

LESSON 10: Jesus, the Sacrament of God



AIM

To help the children understand the Christian belief that Jesus is the visible and active sign of God's presence in the world. (2.4.5)

OUTCOME

Learners understand why Jesus is called the 'sacrament' of God.

WHAT YOU NEED

- * Sample road signs (1)
- * Telephone or television (3)
- * Bibles (4)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Start by asking and explaining what a **sign** is. The children's answers will probably go towards road signs. Draw on the board the signs they mention or the following ones.



Point out that signs are not themselves places or actions, but that they point either towards a place or warns of something that might happen if the sign is not obeyed. Draw the definition of sign from their answers: *A sign is something we can see that tells us about something we cannot see. A sign points to something else.*

- 2 **Sacrament:** Children will be familiar with the word 'sacrament' and be able to name some of the Church's sacraments, but not necessarily have a grasp of what they mean. Talk about Baptism as an example. Pouring water over the person or immersing the person in water is a sign of their being cleansed from sin. Does the water itself cleanse the person from sin? No, but in Baptism the pouring of the water in faith is accompanied by the invisible action of God's Spirit. We say that Baptism is a sacrament. *A sacrament is a visible sign that makes present what it points to.* Illustrate this with further examples. The priest's absolution in Reconciliation is sign that points to God's forgiveness and it also makes that forgiveness effective in the life of the penitent. The bread and wine in the Eucharist are signs of the nourishment that God gives us for our spiritual growth and they also cause that growth to take place.

- 3 Draw a telephone on the board. After discussing the telephone as an **instrument**, point out that it brings to reality the person who is at the other side of the line. As we speak to them we can picture them in our minds. The person becomes real for us.



Perhaps a more powerful comparison would be the television where the person who is not present can be both seen and heard.

- 4 Christian belief holds that **Jesus makes God visible**. Because God is Spirit, God is invisible. We can say that Jesus is God's instrument for making himself known and visible to us. Choose a scripture story to illustrate this, like the calming of a storm [Luke 8:22-25] or the raising of Lazarus [John 11:17-27]. What were the people saying? You could also introduce the following passage, [John 14:5-11], where Jesus says to the disciples that "Whoever has

seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus is thus the sacrament of God. Jesus points to God, and makes God present to us.

- 5 Help the children understand why Jesus is called the **sacrament of God**. Jesus is a visible sign, pointing to God. But Jesus makes God present in our lives.

He gives us direction: **I am the Way**.

He heals our hearts and bodies: **I am the Life**.

He shows us God: **I am the Truth**.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **Essay writing:** Ask the children to call to mind the things that Jesus did that help them see Jesus as God’s love in action. Once the class has discussed this, invite them to write an essay entitled: *How I See God*.

TO REMEMBER




A sign is something we can see that tells us about something we cannot see. A sign points to something else.

A sacrament is a visible sign that makes present what it points to.

LESSON 11: Church, the Sacrament of Jesus



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (5)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (6)(8) ⇒
- * Newsprint for drawing, coloured pens (7)
- * Bible, 'body-church' (8)
- *  *Bind Us Together* (8)
- *  *God Is Building a House* (9)
- * Action rhyme (10)

AIM

To help the children understand that the Church is the visible sign of Jesus' presence in the world (14.4.2).

OUTCOME

Learner understands the idea of the Church as visible sign of Jesus' presence in the world.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **The church:** Ask the children to say what they think the Church is. Draw a mind map on the board with their answers, leaving a space in the centre for the idea which will come up in ACTIVITY 3, namely the Sacrament of Jesus. Concepts that might be present: People - Community - Building - Place of Worship - God's House.
- 2 **Explain in your own words:** Jesus gathered his friends together and formed a community. After the resurrection, (as we saw in LESSON 13) they continued coming together and they reminded each other of what Jesus had taught them. They cared for one another, and they broke bread together. They knew that Jesus was present with them. "When two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them" [Matthew 18:20]. Filled with the Spirit of Jesus, these people, by their words and actions made Jesus really present in the lives of those they served. The Church is the continuation of that community in our times.
- 3 **Church, Sacrament of Jesus:** Remind the learners of the definition of sacrament from the previous lesson: *A sacrament is a visible sign that makes present what it points to.* Draw out the idea that the Church is the visible sign of Jesus' presence among us. The Church points us to Jesus, and it makes Jesus present to the world. We know that the church is a sacrament when we remember Jesus' words: "They will know that you are my disciples by the love you have for one another." [John 13:35].
- 4 **The church continues Jesus' actions:** Write the following on the board and ask the children to copy it in their work books and match the two columns. They could use coloured pencils. You could add other items you think are relevant.

ACTION OF JESUS	CONTINUED IN THE CHURCH
Gathering disciples	Celebrating the sacraments
Teaching	Caring for the sick, for orphans and widows, and all in need
Healing	Reading the Word of God, preaching
Making holy	People gathering publicly to pray and worship

- 5 Conclude by explaining that it is through the loving actions of the people who belong to the church community that Jesus' presence becomes real. Each one of us in the church is called to be a living sacrament of Jesus when we, together with the community, teach, share, care for each others needs and gather to worship God. The Christian is called to be **Jesus for the world**. The story of Peter and John healing the man crippled from birth at the Beautiful Gate [Acts 3:1-10] illustrates this dramatically.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **In which ways are churches sacraments of Jesus?** The children go home and ask their parents, their priest or minister, or their Sunday school teacher or catechist the following questions:
- How does our church serve the community?
 - Who are the people who serve in the church?
 - What are the different ministries?
 - Do we celebrate in community?
 - When do we celebrate in community?
 - Are there any support groups in the community?
 - Are there Bible study groups for adults?

You could add more questions concerning the life of a community that you might think are relevant for the type of class you have. The worksheet will assist you in this. 📖 ⇒

- 7 **All one body:** Use a large poster or drawing of a human person that shows all the essential parts of the body. Label the body CHURCH, and invite the children to say which ministries in the Church correspond to which parts of the body. Alternatively you could ask groups to draw and label the body themselves.

- 8 In a prayerful way celebrate the small paralyturgy, **Let's Celebrate**, to be found on the worksheet. 📖 ⇒

- 9 **Song:** *God Is Building a House*

- 10 **Action Rhyme:** The action rhyme alongside will help you understand that the church is not just a building, but a community of God's people. ⇨

MATERIALS

IF I WERE THE CHURCH

If I were the church,
my church bell would ring,
"Come everyone" I'd gladly sing.
(Place hands together and swing arms)

If I were the church,
I'd stretch my arms wide
to welcome everyone inside.
(Stretch out arms)

If I were the church,
but I am, you see
For the church is people, you and you
and you and me
(Point to others and self)

Church, the Sacrament of Jesus

Take this worksheet home and ask your parents, your priest or minister, or your Sunday school teacher the following questions. Record your answers in the spaces provided.

How does our church serve the community?

.....
.....

Which people serve in the church?

.....

What are the different ministries or services provided?

.....
.....

How do we celebrate in community?

.....
.....

When do we celebrate in community?

.....

Are there any support groups in the community?

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Are there Bible study groups for adults?

.....

Are there groups for youth activities? Name them

.....

Let's Celebrate

Gather together in your prayer corner. Place a 'body church' you have made around it. Light a candle and choose a person to read out *1 Corinthians 12:12-27*.

Sit quietly for a while and think about what you have read. Then join together in singing: *Bind Us Together*.

LESSON 12: The Early Church



AIM

To give the children an understanding of how the Church began, and an appreciation of how its early members lived. (2.4.4, 14.3.2)

OUTCOME

Learners show familiarity with aspects of the early Church's story.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

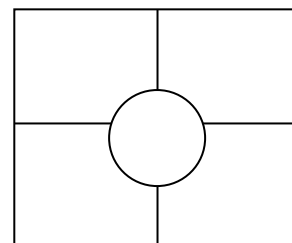
- 1 **New Beginnings:** Ask the class why a new born baby cries. The child begins its life crying because it needs to take in breath for the first time. Breath is crucial for life. Ask the learners to call to mind the different beginnings that people experience. What new beginnings have they experienced? What is it like to begin something new?
- 2 **Beginnings in Scripture:** Ask the learners to look up the following biblical verses: Genesis 1:1; Genesis 2:7; Mark 1:9-11. Have someone read out each for the class. Ask the learners to suggest in each case: What is beginning? What is the wind, breath, Spirit doing? Write up the responses on the board.
- 3 **Pentecost:** Read the passage [Acts 2:1-4]. This event marks the birth of the Church as the Holy Spirit fills its members with new life. The members are newly born in Christ.
- 4 **The Early Church:** We find out what life was like in the very early Church in Acts 2:42-47.

Read the passage, or ask this time that the learners do some silent reading individually noting the things that the early Christian community did:

- They took notice of the apostles' teaching.
- They lived as a community.
- They met for the breaking of bread.
- They prayed regularly.

- 5 **Group drawing or painting:**

Arrange the learners in the same groups as in the previous lesson. Each group makes a painting or drawing with five panels, as follows: The centre circular panel features the Pentecost event. Each of the four rectangular ones, feature one of the four activities identified in ACTIVITY 4. See the illustration above.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (2)
- * Bible (3)(4)
- * Materials for group drawing or painting (5)
- * 🎵 *We Are One in the Spirit, Bind Us Together, A New Commandment, The Spirit Is Moving* (8)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 If you have time, and feel the class needs it, you could **fill out the details** of ACTIVITY 4 above with the following:

The apostles' teaching: They taught the people around them, especially those who hadn't heard of Jesus. They took the Good News of Jesus to all those who were willing to learn and change. With those who were already followers or disciples, they shared in a deeper way and developed their way of life within the Christian community.

The life of community: Seeing the needs of the community, they decided to share what they possessed with one another. Others sold what they had and donated the money for the good of the community. People were not expected to do without all they possessed to become part of the community. That was a voluntary decision. Nevertheless most of them put their possessions at the service of the community.

The breaking of bread: This normally took place in someone's home. They got together to discuss the community's business and to share a meal together, the way Jesus did at the Last Supper. (We'd call this a 'bring and share' today). It was normally one of the apostles who would repeat the words and actions of Jesus. This was a very important part in the life of the community, as Mass is for us today.

Prayers: After Pentecost, they went to the temple together every day. They prayed in private homes as well. In small groups, they shared the food they brought and gave thanks to God. The name Eucharist comes from this practice as it means 'thanksgiving'. Today we use the word Eucharist for the celebration of the Mass - our breaking of bread. As time passed, the apostles stopped going to the Temple, the synagogue, and prayed in their homes or in open fields, where they could gather for prayer in bigger numbers.

- 7 **Point out** to them that this way of life in community gave a new purpose and meaning to their lives. They learned and lived the new Christian way of life together. How are these four things practised in your parish or community today?
- 8 **Song suggestions:** *We Are One in the Spirit, Bind Us Together, A New Commandment, The Spirit Is Moving*

LESSON 13: A Divided Church



AIM

To help the learners understand that the Christian Church is divided, and how the major divisions came about. (5.4.12, 14.3.3)

OUTCOME

Learners show familiarity with the nature and cause of division in the Church.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Reflect on experiences** of disunity and disagreement. It is often difficult to maintain or achieve unity or harmony in a group. Ask the children to think of any recent experience they may have had of working in groups, perhaps in the previous few lessons. Likely experiences would be:
 - The difficulties in coming to an agreement.
 - Dealing with others' impatience and even anger.
 - Deciding who does what.
 - Enjoying harmony and unity in working together.
 - Feeling frustrated with those who are difficult.

Draw from the learners' sharing how difficult it can be to work together, to come to an agreement, or to a unity of purpose. Let them share briefly about other experiences of disagreement and disunity they have had.

- 2 **Focus on the family:** Point out that even families can find it difficult to work together. The Church is a family and it is not surprising that disagreement finds its way into it. The church throughout history has experienced disunity and disagreements that at times led to fragmentation and separation of groups of people.
- 3 These kinds of disagreements go back to **the time of Jesus**. Ask small groups each to read one of the following passages, and to identify what sort of disagreement is described:
 - [Luke 9:46-48] The apostles argued as to who should have the best place in the Kingdom of God.
 - [Acts 15:1-2] Different groups disagreed as to who should be admitted to the church and on what conditions.
 - [1Corinthians 1:10-13] In the letters of St Paul we see him scolding people for their disunity and disagreement among themselves.

4 **A Divided Church**

Give the learners a copy of the worksheet, **A Divided Church**. ⇨ Help them to complete it as you give the following input:

THE EAST-WEST SCHISM (1000 AD)

The word schism means division. For the first 1000 years the Church was united even though there were many disagreements and tensions. Christianity had become the official

WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (3)
- * Copies of the worksheet **A Divided Church** (4) ⇨
- * *In Christ There is No East or West, We Are One in the Spirit, Bind Us Together, I Am the Vine* (8)
- * Copies of the worksheet **That All May Be One** (9) ⇨
- * *That They May Be One, If We Eat of the Lord* (9)

religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century. But the empire became divided between Rome and Constantinople (now Istanbul) with emperors in the East and in the West vying for power. This political tension together with disagreements over how to understand the Trinity caused the first major split in the Church between Western Catholics who took the Pope as their head, and Eastern Orthodox with the Patriarch of Constantinople as their leader. There were attempts to heal the division, but the fall of the empire in the West meant that for a number of centuries, the East became the centre of power, and it became more difficult for the Church to unite. The Eastern Church called itself 'orthodox', meaning that its members believed they had the correct, original teaching of Christ and of the Church. The division remains until today, though the churches are very similar in their practices and beliefs.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION (1500AD)

The great disagreement which led to further division in the Church happened in the 16th century. During the Reformation, the western Church split into Catholics and Protestants. Some people protested against what they regarded as wrong beliefs and abusive practices of the Church at that time. Many people indeed, including bishops and popes, were corrupt. Martin Luther, in Germany, and John Calvin in France led the breakaway. Thousands of people followed them and others. The main Protestant churches today include Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Reformed and Pentecostals.

Almost at the same time, in England, King Henry VIII had a disagreement with the Pope about his marriage and moved away from the Catholic Church, making himself the Head of the Anglican Church (Church of England). Anglicans have also kept many of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church as the Orthodox Church did.

- 5 **Ecumenism:** Explain that today the churches are working towards Christian unity, trying to bring about what Jesus had prayed for: "May all be one, as you, Father, and I are one" [John 17:21]. Ecumenism is the movement which promotes unity among Christian churches

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **The Early Church:** The disagreements in the early church sometimes became quite serious. There is the account of a priest, Arius, who argued that Jesus Christ was not divine. This caused great uproar and the elders of the church had to call for a special meeting, a council in Nicaea in 325AD to discuss this issue that was causing divisions in the church. It was in this council that it was declared that Jesus was truly the Son of God and not just a specially privileged human person. The teaching of Bishop Nestorius caused another divisive problem some hundred years after Arius. He taught that Mary was not the Mother of God. Once again the church called another council, this time in Ephesus in 431AD to settle the matter.
- 7 **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:** Observe the ecumenical week of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost. Look out for notices and materials in your local parish.
- 8 **Songs:** *In Christ There is No East or West, We Are One in the Spirit, Bind Us Together, I Am the Vine*
- 9 To consolidate this mostly informative lesson plan the paraliturgical celebration on unity which you'll find in the worksheet **That All May Be One.** 📖 ⇨

A Divided Church

The Early Church (30 AD)

With your teachers help, fill in the boxes during the lesson

MARTIN LUTHER
(1483-1546)

Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk who challenged the abuses in the Church during his time. He came to believe that only faith in God's love and mercy can save a person. He translated the Bible into German so that the common people could read it. He wanted to reform the Church, but his beliefs led him to break with the authority of the Pope in Rome. More books have been written about Luther than about any other figure in history, except Jesus.

HOW THE EARLY CHRISTIANS LIVED

REASONS FOR THE SCHISM

The East-West Schism (1000 AD)

Western Roman Catholic

Eastern Byzantine Orthodox

The Protestant Reformation (1500 AD)

Roman Catholic

Protestant

Greek, Russian, Serbian Orthodox

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

REASONS FOR THE REFORMATION

That All May Be One

(Adapted from *You Are My Friends*. People of God Series, Book IV)

Create a prayerful atmosphere. Explain to the children that by praying, singing and listening to the word of God we wish to deepen our understanding of the need for unity in the Church, and to pray for this unity.

Sing: That they may be one, they may be one, that they may be one in us.

Leader: Lord, we stand before you as your Church. You founded this Church as one, and yet as we look about us, we see that the church is divided. We have come together today to listen to you and to learn how to become united. We ask you to help us to work and pray for unity. Let your Church become what you wanted it to be: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Let us listen to the words of Jesus who prayed for all those who would one day believe in him and become his followers: "Holy Father, keep them in you name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me." [John 17:11, 21-22]

Sing: That they may be one, they may be one, that they may be one in us.

Leader: The Eucharist is a sign of our unity. As the children, family and friends of God, we come to the table of the Lord and share the one bread and the one cup. Let us listen to the words of Scripture which tell us how Jesus gave us the Eucharist at the Last Supper. "He took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me". And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." Luke 22:19-20].

Sing: If we eat of the Lord, and we drink of the Lord, like the Lord we shall all be.
Then we live with his life, and we share in his love and his truth will make us free.

Leader: Like Jesus, St Paul also teaches us that the Church should be one. Let us listen to his words, "As a Body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit." [1 Corinthians 12:12-13]

Sing: That they may be one...

Prayers of Petition: (You can invite the children to write their own prayers and read them instead of these.)

Reader: Lord Jesus, today your followers are divided. Where there should be one Church there are many churches. Help us to work and pray that the Church will be as you want it to be.

Sing: That they may be one...

Reader: Lord Jesus, we pray that all Christians may learn to respect and understand one another so that we may truly live in love.

Sing: That they may be one...

Reader: Lord Jesus, we pray that the leaders of your Church, enlightened by your Spirit, may lead the people along the road to unity, so that there may be one shepherd and one flock.

Sing: That they may be one...

Leader: As children of the Father, and brothers and sisters of Jesus, let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us: *Our Father...*