

ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 8

The Church

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Our Sunday Visitor

We Are Christ's People

♥ Let Us Pray

Leader: Wondrous Lord, how good it is to know that we are never alone. How good it is to know that we belong to you. May all that we do and all that we say be done in the name of Christ Jesus.

“O LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all
the earth!” **Psalms 8:2**

All: O God, give us wisdom to know where we belong.
Give us wisdom to go where you lead us.

✚ Scripture

“Jesus said to them, ‘Did you never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes?”’”

Matthew 21:42

Have you ever thought...

- How is Jesus the cornerstone of the Church?
- What does it mean to belong to the Church?

Getting Started

In this chapter, you will learn how Jesus accomplished what his Father set out for him to do, and understand how though Baptism, we share in his mission as Priest, Prophet, and King. You will also examine how the Church helps us develop our faith and brings us together through Baptism and belief in Christ.

In the web below, write the various groups to which you belong, what your role is in each, and what each means to you.



I Belong ...

Catholic Faith Words

- salvation
- *ekklesia*
- domestic Church
- offices of Christ

IDENTIFY

Jesus the Cornerstone Using the imagery of Jesus as the cornerstone, build a spiritual house. Label each of the stones with ways that your faith in Jesus has been built and grown to this point. You can include the names of people or groups who have supported you or created a sense of belonging.



We Belong to the Church

How does the Church help us develop our faith?

Throughout life, we belong to a variety of groups. We are part of a family, a class, a school, a parish, a team, a circle of friends. We are born into some communities. We choose to belong to others. And other groups choose us.

We can belong to many groups at one time, but some groups are more essential to who we are. For example, we don't stop being part of our family because we are part of a sports team or a community group. And, as Catholics, we are part of God's People, his Church.



From "No People" to "God's People"

From the time of Abraham and Moses, God called the Israelites, later called the Jews, to be his Chosen People. He is their God; they are his People.

But with the coming of the Son of God, those who believed in him became part of the new People of God in Christ, his Church. We are Christ's Church because he is with us always, present among us as we pray and worship him, acting through us to continue his mission in the world.

No longer do you have to be Jewish to be part of God's People. What you need to have is faith in Jesus. You do not have to be born into God's Chosen People; you have to be born anew through Baptism. Peter tells us:

Scripture

"But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were 'no people,' but now you are God's people" **1 Peter 2:9-10**

If we are called to be part of God's People, how does that happen? Are some called and others not? No, God invites everyone to be a part of his family, and he does it through the Church herself.

> What has God called you to do?

Faith and Baptism

The Church is the Bride of Christ: He loved her and gave himself for her. Jesus is in relationship and communion with her. He has purified her by his Death.

Through the work of the Church, the Good News of Jesus is brought to people everywhere. Those who have faith and choose to be baptized become members of God's People. In fact, the Church is like an international household of faith. Though members speak all different languages and represent many cultures, we are all united through Baptism. We form one family of faith, one People of God.

We cannot underestimate the importance of faith. Yes, it's a free gift from God, but it's also our choice. We don't have to have perfect faith to be baptized. In fact, faith before Baptism is a young faith that needs to mature and grow. Our faith grows as we learn and experience life, with the help of our family, the example of other Catholics, our teachers and catechists, prayer, and the Seven Sacraments.



Procession and Mass of the Holy Cross at the Old City Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

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EXPLAIN

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Saint Paul tells us, "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it." When Paul says you are the Body of Christ, how is that different from membership in any of the groups you listed on page 104? Explain the differences on the lines below.



In the Church's liturgy, the work of Christ's salvation is made present.

God's Plan for the Church

How does the Church bring us together?

The Church exists to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Church is to reach out and let everyone know about **salvation**—the loving action of God's forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of our friendship with God through Christ.

God's plan is that all people come to know him. He uses the Church as a way to make this happen. As both the means and the goal of God's plan, the Church is a planned part of his good creation. She began in the Old Covenant, the promise given to Abraham and Moses by God. The Church is founded in the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by Jesus' Death and Resurrection, and revealed at Pentecost in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. She is perfected in the glory of Heaven.

Together as the Church, we help one another. As diverse as we are, we are all in it together. The spiritually strong, the weak, those suffering in mind and body, young and old, the poor and the persecuted, are all the Church. The word *Church* is not used much in the Gospels. But when it is, it carries with it a great deal of weight. Jesus teaches his disciples that the Church has the authority to mediate between two members at odds with each other.

Catholic Faith Words

salvation the loving action of God's forgiveness of sins and the restoration of friendship with the Father brought by Jesus Christ

ekklesia the original term for church in Scripture, meaning "convocation" or "those called together"

domestic Church a term for the Catholic family, because it is the community of Christians in the home. God made the family to be the first place we learn about loving others and following Christ.

The original term for church in Scripture is **ekklesia**, which means “convocation” or “those called together.” The Word of life in the Gospel gathers the People of God. Once gathered, they are nourished through the Body and Blood of Christ.

> **What is God’s plan for the Church? What part do you think you have in God’s plan?**

We Are Family

The Catholic family is the center of faith, and we call the family the **domestic Church**. This means that your home is a smaller version of the larger Church. Parents and other family members carry the primary responsibility for being good examples in educating and bringing up their children in the faith of the Church, to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.

Just like your family members come together, the Third Commandment tells us, the Church, to come together to observe the Lord’s Day, Sunday. The most important way we do this is by participating in the Mass.

Why is it so important to take part in the celebration of the Mass every week? We are nourished by the Word of God and by the Eucharist when we gather together.

We need this spiritual food often, just as a person needs physical food. Otherwise, we

will starve and our faith will become weaker. We won’t be growing strong because we will have separated ourselves from the Church and Christ’s gift of himself in the Eucharist. In the Body of Christ, the Church, we receive the fullness of God’s life and love in Holy Communion.

> **What do you think it means that we call the family the domestic Church?**

> **Why do we compare the Church to a family? How is the Church like a family? How is she different?**



READ AND DISCUSS

Look up and read the following Scripture passages about the Church. Place a check mark next to your favorite and compare your answer with a classmate. Explain what the passage means to you in terms of the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:12–26

1 Peter 2:9–10

Ephesians 2:19–22



Detail of a ceiling fresco in the Sacristy of San Marco, Italy, depicts the prophet Jeremiah

His Work Is Ours

How does Jesus accomplish what his Father set out for him?

When you hear the word *office*, you probably think of a place where someone works. The word has other meanings, too. For example, the office of president would refer to a position of authority, trust, or duty given to someone. An office is also a function or role given to someone.

During the time of the Israelites and Jews before Jesus' time, men were appointed to be priests to offer sacrifices to God to keep the covenant, prophets to speak God's Word and call the people to live faithfully, and kings to rule God's people. These were their offices, and they were anointed and sent by God to do his work.

Catholic Faith Words

offices of Christ the three roles of Jesus (Priest, Prophet, and King) that describe his mission and work among God's people; all those baptized share in these three roles

Then God the Father sent his own Son to us. The Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit as shown at his Baptism and established him as the Priest, the Prophet, and the King. These roles are called the three **offices of Christ**. They describe his mission and work among God's People.

We Share in Jesus' Mission

When we were baptized, we were united with Christ and his mission. We, too, were anointed to share in Christ's role of priest, prophet, and king to the world. We live out these offices, or roles, in our daily lives at school, at home, in sports practice, at work. We can show others what it means to follow Christ and to live for God's Kingdom. "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is at work until now, so I am at work'" (John 5:17).

The Offices of Christ

As **priest**, Jesus offers the most amazing sacrifice, doing something no other can do. He gave his life so that we all can be reconciled with the Father. He intercedes with the Father for us.

As **prophet**, Jesus completes the Law and prophecy that had come before him. He gives us the words of truth and life that no one else can.

As **servant king**, Jesus leads by example, teaching his people to give God honor and praise and give of themselves for the needs of others. Jesus was not the ruler the people had expected. He was not concerned with earthly kingdoms or politics, but with God's Kingdom.

Participating in Jesus' Mission



Priest: We can offer our daily work to God, our studies, our time in prayer, difficult times and fun times, the ways we take care of others—all can be a spiritual gift to God.



Prophet: We can tell others about Jesus' message, the way to live as a disciple, and stick up for what is right and for those who can't stand up for themselves. We can ask questions and learn more about our faith, and teach others about Jesus by acting as he did.



King: We can serve others as leaders in classes, on teams, in clubs, around our neighborhoods. We can make the needs of others our needs too. We can participate in parish activities and lead others by our example of acting fairly and working for peace.

1. Place a check mark next to the role that is easiest for you.
2. Explain your answer in the space below.



INTERVIEW

Meet with one leader in your school and ask about his or her role. Ask him or her which of the offices he or she feels called to perform most often in his or her work: priest, prophet, or king? What does performing that role involve? Take notes and share your results in class.



IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

As the People of God, all the Church's members have an important relationship with God and a role in spreading his message.

- We belong to the People of God through Baptism and belief in Christ, which matures as we grow and experience more.
- The Church is part of God's plan for all people to come to know him and love him,

and the Catholic family has a special role in this plan as the domestic Church.

- Through Baptism, each of us shares in Christ's mission as Priest, Prophet, and King. We offer our lives and prayer to God, and we show others the Good News through our words and actions, and through how we serve and lead others.

Our Catholic Life

Our life in the Church includes participating in the mission of Jesus as priest, prophet, and king. One way we do this is by offering our lives and prayers to God, both in Church and out in the world.

Another way is by sharing the message of the Good News in our words and actions. One of the **Precepts of the Church** is to take part in Mass on Sundays and holy days and to keep these days holy, avoiding unnecessary work. On Sundays, Catholics can spend time in prayer and thought on how they could serve and lead others over the next week, acting as priest, prophet, and king in their homes, school, and workplaces. Spend some time this weekend considering what you can personally do.

➤ **What is one way you can live as priest, prophet, or king this week?**



People of Faith

Saint Angela Merici, 1474–1540

Saint Angela was a very devout child. As she grew up, she saw that many poor young women were not able to get a good education, so when she was 20 she began teaching girls in her home. When she was 61 years old, she founded the Company of St. Ursula, an order of nuns, with twelve other women. The Ursulines were the first Catholic sisters to come to the new world. In 1639, they built a mission in Canada to teach the native people. The Ursulines still operate schools in the United States and Canada. The Church celebrates her feast day on **January 27**.

For more, go to
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IDENTIFY

Imagine you are a reporter interviewing a Catholic person. This person spoke about being part of God's family and the Church, reasons it is important to attend Mass regularly, and how each Catholic is called to act as priest, prophet, and king. Choose one of these topics and reread the section on it in this chapter.

Your topic:

Write an article based on your "interview," on your chosen topic. Write a headline and an opening sentence for your article here.



Celebration of the Word

Leader: We gather here this day
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us be attentive to the wisdom of
Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 27–31.

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: O God of all,
before we were even born you formed us
and shaped us as one like you.
On the day of our birth, you claimed us as
your own.
On the day of our Baptism, your Church
welcomed us
into the family of believers,
who claim Christ, your Son, as Lord.

How good it is to know that we have
always belonged,
that we are never alone,
that there are others out there just like us,
that we are chosen members of something
greater than ourselves!

Help us to understand what a gift it is to
be members of a community
that chooses Christ in times of trouble,
that chooses Christ in times of joy and
excitement,
that chooses Christ in times of worry and
decision making,
that chooses Christ to lead us each and
every day.

May all that we do
and all that we say
be done in the name of Christ Jesus.

All: Amen.

 *Sing or play "Healing Waters"*

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A Work with Words Circle the letter of the choice that best completes the sentence.

1. Each Catholic family is called to be a(n) _____.
 - a. domestic office
 - b. *ekklesia*
 - c. domestic Church
 - d. parish

2. The loving action of God’s forgiveness of sins and the restoration of our friendship with God is called _____.
 - a. salvation
 - b. abba
 - c. Heaven
 - d. prudence

3. In Scripture, the word for Church, *ekklesia*, means _____.
 - a. chosen People
 - b. those called
 - c. People of God
 - d. people of the Word together

4. Jesus’ mission as Priest, Prophet, and King is known as the _____.
 - a. new covenant
 - b. fulfillment of
 - c. Old Testament offices
 - d. three offices of Christ

B Check Understanding Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. Then rewrite false statements to make them true.

5. The Church is like an international household of faith, all united through Baptism. **True/False**

6. The Church exists to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. **True/False**

7. From the time of Abraham and Moses, God called the Israelites to be his Chosen People. **True/False**

8. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we share in Jesus’ mission as priest, prophet, and king. **True/False**

9. The First Commandment requires us to come together on Sunday to observe the Lord’s Day. **True/False**

10. Jesus showed us that the true meaning of leadership is service. **True/False**

C Make Connections Write a one-paragraph response to the question: As a baptized member of the Church, how can you more fully live out your role as a prophet, a priest, or a king?

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