

Prayer Service for Ordinary Time

The Body of Christ

Overview

The Body of Christ refers to both the Eucharist and to the People of God. In the liturgy, Christ's Body and Blood nourish us and we are sent forth to make his presence known to others. We receive the Body of Christ, and we are the Body of Christ. This prayer service explores these two interrelated realities. The opening prayer draws attention to the ways Christ is present. The readings, both from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, recount the Lord's Supper and explore the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ. The second reading involves the participants in an active presentation of the passage. The prayer service closes with the prayer of Saint Teresa of Ávila.

Prayer at a Glance

Gather

- Gathering song
- Gathering prayer and ritual action

Listen

- Scripture reading
- Responsorial psalm
- Interpretive Scripture reading

Respond

- Sign of peace
- Responding as the Body of Christ

Go Forth

- Prayer of Saint Teresa of Ávila
- Concluding song

Suggested Time, Group Size, and Space Considerations

Allow 15 to 20 minutes for this prayer. The service is adaptable to any group size. Consider a semi-circle seating arrangement to emphasize community. If possible, conduct this service in a chapel or in your church's main worship space.

Preparation

Preparing the Music

Songs are needed for the gathering, the psalm response, and the closing of the service. Selections that emphasize the Body of Christ, the Eucharist, discipleship, and our oneness in Christ will enhance the prayer experience.

The following songs are suggested for gathering:

- “Gather Your People” (Bob Hurd, *Spirit and Song*, OCP Publications)
- “Let Us Be Bread” (Thomas J. Porter, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications)

The following songs are suggested for the responsorial psalm:

- “We Are God’s People” (David Haas, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications)
- “Psalm 116: Our Blessing-Cup” (Marty Haugen, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications)

The following songs are suggested for the closing of the prayer service:

- “Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/We Are the Body of Christ” (Jaime Cortez, *Spirit and Song*, OCP Publications)
- “We Are Many Parts” (Marty Haugen, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications)

Supplies and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - songbooks or songsheets, one for each participant
 - THE CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE* or another Bible, marked at 1 Corinthians 11:23–26
 - copies of handout 8–A, “Praying as the Body of Christ,” one for each participant
 - an 8½-x-11-inch copy of each of the nine images found on resource 8–A, “Body Parts for Interpretive Scripture Reading”
 - nine craft sticks
 - a bottle of glue or a roll of tape

- a piece of card stock
- a roll of magnetic tape
- Divide the large group into two smaller groups. Designate one group as “right,” and ask that group to sit on the right side of the room. Designate the other group as “left,” and ask that group to sit on the left side of the room.
- Recruit a participant to proclaim the Scripture passage (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). Give him or her an opportunity to practice beforehand.
- Make one copy of each of the nine images found on resource 8–A, “Body Parts for Interpretive Scripture Reading.” Use your photocopier’s enlargement feature to increase the size of each image to fill up an 8½-x-11-inch sheet of paper. Glue or tape a craft stick to each image.
- Copy the wallet-sized images found on resource 8–B, “Body Parts for Magnets,” onto card stock paper and cut as scored. Make one image for each participant. Adhere a ½-inch piece of magnetic tape to the back of each image.
- Recruit a reader for the interpretive reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12–20,27, and nine actors to bring the body parts to life. Provide each with a copy of resource 8–C, “Interpretive Reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12–20,27,” and review the directions. Distribute the large body part images to the nine actors and give them time to practice their actions with the reader.

Setting the Prayer Environment

Accent the prayer space with images that reflect the theme of Eucharist, such as wheat stalks, a loaf of bread, a chalice, grapes, a Bible, and a candle and matches.

Order of Service

Gather

1. Distribute a songbook or songsheet to each participant. The person leading song should stand, motion for everyone else to stand, and invite all the participants to join together in singing the opening song. When the song is done, the song leader should motion for everyone to sit.

2. Make the sign of the cross and offer the following opening prayer:

† Jesus, you gathered your friends together and in the sharing of the bread and wine, offered yourself for the sake of others. You proclaimed, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Still today we gather as your followers to remember and participate in the mystery of your passage from death to new life. We join together in praising you for

the gift of your life. We thank you for your saving act, and we honor your presence in the Eucharist.

[If you are conducting this prayer service in the presence of a tabernacle that contains consecrated hosts, invite the participants to bow.]

Christ, we recognize that you are present within us too. We are the Body of Christ. We thank you for your spirit within us, and we honor your presence in one another.

[Invite the group on the right to bow toward those on the left. Then invite those on the left to bow to those on the right.]

May our prayer today draw us closer to Christ in the Eucharist and in the People of God.

Invite everyone to respond “Amen” if they don’t do so spontaneously.

Listen

1. Invite the reader to come forward and proclaim the first reading, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. Allow a few moments of silence to follow.

2. Invite everyone to join together in singing the psalm.

3. Call forward the interpretive reader of 1 Corinthians 12:12–20,27, and those enacting it. Give a brief introduction to the interpretive reading, using these or similar words:

† Visual aids help enhance our ability to hear the Word and grasp its meaning. A group of participants will be using images taken from the reading to bring this passage to life.

Invite the interpreters to begin. When they finish, allow for a few moments of silence.

4. Offer a brief reflection on the relationship between the Eucharist and the People of God, using these or similar words:

† All of us are needed to make the Church whole. By gathering as the People of God and sharing in the Eucharist, we celebrate Christ’s life, death, and Resurrection, and we strengthen ourselves to follow in Jesus’s footsteps. The Body of Christ in the Eucharist nourishes us to be the Body of Christ in the world.

Respond

1. Distribute one magnetic body part image to each participant, and then share these or similar words:

† Each individual member of the Church is important to the whole. For the Body to be complete, the individual parts must come together.

May each of us remember that we as individuals are important to the community.

† Let us exchange a sign of peace with those around us.

2. Distribute a copy of handout 8–A, “Praying as the Body of Christ,” to each participant. Then continue the service as follows:

† Those with the image of feet, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, you traveled around meeting people and spreading God’s unconditional love. May our every step move us to share your love with others. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our feet to walk in your ways.

† Those with the hand images, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, with your hands you healed the sick and gave sight to the blind. May we offer healing and compassion through the work of our hands. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our hands to heal and serve.

† Those with the ear images, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, you listened to the hurting, to the confused, to the angry, and to your Father. May we listen with kindness to all who ask for our time and make time for prayer. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our ears to hear your voice in all those we encounter.

† The person with the image of the eyes, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, your eyes showed the heart of God. May we see the world through your eyes. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our eyes to see God in all and reflect God’s love.

† The person with the mouth image, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, you spoke truth when others laughed at you and mocked you. May we speak with honesty and integrity even when our words go against the crowd. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our mouths to communicate the truth of the Good News.

† The person with the nose image, please stand. Let us pray . . .

Jesus, you came to earth in human form, nose and all. May we appreciate the sacredness of our bodies and fill our senses with the glory of creation. We pray . . .

All: Help us use our noses to breathe deeply and take in the wonders of the created world, the beauty within us, and the beauty among us.

3. Tell the participants they are to take their magnets home. They can place them on a mirror, the refrigerator, or some other spot to serve as a reminder that each individual is part of the Body of Christ and that the community needs each person to be whole.

Send Forth

1. Motion for all to stand and offer the following prayer:

† As we close our prayer service, we pray together with the words of Saint Teresa of Ávila:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,

no hands but yours,

no feet but yours;

yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out on the world,

yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good

and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now.

2. Conclude the service with the following prayer:

† Through the nourishment of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, move us to be the Body of Christ active in the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We conclude our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Invite everyone to respond "Amen" if they don't do so spontaneously.

3. The person leading song should invite all the participants to join in singing the closing song.