

ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 8

The Church

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Our Sunday Visitor

The Church Is Catholic

♥ Let Us Pray

Leader: O God of every good gift, help us to love your people by sharing our gifts with each other. May we help others believe in you.

“How good and how pleasant it is,
when brothers dwell together as one!” **Psalm 133:1**

All: Lord, give us the right words to say.

✚ Scripture

“For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.”

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need.” **Acts 2:39, 44–45**

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Have you ever thought...

- How does the Good News reach every corner of the Earth?
- How can you explain your Catholic faith to a friend?

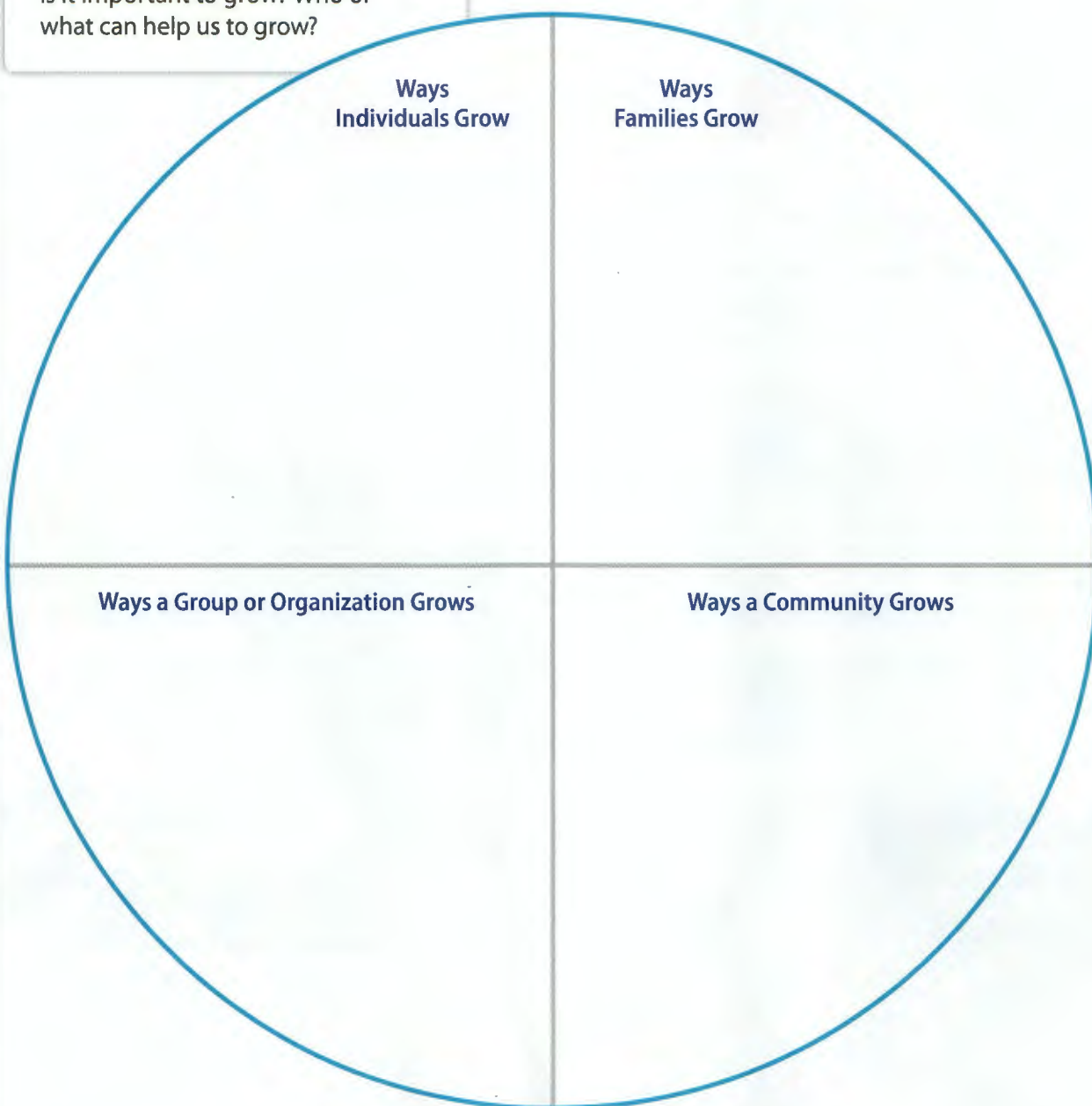
Getting Started

In this chapter, you will explore the importance of sharing the Good News. You will better understand the Church's mission of establishing God's Kingdom and examine the ways that the Church carries out her mission.

Catholic Faith Words

- Evangelists
- missionary mandate
- catholic, as a Mark of the Church
- missionaries

In the circle, describe ways people and groups grow—in understanding and knowledge, or in size, or in influence. Why is it important to grow? Who or what can help us to grow?



LIST

Top Ten Catholic In the Acts of the Apostles, you read about how the Apostles shared their faith and the Christian community grew (see Acts 2:39, 43–46). A friend wants to learn more about what you believe and how you practice your faith. Create a Top Ten List of Catholic beliefs and practices that you could share with your friend.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Believers Spread the Good News

Am I willing to tell other people about Jesus and his Church?

Sometimes talking about your faith is easy and natural. Sometimes it feels awkward. Sometimes it feels competitive—or preachy. When it comes to talking about your Catholic faith, speak simply and from your heart.

When you speak from the heart about what you believe, others tend to respect it—whether they get it or not. Talking about God comes with being a disciple.



Evangelists

The four authors of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are called the Four **Evangelists**. Inspired by God to record his Word, they were certainly bearers of the Good News.

Before any of the Gospels were written, a woman brought an entire town to meet Jesus, even though many of the townspeople did not like her very much. She became known as the Woman at the Well. (See John 4:4–42.) She was a woman with a bad reputation.

Jesus knew all about her, and he told her so. He also told her he was the Messiah who could give her life-giving water. She believed what Jesus told her and she told others about him. And they came to believe too.

➤ If Jesus came to stay with you, what would you want to ask him and learn from him?

Scripture

“Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me everything I have done.’ When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe because of your word, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.’ ” **John 4:39–42**

Go to the Source

What did Jesus say to the woman? Read *John 4:13–26* to find out.

An Urgent Mandate

Jesus sends his disciples out with urgency. He says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). After his Resurrection, Jesus told his Apostles to make disciples of all nations. The Church is the sign of salvation and new life sent by God to all nations in all times to bring the saving message of Jesus to everyone. Salvation can only come through faith in Christ and his Church, so the Church must spread the Gospel everywhere. This is her **missionary mandate**.

Christ did not send only the leaders to spread the Gospel. He sent the whole Church. This means he also sent and continues to send each of us. There is no other way for us to truly be disciples of Jesus. He expects us to spread his Good News.

We might doubt our ability to spread the Good News or be afraid of how people will receive us. Jesus reassures us: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (**Matthew 28:20**). He has stayed with his Church down through the ages. He is with us now.



Religious sister Maria helps clean up after serving meals to the homeless in Kamagaski, Japan

Catholic Faith Words

Evangelists the four inspired human authors of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

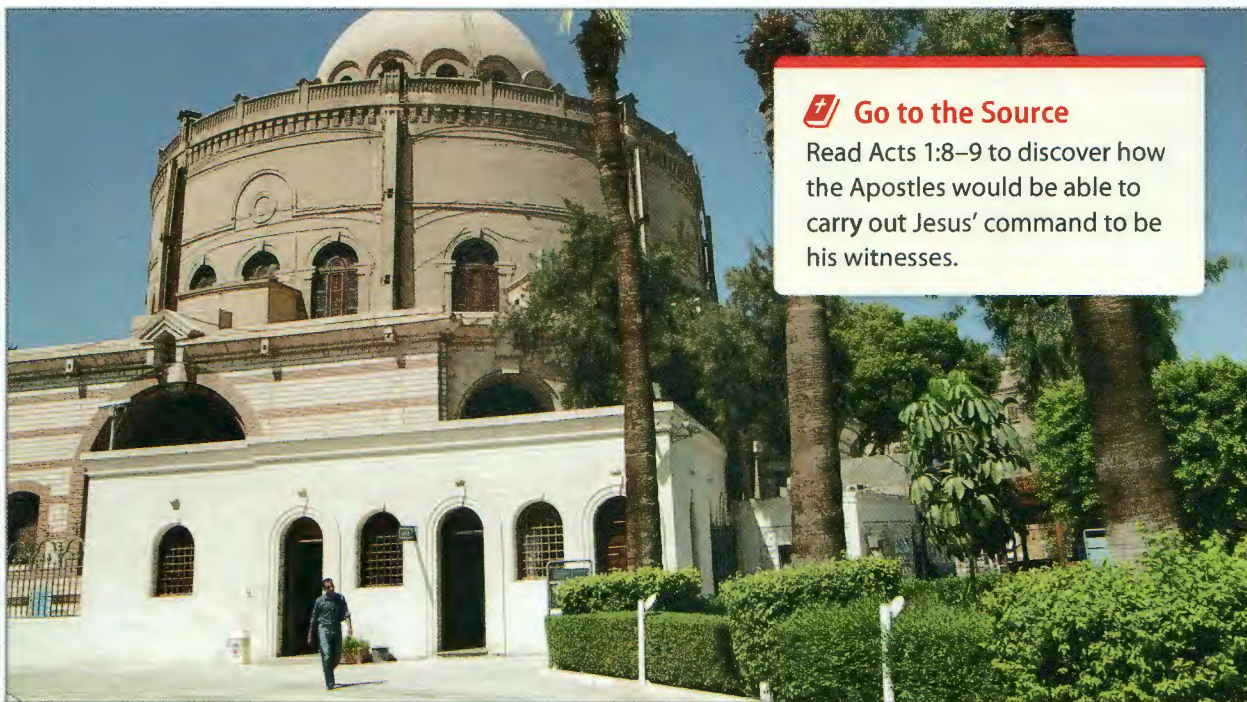
missionary mandate the responsibility given by Jesus to the Church to bring his saving message to everyone

LIST AND APPLY

List some ways people can tell that you are a Catholic.

Think of other Catholics you know. Explain some of the ways their faith is visible.

What is one thing you can learn from the ways their faith is visible?



Church of Mary Girgis, Cairo, Egypt

Go to the Source

Read Acts 1:8–9 to discover how the Apostles would be able to carry out Jesus' command to be his witnesses.

Meant for Everyone

Why does the Church want to reach everyone in the world?

The word *catholic* means “universal.” When something is universal, it is for everyone. It is total and complete.

The word fits the Catholic Church in two ways:

- The Church proclaims all the truths of the faith. In the Church we have the total message and everything we need for salvation with nothing left out.
- The Church is for everyone. She is sent out to all people everywhere in every time. When Jesus was ascending to his Father, he told his Apostles, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This is why we say that one of the Marks of the Church is that she is **catholic**.

Universal Doesn't Mean Identical

The Church has to reach out to everyone in the world in order to be herself. From the beginning, Jesus wanted the Church to be universal, welcoming, and open to everyone. In order for this to happen, we, like the first disciples, have to spread the message.

Although the Church strives to be universal and reach everyone in the world, she does not have to look and act the same in every place she is established.

The Church takes on different cultures, customs, and appearances in each part of the world where she puts down roots. The rich variety of liturgical traditions and cultural expressions of the faith are part of the Church's great glory.

Catholic Faith Words

catholic a Mark of the Church. The church is catholic because her mission is to the whole world.

Everything Needed

The Catholic Church has everything needed to be reconciled with God and to be made one with him. The Fathers of Vatican Council II listed all that is necessary for salvation:

- correct and complete instruction in the faith
- the full sacramental life of all Seven Sacraments
- ordained ministry that follows in direct succession from the Apostles

These things can only be found completely in the Catholic Church. People who are not members of the Church can be saved, but only because of the grace of God present in the Church.



Palm Sunday liturgy in Ethiopia

WRITE

Write down some ways the Church is for everyone, welcoming all people, and going out to people everywhere. Then, explain how your parish acts in the same way on a local level.

The Universal Church: _____

My Parish: _____

A Missionary Church

How does the Church carry out her missionary mandate?

God, in his great love, wants everyone to know and love him. Everyone who searches for the truth is on the path to salvation, but the whole truth has been given to the Church. So, the Church goes out to those seeking the truth, offering them salvation through faith in Christ. The Church has been missionary from the very beginning and continues to be so today.

Missionary work requires patience; it doesn't succeed overnight! The Church acts like water on a seed—a whole tree doesn't grow instantaneously. It gradually leads people to Christ in these stages:

- proclamation of the Gospel to nonbelievers
- establishment of Christian communities
- foundation of local churches

Missionaries enter into “respectful dialogue” with those who do not yet accept the Gospel. They respect other traditions and

Catholic Faith Words

missionaries people who answer a call from God to devote a period of their lives to bringing Christ's message to people in other places

cultures and try to incorporate symbols and traditions of cultures into the way they teach about the Gospel.

Catholic missionaries have been among the greatest world explorers. Missionaries have found isolated tribes, explored unmapped lands, and gained new knowledge about cultures, languages, and even plant and animal life from distant places.

Missionaries help people needing food, shelter, medical care, education, and even protection from war and violence. Catholic missionaries are lay people, deacons, priests, bishops, or religious brothers and sisters. They work in every country in the world today, and are often in danger. There have been missionaries martyred in every land and time, including now.

➤ **Why is it important for missionaries to respect other religions and cultures?**





Everyone Is Called

You might be called to become a missionary someday. If not, you are still called to be part of the Church's missionary work—in fact, all Catholics are! One of the patron Saints of missionaries is Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who never left her convent! Her prayers for the missions contributed so much that she has been recognized as a missionary herself. There are many opportunities to share in the missionary work of the Church with prayers and donations, and even projects in your local area. Your parish

may even be a sister Church working with missionaries around the world.

➤ **If you could be a missionary in a distant land, what kind of work would you do?**

SUMMARIZE

Find out about the life of one of the missionaries listed above and write a short summary of their work. Then spend some time in prayer for missionaries around the world.

IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

As members of the Church, we are called to proclaim the Good News of Christ to the world.

- While Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the four Evangelists of the Gospels, all Church members are called to spread the Good News of the Gospel.
- The Church is universal, going out to the whole world, welcoming people of all cultures and ages.
- Missionaries continue Christ's mission of healing and bring the message of salvation to people who have not yet come to know and believe in Jesus. Each of us is called to share in the missionary work of the Church.

Our Catholic Life

The Church's **missionary mandate** continues Jesus' mission of spreading the Good News by what we say and do, by loving one another, and by working for peace and justice as we work with God to help build his Kingdom: "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (**Matthew 10:40**). It is our responsibility to study, know, and live our faith so that we can share it with others. Talk to someone you know who is an example of Catholic faith, and ask them how they share their faith with others. You can also decide how to share in the missionary work of the Church right now. Choose a mission to pray for and think of ways you can help that mission financially.



➤ **What aspect of the Church's missionary mandate interests you most?**

People of Faith

Saint Agnes, c. 291–304

Agnes was born to a Christian family in Rome. A high-ranking official wanted her to marry his son, but Agnes didn't want to marry a non-Christian. This made the official angry, so he had her sentenced to death. She was dragged through the streets, then tied to a stake to be burned, but the wood wouldn't catch fire. One of the soldiers in charge of the execution then cut off her head. She was buried in the catacombs under Rome, but today her bones are in two churches named after her in Rome. Saint Agnes is the patron Saint of girls and engaged couples. The Church celebrates her feast day on **January 21**.

For more, go to
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DISCUSS

Form groups of three and talk about being Catholic. Make notes here.

My favorite Catholic symbol is

because

My favorite Catholic season is

because

One thing I still don't understand about being Catholic is . . .



Prayer of Acknowledgment

Leader: God calls all of us, his disciples, to be Saints.

Let us listen well to the words of Jesus.

Reader 1: Be attentive to the wisdom of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (**Matthew 28:18–20**)

At the conclusion, pause for silent reflection; then continue with the following:

Reader 2: Let us pray.

O God, give us the strength we need, to take up the cause of those who so willingly gave their lives to serve others.

All: We will go out and tell the Good News.

Reader 3: God of light, help us to see as you would want us to see.

All: We will go out and tell the Good News.

Reader 4: God of all goodness and mercy, open our hearts to be compassionate, open our minds to understand the needs of others.

All: We will go out and tell the Good News.

Leader: God, we know and believe that you have chosen us to be your servants, your missionaries, your Saints.

Help us to respond to your call; help us to receive this challenge with confidence and trust knowing you are with us.

We ask this through your Son, who is Jesus Christ, our friend and brother.

Amen.

 *Sing or play “Go Ye Out”*

 Go to aliveinchrist.osv.com for an interactive review.

A Work with Words Complete each sentence with the correct term.

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are "the Four _____," the four inspired human authors of the Gospels.
2. Jesus told the Apostles to make _____ of all nations.
3. Because salvation can only come through faith in Christ and his Church, the Church has a _____ to spread the Gospel.
4. The Church is _____ or "universal" because she is sent on a mission to the whole world.
5. Jesus told his Apostles, "You will be my _____ in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

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

6. In the Catholic Church we find everything necessary for salvation, with nothing left out. **True/False**

7. Full sacramental life of all Seven Sacraments is present in the Catholic Church. **True/False**

8. The Church looks and acts the same in everyplace she exists. **True/False**

9. To be a missionary, we have to travel. **True/False**

10. Many great world explorers have been Catholic missionaries. **True/False**

C Make Connections Write a one-paragraph response to the question: Who do you know who needs to hear some Good News? Write about some specific ways you can share your faith with this person.
