

Belonging to God's People

In this unit students learn about religious imagery, the church building and its furnishings, and the gestures used in liturgy. They learn about the name and location of the local parish, and the role of the priest in the parish. They explore the celebration of the Eucharist through a focus on key liturgical actions and objects used.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#1655 The Church is nothing other than 'the family of God'. From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers 'together with all [their] household'.

(See Compendium #147 What does the word Church mean?)

#2179 'A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop.' It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

(See Compendium #244 Does the Church need places in order to celebrate the liturgy?)

#1180 Christians construct buildings for divine worship. These visible churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place, the dwelling of God with men reconciled and united in Christ.

(See Compendium # 245 What are sacred buildings?)

#1383 The altar, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful.

(See Compendium #288 What is the meaning of the altar?)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

In the first centuries of the Church Christians gathered in homes to 'break bread'. In time, a special 'house-church' became the place for gathering. In the fourth century, when the communities had become larger, the Christians began to use 'basilicas', the public assembly halls of the time. There the Christians had ample space to gather, to hear the Word of God proclaimed and to celebrate the Eucharist.

During the Middle Ages the altar was moved more towards one end and eventually against the wall. The 'sanctuary' became the place where all liturgical ministry took place. The people remained in the nave, but they no longer participated as they had. They had become separated from the liturgical action. This arrangement remained into the early twentieth century.

The Second Vatican Council called for a re-ordering of this arrangement. The community is called to 'full, active, and conscious participation' in the liturgy. When we use the word 'Church' we mean the people of God, all who are baptised. A church

building then is a 'house for the Church', the sacred space where the holy people of God do holy things.

The liturgical celebrations of our faith community are religious and human experiences which engage the whole person. We see, hear and experience the liturgical signs, words and gestures. In what church or chapel have you experienced awe, wonder, reverence and the presence of God?

LINKS TO STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students experience a sense of belonging through home, school and the local community. Belonging gives students a sense of identity, security and affirmation. The Church, as the family of God, offers students an experience of belonging. *What are the students' experiences of parish? What opportunities can be offered to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of belonging to the parish community?*

Students encounter their world through physical and concrete means. They are beginning to understand that the Mass occurs in a special building and involves special actions and objects. *How can students best explore the significance of the church building and its sacred objects? How can students make a connection between these and the celebration of the Mass?*

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Allow the students to spend some quiet time in the church. Invite them each to find a quiet space where they can sit in silence. Lead them through a 'stilling' exercise, e.g. 'Breathing 2' in *To God on a Magic Carpet* (Sr Anthony, Spectrum Publications).
- Gather in a circle around the altar in the parish church. After sharing reflections on the altar as the 'table' of the whole community, sing together an appropriate hymn, e.g. 'Jesus, Be With Us' (Paul Inwood, *Children At Heart*, OCP Publications).
- Prepare a class Liturgy of the Word to be celebrated at the lectern in the church. Include a procession with the lectionary. Songs may include, 'Alleluia, We Will Listen' (Paul Inwood, *Children At Heart*, OCP Publications) or 'Clap Alleluia' (Michael Mangan, *Children of the Light*, Litmus Productions). Involve the children in choosing the readings and preparing the celebration. Use the formula from the Mass:
 - 'A reading from the holy gospel according to ____'.
 - All respond with 'Glory to you, Lord' with the appropriate action – cross on the forehead, lips and heart.
 - After reading the gospel say, 'This is the gospel of the Lord'.
 - All respond with 'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ'.
- Ask the priest to bless water with the students present. Keep this water in a bowl in the prayer place. Students could use this water to bless themselves before or after class prayer. This models the practice of blessing oneself when one enters the church, and also draws the connection to baptism.
- Begin class prayer with responses used in the Mass, e.g.
 - Leader: The Lord be with you.
 - All: And also with you.

Conclude by offering a sign of peace.

- On a plain cloth light a circle of tea lights. In the centre, place the bread and 'wine' (grape juice). Gather the children in a circle around the symbols. Read Lk 22: 19–20. Pray a spontaneous litany of thanks, using the response: 'Thank you, Jesus, for your gift!' Invite the children to offer their own prayers of thanks. To ensure that there is no simulation of the Mass, make sure students do not eat the bread or drink the wine during this prayer.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 10, We Visit the Church; Chapter 11, Together at Mass.

Faith concepts: community, belonging, place, customs, ritual, symbol, sign.

Understandings:

The Church is the family of God.

Through baptism people are welcomed into God's family.

People gather to pray and celebrate the Mass at the parish church.

There are different roles in the parish.

In the church building there are sacred symbols and objects.

The Mass is a special celebration when the Church remembers and relives the words and actions of Jesus.

Jesus is with us when the Mass is celebrated.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their own experience of community and belonging. • The location and name of the local parish. • Their experiences of belonging to the faith community. • The sacred signs and objects within the parish church. • The eucharistic signs of bread and wine. • The role of the priest during the Mass, and his work in the parish. • The ritual actions of the priest during the Mass. • The significance of the colours of vestments used by the priest during liturgical seasons. • The relationship between the Last Supper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their feelings and ideas in response to 'I wonder' questions and statements that are posed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with members of their parish community, e.g. parish priest, community members. • Be part of a parish Mass or class Liturgy of the Word. • Participate in class prayer sessions.

and the Mass.

Part 1: Our Parish Community

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Wondering</p> <p>Invite students to wonder with you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What is your family name?How do you know you belong to your family?What is the name of our school?How do you know you belong to our school?Do you belong to any other groups or clubs?How do you know you are a member of that club?How did you become part of that club?What is the name of our church?How did you become a member of our church community?Have you ever visited our church?What does our church look like?	<p>Assessment for Learning</p> <p>This task will indicate students' understanding of the concept of belonging.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The sacred space of the church building always derives from and leads to a <i>person</i> – Jesus Christ. The altar is a symbol of Jesus Christ and is the central focus of the whole church building. It is the place around which we gather for our eucharistic celebration. The altar is the place of sacrifice to God. The baptismal font and lectern lead us to Jesus Christ. The lectern is the place on which the word of God (Scripture) rests. The tabernacle is derived from the altar, as it holds the Blessed Sacrament reserved from the parish’s celebration of the Eucharist at the ‘table of the Lord’. The crucifix is a basic symbol in all Christian liturgy.</p> <p>The church building is a sacred space where the mysteries of God are recalled and celebrated in human history. It is the holy place where the people of God gather to worship.</p> <p>Children should feel at home in the church. Yet you will need to cultivate an atmosphere of silence and respect. Teach them how to sit and kneel properly, how to genuflect reverently. Revise the Sign of the Cross, and allow them to spend a few moments in prayer.</p> <p>Remind the students that this is a place where we are all welcome.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Go to the church with the students. Walk around the church grounds. Discuss what is outside the church. Tell the students the name of the church and point out significant features, e.g. stained glass window, cross, foundation stone, name, etc.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding Students draw and write about what they saw when they visited the outside of the church.</p>	
	<p>Telling the Story Visit the church with the students. Tell the students the names of the sacred symbols and objects inside the church. (Take the digital camera and photograph the sacred symbols and objects to make part of a class big book/display/activity). While in the church introduce the students to the behaviours expected, e.g. reverence, genuflecting, blessing with water, etc.</p> <p>Wondering While still in the church invite students to wonder with you using the 'I wonder' questions from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 10, p. 70.</p> <p>Praying with God Prepare the students for prayer within the church. Pray together using <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep, Chapter 10, p. 71 or see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship'.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class: Ask students to sit in a circle. In the middle of the circle place illustrations or photos of the sacred symbols and objects found in the church. Teacher puts flashcards randomly around images. Students play a matching game, telling the class what the word is and what the object is used for (teacher to support). • Individual: Students draw or construct and label the different sacred symbols and objects seen in the church. • Whole class: Teacher prepares resources for an enlarged text prior to the lesson (use photos or other images of sacred symbols and objects from your church to make a big book or PowerPoint presentation). Use the name of the parish church as the title for the shared text. Students share the writing of the text about the school's parish church. • Individual or pairs: Students create 3D models of the church and its sacred objects and symbols using boxes, sticks, Lego, digital photos, plasticine, playdough, concrete materials, etc. 	<p>Assessment of Learning This task will indicate students' ability to recall sacred symbols and objects seen in the church.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning This task will indicate students' knowledge of sacred objects, signs and symbols and where they are located in the church.</p>

Part 2: Our Community at the Mass

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Water is used in the sacraments and in liturgical celebrations. It signifies that God is the source of all life, and that, without God, life would not be. Water is also a symbol of cleansing and new life.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Read 'Together At Mass' from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 11, pp. 72–77.</p> <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you using the 'I wonder' questions from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 11, p. 78.</p> <p>Telling the Story Invite the parish priest to meet with the students in the church to discuss his role as the leader of the community. Ask the priest to share with the students the different vestments and vessels he uses in the celebration of the Mass. Invite the students to ask questions.</p> <p>Praying the Word Ask the priest to bless water with the students present (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').</p> <p>Responding Teach the students the song 'Come Together' (Mangan, M, <i>Sing Your Joy</i>).</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Telling the Story Retell the story of The Last Supper (Lk 22: 7–14, 19–20) using 2D or 3D materials, paying particular attention to the food shared, the words and actions of Jesus.</p> <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder where we hear Jesus' words of the Last Supper today? I wonder why the priest says the words of Jesus? I wonder why we remember Jesus this way? I wonder why it is only the priest at the Mass who can say the words that Jesus gave us? I wonder how Jesus is present to us during the Mass (the Word, community, the Eucharist)?</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Jesus used bread and wine when he celebrated his last meal with his apostles. Bread and wine are the work of human hands. The wheat and grapes have to be crushed and broken so that they take on a new form. In the Eucharist the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, really present among us.</p>	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use concrete materials to retell and explore the meaning of the Last Supper account for themselves either individually or in pairs. • Students use plasticine, playdough, crayons, paint or pencils to depict and explore a favourite moment, character or symbol from the story of the Last Supper. • As a class, students use a graphic organiser such as a Venn diagram or similarities/differences chart to compare the Last Supper with the eucharistic celebration in the Mass. 	
	<p>Praying the Word</p> <p>Set the scene for a prayer celebration using the symbols of bread and wine. Begin the prayer celebration with the response used in the Mass (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will indicate the connections students make between the Last Supper account and the celebration of the Mass.</p>

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 10, We Visit the Church; Chapter 11, Together at Mass.

Music & CDs

Inwood, P 2001, *Children at Heart*, OCP Publications.

Mangan, M 2000, *Children of the Light*, Litmus Productions.

Mangan, M 1997, 'Come Together' in *Sing Your Joy*, Litmus Productions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 1 standards.

Students relate to sacred story including the image of the Good Shepherd by making connections to their personal experiences. Students contemplate and reflect about God, themselves and the world by responding to their wondering, feelings and ideas through prayer and a range of media. Students describe sacred objects, signs and symbols in the Catholic tradition by explaining what they are, and when, where and how they are used.