

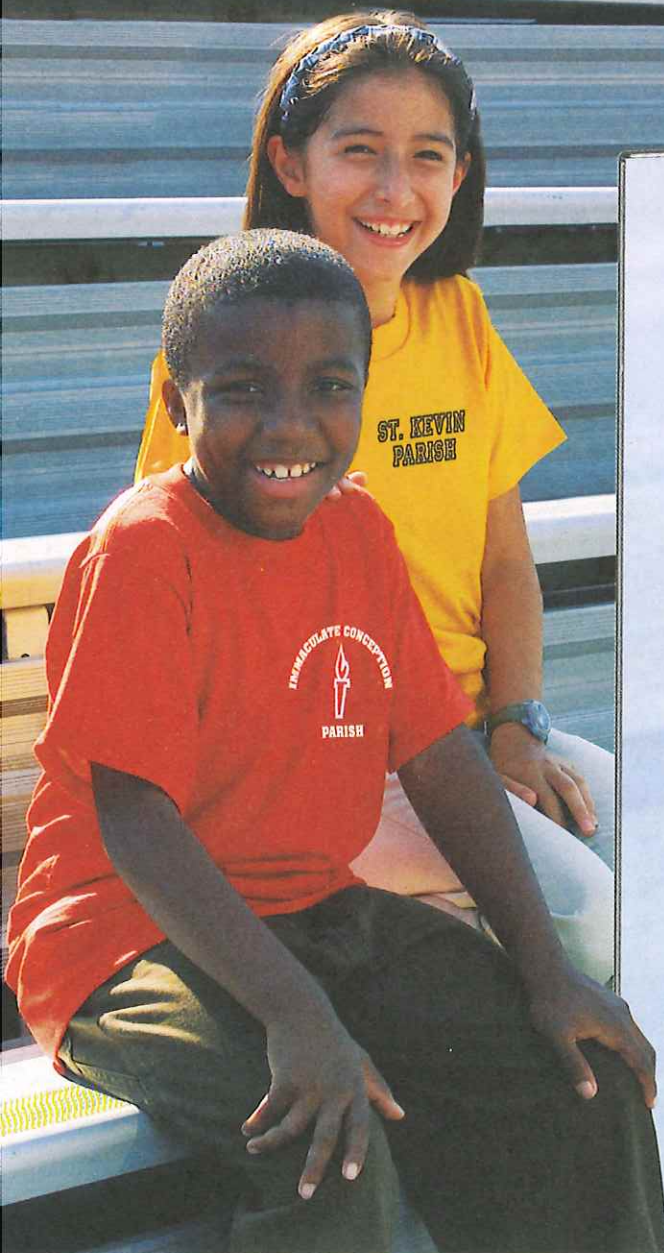
# We Are the Church

25

## WE GATHER

✚ **Leader:** Let us sit quietly and think about all of those we know and care for.

Loving Father, thank you for the gifts of friendship, family, and community.



## 🎵 **Though We Are Many/ Make Us a Sign**

Though we are many, we are one family.  
We are one body in your love.

Make us your people, people of Jesus.  
Make us your people, called by love.

Blessed be Jesus. Blessed be Jesus.  
He came to show us how to love.

Blessed be Jesus, our friend and brother.  
He came to show us God is love.

Make us a sign of hope to all in the world.  
Make us a sign of hope to all in the world.

Make us a sign of light to all in the world.  
Make us a sign of light to all in the world.

Make us a sign of Christ to all in the world.  
Make us a sign of Christ to all in the world.

☀️ Discuss what it is like to belong to a group, club, or organization. How do others know you are a member?



## WE BELIEVE

### The Church is a worldwide community.

All Catholics in the world share the same beliefs in Jesus and the Church. We celebrate the same Seven Sacraments and follow the commandments. We have different languages and customs, but we are united by our Baptism and our call to love God and others.

A **parish** is a community of believers who worship and work together. Catholics in nearby neighborhoods usually belong to the same parish. Parish members gather for Sunday Mass and the sacraments. They pray, study, and work together for justice and peace. People serve their parishes through different ministries. They have responsibilities in religious education, youth organizations, social outreach programs, and in the liturgy.

A **pastor** is the priest who leads the parish in worship, prayer, and teaching. A deacon serves the parish by preaching, baptizing, and assisting the pastor. All the members of the parish work together to continue Jesus' work.

Each parish is part of a **diocese**, a local area of the Church led by a bishop. The **bishops** are leaders of the Church who continue the work of the Apostles. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles. The authority of the Apostles has been handed down to the bishops of each generation. The bishops continue the work of Jesus that was first given to the Apostles. They act in Jesus' name. The bishops teach, govern, or lead, and sanctify, or make holy.



The **pope** is the bishop of the diocese of Rome in Italy. He continues the leadership of Saint Peter, and the bishops work with the pope as their leader. Together with all the bishops, he leads and guides the whole Church.



List some ways you will show that you are part of the parish community.

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## We have responsibilities as members of the Church.

Jesus gave Peter and the Apostles help in guiding the Church. At the Last Supper Jesus told the Apostles, “The holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you” (John 14:26).

Like the Apostles, the pope and bishops are strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit. They help us to understand what it means to live as followers of Jesus in today’s world.

The Holy Spirit is with all of us, helping us to be Jesus’ disciples. The pope and bishops have established some laws to help us know and fulfill our responsibilities as members of the Church. These laws are called the **precepts of the Church**.

The precepts of the Church remind us that growing in holiness and serving the Church are important responsibilities. They help us to see that loving God and others is connected to our life of prayer, worship, and service. The precepts teach us to act as members of the Church. They also make sure that the Church has what it needs to serve its members and to grow.

### The Precepts of the Church

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.
2. You shall confess sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence by the Church.
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

### Key Words

**parish** (p. 260)

**pastor** (p. 260)

**diocese** (p. 259)

**bishops** (p. 259)

**pope** (p. 261)

**precepts of the Church** (p. 261)



Explain to a friend why the precepts of the Church are important.



## We celebrate the sacraments.

Baptism is like a door to the rest of the sacraments. It welcomes us to the Church and to celebrate the other sacraments.



The sacraments change us. As Catholics we worship and celebrate with other members of the Church. Through the sacraments the life of Christ grows in each of us and the Church grows, too. An important part of preparing for the sacraments is learning about our faith. When we read the Bible and learn more about Jesus, we have a better understanding of the Church and our faith. We can discover how to live as Christ calls us to live, building up the community of faith.

The first precept or law of the Church reminds us to participate in the Sacrament of the Eucharist on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

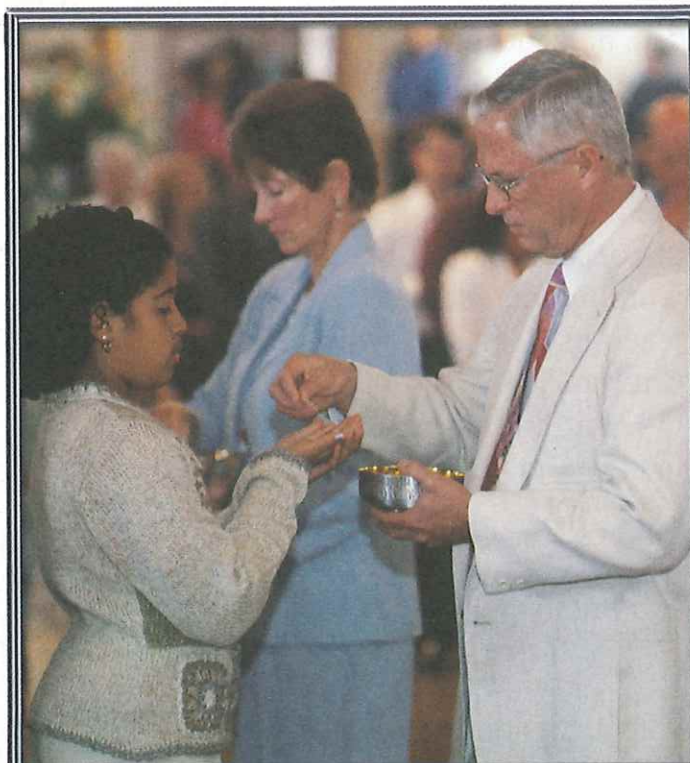
The next two precepts remind us of the need to receive Holy

Communion and the Sacrament of Penance. The second precept requires that we celebrate the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year. The third precept requires that we receive the Eucharist at least once during the Easter season. However, we are called to regular and frequent participation in these two sacraments.

Receiving Holy Communion and God's forgiveness in Penance are important ways of nourishing and healing the life of Christ in us. Celebrating the sacraments strengthens the Church and unites its members.



Work with a partner. Name ways you can follow the first three precepts.





## We have an active role in the Church community.

We are an important part of the Church community. Being a member of the Church gives us certain responsibilities to one another.

The fourth precept of the Church deals with the importance of doing penance. Doing penance helps us to focus on God and what is important in our lives as Christians. Doing penance is also a way to show we are sorry for our sins. That is why it is an important part of the Sacrament of Penance. There are days during the Church year when Catholics do penance by fasting from food or not eating meat. Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Fridays of Lent are some of these days.

The fifth precept of the Church deals with helping the Church help others. As Church members we contribute to the support of the Church in many ways. We offer money, time, and our talents. Just as it takes money to care for our families, money keeps our parish and diocese strong and active. That is one reason that there is a collection at Mass.

Our diocese helps people with housing, food, medical care, education, and many other needs. We also work to share the Good News of Jesus at school, in our neighborhoods, and with all those we meet. This missionary work is our responsibility as members of the Church.

## WE RESPOND



The precepts help us to grow in holiness as a community of believers. If you could add one more precept, what would it be and why?

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## As Catholics...

Each time we gather as a parish for the celebration of the Mass we profess our faith by saying the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed. In the Nicene Creed we state, "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." Our belief in the Church is also a description of it. One, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic are the four marks of the Church. These marks, or features, identify the Church.


Remember what you believe about the Church as you pray the Creed at Mass this week.





# PROJECT

## Show What *you* Know

Read the clues. Then read the four words in the box. Cross out the words that do not answer the clue. You are left with the .

1. Bishop of Rome who leads the whole Catholic Church	priest	bishop	pope	deacon
2. local area of the Church led by a bishop	pastor	parish	liturgy	diocese
3. priest who leads the parish in worship, prayer, and teaching	pastor	parish	liturgy	diocese
4. leaders of the Church who continue the work of the Apostles	bishops	deacons	priests	pastors
5. community of believers who worship and work together	parish	precepts of the Church	pope	deacons
6. laws to help us know and fulfill our responsibilities as members of the Church	Beatitudes	dioceses	precepts of the Church	sacraments

## Reality Check



Check the ways you take an active role in the Church community. Add your own.

- ☐ give to the collection at Mass
- ☐ share the Good News of Jesus with classmates and neighbors
- ☐ help with parish/diocesan projects
- ☐ celebrate the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance with the parish
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Saint Stories

Saint Monica was a married woman who lived in northern Africa in the fourth century. She worried about her son Augustine. His life was going in the wrong direction. Monica prayed for her son. After many years, Augustine realized that only God could make his life meaningful. He was baptized. Augustine was a great teacher of the Catholic faith, and became a priest and a bishop. He was canonized a saint. Saint Augustine's feast day is August 28. Also canonized, Saint Monica is the patroness of married women. Her feast day is August 27.



### DISCIPLE CHALLENGE

- Underline the sentence that tells why Monica was worried about her son.
- Underline the phrase that tells what Augustine realized.

## More to Explore



Kidnapped from Africa and sold into slavery, Josephine Bakhita later won her freedom. She began to speak out for Catholic missionaries throughout the world. She was canonized a saint in 2000.

Find out more about orders and organizations that support Catholic missionaries. How can you and your parish support them?

### Take Home

With your family, learn more about saints and holy people by visiting *Lives of the Saints* at

[www.webelieveweb.com](http://www.webelieveweb.com).

**Now, pass it on!**



# CHAPTER TEST

Write the letter of the phrase that defines each of the following.

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ parish                 | a. the priest who leads the parish in worship, prayer, and teaching                   |
| 2. _____ precepts of the Church | b. the leaders of the Church who continue the work of the Apostles                    |
| 3. _____ bishops                | c. the laws to help us know and fulfill our responsibilities as members of the Church |
| 4. _____ pastor                 | d. a community of believers who worship and work together                             |

Circle the correct answer.

5. Through the \_\_\_\_\_ the life of Christ in us grows.  
precepts                      sacraments                      responsibilities
6. Each \_\_\_\_\_ is led by a bishop.  
parish                      diocese                      precept
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is like a door to the rest of the sacraments.  
Eucharist                      Baptism                      Penance
8. Catholics around the world share the same \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus and the Church.  
beliefs                      customs                      language

Write a sentence to answer each question.

9. Why does the Church call us to regular and frequent celebration of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance?

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10. What is one way you can take an active role in the Church?

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