



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate*  
**DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
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**2007 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:  
Grades 4-5**

**THEME:**

*“...Building up the Body of Christ; until we all come to the unity of the faith.”*

*Ephesians 4:12-13*

**GOALS:**

1. To help students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, poetry, prose, or photography.
2. To encourage student understanding of themselves as members of the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head of the Church.
3. To help mediate student growth as Orthodox Christians in an increasingly diverse world and among diverse Orthodox Christian populations and jurisdictions.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To define the Church as a gathering of baptized and chrismated Christians who worship the Holy Trinity and to understand the term *ecclesia* used by the Early Church as meaning “gathering.”
2. To define the Body of Christ as all the baptized and chrismated members of the Church who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
3. To hear and repeat the sentence: Christ is the Head of the Church, and we are members of His Body.
4. To demonstrate the Body of Christ as the “whole body knit together” with a variety of jobs, talents, and skills needed to do the work of the Church.
5. To describe one talent or skill he or she can offer to the Church for working toward the unity of all Orthodox Christians on the North American continent.

**TIME:** 45-50 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Large Icon of Christ (Pantocrator) or of The Resurrection
- Placard or oak tag with definitions:  
**Ecclesia**-A Greek word used by the early Christians to describe the Church. It means “gathering.”  
**Unity**-Oneness as in spirit, aims, interests, feelings; a whole made up of a variety of parts.  
**Diversity**-Variety, different parts or expressions.  
**Unity of faith**- United in the same Faith, the same belief, the same purpose for coming together. For us today, this means the Orthodox Church.
- Chalkboard and chalk or large sheets of paper and markers
- Copies of the Home Page of the Department of Missions and Evangelism  
[www.antiochian.org/missions](http://www.antiochian.org/missions)
- Bibles
- One sheet 9”x12” construction paper or drawing paper for each student
- One marker or crayon for each student.

## FOR THE CATECHIST:

This year’s Festival theme contains two important phrases: *Body of Christ* and *unity of the faith*. The intent of the theme is directed toward unity at the Archdiocesan level and at the Orthodox Church on the North American continent. You will need to be sure that your students understand the Body of Christ with its various levels of meaning and as St. Paul uses the image in *Ephesians 4*. Then you will want to direct student

thinking toward the possibilities of unity of the Orthodox Faith in North America.

The portion of the lesson that deals with the Body of Christ relies heavily on what St. Paul presents in his Epistle to the Ephesians. Depending on the abilities of your class, you can utilize as many of the references to *Ephesians* as you think are helpful. If your students are well versed in knowing what the Body of Christ means, you can continue on with discussion about what it would be like to have unity among the Orthodox Churches in America—and what the student can do toward unity among the Orthodox. Each section of the lesson is presented with a bold-faced question.

Another aspect of this lesson deals with spiritual gifts, which St. Paul calls grace. It will be important for students to know that by virtue of their chrismation and as members of the Orthodox Church, they can already contribute their particular gifts and skills to the building up of the Church. This is not limited to the “gifted and talented.” Each person is unique and able to offer Time, Talent, and Treasure to the Church. During the Activity section, students may brainstorm the diverse roles and “jobs” needed for the Church to function and how people who fill these roles contribute as parts “knit and joined together” to form the whole Body of Christ. This whole strives to attain the unity of faith—communion with the One Truth in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then, of course, this Truth must be proclaimed to all peoples in all nations. So then begins the work with individual persons growing into Christ, coming together as the Body of Christ, and making the Body grow and be known to all.

**Suggested Readings:**

*The Orthodox Study Bible. Ephesians,*  
pp. 436-452, especially “The Church,” p.  
445.

Sr. Magdalen: *Children in the Church*  
*Today. An Orthodox Perspective.*

## ***THE LESSON PLAN***

### **OPENING:**

Gather students around the icon corner to say “Our Father.”

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Announce the theme for the Creative Arts Festival and explain that it comes from St. Paul’s *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Chapter 4. Call attention to the important phrases of Body of Christ and unity in faith. Tell students you will talk about what St. Paul meant by “Body of Christ” and then concentrate on what unity could mean for the Orthodox Church. Ask a good reader to read the *section* of Chapter 4 from which the theme is derived: Verse 7, and verses 11-16. Explain that as you continue with the lesson you will refer to some of these verses, so the students should keep their Bibles open to *Ephesians*, Chapter 4.

### **CONTENT:**

**The Church as People.** Ask students, “What do you think it means when we talk about “the Church”? What is “the Church”? Write their ideas on the chalkboard or on a large paper. Introduce the idea, if it was not already mentioned, that the Church is a group of baptized and chrismated Christians who *gather together* to worship the Holy Trinity; to pray and sing to God; to receive Holy Communion, etc. The Early Church was called the *ecclesia*, which translated means *gathering*. (We get the word ecclesiastical from the Greek word ecclesia. You can write these words on the chalkboard and ask students to repeat them.)

Remind students that Christ told us He would send the Holy Spirit, “the Helper” to His people. This happened on Pentecost. (Students should be familiar with this event, based on last year’s Festival theme.) Tell students that *people* who were baptized became members of the Church. They were first called Christians at Antioch in Syria!

Help students to articulate that we are *members of the Orthodox Church* because we are baptized Christians who have been chrismated in the Orthodox Church.

### **The Body of Christ.**

Write the phrase *Body of Christ* on the chalkboard or on a large piece of paper. Some students may already understand what this phrase means, even in its many layers of meaning. Say the phrase aloud and ask students to repeat it. Explain that in the Epistle the phrase *Body of Christ* doesn’t mean Christ’s actual arms, legs, hands, feet, stomach, or chest. Instead, St. Paul uses the phrase *Body of Christ* to talk about all the people who are baptized Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the Cross and rose from the dead to save us from sin and give us eternal life. St. Paul would say that all these people are members of the *Body of Christ*.

You might also say,

“The Body of Christ is one way to talk about the baptized people of the Church.”

You might then say,

“The Church is the Body of Christ.” (Students could repeat this.) Refer students to *Ephesians* 4:12.

### **Christ is the Head of the Body.**

Tell students: We know that the Church is all the people who are the *Body of Christ*. Who is the Head of the Body of Christ? (Jesus Christ, the Son of God) Most students should be able to answer that Christ is the Head of the Church. You will want to emphasize the sentence the Church uses to state this truth:

Christ is the Head of the Church and we are *members* of His body.

Ask students to repeat this sentence.

Refer students to *Ephesians* 4:15-16. In verse 15, emphasize the word head. Christ is the Head! By speaking the truth in **love**, we may grow up in all things into Him, Christ.

In verses 16-17 St. Paul uses the image of the body joined and knit together. St. Paul's image is one of a body working in unity with all its part functioning—each part doing its share--in a spirit of love. The head and body are fully joined and working in unity.

Look at Verse 16 and the words “from the whole body knit together.” Notice that St. Paul uses the phrase **whole body**, not just part of the body. Think of Christ as the Head of the whole body joined together with the same purpose and same belief (Faith). What do you have? The Body of Christ!

### **How do we build up the Body of Christ?**

Tell students that St. Paul gives us some ideas about how we can build up the Body of Christ (the Church).

Direct attention to verse 7, read it aloud for students, and point out that Christ gives grace (or spiritual gifts) to each person. Christ decides what He will give to each and for what purpose.

Continue with Verse 11. Grace (spiritual gifts) is given to some people so that they can become apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Verse 12 tells us the purpose for these gifts:

- equipping the saints (Anyone can become a saint; the assumption is that everyone will try to achieve saintliness.)
- for the work of ministry (service to others)
- building up of the Body of Christ (the Church).

Tell students we sometimes hear the phrase “Unity with diversity.” Within the One Body of Christ there is diversity of people with different gifts and expression of these gifts, talents, skills. You may need to define diversity as variety and it usually is understood nowadays as variety within a group of people.

Direct students' attention to the roles people in the Church could have, depending upon their gifts, talents, or skills. Take a few minutes to pose these questions:

- a) What functions or “roles” in the church does St. Paul write about? (Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers)
- b) Are these the only roles or jobs needed to build up the Church? (No,

there are others to keep the Church going. St. Paul listed roles that are leadership or teaching roles. Numerous other tasks are required to do the work of the Church.)

Students can name some, such as architects, iconographers, chanters, choir singers, those who clean, paint, repair; those who visit the sick, etc. Later, in the Activity, students will write on large paper the various categories, roles, and jobs of people in the Church.

c) How can a young child, such as you, participate in some of these roles or jobs? (Not as leaders such as a priest, or evangelizer (missionary) but one can talk about his or her Faith, do service projects with the help of adult leaders; use a talent such as in art, music, or even leadership skills; praying for others.)

d) A lot of people with different talents can do things for the Church. What can *all* these people do in the Church, regardless of their skills or talents? (They can participate in worship and receive Holy Communion. Anyone can worship; those chrismated Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves can receive Holy Communion because they are members of the Orthodox Church and in the fullness of the Faith.)

Verse 13 is important. The word attain means “to gain through effort.” The phrase *unity of faith* means everyone is united in the same Faith, the same belief, the same purpose for coming together. For us today, this means the Orthodox Church.

Note the phrase *of the knowledge of the Son of God*. This means we know Christ, the Son of God, because we have a

relationship with Him through prayer, worship, and Holy Communion. It’s not just by reading about Christ or discussing what we know.

St. Paul suggests that all Christians should work toward becoming perfect or holy. Students may remember hearing Christ words: “...as My Father is perfect in heaven” or “Be holy, for I am holy” (1Peter 1:16). This is the Christian life. Explain to students that even St. Paul knew this is difficult to do and wants us to support one another as we strive to the “fullness of Christ.” (Verse 13). That’s why he uses the word attain which means “to gain through effort.” It’s hard work to be the kind of Christian that Christ wants us to be.

Point out to your students that St. Paul also says we don’t do this alone. This is what he means about the whole body working together “by which every part does its share.” He means that when each person contributes to the work of the Church, then the Body of Christ (the Church) grows closer to Christ and to a unity of faith.

### **What is the faith that St. Paul talks about?**

Point out the “Oneness” of the faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God. There is One God, One Body of Christ, One Church, One Truth. St. Paul wanted to warn Christians not to get swept “to and fro” by false beliefs. Verse 14 tells **why** we need to build up the Body of Christ to unity of the faith.

- a) So all people would know the Truth, which is Jesus Christ as the Son of God;
- b) So people would not fall into believing false doctrines;

- c) So people would not be tricked into believing Christ is not who the Church says He is (or who Christ says He is).

A unity of faith means that everyone believes the same thing. In this case, it means that all Christians believe the Truth about Christ and Who He is and what the Church is and should be. It also has the meaning of everyone sharing in the “fullness of faith.”

Here you can remind students that The Orthodox Church believes it has the “fullness of Faith” handed down from the time of the Apostles and this is why the Church believes so strongly in preserving this Faith in Truth. (Holy tradition)

#### **What does this mean for unity?**

Ask students to say in their own words what unity means, whether in daily life or in the context of the Church: Refer to the definition of unity as “oneness as in spirit, aims, interests, feelings but made up of a variety of people or parts.”

Possible responses:

A team works together; each player has a particular skill and does what he is supposed to do, and so the team wins.

A class project has different members, each contributing his or her skill, talents, ideas, and the project becomes something good.

A church project might be people raising money to help someone who is sick; workers for Habitat for Humanity; people raising money by going on a “Walk” for a charity.

The Divine Liturgy has different people working together (leitourgeia) with the priest and deacon doing what their role is and the parishioners responding—and together everyone participates in the Divine Liturgy with Holy Communion.

Students should be helped to understand: The people who live in unity of faith would have the same beliefs and the same purpose in the Church but might have different gifts to do the work of the Church.

Quote from *Psalms 133* which is one of the psalms used at The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. *The Orthodox Study Bible* refers to this psalm as “Blessed Unity of the People of God,” (p. 743). The verses quoted here are from the more traditional translations

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is  
When brothers dwell in unity.  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Running down the beard, the beard of Aaron.  
Running down on the collar of his robe....”  
*Psalms 132/133.*

Note the words good and pleasant and dwell in unity. Remind students that oil would have been costly and indeed precious in Jewish culture; often it was used for anointing. We shouldn’t think of it as we do fuel oil or cooking oil. Think of myrrh. Ask students to imagine how it feels to have warm, smooth oil on their arms or someone rubbing their arms or face with oil.

Or how else might it feel to have “brothers dwell in unity”?

**Imagine what it would be like if all Orthodox people in North America came together as one Body of Christ.** Unity could mean that all jurisdictions would be joined together as one. (Recall

St. Paul's description in *Ephesians* 4:16. "joined and knit together....) Use the senses to stimulate discussion:

How would that look to you?

Possible responses: A lot of people as part of the "church"; A blend of cultural expression, customs, iconography, liturgical music, architecture, service organizations.

How would it sound?

Possible responses: A strong voice in the nation; A mix of musical styles in the services; perhaps unfamiliar music at Divine Liturgy; possibly people speaking different languages at church.

How would it taste? Would it leave a bad taste in your mouth? A good taste?

Possible responses: Varied menus at church. Everyone receives the **Eucharist**: One Body of Christ expressed in Holy Communion.

How would it feel? (Emotional responses here)

Possible responses: Pride in making a real presence on the American scene; Pride in a common goal, in overcoming obstacles of uniting the various jurisdictions; Security in larger number of Orthodox Christians one knows; Discomfort with new members until one knows them better.

**What do the people in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese need to do to achieve unity of faith?**

As students think up answers, write them on large sheets of paper and post them. You might ask students to consider some of the ideas listed below, if they haven't mentioned them. Show the Home Page of the Department of Missions of the Archdiocese and point out the quotes as

well as the objectives of the Department in reaching out to America to bring America to Orthodoxy.

- The clergy and the laity need to pray to the Holy Spirit to guide them about what to do.
- The bishops need to work with other jurisdictions so that all the Orthodox Churches on the North American continent work together and share the resources they each have.
- All the Orthodox—clergy and laity—need to be the living Church through regular worship of the Holy Trinity and frequent reception of the Eucharist and other sacraments.
- Clergy and laity need to follow the Great Commission to go out to all nations and baptize them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Matthew* 28:16-20, *Mark* 16:14-18; *Luke* 24:44-49).
- All the Orthodox clergy and laity need to work in harmony toward one Orthodox Church on the North American continent. This can be accomplished through people using their gifts for the Church in different organizations.

**What can you do as a young person to work toward unity on the North American continent?**

Ask for student responses. Offer these suggestions as ways students can contribute toward spreading the Faith or toward building up the Church on this continent. You may want to point out

that spiritual work is important: Building themselves up in faith now so they are better equipped to do the work of the Church. By example, they can inspire others. Emphasize that cooperation between hierarchy and the laity is needed to achieve this effort.

- Know that without a doubt you can contribute to the Church through personal prayer, in your family, in the local parish. You are a member of the Orthodox Church right now!
- Pray and study the Scriptures, learn about what the Orthodox Church teaches, and grow closer in your relationship to Christ.
- Worship regularly and partake of Holy Communion and other sacraments on a regular basis.
- Become involved in parish activities, camps, and the Parish-Life Conference with activities such as the Creative Arts Festival. As you get older, you can participate in the Bible Bowl and Oratorical and join Teen SOYO. When you become an adult, you can become a member of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, Antiochian Women, Order of St. Ignatius, or participate in work of the various departments; or you might work as a young adult on projects for Orthodox Christian Missions Commission, etc.
- Give of your Time, Talent, and Treasure. This means you will give of yourself to serve others, and you will know something about the “gifts” God has given

you, whether in sports, music, arts, intellect, leadership, or being able to help people—which itself is a gift. You can help support the church by donating a portion of your allowance, or other money you might have.

- Learn something about the saints of the Church and about the history of the Orthodox Church so that when people of other faiths try to convert you, you can defend the Truth and your own beliefs.
- Work toward being friendly and open and respectful of all peoples of all races and cultures. As you respect others, they will respect you and your beliefs.

#### **ACTIVITY:**

You can demonstrate, especially for kinesthetic learners, “unity in diversity” in the Body of Christ with Christ as its Head by asking students to name all the variety of people and workers in the Church. Distribute one 9”x12” sheet of construction paper and a marker to each child. One by one, have students call out a category of a member of the Church such as parent; or a role that a person has in the Church, such as priest; or a job that has to be done such as architect to build the Church, etc. That student will write his choice on the sheet of paper and take his or her place to form a circle. See the list below:

Laity/clergy; parents/children;  
grandparents; boys/girls; deacon/  
priest/ bishop/ archbishop/patriarch;

chanters/choir singers/choir directors;  
iconographers/architects;  
catechists/students; gardeners;  
painters; cooks/bakers; cleaners;  
parish council members; altar servers;  
missionaries, etc.

Everyone should then stand in a circle with his or her signs to represent “members” of the Church. This is the Body of Christ. Next, place an icon of Christ as Pantocrator or an icon of The Resurrection above the heads of the *Body of Christ*. All the members of the Body of Christ worship together and work together, each part doing its share in the Church. The Head and the Body are fully joined and function together as a whole.

Next, take a few moments for students to group themselves into what “category” they think they might fit into—what they would like to do for the Church or what talent or skill they already have to offer for the building up of the Church. e.g.: Someone who sings well might want to be part of the church choir or compose liturgical music. Someone might want to teach or preach. Someone might want to be a good parent. Perhaps one child will say how important it is to pray. Ask the students how they feel being part of this “church” and about possibly doing some special job or taking on some special role for the church. Ask students to remain seated in the circle for some final questions.

### **CLOSING:**

You can review with students by posing these questions:

We’ve been talking a lot about the Church. Why do we say the church is

not just a building? (The church is made up of people who worship the Holy Trinity.)

What is the Greek word that describes the church as a gathering? (Ecclesia, which translated means “gathering.”)

Who is Head of the Church? (Christ—not any human being)

What is the Body of Christ? (All the members of the Church)

Who are members of the Orthodox Church? (All people who are chrismated in the Orthodox Church are members of the Orthodox Church.)

Finish this sentence: The Church is the Body of \_\_\_\_ (Christ) and we are \_\_\_\_\_ (members) of His Body.

Describe St. Paul’s image of the Body of Christ. (Not flesh and bones as in a human body; all the believers in Christ; the church; the *whole* body joined and knit together with all the parts working together in unity. The Head and Body are fully joined and working in unity.)

We Orthodox Christians are given spiritual gifts which we can use to build up the Body of Christ. What is another word for these spiritual gifts? (Grace)

Who bestows these spiritual gifts on each one of us? (Christ Our God through the Holy Spirit)

What spiritual gift do you think you have to use toward building up the Church, the Body of Christ? (Ask each child in turn to say what he/she can do. Perhaps a child feels more comfortable

saying what he or she would like to do for the Church).

What do we mean by the word unity? (Oneness, as in spirit, aims, interests, or feelings;  
A whole made up of a variety of parts)

What do we mean by unity of faith? ( One faith—one belief. Everyone believes the same thing. Everyone is in communion with one another. The Orthodox Church believes it has the “fullness of Faith.”)

Why is it important for us Orthodox Christians to work together for the building up of the Church? (The Church is not just one person, but a gathering of people who worship the One True God. Working together, everybody can get the job done—just as a team works together to attain its goal. When each person uses his skills and talents or does something to help the Church grow, the whole body of the Church works together efficiently and “fits together” to make up the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head.)

Who remembers what the Great Commission is? (Jesus told His disciples to go out to all nations to baptize all the people in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.)

Why is it important for us in the Antiochian Archdiocese to work toward unity on the American continent? (Accept individual answers. Christ has asked us to bring all people into “the unity of faith”—so that all believe the same Truths about Jesus Christ and His Church. When all people share in the same Holy Communion, they share in

the Body of Christ in a unity of faith. We want everyone to know Christ and the Orthodox Faith! )

### **Optional Questions:**

Why can we say that there is unity among all Orthodox Christians who receive Holy Communion? (All Orthodox Christians belong to the same Faith—and all who receive Holy Communion are in union with each other or else they could not receive the Eucharist. Communion means “in union.”)

What does the word diversity mean? (Variety; different parts or expressions).

We’ve used the phrase “unity in diversity” regarding the Church. Tell what this means to you. (There is One Church and One Faith, but within the Church, there are people who have different languages, customs, talents, and jobs. Even though they are different people, they all make up the Body of Christ, receive Holy Communion, and work together toward building up the Church.)

Gather students around the icon corner. Read from *I Corinthians* 12:12-14:

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

For in fact the body is not one member but many.”

Say a closing prayer or sing “It Is Truly Meet” or another hymn customary for your parish