

The Mission of the Catholic Church

Core Activity

The Mission of the Church

1. Before beginning this activity, gather enough samples of corporate mission statements so that small groups will each have a copy. The Internet is a good source for finding them. Some corporations you might consider are Nike, McDonald's, Sony, and Microsoft.



Also make copies of the handout "A People, a Body, a Temple" (Document #: TX003187), and cut apart the copies as scored. Be sure to make enough copies so that each small group will have one of the scriptural images of the Church.

2. Divide the class into small groups. Explain to the students that they will begin the activity by looking at corporate mission statements. Mention that a mission statement describes the core identity and purpose of an individual or a group. Give each group a copy of a corporate mission statement. Allow about 5 minutes for the groups to read their statements and discuss the following questions:

- What does this mission statement mean?
- What evidence do you have that this corporation is fulfilling its mission?
- What could this company do to more completely achieve its mission? Should it do those things?

When the groups are finished working, ask them to report their answers to the entire class. Invite reactions from the students.

3. Instruct the groups each to write the following headings on three separate sheets of paper:

- Proclaim the Good News
- Serve the Needs of the Poor
- Build the Reign of God

Below each heading they are to create two columns, with the headings "Evidence" and "Do More."

Explain that the groups will have 5 minutes to address each of the three statements they have written on paper. They are to write their answers to the following questions in the respective columns:

- What evidence is there that the Church is carrying out its mission in this particular area?
- What could the Church be doing more of in order to achieve its mission?

4. After a presentation on the Marks of the Church, using material found on pages 139–143 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*, briefly discuss the students' impressions of how those Marks relate to their exploration of the Church's mission, asking questions like the ones that follow:

- How do you see the Marks of the Church represented in the lists you just created?

- What are your impressions of how much the people in this class do to achieve the Church's mission?

5. Give each small group one of the three sections of the handout. Direct the groups to read their sections and to record on them the characteristics of the scriptural images of the Church they were assigned. In other words, if the Church—meaning we—is the people of God (or Body of Christ, or temple of the Holy Spirit), what kinds of things does it do?

6. Conclude by having the groups give brief reports to the entire class. Have a student record, on the board, the characteristics named by the groups as the reports are given. Challenge everyone to select one characteristic from the lists derived from the Scripture passages. Ask the students to use their selections to consider what they can do to be Church in the coming weeks.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

A Parish Mission

As homework or as class work, instruct the students each to obtain copies of their parishes' mission statements. Many parishes post their statements online. Ask the students to analyze and reflect on the statement in light of the criteria used in the core activity. Have the students write a brief reflection on how the parish's mission helps to further the Church's mission and how it is lived out in the parish. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Additional Activities

The Body of Christ in the Community

1. Read the following prayer from Saint Teresa of Ávila:
 - "God has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people" (Jacquelyn Lindsay, *The Catholic Family Prayer Book*, p. 243).

2. Encourage the students to think about the people they know who are taking action to strengthen the Body of Christ. Invite them to recall recent news events and to identify people who are carrying out Christ's mission in the world. Ask them each to prepare a brief presentation on one of the exemplary people they discover.

3. Conclude by summarizing the characteristics of the people selected by the students and relating those to the material from the core activity.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

A Personal Mission Statement

To help focus their lives of service to the world, have the students write a personal mission statement that describes their core identity and purpose. An excellent resource is “Paradigms and Principles,” chapter 2 of *Seven Habits for Highly Effective Teens*, by Sean Covey (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998). Another resource is *Moving On: Embracing the Future*, by Michael Theisen (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1997), from level 4 of the Horizons Program. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Thank-You Notes

Have the young people surprise someone they have witnessed doing an excellent job carrying out the mission of the Church, by writing him or her a thank-you note. Whether they know the person or not, this is a way to say thanks and to encourage those who have been excellent examples to the young people of what it means to be Church. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Journal Entries on the Four Marks of the Church

The four Marks of the Church also describe the challenges that each Catholic, as a member of the community, faces. Ask the students to write a journal entry answering the following questions for the Marks:

- *One.* What can you do to break down the walls between groups in your church or school community that seem to be at odds with one another, or that do not make an effort to reach out to one another?
- *Holy.* How can you live as if you were called to share in Jesus’ mission to the world?
- *Catholic.* What can you do to be more welcoming to those who are different from you?
- *Apostolic.* How do you make an effort to understand what the Church teaches, and wrestle with it if you need to, rather than brushing it aside as old-fashioned or irrational?

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

(The material labeled *TC: Creed* is adapted from *Total Catechesis: Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*, by Maura Thompson Hagarty, Michael J. Hagarty, Marilyn Kielbasa, and Barbara Murray, in the Total Catechesis series [Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2004]. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary’s Press. All rights reserved.

The words of Saint Teresa of Ávila are quoted from *The Catholic Family Prayer Book*, edited by Jacquelyn Lindsay [Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2001], page 243. Copyright © 2001 by Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division.)