



a Kendall Hunt Company

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



Junior High Session

Acts 9:26-31

John 15:1-8

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

God of Love,

As members of the one Body of Christ,

help us to be so united that we feel the pain and the joy of other members.

Help us to live as one family united in love.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

The topic for today is the Church as the Body of Christ. To begin, take a ball of yarn and invite the young people to gather in a circle. Hold the end of the string of yarn and toss it to a person in the circle. Have each person hold on to a piece of the string and toss the ball of yarn to another person. Let the tossing go on until everyone is holding a strand of yarn, creating a web. Invite the young people to examine the web of yarn. Point out that although there are differences among the group members, all are united as one. Then, tug on the string to show how the behavior of one person affects the whole group. Discuss.

- How does this web represent our connection to one another?
- What effect do the feelings and actions of one member have on the whole group?
- Why is it important to care for and cooperate with one another?

Allow time for discussion. We are members of the one Body of Christ. As members of the Body of Christ, the Church, we are called to live together in unity.

Listening to the Word of God

In the first reading from Acts of the Apostles, listen to how the early church built up as one Body.

Read Acts 9:26-31.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Why does Barnabas accept Paul as a disciple?



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- How is the early Church built up?
- How does the Holy Spirit help the early Church?

In the gospel listen to the image Jesus uses to show his followers that they are united in him.

Read John 15:1-8.

Allow for silence.

- How does Jesus represent the true vine?
- What do the branches represent?
- What does Jesus teach his followers about bearing fruit?
- What will happen to those who are connected to Jesus, the true vine?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

In the reading from Acts of the Apostles we learn about the joys and pains of a growing Church. Paul is introduced to the community in Jerusalem by Barnabas. Because Paul was once an enemy of the Christians, the other disciples are afraid of him. Barnabas tells the others that Paul has seen Jesus and is now a devoted follower who is preaching the good news. Today's passage points out that the Body of Christ is building up and flourishing with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In the gospel Jesus uses the image of a vine and branches to show the importance of being united in faith. Jesus is the vine and God is the vine grower. We are the branches. This image points out that staying connected to Jesus helps us to grow. Together with Jesus we bear fruit and offer our gifts to the world. Apart from Jesus we wither and die. The vine and branches in this gospel represent Jesus' relationship with the Church. Jesus is the head of the Body of Christ—the Church. As members of the Church we give glory to God when we love and care for one another.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What helps to build up the Church today?
- How can you stay connected to Jesus?
- What gifts do you have to offer the world?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life.**]

Doctrinal Discussion Starter

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The Church as Body of Christ

We believe that the Church is a gathering of people brought together by the saving action of Christ. The Church is the gathering place where all men and women are called by God to rediscover their unity and salvation in Christ. The Church is not a building, it is a body—the Body of Christ. Believers form one Body and Christ is the head. Just as the head is connected to the body, the people of God are one with Christ. God's loving plan draws all people into the one Body. The Church is made up of all living members and all those who have gone before us in faith. Individual members bring their different gifts, and with the help of the Holy Spirit all build up the Church as the one Body of Christ.

- Why is the Body of Christ another name for the Church?
- What different gifts do members bring to the Church?
- What does it mean to be united in Christ?

Sacrament Connection

In the Sacrament of Eucharist we celebrate our unity as members of the one Body of Christ. The Eucharist unites us with the Holy Trinity and with one another.

The Gospel in Life

How can you bear fruit this week?

