential part of the Church's identity in the same way that our bodies are an essential part of our identity. Even as it changes and develops it remains fundamentally the same.

We believe that Jesus established the basic structure for the Church when he chose twelve apostles from among his many followers. Because of human limitations some people were bound to know Jesus and his message more intimately than others. Jesus specifically selected some with whom he would share the most, and he made it clear that this selection came with responsibilities. Jesus gave the apostles authority to teach and baptize in his name. He also made it clear that this authority was not to be used to gain power, but to serve others and help them grow spiritually.¹⁶

Given the power from Jesus to act in his person, the apostles passed on their knowledge of Jesus, their authority from him, and their commitment to service in his name to their successors. In this way, the hierarchical structure of the Church was permanently established. The Catholic understanding of the Church is built upon the belief that this structure has been what Jesus intended. When Jesus commissioned the apostles he also promised that he would be with them to the end of time (Matthew 28:20). He would guide them in their teaching and in who they baptized. Since the apostles themselves did not live until "the

permanent constitution—Those elements in the Church's structure which were established by Jesus. It includes the presence of the hierarchy.

For Enrichment

Have the students read the following Scripture passages about St. Peter and then write a profile of him based on what they read:

Matthew 18:21–22	Matthew 19:27–30	Mark 9:2–8
Luke 5:1–11	John 6:67–71	John 13:1–20
John 18:1–11	John 20:1–10	Acts 3:1–4:31
Acts 9:32–10:48	Acts 11:1–18	Acts 15:7–11

end of time," the Catholic Church understands this promise to mean that Jesus will continue to guide those who will succeed the apostles until the end of time.¹⁷

Bishops in union with the pope and with priests as their co-workers have the responsibility of carrying on this teaching role. They are called to protect the central truths of our faith from ideas and beliefs which are not compatible with the truth revealed by Jesus. Bishops are committed to passing on the truth which they have received from those who have gone before them, extending all the way back to the apostles. Bishops can and must interpret that truth in light of current circumstances. They also can and must express that truth in language which makes sense to the people of the day. But they are not free to change or contradict the fundamental essence of that truth. Changing historical circumstances cannot change the nature of God or the nature of God's call to us. Since we believe that both of these things (God and God's call to us) were perfectly revealed in Jesus, changing historical circumstances should never cause us to accept things that contradict what has been passed to us from Jesus through his apostles and their successors.

The Responsibility of the Magisterium

The bishops of the world, often referred to as "the college of bishops," are committed to maintaining continuity between

the faith of today and the faith of the past. They help prevent us from reinterpreting what Jesus said and did in such a way that we can use it to justify anything we are doing or want to do. The bishops, acting in



union with the pope, by virtue of their ordination, are the authentic teachers of the faith. They constitute the magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. The pope and bishops hand on the deposit of faith from generation to generation. Competent theologians and spiritual authors—both ordained and lay people—are able to help the pope and bishops in the area of teaching and preaching.¹⁸ But it is the job of the pope and bishops to ensure that the teachings of Christ—the head of the body—are not dissipated or corrupted before they reach the other various parts of the body—the members of the Church. It is also the responsibility of the magisterium to convey the messages that come from the head in such a way that they can be understood. The

bishop—Literally an "overseer." A bishop is a successor to the apostles and the head of a particular church (usually a diocese). All of the bishops together and united with the pope exercise leadership over the universal Church.

pope—The bishop of Rome. The pope is successor of Peter and as such holds the highest office of teaching and governance in the Catholic Church.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING



Bell-Ringers

1. Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to brainstorm a list of things that change (e.g., music styles, clothing fads, boyfriend/girlfriends, etc.). Ask the other group to brainstorm a list of things that are permanent (e.g., long marriages, classical literature, town landmarks, etc.). After the discussion, compare the lists. Discuss what makes things permanent and what makes things prone to change.
2. Follow up by asking: "How is change a necessary element in a relationship? How important is permanence?"



Teaching Approaches

1. Point out that in the Church as in many other aspects of life, change and permanence go hand in hand. The Church must change in some ways in order to remain relevant or even comprehensible in a changing world. At the same time, there are aspects of the Church which cannot change if the Church is to maintain its identity as the body of Christ. These aspects are (write on the board and offer an explanation):

1. **The Church has a permanent constitution.** (i.e., the hierarchical structure of the Church, the Magisterium—bishops in union with the pope)
2. **The Church has a permanent ethic.** (i.e., the Church's moral teaching)
3. **The Church has a permanent body of dogma.** (i.e., certain absolute truths which were revealed by Jesus and will never change)
2. Focus on the text subsection, "The Church Has a Permanent Constitution" (pages 48–49), especially on the authority Jesus gave to Peter and the apostles and on the necessity of the Magisterium in today's Church.

Background Information

The Unity of the Bishops With the Pope

From the early centuries, the community of bishops appeared as an organically structured body—one that consisted of a head and members, each having a specific function. Pope Leo the Great in the fifth century was the first to explain this "constitution" in theological terms: the bishop of Rome was the vicar of Peter; by implication the rest of the bishops were the vicars of the other Apostles. It is a unique constitution: The pope is a brother-bishop, not a "super-bishop." He has the pastoral care of a diocese as the others do, yet he has a "primacy of power" that the others do not have.

The head and the members, of course, must work together in harmony. The body is in good health and vigorous (as Paul the Apostle told the Corinthians) when each of the organs is performing its own specific task. Should any of them fail to operate to full capacity, the whole organism is bound to suffer for it.

Good examples of such harmonious cooperation between the head and the members have been precisely the ecumenical or general councils—21 of them by the official count of the Western church—since the First Council of Nicaea in 325. At these gatherings, the bishops sought—and found—a deeper understanding of the Christian mysteries, and they gave wise directions to the people. The final approval of the council's actions was granted always by the Vicar of Peter, whether he had been present at the deliberations or not. At the end, there was integrity in the process (Excerpt from an article by Ladislav Orsy, S.J. that originally appeared in *America*, October 9, 1999. Full article can be viewed at www.americamagazine.org/articles/orsy.htm.)

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY

3. Share: "The Magisterium—the official teaching authority of the Church, residing in the pope and the bishops—has a vital function. The Magisterium ensures the authentic teaching of the gospel message."
4. Play part of the video *Peter, Keeper of the Keys* (see above) that details Jesus' founding of the Church and its hierarchy through St. Peter. The video is a total of 110 minutes. Plan to show about a twenty-minute portion.
5. Ask the students to reread the subsection "When an Individual Disagrees with the Magisterium" (pages 50–51) and ask the question (page 55) "What are the responsibilities of someone who disagrees with the Magisterium?" Ask them to reflect on their answer in light of times they or someone they know has disagreed with the Magisterium. Ask: "How does your answer to this question give you new perspective on the issue?"

6. Homework Assignment:

- Complete the goals asked for in the Discipleship activity on page 53.
- Write answers to the first three Study Questions on page 55.
- Read the text subsections "The Church Has a Permanent Ethic" and "The Church Has a Permanent Body of Dogma" (pages 51–55).
- Continue working on the Learn By Doing assignment, page 56.

THE CHURCH OUR STORY

magisterium is the authentic interpreter of scripture and Tradition (the doctrinal and moral teachings which have been passed from generation to generation).

The magisterium is not the Church. The Church is the whole body of Christ: laity, clergy, and religious. However, the

pronouncements of the Catholic magisterium on these and other issues. Second, the magisterium of the Catholic Church has ensured the preservation of certain beliefs and practices which many Protestant churches had ignored for a time but are now reclaiming.¹⁹

According to Catholic teaching, the magisterium—the pope and bishops—were established by Jesus. They will always be, and should always be, part of the Church. Furthermore, the pope and bishops will and should always have the job of interpreting scripture and Tradition in light of current circumstances. There will always be the authoritative voice concerning what is genuinely Catholic at any particular point in history. This is one of the beliefs that most clearly distinguishes Catholics from those in other Christian denominations.



magisterium is essential to the Church. Without it the Church would not function as a single and unified body. Furthermore, without the magisterium of the Church, much of the truth which Jesus revealed about God and about God's call to us would be permanently lost or distorted.

A point of contention may be made that there are other Christian denominations which do not have a magisterium and which nonetheless have remained faithful to Jesus. It must be noted, however, that the presence of the magisterium in the Catholic Church has served non-Catholic Christians as well as Catholics in at least two specific ways. First, the very existence of the Catholic magisterium has ensured that issues such as abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and justice for the poor will be discussed in relationship to Christian faith. Christians of many other denominations are aware of, and find it necessary to respond to, the

When An Individual Disagrees with the Magisterium

Each Catholic, in following the teaching of the Church, needs to keep in mind the good of the whole Church and of all persons. However, sometimes an individual faces a situation in which following the teaching of the Church seems particularly difficult. Only with appropriate study, reflection, prayer, and consultation with others knowledgeable about a teaching of the Church can one make an informed decision. A person should not seek to place individual conscience apart from the teaching of the Church. When after a process of fully forming one's conscience in this way, one concludes that he cannot follow the Church's teaching on a particular matter, he must realize he is disagreeing with the magisterium. Despite this disagreement, one must continue to pray for conversion and strive to form his conscience in conformity with the teaching of the Church in that

50

Extending the Lesson

1. Brainstorm with the class a list of topics which are debated within the Catholic Church.
2. Ask each student to select one of the topics.
3. Ask the students to identify the main points being made, challenges offered, and questions raised by those on each side of the debate. Identify any arguments, challenges, or questions which deny one of the permanent elements of the Church and therefore fall outside of legitimate discussion within the Catholic Church. (For example: any statement which would seem to indicate that the Church has no right to make statements about personal morality, any statement which would question the legitimacy of the hierarchical structure of the Church, or any statement which rejects the concept of objective, unchanging truths.) Identify any arguments which would try to make permanent those things that are not necessarily permanent. Categorize the remaining points, questions, and challenges according to whether they relate to the constitution, ethic, or dogma of the Church.

matter. When people disagree with the magisterium, they must admit that they are not speaking as representatives of the Catholic Church, but as individuals. They must acknowledge that their opinions do not carry the weight of a universal Church, or of a teaching with an unbroken connection back through history to Christ. They must acknowledge the cultural biases of their opinions and admit that those opinions may not be open to the voices of people of faith from very different cultures.

They must admit that in taking a stand that is different from that of the magisterium they are implying that the Holy Spirit has revealed things to them and to their group that have been withheld from many others who are equally committed to listening to the Spirit. In other words, Catholics should be very cautious when they hold opinions that differ from the teachings of the magisterium, and they must always be open to the possibility that those opinions are wrong. Furthermore, Catholics are called to acknowledge the right of the magisterium to say that certain beliefs and behaviors are so fundamentally opposed to the central truths of the faith that a person who publicly embraces or advocates them can no longer expect to be treated as a member of the Catholic Church.

We now return again to Tonia's question: Who represents the true Church? Father Kelly, who insisted that everyone obey the teachings of the magisterium? Or Father Dave, who said that all of the faithful together make up the body of Christ and that priests and bishops are no more important than anyone else? Once again we must answer that, in the great mystery which is the Church, both Father Kelly and Father Dave are right. All of the baptized are equally members of the body of Christ. All are called to serve God and to make Jesus' presence known in the world. Father Dave is speaking of the true Catholic Church when he helps

people to understand that it is not the hierarchy alone that determines how the good news will be shared with the world. Every Catholic has both the right and the responsibility of helping to shape the Church. On the other hand, the magisterium is needed to ensure the unity of all of the individual efforts and to ensure that individual efforts do not separate Catholics from the essential truths revealed by Christ. Father Kelly is speaking with the voice of the true Catholic Church when he stresses the importance of knowing, understanding, and respecting the teachings of the magisterium.

The Church Has a Permanent Ethic

In order to cope with the tremendous intermingling of different cultures and value systems, many North Americans have accepted the way of thinking which says that everything is relative. In other words, the view is held that there is no "right" way of relating to other people, no "right" religion, no "right" understanding of marriage and sexuality, any more than there is a "right" food, a "right" way to dress or a "right" type of music. In today's popular culture right and wrong are in the mind of the individual. Under this belief, each person follows his or her own conscience and respects the right of others to do the same.²⁰

Catholic moral teaching agrees that we must respect the rights of others to follow their own conscience; God has given each one of us the freedom to choose between right and wrong, and we should do no less for one another.²¹ Catholic moral teaching does not, however, agree that "right" and "wrong" are a matter of individual perspective. Fundamental to Catholicism is the belief that God is unchanging, and therefore there are certain things that have always been and will always be opposed to God. Certain behaviors always undermine our relationship with God and with God's people regardless of our

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING

The Church Has a Permanent Ethic The Church Has a Permanent Body of Dogma

Objectives

In this lesson, students will be able to:

- know that there are certain objective truths that are defined by God and can never be changed;
- comprehend that it is the task of the Magisterium to study the truths and to interpret and pass them on for succeeding generations;
- understand that there is a permanent body of dogma in the Church.

Preview

This lesson continues the understanding that the Church is a mystery, in that it is unchanging even though it does not look the same at every period in history. Related to this is the fact that the Church has a permanent ethic, that is, a basic moral teaching that can never be changed no matter how the world changes. Once again, it is the responsibility of the Magisterium to examine and preserve these truths, while at the same time to look for ways they apply to each new generation in history. The Church also has a permanent body of dogma, that is, certain absolute truths that were revealed to us by Jesus and will never change.

Background Information

Conditions of Discipleship

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:24-26).

Consider having the students use a concordance to search for other New Testament passages that include descriptions of the tasks of a Christian disciple.

UNIT 2: THE CHURCH IS MYSTERY



Bell-Ringers

1. Choose three or four readers to divide Matthew 10:1–43, the call and meaning of discipleship, into parts. When completed, call on the class to list several characteristics and conditions of discipleship as gleaned from the reading. List these on the board. For example:

- stay away from pagans
- do not carry many possessions
- be ready for persecutions
- remain humble under the Lordship of Jesus
- speak the truth by day
- do not be afraid
- acknowledge Jesus before all
- put Christ before even family members
- take up your cross and follow

2. Next, have the students comment on their homework assignment about some of the goals they have for being a Christian disciple. *Optional:* Go around the room asking each student to name one of the goals from his or her list. If there is time, have them go around a second and/or third time, sharing other goals.

THE CHURCH'S PERMANENT ETHIC

permanent ethic—Those moral teachings which are essential corollaries of the Church's understanding of God revealed in Jesus.

reasons for doing them. Rejecting God and God's plan for the world is always wrong and will always have negative consequences both for the individual and for his or her community, both local and global.

There are some elements of Catholic moral teaching which can never be changed, no matter how much the world changes. This is the meaning of the statement that the Church has a **permanent ethic**. This is because certain moral teachings are essential formulations of our understanding of the God who was revealed in Jesus. For example, we believe that every single human being has value because every single human being is made in the image and likeness of God. When human nature was permanently joined to the divine in the Incarnation of Jesus, the dignity of human life was underscored. In choosing to become human, to be born and to die, Christ revealed that human life has value from the moment of conception until death. Because of this basic belief, the Church is not free to decide that some human lives have ceased to have value. Similarly the Church does not have the right to decide that sexual behavior is morally neutral and therefore something that the Church should not comment on. Because in our sexuality we are offered the role of co-creators with God, we believe that our sexuality is a gift from God. The way we use our sexuality shapes the world. The Church has a responsibility for teaching and encouraging people to use their sexuality in a

way that is compatible with God's revealed intention for the world.

We are a Church made up of sinners. We recognize that throughout history many Catholics "have been disloyal to the Spirit of God."²² The Church has not always upheld its own moral teaching. During historical periods such as the inquisitions and the crusades, the Church violated some of the basic principles of its ethic. Pope Leo X went so far as to claim that the burning of heretics was completely in accord with the will of God. Nonetheless, an ethic rooted in a belief in God's love for all people has never ceased to exist, and it has been passed on even through the darkest times of Church history.

Responsibilities to the Church's Permanent Ethic

The permanent ethic is part of what defines Catholicism. By definition, it is impossible to be a Catholic and to reject the permanent ethic of the Church just as it is impossible to be a Catholic and to reject the notion of a Church with a pope and bishops. It is the responsibility of the magisterium to give voice to the permanent ethic of the Church. Every Catholic is responsible for learning and embracing this ethic. If a person knowingly rejects all or part of the permanent ethic of the Church, that is, if a person knowingly rejects all or part of the moral order which has been revealed by Jesus and chooses some other arbitrator of right and wrong, that person puts him or

82

Background Information

Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*

Pope Pius IX was pontiff from 1846–1878, the longest reign in the history of the Church. To his encyclical written in 1864, he attached the "Syllabus of Errors," in which he denounced several errors which had sprung up in Church teaching. He also included many tenets that had cropped up in the nineteenth century, including freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Some of the errors of the Church commented on by Pope Pius IX can be read at www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P9SYLL.HTM.

himself outside of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, if a person accepts the permanent ethic of the Church but rejects the magisterium's interpretation of that ethic with regard to a specific set of circumstances, that person is not automatically separated from the Church.

The magisterium not only gives voice to the permanent ethic of the Church, it is also responsible for observing and evaluating the common practices of the day in light of that ethic. It is the magisterium's role to guide the faithful as it determines the behavior appropriate to specific situations. Every Catholic is called to pay close attention to the magisterium's interpretation of the permanent ethic in light of specific current circumstances; however, there may be instances when a person, even after careful study, reflection, and prayer, accepts the permanent ethic of the Church but believes that putting that ethic into practice means behaving in a way that goes against a specific teaching of the magisterium. This person may or may not be sinning, but he or she has not ceased to be Catholic.²³

Even as we are called to give careful attention to the directives of the magisterium, we are also to respectfully challenge the magisterium when necessary. We must share with the magisterium and with the rest of the body the experience, wisdom, and knowledge which are unique to our own segment of the body. When various members of the body ignore the teachings of the

magisterium, the body acts like a person suffering from a spasmodic disorder who is unable to function in a coordinated manner. On the other hand, when members of the body follow the directives of the magisterium blindly without taking any responsibility for sharing their own wisdom and insight, it is like a body suffering from leprosy, with no sensation coming from the hands or feet to warn of problems or errors. The magisterium has the final authority for interpreting the permanent ethic of the Church which has been handed down to us through scripture and Tradition. However, every member of the body of Christ is called to support and aid the magisterium in carrying out this task.

The mystery of the Church can be seen in its moral teaching. The hierarchy and the laity work together to preserve a permanent ethic and to give it life. In a world in which wrong choices can blind us to the difference between right and wrong, the mystery of the Church lies in the fact that it has not lost sight of the "right" which was revealed by Jesus. The mystery of the Church is revealed in the fact that it has preserved an ethic rooted in love even through the darkest periods of its own history. Despite the sinful nature of some of its members, the Church has not allowed the ethic which it received from Jesus to be swallowed up by secular culture. In the permanence of the Church's ethic, the hidden presence of the eternal, unchangeable God is revealed.



DISCIPLESHIP

When Jesus chose the apostles, he gave them a mission. He also set the conditions of discipleship. Read Matthew 10:1-43. Then write ten goals you have for living your life as a disciple of Christ.

hierarchy—The structural order of leaders within the Church. The term is commonly used to refer to all of the ordained ministers in the Church: the pope, bishops, priests, and deacons.

ENDURING AND DEVELOPING



Teaching Approaches

1. Review the content of the previous lesson by going over the correct answers to the first three Study Questions on page 55.
2. Define what is meant by the Church's permanent ethic as the following. Refer to the vocabulary panel on page 52: "The Church's permanent ethic refers to those moral teachings which are essential corollaries of the Church's understanding of God revealed in Jesus." Use the example of sexuality on page 52 to help explain why the Church's permanent ethic can never be changed. Also refer to the example listed in footnote #23 on page 57.
3. Re-read the statement at the end of "The Church Has a Permanent Ethic" subsection: "We cannot ignore the Magisterium's teachings but we also should not try to suppress or ignore human experience." The text points out the example of how this important in footnote #24. After reading the footnote, have the students speculate on how freedom of the press and freedom of religion might have been disruptive of the Church in one century, but help underscore the truth of Catholicism in the next.
4. Read the opening statements in the text section, "The Church Has a Permanent Body of Dogma." Ask the students to apply these statements to real times they have heard people speak them and to tell what the situation was they were speaking of. Note why these statements are unacceptable for Catholics: "There are certain absolute truths which must be accepted because they have been revealed to us by Jesus and will never change."
5. Using what they know about the permanent constitution, ethic, and body of dogma of the Church, ask the students to respond to arguments presented by various people on the handout, "The Permanent Elements of the Church Case Studies" (page 330 of the TWE). This page can be reproduced for distribution to each student. Use the following guide on page 66 of the TWE to help respond to each case study.

Background Information

The Burning at the Stake of Heretics

The Church began killing heretics in the fourth century and again in the eleventh century. Papal instructions insisted that heretics must suffer death by fire to avoid spilling a drop of blood, which was at least partially attributed to Jesus' words in the gospel: "Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned" (Jn 15:6). The Church eventually distanced itself from the killing of heretics by turning over to the secular government the actual burning. These governments were not allowed to decline the task, however. When the Senate of Venice refused to approve such executions in 1521, for example, Pope Leo X wrote that secular officials were "to intervene no more in this kind of trial, but promptly, without changing or inspecting the sentences made by the ecclesiastical judges, to execute the sentences which they are enjoined to carry out. And if they neglect or refuse, you [the papal legate] are to compel them with the Church's censure and other appropriate measures. From this order there is no appeal."