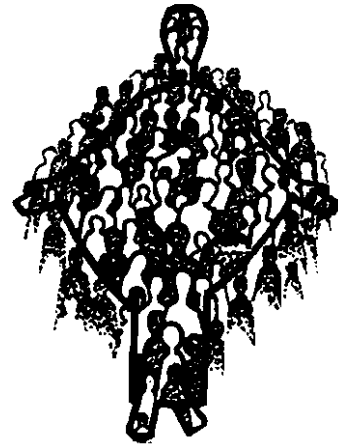




What is the Church?

Catechist's Guide: Unit 1

We are the People of God



Since this is your first meeting with the children, you will need to spend a little bit of time at the beginning getting to know their names and explaining what will happen at their meetings with you.

Remember that you are not acting as a teacher but a catechist, a faith friend, someone from the parish who is prepared to share a little of their own faith with the children.

This is especially important on this first occasion, since the aim of this unit is to explore what it means to belong and to be made welcome. This will be done by reflecting with the children on a number of themes:


- ◆ The fact that they belong to a family
- ◆ Their baptism which made them members of God's family
- ◆ The way they are welcomed at Church
- ◆ The fact that Jesus welcomed little children as his friends

In preparation for this session, you might like to arrange for the children:

- ◆ to see the things that are used at a baptism - the font, the oils, the candle
- ◆ to see a video of a baptism (either in the session or at school)
- ◆ to be present for a baptism

The parish priest might be able to help with this particular aspect of the input.

The most important thing is for the children to enjoy meeting with you, so that they think coming to Church is something to look forward to. This is especially important in this first session where the emphasis is on being welcome!




INITIATION

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 1

We are the People of God



I belong to a family...

My family name is _____

The day I was born was a very special day.

My birthday is _____

Other members of my family are:

Here I am!

When I was born...

I was welcomed into my family and into the world

My Family at Home

Some of the people who welcomed me were:

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Explore with the children the fact that we get our surname from our families.

Mention some family names as an example.

Point out that sometimes family names describe what the family used to do a long time ago (eg. "smith", "baker", etc), or the place the family came from or something else that distinguishes one family from another.

Point out that the birth of a baby is a happy occasion. People celebrate and congratulate the parents.

People come together to welcome the new baby.

Parents know that they will have a lot to do to help their child grow strong and healthy.

Note: the boxes 'Here I am!' and 'My Family at Home' can be used to draw pictures or for photographs.

I belong to another family...

The name of this family is the C _____ C _____



I became a member of that family when I was baptised.

That was also a very special day.

I was baptised on _____

At _____ Church

My Christian name is _____

My Godparents were _____

and _____




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[C _____ C _____ can be either 'Christian Community' or 'Catholic Church']

Explain that Christians belong to the family of God as well as their own family at home. They become part of this family at baptism. At baptism we are signed with the "sign of the cross". This is our special Christian sign.

Christians choose a "Christian" name for the first name of their children. This is usually the name of a saint whose protection parents want for their child and whose life they find especially attractive.

Members of God's family gather to welcome new members. It is a happy occasion.

Parents know they have a lot to do to bring their child up as a child of God. They ask other family members or friends to help them bring their child up as a child of God. These people are called "godparents".

At my Baptism...

I was baptised with water and the Holy Spirit as God gave me a new kind of life in Jesus



I was anointed with the oil of chrism so that God's power would make me strong to be like Him

I was given a lighted candle to show that Christ was now present in my life



My parents and the Church community are now helping me prepare to celebrate Confirmation and Communion



When I am confirmed I will receive the fullness of God's Spirit..

When I receive Holy Communion I will share fully in the Mass



At Mass...

We begin our prayers with the Sign of the Cross - In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest welcomes us to the celebration.

We are welcome to be there because we are part of God's family.

At home...

Colour in the picture and read the story of Jesus welcoming the little children.



People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

Remember that Jesus first welcomed you when you were baptised. On that day you began to be a very special friend of Jesus. Through your Confirmation and Holy Communion, you will deepen and strengthen that friendship. Jesus wants you to be part of his special family - the People of God - for the rest of your life.

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In baptism we are washed clean of sin and given new life.

We are strengthened by God's anointing with oil.

We shine for Jesus and receive a light from the Easter Candle (the light of Christ).

The Holy Spirit comes down upon the baptised to help them be a child of God.

When we are confirmed the Holy Spirit will return to make us stronger.

Soon we will receive Jesus in Holy Communion and this will feed the life of God within us.

We will receive Jesus during Mass.

We begin Mass with our Christian sign: "the sign of the cross".

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Ask the children to complete this page of the worksheet at home but, if time allows, take them through the ideas that it contains:

Jesus was always pleased to see little children.

He made them very welcome.

We learn about this in the Bible.

Remember that Jesus has already welcomed you at Baptism.

He sees you as his friend and he looks forward to your becoming better friends through Confirmation and Holy Communion.

Remind the children to bring their worksheet back to the next session. Thank them for taking part, or tell them how much you have enjoyed working with them.

Additional Suggestions and Resources

1. The Rite of Baptism

This might be a useful resource for you to look at before the session, since many of the words that are spoken by the priest help to explain the symbolism used in the service.

2. Making People Welcome

You can help the children to explore particular ways in which we make people feel welcome or unwelcome, perhaps like this:

"Suppose somebody came into the room and we did not want them to stay; how would we show, without speaking, that they were not welcome and that we wanted them to go away?"

Then suggest the opposite and explore the different facial expressions and gestures which tell people they are welcome.

You might then think about the ways in which we make people welcome (or not) at Church.

3. The Story of Jesus and the Little Children

People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

4. Be Prepared

It is very likely that the children will not know all the details of their own baptism (date, church, godparents), so be prepared to let them complete that part of the worksheet with their parents. Alternatively, it might be possible for you to have this information available (through the parish priest or co-ordinator) for the children in your group before you begin.