

GRADE 10

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

BOOK ONE: CHURCH



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This book is the first of three books which make up the Grade 10 Religious Education programme.

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Sr. Ehrentude Pretzl, SSpS, Coordinator.

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Topic One

Background to the study of Church

Last year in Grade 9, we studied a unit on the history of the Church. We learnt about many famous people and events.

.....
:check your memory:
.....

What Apostle spent his last years in the city of Ephesus?
Name 2 early martyrs of the Church.
Who was the first martyr?
What are monasteries?
Name one person who founded monasteries.
Who was the first Emperor to legalize Christianity?
Tell the story of St Francis.
Who founded the Lutheran church?
What was the cause of the disagreement between Henry VIII and the Pope?
What famous person did Henry have executed?
Who were the first priests to come to work in Melanesia?

Write the answers in your book. Draw a star in your book if you got 7 or more answers correct out of 10!



In this book we are not going to look at the HISTORY of the Church, instead we are going to try to answer questions like:

What does it mean to be Church?
Are young people interested in being Church?
What was the experience of Church for the early Christians? What is our experience?
What kind of problems did they face?
What kind of problems do we face?
What is fundamentalism in a Church?
What does my local Church do?
What are some ways of describing the Church?

We hope you will enjoy learning and thinking about these questions and come to understand and love **being** Church as well as deepening your understanding of the great mission we are given as members of Jesus' Church.

The dictionary describes the word Church as meaning

- a building for public Christian worship
- a religious service in this building
- the whole group of those who believe in Jesus, or part of this whole group.

Make up 3 sentences using the word Church in these 3 different ways.

When the word Church is used in this book it will usually mean the whole group of people who believe in Jesus. Especially it will mean the community of believers who are trying as best they can to become like Jesus, who have Jesus as their head and the Spirit as their guide.

Reflection: Is there anything that I did today that shows I am trying to be more like Jesus?

(If I want to be like Jesus, I have to practice doing 'Jesus' things, so that they become a habit for me. I cannot just sit back and HOPE I'll be like Jesus!)



†
nothing
in
all
creation...
will
ever
be
able
to
separate
us
from
the
love
of
God
which
is
ours
through
Christ
Jesus
our
Lord

Romans 8:39

We studied the story of the Church first, as a reminder to us that without those who have gone before us we would not even know Jesus.

St. Cyprian said "We cannot have God as our Father, without having the Church as our Mother".

In other words, we would not even know God as our loving Father, if it were not for the Church and for the scriptures which were produced by the early Church communities.

The people of the early Church treasured Paul's letters and those of the Apostles and kept them.

The evangelists wrote for their own communities and also for those who would follow. It is the job of the Church to continue to guard the memory of Christ's words, and to pass them on from generation to generation.

It is also through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by Baptism. We can truly say that we meet Jesus today because he was real in the lives of those who went before us, those who made up the Church, up to our own day.

In the same way our language and customs have been passed on to us by those who lived them.

If our customs were only written about in a book and not lived by a community, then they would be dead customs. They can also be 'dead' if they are only used on a few occasions and especially if most people are spectators at these events instead of really participating in them. We can see parts of our culture dying because of this problem.

Religion is dead too, if it is only words in a book and not part of people's lives. It is dead if people are just spectators and not really participating in the life of the Church.

We know Jesus, because of those who have gone before us, people who were not 'spectators' but who truly participated in the life of the Church.

Future generations will learn both about Jesus and how the Church grew and developed in our period because of the way we live Church today.

Imagine you are living in the year 3000.
Name 3 changes there might be in your area.
Name 3 changes there might be in the Church in your area.
What change would you most like to see?

Knowing that we are part of the story of the Church is both a bit frightening and also a bit exciting. It may be frightening to think of the responsibility we have.

But it is exciting to know that we can contribute to keeping our community alive and strong.

This is the job that Jesus gives us to do.

Are we ready?

Are we willing?

YES!

what young people think

Do we really want to belong to the community of those who believe in Jesus?

For us young people, what do we really think? Is religion and being Church important for us?

Some of us do not go to Mass. Does this mean we do not believe in Jesus or talk to him?

Recently a survey of young people in Papua New Guinea was carried out by the Melanesian Institute.

It asked young people whether they believed in Jesus or preferred traditional beliefs, whether they prayed privately, whether they wanted Church schools and many other things about religion.

The results of the survey showed that young people in Papua New Guinea today are young people

- who believe in Christ and
- who want to worship God and experience the presence of Jesus and the presence of his Spirit in their lives.
- Most of the young people said that religion is important to them.
- They said they prayed to God in their hearts and
- many also said they belonged to a Church and prayed with this group.

Do these results surprise you? Or are they what you expected?

Write the answer in your book.

Do a survey of a group of young people, perhaps those in another class.

Work out 4 or 5 questions with your teacher or your group, and see what you discover.

E.G.

Is religion important to these young people?

Do they believe in Jesus?

Do they want to belong to a Church?

When do they usually pray?



Many of the young people also said that they belonged to youth groups. They said they found these groups and the friends found in them of great assistance in helping them to cope with a rapidly changing world.

Many of the young people said that although they love and respect their parents, their parents do not really understand what it is like for them, growing up in today's world.

They said they depended on their friends for this kind of understanding. They also said their friends influenced their spiritual life.

Their friends influenced the religious groups they joined. Many young people in the survey also said that they wished they had been given more instruction in school about different types of religious groups.

This book aims to give you some guidelines in this area, but before we deal with other groups, we are going to look at our own call to be Church. To do this we need to look, not at the Church's history, but at its very purpose and meaning. This purpose and meaning is found in a book called

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

We will look at this book to see how and what the early Church lived and believed. We can also think about whether we are faithful to Jesus' words and the early purpose and meaning of living as Church.

As we do this, we can remember all those who suffered so that the true message of Jesus would be passed on to us and consider how we can best pass on this treasure to those who come after us.

Topic Two

The Acts of the Apostles

Look at the book of ACTS

Find stories to
match these pictures.
Give the reference.



Everybody loves to listen to stories and tell stories. We do it nearly every day of our lives. Perhaps someone told you a story this morning when you were doing work parade. Often when we start work we really try hard, but when someone starts telling a story, we can't resist and we stop working!

Tell a story that has distracted you lately.

Families tell stories as a way of recalling happy memories or to teach what is important, or simply because they are funny stories!

Share one of your family stories.



The family of the Church also told stories, in fact the book of Acts is full of all sorts of exciting and interesting stories.

Look at the first 15 chapters of Acts and read aloud all the headings. Write down the seven headings you think contain the most important stories of the Church's beginnings. Choose one heading and write a paragraph about it in your book.

Do you know the story of your own Church in your village? Who first brought the Good News? Do you know the names of the first people in the village who became believers in Jesus? What kind of problems do you think they would have faced?

Acts is really interesting and helpful to us because often the stories recounted there and the pictures of people we have there, are closer to our own experience of life than even the great stories of the gospel.

Find a story in Acts where you want to sympathize with the early Christians.

One reason we feel like this is because we are Christians ourselves, and we also find ourselves in similar circumstances.

We can appreciate the early Christians' struggle with ordinary life as a community in a secular world, because that is our situation as well.

The progress of faith in their own lives and the world they lived in, was sometimes discouraging for them, the same as it is for us.

The 'invisibility' of the things we believe, makes it difficult for us to persevere as it was difficult for them.

Write down in your book, one thing you find hard about being a Christian today.

Yet Acts assures us that although we will not always have easy sailing, we will reach the harbour.

Acts also enables us to appreciate the way God is acting in our lives through the Spirit. Sometimes Acts is even called the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' because of its emphasis on God's power.

In Acts there are good sermons that summarize the main teachings of our faith. These helped people in the first century and they can still help us today. About one quarter of Acts is filled with sermons or speeches.

Find one of these sermons. Copy it into your book.

Think about some speech days you have been to at Primary or Secondary school.

What is the same about them all?

What is different about each Speech Day?

Does the school report include every single thing that happened during the year?

How do people select what to put in?

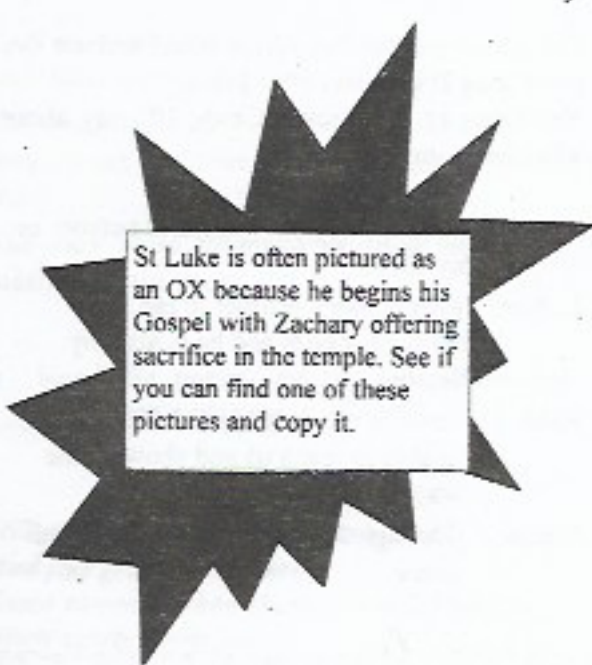
Look at the Speech you have copied from Acts.

Is there anything similar in it that matches something you heard at your last School Speech Day?

In Acts, apart from the speeches, and even in the speeches, we learn

- how the early church prayed,
- what values it held,
- how it treated those who were poor.

Read the first seven chapters of the Book of Acts. Put the heading 'The Early Church'. Underneath the heading draw three columns. At the top of the first column write Prayer. In the second column write Values. In the third column write Treatment of the Poor. Now from the seven chapters you have read, find at least 2 examples for each column.



St Luke is often pictured as an OX because he begins his Gospel with Zachary offering sacrifice in the temple. See if you can find one of these pictures and copy it.

ST. LUKE

The person who wrote the book of Acts was St. Luke.

No other New Testament writer has given us so much material and so much understanding of the early Church.

His Gospel together with the Acts, is about one quarter of the whole New Testament, more than all St. Paul's letters or St John's writings.

Luke's first book, his Gospel, shows us Jesus who lives in great intimacy and dialogue with God his Father. He shows us Jesus concerned for all: men, women, children, rich and poor, the just and sinners, fellow Jews and strangers.

Luke tells us that if Jesus had any preference, it was for those who suffer, the poor, the humble, and the discouraged. Luke shows that Jesus willingly entered people's homes, spoke with them, allowed them to touch him, and ate with them. He shows that Jesus never gave up preaching about his Father.

In Luke's follow-on book, 'Acts' he shows Jesus' followers doing the same kind of things. Jesus wasn't a politician or a lawyer, he didn't own a home or a business, he never married, he never even travelled to far away countries.

Yet his person and his message have affected the world as no other person before or since.

Our country is far away from Israel and we live more than 2000 years after Jesus. Yet listen to what some Grade 10's say about what Jesus means to them:

Ava: Jesus is the most important person in my life.

Esther: Jesus is like a brother to me. He hears my needs and he is also my Saviour.

Vaki: Jesus is the only special friend that is able to teach us and show us the way to live.

Simon: Through Jesus I find happiness and peace.

Think about what Jesus means to you. Write one or two sentences in your book. Share with a friend.

Luke tells us about Jesus in his Gospel, but he also tells us in his Gospel, how the Church was called (5:1-11, 6:12) and formed (7:50) and commissioned (9:1-5).

Luke, like the other gospel writers, says that crowds came together at Jesus' arrival at a place, and that they accompanied Him on his journeys. BUT Luke also tells us that Jesus avoided a large public following, and from the beginning, gathered around himself only a small group of disciples. Luke also tells us that these disciples were chosen after a night spent in prayer. Jesus instructed them carefully, and even gave them practice at preaching in the towns and villages of Palestine. Among the disciples, Jesus gave Peter in particular, the job of leading and protecting those who would accept his message of salvation. To Peter and the Twelve, Jesus promised the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. He made them responsible for carrying on his work of salvation.

Read Luke 24:45-51. Copy these verses into your book. Underline the sentence that you like the most.

It is the special promise of the Holy Spirit that gives us the courage to continue the 'Acts' of the Apostles and early Christians.



We know that if Jesus' message just depended on us alone, then very soon it would be forgotten.

But Jesus did not leave us alone.

He promised to be with us always, and to send his Spirit to us. The story of the coming of the Spirit is in Acts.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to St. Luke for telling us the story of Pentecost and for showing us in the Acts of the Apostles, how truly the Spirit was with the early Church.

Thank you St Luke!

Luke tells us it was the Spirit who filled the Apostles and gave them the courage to be true leaders.

It was the Spirit who gave the martyrs the courage to suffer and stay true to what they believed.

Luke assures us that the Spirit is with us too, and will fill us even more if we invite him into our lives. It is the Spirit who will help us and give us courage in all our hard times.

Write down an experience you have had of being a leader at school - either for work parade, or sport or a student leader.

How did you feel about this experience?

What do you like about being a leader?

What do you dislike?

How do you think God's Holy Spirit can help you to carry out your leadership role more faithfully?



Since the coming of the Holy Spirit is so important to the life of the Church, let us look more closely at the story of Pentecost.

Luke's picture of Pentecost is full of symbols. It commences with a very vivid picture:

'Suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.'



The Holy Spirit of course is neither wind nor tongues of fire. He cannot be seen with human eyes or heard with human ears.

Many writers use symbols and images to get a message across, and Luke is one of them.

In the next column there is a poem which also uses images to get a message across.

Luke uses images such as fire and wind.

This poet uses images like 'when fishes flew' and 'forests walked'

These are interesting images to think about, but they are not just there for their beauty or excitement.

They are there to make us think about the meaning of the poem.

- Read the poem and try to answer the questions underneath.

*'When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born;*

*With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.*

*The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.*

*Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet;
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms beneath my feet.'*

- G. K. Chesterton.

Questions:

Think of a gospel story where palms are mentioned.

What animal had palms beneath its feet?

Who was riding this animal?

What animal is the poem about?

We don't have donkeys in Papua New Guinea but in countries where they live, donkeys are considered to be rather ugly. As well, they are known to be very stubborn. What line tells us the donkey is stubborn?

Read the first verse. Could the images in the first verse be taken literally?

Why is the time of the donkey's creation

seen in this type of image? (The second verse gives the answer)

The third verse highlights the characteristics of the donkey and suggests that there is a hidden meaning for the sort of animal he is.

What are the donkey's characteristics?

The last verse gives the reason.

What is the donkey's secret?

Do you think this is a good secret?



In a similar way, the picture given by Luke is symbolic of the events of Pentecost. After Pentecost, the Apostles were filled with a new power, which Luke tried to symbolize in the words and images he used. Read the Pentecost story again. Explain the meaning the words and symbols written below have for you.

What do you think they meant for Luke?

suddenly

TONGUES

powerful

wind

fire

filled the entire house

from heaven

NOISE

each



Topic Three

Life In The Early Church

Read the following extracts from the Acts of the Apostles and write down in your exercise book, some of the ways people lived in the early Church.

Acts of the Apostles

Description of how people lived

Acts 2:1-4

Acts 2:40-43

Acts 2:44-47

Acts 3:1-10

Acts 4:32-35

Acts 5:12-16

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 7:54-60

The descriptions we have looked at all came from the first 7 chapters of Acts.

Chapters 8 to 12 of Acts describe how, at first because of persecution, Christianity spread into Judea (the Province next to Jerusalem) and then Samaria (where people belonging to a *despised enemy nation* were welcomed into the church).



In our country there is a lot of rivalry in some places, between people of different provinces, and even between different peoples in the same province. The fact that the Christian Jews could welcome the Samaritans into the Church shows how deeply the message of Jesus had come into their lives.

This same message has to come into our lives.

Jesus asks us to forgive our enemies, and this is something that we find very hard to do. When somebody says something against us, we want to pay them back.

It is much worse when people actually do something to us, especially if it is something very serious e.g. kill a member of our family.

Sometimes we just dislike people because they are different.

For the Christian Jews, welcoming the Samaritans was not just something nothing. The Samaritans were outcasts as far as Jews were concerned. (*Outcasts* were people who were 'cast out' of Jewish society). There were strict rules about not touching outcasts and not speaking to them.

This rule was there because there was a strong shared hatred between Jews and Samaritans. The reasons for this hatred were both religious and political.

It is important to understand the big step that the early Christians made in accepting the Samaritans, so that we too can be challenged to love our enemies.

If the Jewish Christians could do it,

surely the PNG/SI Christians can too!

What was the problem?

The hatred between the Samaritans and Jews went all the way back to the time when the kingdom of Israel was overrun by

the Assyrians, and when many of the people were deported.

Those left were the poorer ones, and without their leaders, many intermarried with non-Jews and even accepted the worship of other gods.

At the time of the return of the exiles of the southern kingdom, the Samaritans (originally from the North) offered to help in the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. After all, they had once been one kingdom, under a famous king.

Who was this king?

But the Jews refused to have anything to do with these people who had not been in exile, and who had not kept the Jewish Law. They actually hated them more than they did the pagans and they treated them as both foreigners and heretics.

The Samaritans were insulted.

After all it was not their fault that only some had been deported. They began to fight the newcomers. The returning Jews had such trouble with their neighbours that Nehemiah (4:17-18) reports

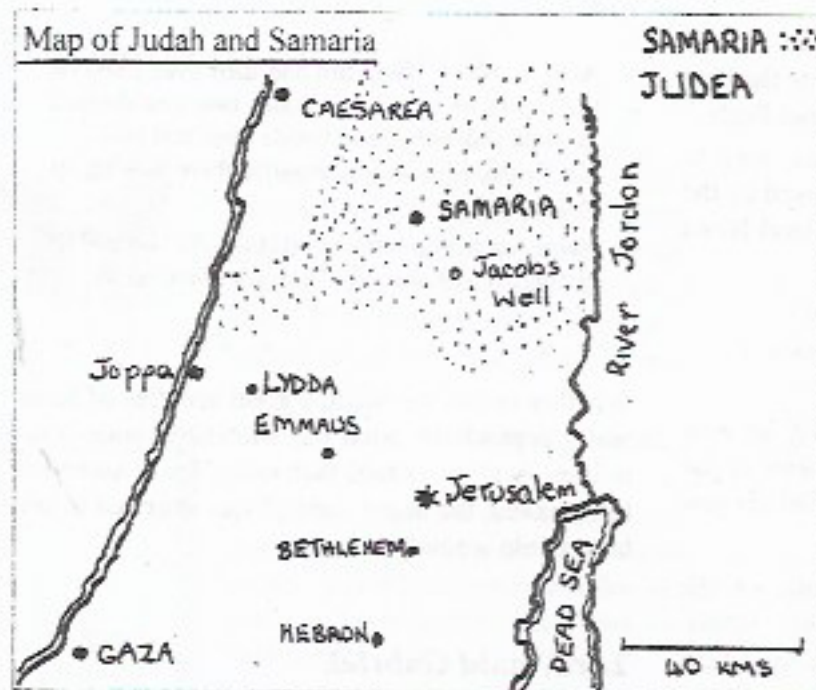
'Those who carried building materials worked with one hand, and kept a weapon in the other, and everyone who was building kept a sword strapped to their waist'.

In the end the Samaritans decided to build a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim to rival the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem.

This did not solve the problem.

Instead it started a continuous argument between the Jews and the Samaritans as to which was the proper place for worship.

The Mount Gerizim temple was destroyed by the Jews in 128 BCE. (Still today the Samaritans go up to Mt. Gerazim to celebrate the



Passover but there is no temple there). Shortly before the Passover Feast in about 6 BCE the Temple of Jerusalem was spoilt by some Samaritans who threw human remains into the sanctuary or holy place. This was a very great insult.

When their own temple was destroyed, some Samaritans used to worship in the Jerusalem temple. But after this insult, all the Samaritans were excluded from worshipping in the Jerusalem Temple.

Do you think this was the end of the problem between the Jews and the Samaritans?

No, of course not. Our own experience tells us that this would not be the end. An historian of Jesus' time, Josephus, tells us that the Samaritans used to set ambushes for pilgrims travelling through Samaria to celebrate the feasts in Jerusalem.

In the Gospel of Luke there is a story of a Samaritan village where the people refused to receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. (Lk 9:52)

Read this story.

What two Apostles were angry with the Samaritans in this story? What did they want to do?

We can see then that the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was not good and went a very long way back into the past. This was sad, because in the time of King Solomon, both the North and the South had been one Kingdom of Israel.

As well, the district of Samaria was a sacred and historic place, famous in the time of the Patriarchs and the Judges. It was important to the Jews. It was the place where Jacob had given land to Joseph, it was the place where Joseph was buried and where Jacob's well was situated.

In the same way, we have relationships in our lives that are broken and that should be one. Perhaps these are relationships between clans, between families, or even within a family. These relationships are important to us and it is very sad when they are broken.

Do you know of any groups in your own place that have a long history of being enemies?

Share with a friend.

Has Christianity made any difference to these groups?

What was the aim of those who were persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea?

Do you think they were successful in their aim?

Think of a broken relationship in your own life.

Name the reasons the problem happened.

What do you think would be a good way to solve this problem?

Is there something you can do to mend this relationship?



After we have heard about these former enemies becoming part of the Church, the next part of Acts talks about Saul and about Peter.

Saul's dramatic conversion on the way to Damascus (Acts Chapter 9), is followed by the story of how Peter learnt that the Good News was for all nations, not only Jews.

Read the story of Saul's conversion.

Why do you think it is called 'dramatic'?

Act it out as a drama.

Find the story in Acts Chapter 10, of how Peter discovered that the Good News is for everyone. Which of these two stories do you like the best?

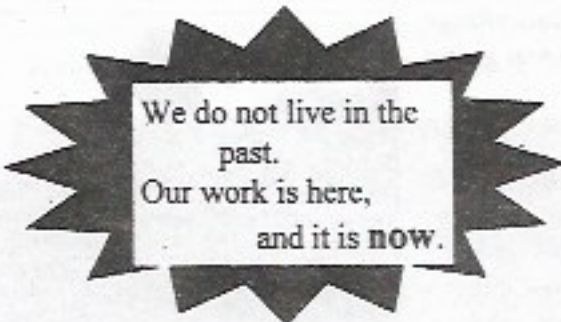
The rest of the Book of Acts tells of the missionary work of Paul and his fellow workers, his journeys in the Mediterranean world, his trials and his imprisonment in Rome (Chapters 13-28).

Copy a map of the Mediterranean world from your Bible and mark in 10 towns or provinces mentioned in Chapters 13 to 28.

It is important to remember that the deeds or acts that Luke talks about are the acts of ALL apostles.

Luke saw clearly that our time, that is, the time of the Church, is different from

- the time of Israel (the preparation of the chosen people),
- and it is also different from the time of the historical life of Jesus.



We do not live in the past.
Our work is here,
and it is **now**.

Copy the paragraph below:

Today's apostles are all of us who, because of our baptism, have been sent by God to bear witness to and continue the saving work of Jesus.

Acts 1: 10-11 They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them and said: 'Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky?'

Name a time you just 'stared at the sky' instead of getting on with the job of being a Christian.

Whether or not we become good apostles of Jesus really depends on what our friendship with Jesus is like. A story is told that when Jesus ascended into heaven, the angel Gabriel was shocked to see his terrible wounds:

'Lord,' said Gabriel,

'do all the people know

how much you have suffered for them

and how much you love them?'

'Oh no,' said Jesus,

'only just a few in Palestine.

But I'm not worried, they will tell the

rest.'

'Are you sure,' asked Gabriel, who was very worried.

'Do you have a back-up plan, just in case?'

'I've thought about that,' answered

Jesus,

'but I've decided against a back-up plan.

This is my only plan.

I'm counting on my friends'.

Today, 2000 years later, Jesus still has no other plan. He is still counting on his friends not to let him down.

**are you
Jesus' friend?**

Problems in the early Church.



Jesus helps us to see our problems in a new light.

If you like maths, try this:

Write six 9's so that they equal 100.

If we only concentrate on certain parts of Acts, it would seem that the early Church had no problems at all. People were reconciled with each other, they forgave each other, they shared what they had, and life was just perfect!

But we know that life isn't really like that at all.

When we read all of Acts, we see that the early Church too, faced plenty of problems, problems that are just the same as the ones that we face today.

Some of the problems were internal ones, and others were external or outside problems.

Write down a few problems that your class faces. Try to divide them into two groups.

Which are internal problems?

Which are external problems?

Look at some of these problems that are written about in Acts. Do you think they are internal, or external, or a bit of both:

- Before Paul was converted to Christianity he devoted his life to persecuting Christians (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2).
- Ananias and Sapphira, who were two early converts to Christianity, attempted to deceive church leaders over money (Acts 5:1-11).
- There were accusations of favouritism and wantokism in the distribution of the food for widows (Acts 6:1).
- Stephen was stoned to death after false witnesses were brought against him (Acts 7:54-60).

- Simon the Magician, tried to use the powers of Christianity to his own personal advantage (Acts 8:9-24).
- The Apostles were arrested (Acts 5:17-19), James was murdered (Acts 12:1-2).
- Simon Bar-Jesus, another magician, tried to prevent Governor Sergius Paulus from being converted to Christianity (Acts 13:6-12).
- Jewish Christians felt that Gentile Christians should follow all the Jewish laws and practices. The first Church Council meeting was called to resolve this issue. (Acts 15:1-35).

In every country where the Good News has come, there have been similar problems.

Those who have come to believe in Jesus have had to change their ways in order to live as Christians.

Some of the hardest things we have to do are to

- forgive our enemies instead of paying them back,
- do good to those who hate us
- not be jealous of those who have special talents

Our own school community can have many of the joys and problems of Acts. Sometimes we may feel really 'at one', united and happy. Other times there can be persecutions.

Some examples of persecutions are

- A student or even a teacher may be teased and imitated because of the way they speak or walk.
- Students or teachers might gossip about somebody or show favouritism.
- Sometimes students are laughed at and some students try to stop others from having a deeper relationship with Jesus.



If someone tries to show leadership, others get jealous and they make fun of the person or spoil their belongings.

Which of these things is most common in your school?

How do you think Jesus wants us to act in all the situations above?

What causes people to act in these jealous and unkind ways?

What is another common problem that you face in your school or classroom?

How would you help the following people with their problems?

John: I do not want to smoke marijuana with my friends, but I also want to keep my friends. They are really important to me. I am worried that I will lose them if I don't do what they want.

Sally: I am thinking of being a sister, but when I mention it to my friends they always tell me not to join, they don't encourage me at all. Even when I say that it is God that calls me (it is not my own decision), they seem to think that their opinion is more important than God's and that I should take notice of them and not God.

Peter: I would like to follow Jesus more closely but it is just too difficult. I have to act in an unchristian way sometimes to be accepted by my friends.

Sandra: Another person in my class is from a different church and he criticizes the things I do. This makes me feel worried and upset because the things I believe in are important to me and also I want to be friends with everyone in my class.

You: Write down a problem you have, and discuss it with your friend.

Apart from similarities with problems, St. Luke's time was like our own in lots of other ways. For example, it was a time of questioning. People were not really sure what the truth was.

Luke begins his Gospel by assuring his reader that he has worked hard to check out the truth, that he has spoken to eye-witnesses and that what he writes can be relied on, it is not just gossip.

Luke writes for us too. We live in a time of doubt and uncertainty. We also are searching for the assurance of our heritage and the Christian tradition we have received.

Plenty of people are making up all kinds of stories and seeing all kinds of visions, just as they did in Luke's day. Luke says we can trust his work.

Another similarity with our times is that people in Luke's time could move around a lot.

Is there anyone in the class who has been to 3 or 4 or 5 different schools? Who has been to the most schools?
Who has been to the most Provinces?

In Acts there is mention of the married couple Aquila and Priscilla: they came from Asia Minor in the first place, and then they settled in Rome. Then an edict of the emperor Claudius drove them out, and they moved to Corinth. Paul lodged with them there (18:1-2). Later we read that Paul sailed for Syria accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla and that he left them in Ephesus (18:26).

Look at an Atlas, and trace the movements of Aquila and Priscilla.

Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt because of problems with Herod.

Priscilla and Aquila had problems with the Emperor Claudius.

Cut out some stories from newspapers of refugees in our own time.

See if you can find out what is happening in these countries to cause this problem.

Make up a prayer which prays for good leaders in countries.

The people in Acts also faced a mixture of cultures, and they had the problem of trying to integrate the values of Jesus into a world like our own; where society says that money and power and having a good time are much more important than love and service and faith in Jesus.

Can you find any newspaper advertisements or stories that show the values of Jesus?

Can you find any that show the importance of money and power and having a good time?

At the first Pentecost the Church set out in obedience to Jesus, on a long journey.

The Spirit led us on paths that we did not expect, into situations that were unfamiliar and sometimes frightening.

What a shock it was to the Jews when Peter said that God had called the pagans to share equally in the Kingdom!

How difficult it was for these Jewish Christians to accept the decision of the Council of Jerusalem that the pagans were not obliged to become Jews before becoming Christians.

How painful it was for Paul that many of his own fellow Jews could not accept the Good News.

It seems that in many ways, it is easier to stick with the old than to face the challenges of the new.

Talk about a suggestion that has been made to improve something in your school, but it has never happened because people just stick with the old way of doing things.

Anyone who has come into a new school knows the awful feeling: *What will happen next? Will I find a friend? I wish my old friends were here!*

Sticking with the old certainly has its advantages and it is more comfortable.

On the other hand, if we had never tried anything new, think how many experiences we would have missed out on.

Name 2 activities that you felt shy to start but now you really enjoy them.

CONFLICTS

Most of the problems in Acts occurred because of conflicts between people. Most times we wish we didn't have any conflicts in our relationships.

Yet conflicts can have some good results in our lives. Sometimes they teach us to be humble. Sometimes we learn from them about God's great compassion and forgiveness for sinners. Having to admit we made a mistake keeps us from being too proud. And even when we are wrongly accused of something, we can experience what Jesus experienced and come to understand a little of the love he has for us, that he would suffer injustice so willingly. We can also offer our sufferings to Jesus.

When we read the stories in Acts we see that the people there faced many conflicts, especially St. Paul. For example, there is the internal conflict he faced with other Church members who did not think that people should become Christians without becoming Jews first. Then there were the many conflicts he had with outsiders.

Conflicts are part of our lives and they can even lead us to understand God's love better.

A famous American educationalist (Dewey) wrote this definition of conflict. He said:

CONFLICT IS THE
MOSQUITO OF
THOUGHT

Think of a conflict you have had recently.
Talk about it with the person next to you.
Do you think you learned anything from
this conflict?

This definition is saying something very positive about conflict.

It tells us that without problems and conflicts we would never have to stop and think.

Conflicts are like mosquitoes that make us stop and be aware of what it is we are saying or doing. They keep us awake and alert. So there is no need to be frightened of them. Just remember that they force us to think and express ourselves clearly.

The other thing to remember about problems and conflicts is that they will always be with us. Even if all the troubles of the world disappeared today, by tomorrow there would be another set!

Share a time when everything was going well for you and suddenly something happened e.g. your cooking was OK, then it got burnt. Or your garden was looking good and the next time you looked it was all EATEN! Or you woke up expecting a normal day at school and every single thing went wrong.

We have come to the end of our short study of this interesting book of the New Testament. Hopefully we have learnt some important things.

Luke shows us clearly in the Acts of the Apostles, that the guidance of the Spirit does not mean we will always have clear and easy answers to problems. Nor does it mean that the problems we come across will be solved without any conflict.

But we do know that each day is a new Pentecost. We do know that the Holy Spirit is present in us and in our communities.

We do know that the Holy Spirit is helping us to witness to Jesus 'to the ends of the earth'. This knowledge is a great consolation in our lives.

Questions

1. Read Acts 1:12-26

Why do you think Luke pays so much attention to the election of Matthias?

How would you feel if you were Barsabbas?

2. Read Acts 2:14-36

Out of all the things that Peter speaks about, which part means the most to you? Copy it out.

3. Read Acts 2:37-41

Peter asks the people to turn away from their sins. What particular sin was he talking about?

How do we turn away from our sins today?

What is the promise of verse 39?

In verse 40 Peter talks about saving themselves from a wicked people. Do you think Peter meant criminals or another kind of wickedness? Do you think this kind of wickedness is around today?

4. Read Acts 2:42-47

Describe the life of the early Christian community. Do you think we should live that way today? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Write down one way in which you personally could live more closely to the life-style of the early Christians.

To Think About

Reflect on and name people in your own parish who:

contribute their talents and time towards enriching the life and service of the parish.

provide leadership for the growth and well being of groups in the parish.

have been called by God to live within the Church in special ways.

keep alive Jesus' message and mission by their worship and witness of being Church members.

Which of the above points
is God calling you to do?

Topic Four

Our local Church

In New Testament times, the Church was not as organized as it is today. It was just beginning.

Some communities had leaders, called elders or bishops, who taught and they had deacons to help them. (These leaders were like the leaders we know today, although the names had slightly different meanings then).

Other leaders were more charismatic. This means they had special gifts such as preaching, or healing, or caring for others. There must have been great variety in the gatherings of these churches as different people took leadership, just as there is still variety in our parishes today.

They had many things in common of course:

- they believed in Jesus
- they were faithful to the Apostles' teaching
- they broke the bread
- they worked together
- they prayed in small groups
- they had a strong community life
- they cared about the poor

Are these things still true of us today?
What things do you think we are 'best' at?
Which things are we 'worst' at?

Name the different groups in your church that

- pray together
- help the poor
- work together

Compare your answers with your friend.

Do you have any groups that are different?

*Can you explain the reasons for the difference?
Is there any group missing that you think might be important in your parish?*

The life of the local parish community involves people in a variety of 'ministries' or special ways of helping.

Name one time and way in which you helped your local Church community.

Is there any way in which you would like to help more?

What things stop you from helping?

Write them in your book.



Church Structures and Activities

In order to carry out the word of Jesus in the world, the Church is organized in many areas. Some of the ministries that make up parish life are:

Liturgy: Liturgy is the public celebration of the presence of God, through the seven sacraments.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that in the liturgy, the mystery of salvation is

- *proclaimed*
- *made present*
- *communicated*
- *and continued*

in the heart that prays. The Liturgy is therefore a very important ministry.

There are a number of ministries that are associated with the liturgy,

e.g. the priest as the one administering the sacraments readers, altar servers, catechists, those who provide music, ministers of the Eucharist, those who decorate the church and so on.

Pastoral: These are the groups and services by which the parish provides care and compassion for people in need.

Examples are, a Parish Pastoral Council, a St. Vincent & Paul Society, Catholic Mothers, Counseling Service, Family Life Apostolate.

Education The education ministry enables newcomers to be instructed and others to receive the formation which is necessary to live a Christian life. Examples are schools, parish sacramental programmes, catechist ministries, adult education classes.

Prayer and Spirituality: Prayer groups assist with growth in faith and give people the chance to express their faith.

Examples are Charismatic prayer groups, Retreats, Antioch groups, Rosary groups, Basic Christian Communities.

Parish Councils/Boards: These are the financial and management structures involved in the running of the whole parish or parts of the parish. Examples are a Parish Finance Committee, a School Board.

Social Groups: These provide social functions

for all parishioners and the chance to celebrate and build up community. They are often fund raisers as well.

Examples are youth groups, parish dances or picnics or concerts.

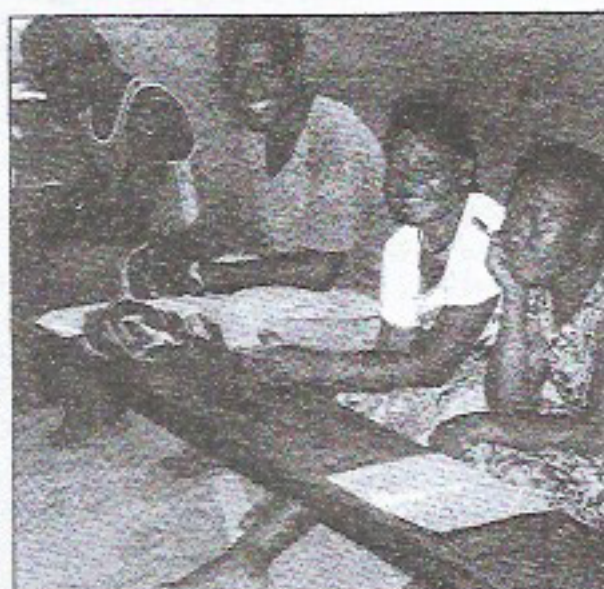
It is important to remember that the local church is not exactly the same in every place.

The local church is about being an extended family, a community that follows Jesus

It is made up of old and young, rich and poor, men and women, involved and bored.

It is made up of different ministries and sometimes, different cultures.

And just like a family, it is made up of different people, some are easy to get on with, and some are difficult to get on with.



Finally, since our religion is not separate from our everyday lives, our experience of church is also influenced by the political, social and economic situations around us.

If there are many poor people in our area, there will surely be groups formed to help them.

If there are many injustices in another place, then the Church might be involved in politics.

If singing is really important in one area, there will probably be choir groups and an emphasis on music.

If there are plenty of young people, there may be youth groups.

So the kind of groups that are in a church, also tell us something about the society of the time.

how much do you know about your parish and your diocese?

See how much of the following table you can fill in:

Name of my parish

Name of my local church

Diocese

Bishop

Name of our Cathedral

Location of our Cathedral

Size of my Diocese

Number of Catholics

Number of Priests

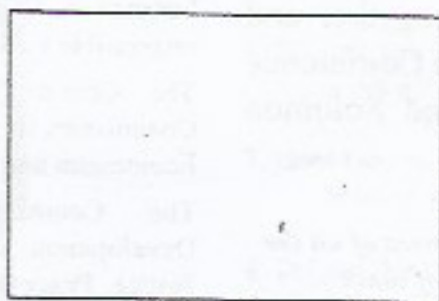
Main places in the Diocese

Main cultural groups in the Diocese

Names of some people with special ministries in the Diocese

Names of some people with special ministries in my local Church

Draw your Bishop's crest



Make up a poem about your local church.

How much do you know about the Church in PNG?

The Catholic Bishops Conference of our area includes Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Papua New Guinea has 18 Dioceses.

These are

Archdiocese of Port Moresby

Diocese of Bereina

Diocese of Kerema

Diocese of Daru-Kiunga

Diocese of Alotau

Archdiocese of Mount Hagen

Diocese of Kundiawa

Diocese of Goroka

Diocese of Mendi

Diocese of Wabag

Archdiocese of Madang

Diocese of Wewak

Diocese of Aitape

Diocese of Vanimo

Diocese of Lae

Archdiocese of Rabaul

Diocese of Kavieng

Diocese of Bougainville

Solomon Islands has 3 Dioceses.

These are

Archdiocese of Honiara

Diocese of Auki

Diocese of Gizo

All these Bishops come together and form the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

A. See if you can find out the names of all the Bishops and Archbishops of these Dioceses and Archdioceses.

B. Draw a map of PNG and SI and mark in all the diocesan boundaries.

These Bishops meet as an apostolic community, committed by their pastoral office to the growth of the local Church and the building up of a truly Christian society, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Michael the Archangel. They meet annually, usually around April, and deal with matters that are national, that is, matters that concern all the Dioceses of PNG and/or Solomon Islands.

The Catholic Bishops Conference (often called the CBC) works on the national level through 3 Committees; the Committees then work through Commissions, Boards, or Institutes.

Each Institute, Board and Commission has a Bishop as its link with the Bishops Conference.

The three committees are

- Committee for Christian Formation
- Committee for Mission
- Committee for Integral Human Development

As an example of how these work, let us look at the first Committee, the Committee for Christian Formation.

Within this committee there is a Commission for Christian Education. This Commission has a Sub-commission for Secondary Christian Education. The book you are now reading has come from the work of this Sub-commission.

The Formation Committee also has a Commission for Liturgy and Catechesis, which is responsible for the Liturgical Catechetical Institute in Goroka. It is also the Committee responsible for the Seminaries.

The Committee for Mission includes a Commission for Evangelization and a Board for Ecumenism and Anglican-Catholic Dialogue.

The Committee for Integral Human Development includes the Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, the Office of the Laity, the National Catholic Health Secretariat and the Commission for Family Life Apostolate.

Other Institutes with a relationship to the CBC are:

- ♦ Divine Word University
- ♦ Melanesian Institute
- ♦ Christian Institute of Counselling

Because the Catholic Church is such a large institution (the largest unified institution in the world) there has to be the kind of organization that has been described above.

The problem with this, is that people often only see the institution and not the real purpose and meaning of the Church.



In the next topic, we are going to look at some of the many other ways of describing the Church.



Test Yourself!

Part A:

- What is the name of the present Pope?
 In what country does the Pope live?
 Of what city is the Pope a Bishop?
 How many Popes have there been since St. Peter?



Part B:

(Give yourself a mark (A,B,C) depending on how well you are being a sign (pointing to the Kingdom) and a servant (working for the Kingdom).

1. What is your general attitude towards other people? How do you treat them, not your friends only, but all people?
2. How do you treat your parents? Your brothers and sisters?
3. How do you control your temper? Do you yell at people?
4. Do you respect others' property?
5. Do you consciously try to make other people happy?
6. Why do you go to Church? Because you must or because you want to worship God?
7. Does God really have an influence in your life because you think about him?
8. Do you think of yourself as the body of Christ and of Christ living also in others?

explanations or descriptions of the church

In this last part of our unit, we are going to look at some ideas people use to describe or explain ways of being Church.

The Church is a mystery, it cannot be described in simple terms. So people use different images to describe the Church.

Jesus also used many images. For example he used images to help people get an idea of the Kingdom of God when he compared the Kingdom to

- a tiny seed that grows into a great tree (Mt 13:31)
- a tiny bit of yeast that makes a large batch of dough rise (Mt 13:33)
- a pearl that a merchant finds and then sells all he has in order to buy it. (Mt 13:45)

Jesus' use of many images to describe the Kingdom of God illustrates an important point about images. **They must be used in groups, never alone.**

A single image used alone makes the picture inaccurate, rather than helping to explain it. Do you know the story of the six blind men of Indostar? It is about blind men standing around an elephant, wondering what it looks like.

One blind man feels its side and says the elephant is like a wall.

Another feels its tail and says it is like a rope. A third feels its trunk and says it is definitely like a snake.

The fourth feels its ear and says it is like a fan. The fifth feels its tusk and says that the elephant is like a spear.

The last feels its leg and says the elephant is like a tree.

The poem ends like this:

*And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long
Each in his own opinion,
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the
right
They all were in the wrong*



John Godfrey Saxe

Explain the last two lines of the poem. (This was the point the writer was trying to make)

Why do you think the title on this page is surrounded by little boxes?

If you ask people what their picture of the Church is, you will find it is very much coloured by their experience.

If our experiences are good, our view will be good. If bad, then bad.

This limited view of the Church is like a single blind man's view of the elephant.

Prejudging the Church on our limited viewpoint is like a person condemning a country or praising a country because of a bad or good experience with one person of that nation.

Similarly if people sing or play a song very badly, the problem is the musicians, not the song.

Or if people play and sing a song very well, we might think 'what a great song' when really, if we think about the words, the song might not be a good song at all.

In regard to the Church, we have to recognize the good, and praise God for it.

We have to recognize what is not good and search for ways to make it better.

Above all we have to trust Jesus' words

'Peter, you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it' (Mt 16:18).

We will lead happier lives if we try to see the whole picture and not just the tail or the ear of the elephant.

The next few pages are going to talk about 8 images that can be used to describe the Church. Look out for some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of these images.

Disciples Image

This image points to the Church as a group of people who believe in Jesus and try to follow his teaching. It emphasizes that the Church is a faith community, guided by the Holy Spirit. (This image reminds us of the work we have done on the Book of Acts).

A good point about this image is its stress on the need for the Church to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A weakness is that people can concentrate so strongly on being open to the Spirit that they can forget that the Spirit also acts in a special way through Church leaders. So openness to the Spirit also means openness to the words of those people who have been appointed as leaders.

Body Image

This image is often used and one we probably know. It stresses that the members of the Church form a single body with Jesus as their head. The Church is a life-sharing community. Jesus said:

I am the vine and you are the branches.. Jn 15:5



Just as a branch cannot live apart from a vine, so we cannot live apart from the Body of Christ.

A good point about the Body image is its stress on the fact that the Church is not an organization but an *organism*, a living thing, the living body of the Risen Christ.

A weakness is that we can think too much about Jesus as the head of the body and forget our responsibility as members of the body.

Sacrament Image

This image points to the fact that the Church is a sacramental community.

The Church is Jesus, present and active in the world in a way that we can see, hear, and feel.

Jesus acted in Gospel times through physical actions of his real human body.

Today, Jesus continues to act through the liturgical and sacramental actions of his mystical body, the Church.

A strength of the sacrament image is its stress on the fact that through the Church, and especially through the 7 sacraments, we truly and really encounter Jesus.

A weakness is that through ignorance of what the sacraments are, they become just rituals instead of living encounters with Jesus.

People of God Image.

This image is also a common one. It shows out that the Church is a community.

This community worships together and knows itself to be God's chosen ones.

This image emphasizes that we are the Church. In us, we witness God calling all people in Jesus, to put an end to hostility and hatred and to live together as one family.

A strength of this image is the way it emphasizes that we are a family.

A weakness is that we can be so concerned about being 'special' that we forget about all other people, or think that we are better than others are. God has no favourites. Also Jesus came to call sinners, not respectable people, and if he has called us, then we can be sure that we are sinners!

Institution Image

It is very clearly stated in the Gospel, that Jesus said to Peter:

*'You are a rock
and on this rock foundation
I will build my Church...
I will give you
the keys of the Kingdom of heaven;
what you prohibit on earth
will be prohibited in heaven,
and what you permit on earth
will be permitted in heaven'. Mt. 16:18-19*

This is one of the most amazing passages in Scripture. It shows Jesus sharing his power and authority with Peter. In this passage, Jesus gives Peter a special leadership role in the Church. Peter's special responsibility explains why he is always first on the list of Apostles. It also explains why he has a special leadership

role in the Church. This image illustrates the fact that the Church is a 'hierarchical' or ordered community. We have leaders and Jesus gave certain members of the Church the special responsibility and authority to speak and act in his name.

We must take seriously Jesus' words to his Apostles:

*'Whoever listens to you listens to me;
whoever rejects you rejects me;
and whoever rejects me
rejects the one who sent me. Luke 10:16*

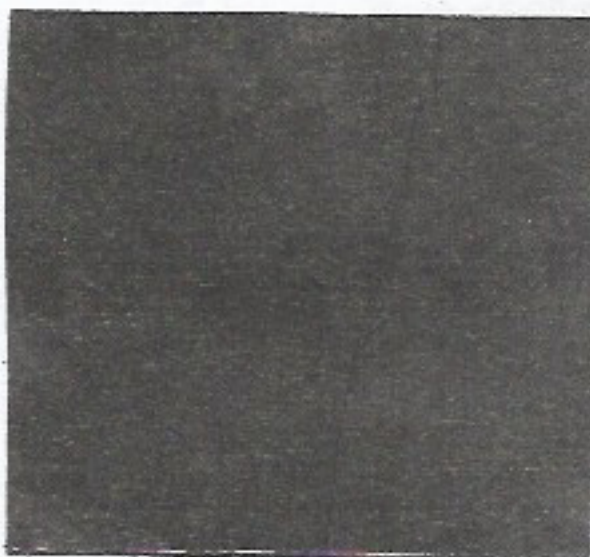
A strength of this image is the way it points out that Jesus gave the leaders of his Church definite authority.

A weakness of this way of imagining the Church, is that the Church's leaders can abuse their authority and use it in a way to make themselves powerful. Another weakness is that people can think this is the only way of being Church.

Servant Image

The servant image points out that the Church is called to be a community that helps others. All members of the Church are called to follow Jesus who said:

The Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve. Mt. 20:28



A strength of this view of the Church is the fact that it stresses that the Church is called to give special service to the poor ones of society, the weak, the powerless, the unwanted.

The weakness of this image is that people can get so caught up in the problems of the needy that they abandon the other teachings of the Gospel. They can decide for example, that being in politics is the only way to achieve their goals of helping people. Or that the way to help the poor is to kill the rich, and so on.

Herald Image

The herald image points out that the whole Church is called to be missionary, to proclaim the word of God in deed and in action. (Look up the word 'herald' in a dictionary. Which of the words given best describes the meaning of herald in this context?)

Jesus did not send only the apostles to preach. In St. Luke's Gospel we read:

'After this the Lord chose another seventy-two and sent them out two by two, to go ahead of him to every town and place where he himself was to visit ... Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes, and greet no-one on the road.' Luke 10: 1,4.

A good point about this image is that it reminds us not to be too concerned about our food and clothing and to get busy about being messengers of the Good News. It reminds us not to spend our time 'talking on the road' but to be people who have a goal, who take the message of Jesus to the world, so that others might believe.

A weakness of this picture is that we can be so busy preaching to others that we forget that the first person to be converted is ourselves, and that conversion is a life-long process. We can forget, if we concentrate too much on this image, that wherever we go, God has been there before us.

Ecumenical Image

An important image of the Church has always been that the Church is a family.

When we go to Mass on Sunday, we see clearly the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the educated and the uneducated, in fact all kinds of people.

All these people eat at the table of the Lord, and are fed with the same food, Jesus himself.

The word 'ecumenical' comes from the Greek word for 'household'.

One of Jesus' last prayers brings out the desire of Jesus that we be one 'household' in faith:

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message.

I pray that they may all be one.

Father! May they be one in us,

just as you are in me and I am in you.

May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me." Jn 17:20-21.

This image of the Church is an important one and one that many people want to work towards. It has been a great concern of recent Popes, so we will now look at the idea contained in this image under the heading of Ecumenism.

ECUMENISM

The 20th Century might be called the Age of Ecumenism. It was in this century that many Churches for the first time in history, made a commitment to work together towards unity as Christians.

The prayer of Jesus which has already been quoted, is what Ecumenism is all about.

The desire to be reconciled, to talk about our shared beliefs and recover the unity of all Christians is both a gift of Jesus and a call of the Holy Spirit.

Although the reconciliation of all Christians might seem beyond our human powers, we place our hope

in the prayer of Jesus for his Church,

in the love of the Father for us,

and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus uses ordinary people to do his work. The Catholic Catechism gives ways in which we can make an effort to respond to this desire of Jesus and call of the Spirit for unity.

Some of the ways it mentions are

- conversion of our hearts, and trying to live holier lives according to the Gospel
- prayer in common
- making an effort to know each other
- working together in the service of those who need our help

The effort we make to be friendly to people who belong to a different religious group to ourselves is very important. It is a big help in breaking down the walls of mistrust that have grown up between different religions. We cannot leave it all to the leaders of the Churches to solve

problems. We have a very important part to play. Gossiping about other churches, making up stories, and being critical, damages the unity that there should be between us and is not the way that Jesus wants us to behave. Prayers for unity are also essential if this movement is to succeed.

Our country has a chance to lead the world in showing how Christians behave to one another. We have had some differences, but not years and years of hatred between groups as has happened in some other countries. In fact in many cases in our country there were strong friendships between people.

For example, in 1942 when the Catholic priest of Port Moresby, Fr. Michael McEnroe, went to join the army, he gave the keys of his church to the Anglican rector and asked him to take care of things. When the Catholic Bishop of Bereina died in 1998, the United Church people took their turn for an hour of prayer by his coffin during the night. When the United Church were celebrating a Jubilee, the Catholic people contributed items. There are many other examples like this.

The Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and United Churches combine to run a number of institutions and organizations, the most remarkable being the Melanesian Institute and Word Publishing.

Another great project where Churches worked closely together was the Tok Pisin Bible. This took over 30 years of work, and its translation was carried out by Christians of many denominations. This work was a great learning experience and through it the Holy Spirit brought many people of different Churches closer together. Let us then concentrate on what unites us, and work together as brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Then Jesus' prayer might be realized, and many people be brought to believe, and believing, have eternal life.

In each of the other descriptions of the Church, some good points and some bad points of the image were written down.

You write down your own thoughts on the good points of the Ecumenical image of the Church, and a weakness of this image.



Summary

The Church is a mystery. It is unlike any other community on earth because it has a divine part and a human part.

The divine part is Christ himself, who is the head of the body of the Church and whose own life makes the body live.

The human part is the visible part of the Church. This part is the members of the body of the Church. Because this part is human, all members and even its leaders, fall victim to human weakness. So sometimes we see Church leaders and people, sinful and doing wrong things.

When we notice this, and it disturbs us, it is time to think about the parable of the weeds and the wheat.

Jesus told them another parable:

'The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man sowed good seed in his field. One night, when everyone was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the plants grew and the heads of grain began to form, then the weeds showed up.

The man's servants came to him and said,

'Sir, it was good seed you sowed in your field; where did the weeds come from?'

'It was some enemy who did this,' he answered.

'Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?' they asked him.

'No,' he answered, 'because you might pull up some of the wheat along with them.

Let the wheat and the weeds both grow together until harvest. Then I will tell the harvest workers to pull up the weeds first, tie them in bundles and burn them and then to gather in the wheat and put it in my barn.'

Jesus' parable of the Weeds and the Wheat tell us that 'good' and 'bad' will be found side by side in the Church right up to the end of the world.

Does this thought make you sad or happy? Think seriously before you answer!



As a result of the Church being both human and divine, it is a mixture of light and darkness.

There will always be enough light for those who want to see, and enough darkness for those who don't want to see.

This is how it should be.

The light of Jesus should never overpower us; it only invites us. It never takes away our freedom.

So when it comes to Jesus' presence in the Church he never shows himself so clearly as to leave us without questions. Otherwise there would be no need for our faith.

But Jesus also never hides himself so completely that the person who is searching cannot find him.

Jesus always allows himself to be found by those who search for him.

This is very reassuring for us, especially at this stage of our lives as we are growing towards an adult faith, and searching to make Jesus' message our own.

Let us be sincere in our search, and courageous on our journey



Topic Five

New religious groups

In this chapter we are going to think about some of the new religious groups and movements that are presently in Papua New Guinea.

New religious groups and movements were a problem in the early Church and they can be a problem for us too.

You have probably found out from your survey that yes, most young people believe in Jesus and pray to the Father, Son or Spirit at least in their own heart, if not publicly.

The way young people decide to pray however, and **which group** they decide to join can cause problems, especially if they chose to join one of the new religious movements and their families belong to a mainstream church.

By looking at some of these groups we hope you will be better informed to make good decisions in the future.

Above all, we hope that these thoughts will lead you to reflect on your own faith more deeply.

At this time in America, society was rapidly changing. There were many new ideas and new ways of doing things. People were confused. For the first time, many people were hearing that perhaps the world wasn't created in just seven days as the book of Genesis says.

Some scientists were even saying that human beings had apes for their ancestors!

It is not surprising that people were confused.



FUNDAMENTALISM

Often some of these groups have aspects which we call *fundamentalist*.

It is usually this fundamentalist attitude that causes conflicts between groups. So what does the word fundamentalist mean? And what is a fundamentalist group?

People who have studied these new religious groups agree that the name 'fundamentalist' comes from a series of 12 booklets titled 'The Fundamentals'. These were published about 1908 in America.

They were financed by two brothers. These men distributed over 3 million copies free.

They were sent to parishes, schools, towns, politicians, and all kinds of Church people, so you can imagine the impact they had.

Many people wanted something permanent in a world that was rapidly changing.

Fundamentalism was the way many good Christians tried to answer the new scientific ideas of those days and the questions that were arising because of a whole new study of Scripture. They decided that at least some things would remain unchanging, especially the words of scripture.

Today, many people still desire this kind of certainty in their lives, whether it is in politics, religion or society.

Another name sometimes used for those who resist great change is 'conservative' or 'right wing'.

Sometimes those who favour much change are called 'left wing'.

Can I be fundamentalist?

Can you remember a time when a friend wanted to do something new, but you wanted to keep doing things the same old way?

Maybe a prefect or a Headmaster wanted to introduce a new way of doing things and everyone said

NO WAY!!!

Perhaps a teacher wanted you to move to a different position in class and you refused to go.

Of course these are only small things, but they show that we all have a bit of the fundamentalist in us.

It is good to want to keep some ways of the past, and to preserve them for the future.

Not everything new is good.

Jesus himself says that a disciple is like the owner of a house who takes new and old things out of his storeroom (Mt. 13:52).

On the other hand, we must make sure we are open to the new, and not just stubbornly sticking to the old way of doing things.

Note: To have an opinion and to stick to it is a good thing, as long as

- ♦ you have been open to hear other people's points of view,
- ♦ you have considered both your own thoughts and those of other people
- ♦ you have talked with other people
- ♦ in the light of the gospel you truly consider your words and actions the best possible in the circumstances.

**to grow
is to change
and to grow
perfect
is to
change often**



Perhaps it would be good first, to look at some of the main differences between how Catholics (and many others) see the world, and how Fundamentalist Christians see the world, because this is where most of the problems arise.

It is important to remember though, that the Catholic Church and other mainline Churches have amongst their members, people who do not like change and who want to keep the way we worship and the way we do things, exactly as it was.

It is also important to remember that there are varying degrees of fundamentalism. Some extreme, and some not so extreme.

Fundamentalism began because people did not want their thinking influenced by the modern world. The teaching of mainline Churches and especially Catholic teaching, at their best, try to bring everything in the universe into the light of Christ, modern discoveries included.

This is the first big difference.

As an example of what this means, some fundamentalist groups say there is only one right sort of clothes to wear and that only certain foods are good to eat.

Mainline churches at their best, not only allow the gospel to come into contact with different cultures but try to see how the Spirit has already been at work in these cultures, preparing them for the Good News.



Another difference which comes from the same kind of thinking, is that basically the fundamentalist is not hopeful toward the world while the Catholic is hopeful. For fundamentalists the primary mood is one of pessimism.

Look up 'pessimism' in the dictionary. What does it mean?

Fundamentalists often talk of the lack of morals of people, the rising crime and all the evils of the world.

<p>Woman raped at 6-mile</p>	<p>Young pilot murdered</p>
<p>DRUG DEATH OF SCHOOLGIRL</p>	
<p>Robbery victim loses sight in both eyes</p>	<p>Rural health and education suffer in budget cuts</p>
<p>AIDS on the increase</p>	

They believe that the only way to the salvation of the world is first for its destruction and then for a new re-ordering through the 'cataclysmic' second coming of Christ. So they are often talking about the end of the world.

Look up 'cataclysm' in the dictionary. What does it mean?

Catholics on the other hand, believe that the world has been redeemed, even though original sin still has its hold. (We surely see the many examples of sin in our world).

But we also know that God wants us to do something about the problems we have.

Fundamentalists minimize or even deny that human beings can contribute to making the world a better place. They do not stress the importance of social justice.

Catholics stress God becoming a human being and the words of Jesus to St Paul before his conversion, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' For this reason Catholics and many mainline Churches are involved in health services and education (because of the dignity of each person) and many other activities of visiting the poor and the sick. Catholics believe that Jesus wants us to build up this world and to treat each person as though he or she were Christ himself.

Another difference is the strong stress that Fundamentalists put on **Atonement**, which means Jesus dying for our sins.

Both Catholics and Fundamentalists believe in Atonement. Both believe that Creation has been so spoilt by sin that only the atoning death of Jesus can make it right.

Catholics emphasize that on the cross, Jesus brings God and us together. Jesus makes us at-one (atone) again with God so we don't have to spoil the world and start again. We have to work and struggle together to find the answers to the world's problems.

This leads us to a third difference between Catholics and the strong Fundamentalists. Fundamentalists tend to have answers for everything. Catholics believe that it isn't so easy to find the solutions to all the world's problems. As we have said, we have to work and struggle together to try to find better ways to live.

In stressing these different things about what we believe, we again see it is just a different way of seeing things. These are two different visions. They call for people to choose. How do you prefer to see the world?

Do you see it as totally evil separated from Christ? Or do you find some good in the world?

If you find beauty in the world, if you can see the hand of God in a glorious sunset, if you hear God's voice in the world's music and art, then you are more like a Catholic.

Ask yourself how you feel and which way of seeing things better expresses the love of God as revealed to us in Christ Jesus. (Jn 3:16,17).



There are many reasons why young people join fundamentalist groups. One reason we have mentioned is sometimes just because of their friends.

Other reasons are

- the feeling of belonging and the liveliness of worship
- The offer of simple and ready made answers to complicated questions and situations
- The opportunity to change one's life, to have a new vision
- The emphasis on a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus
- There is recruitment, training and indoctrination
- The offer of free meals, medicine, travel and so on
- Sometimes 'friends' are used to get people into the group.
- Sometimes 'reflective' thinking is prevented by keeping people constantly busy.
- Sometimes people are isolated from friends or family so they cannot hear other points of view, e.g. they are sent to another province or they do not read newspapers.

Can you think of any other reasons why these groups are popular?

Some of these reasons are good, some are not so good.

Draw a table with two columns. Divide the points above into two groups, good reasons and not good reasons. See if you can add one more of your own to each side.

Sometimes there are tensions between fundamentalist groups and mainline churches. When some students were questioned about why they felt unhappy about some of these groups, they said things like:

- They argue the Bible all the time
- They seem to have hatred towards others
- Some people in these groups feel that if you are not one of them, you are not even a Christian

Has anyone experienced any other reasons?

Although the charismatic speakers and the religious fervour of these groups often occupy our attention, the real problem is the last one mentioned by the students above.

It is the problem of feeling an outsider.

Although we may ourselves want unity, the reality is that many in these groups do not want to listen to others. They do not want compromise and they cannot allow others to be different.

Often they do not want to hear other points of view because they want life to be simple. They want the Bible to be simple. They also want to get rid of those who are different. The person that does this however, has to shut the door to the thoughts of others, and even the questions that might rise in their own hearts.

The cost of fundamentalism then is a serious and a personal one. We have to close our hearts to the ways we usually learn and think.

It is very important to remember that not all of the new religious movements are strict fundamentalists, and even the same movement varies from place to place. Many times Christians work well together even at the topmost levels, for example in the PNG Council of Churches, in the Melanesian Institute and in Word Publishing.

Many Christians also work well together at the smallest levels, for example in families where the husband and wife share different faiths and still live in peace and harmony.

St Paul tells us you can always make judgements by looking at the kind of fruits

the movement results in.

What the Spirit brings is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. (Gal 5:22)

If you find criticism, hatred, people making fun of other people's beliefs or religion, then you know you have struck the spirit of division and discord, not God's Holy Spirit.

Stay away from this kind of group.

The Spirit which comes from God always makes us gentler, kinder and more patient with others.

Using this criteria, when talking about the Bible, negative answers are more likely to be wrong; positive explanations more likely to be correct.

People who are

positive in affirming others,
slow to condemn,
ready to forgive,
tolerant of other people's opinions,
prayerful and respectful,
have the best chance of being right.

Finally, we do not read the Bible for 'answers' to use as ammunition to prove others wrong.

We use the Bible to seek the living God and to respond to his loving presence within us.

The Lord is the searcher of mind and heart.

Let us seek this Lord peacefully and he will surely reveal himself to us.

A Story

A wise old man told this story to explain why our hearts have to be still and peaceful in order for us to find the answers to problems in our lives.

He said: Your heart is like the ocean. When the ocean is still and calm, then you can see right down to the bottom, to the ocean floor. You can see the shells you want to dive for, you can see the fish and corals and any danger there may be for you. When the ocean is still, the light can shine through and reveal everything as it really is.

When the ocean is rough and tossed about, you can see nothing. You are likely to pull the wrong thing out of the water.

To solve a problem, your heart must be still like calm water. God's light can then penetrate your heart and you will be able to see the good and the bad, and not put your hand on a stonefish instead of a pearl.

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Last year in the Scripture unit called "Introduction to the New Testament" we learnt about Literalists and Contextualists.

See if you can explain the difference to your friend.

This difference is a major one between many new religious groups and the mainline churches.

Many new religious groups believe that each word of the Bible is exactly true.

Perhaps the reason some people get confused with the Bible and how to interpret it, is because they forget about how the Bible came into being.

Moses did not have an Old Testament to preach from. The Apostles did not walk around with the Gospels in their hands.

In the Old Testament, there was a people of Israel before the Mosaic Law was written down. There was a worshipping community before there was the book of the Psalms. There was a nation, before there were prophets. Only very gradually did the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms become books of this community and this nation.

**The people came first,
the books came second.**

In the same way, in the New Testament, there was the preaching of Jesus, the witness of the early Church, the preaching of Paul, all of which came before any writings in the New Testament.

In both the Old and the New Testament, the writings came into being,

- in the community
- through the community
- for the community



Since the writings of Scripture are for the community, then it is the **community** that has the final say in matters of interpretation of the Bible, not individuals.

The Church is the community, brought into being by God through Jesus Christ, which has this final authority.

Common sense also tells us that if the Bible is to speak with a single voice there must be a means of sorting out different claims and declaring which are true and which are false.

It would not be very sensible to think that God revealed himself in his works to people in the Old Testament, that he revealed himself in the flesh in the New Testament, that he granted the world a record of his acts in the Scriptures, and then wanted everyone to be confused about what the record meant!

Instead of this confusion, we believe that Christ founded an organization, with a head and leaders who could teach with authority.

This is one of the important jobs of the leaders of the Church.

For example, the religion books we use have been commissioned by the Bishops of PNG and S.I. since the Bishops are responsible for handing on and preaching the Good News without error and as the Apostles taught it.

Of course they cannot do this alone, but they do decide what content their helpers will teach. So the material in our books has been approved and has been checked by people appointed by these Bishops.

Many books about religious topics have an 'Imprimatur' - an official statement that assures readers they are not being led astray when they read that book.

See if you can find an Imprimatur in one of the books in the Library.



What is the difference between a religion, a church, a sect, and a cult?

RELIGIONS:

Some of the great world religions are Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism.

Can you name some countries where these religions are predominant?

The word religion comes from the word 'ligament'. You probably know from Science that a ligament is a very strong and tough band of tissue that connects or binds a muscle to a bone. Religion is the way that people are bound or connected to the 'supernatural'.

CHURCHES:

The word 'Church' belongs to Christianity. The mark of a Church is that it is an organization which keeps and teaches the basic doctrines of Christianity.

Christians all believe that Jesus Christ, the man who was born, lived and died in Palestine two thousand years ago, is the Son of God. They believe that what is said about him in the New Testament is true. Can you name some of these things? (Hint: think of the Creed)

Here are some of the beliefs of Jehovah Witnesses. Look at these beliefs then give some reasons why Jehovah Witnesses are not a Church.

- Only God is Jehovah - (one person)
- Jesus is not God (so feastdays like Christmas are not celebrated)
- The Holy Spirit is believed to be neither God nor person, just an impersonal force
- It is believed that Jehovah will vindicate himself by the war of Armageddon.
(This is more important than the salvation of humanity).
- Jehovah Witnesses oppose all theories of evolution. The first creature made was Jesus Christ. (In his pre-human state Jehovah's believe that Jesus was the Archangel Michael).
- Jehovah Witnesses believe that the vindication of Jehovah's name is the primary purpose of world history.

There are many good people who are Jehovah's. There are many good people who are Jews. There are many bad people who call themselves Christians. The aim of this topic is not to say who is good and who is not, but just to describe the differences between groups.

SECTS:

Most religions contain different sub-groups or sects. For example, within Judaism there were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. One group believed in the resurrection of the dead and the other didn't. But we do not say these are different religions. They were Jews and their religion was Judaism.

Sects always have one of the main Religions or Churches as their 'parent' religion. Sometimes sects are not very different at first from the parent Religion or Church, but gradually they get further and further away.

Sometimes they become closer to their parent Religion or Church e.g. a Christian sect might end up a Church if they gradually come to hold the basic doctrines of Christianity as we say them in the Creed.

attitudes for prayerful bible reading

Since the Bible is often the cause of problems between people, this page has been written to help us understand how to read the Bible well. To understand the Bible we must be aware of 3 truths.

1. The first truth is that God does want to communicate with us and that the Bible is a special form of that communication .

However, we remember that misunderstandings occur even when we are communicating with our best friends. Even with our friends we must make a big effort to understand and be understood. This goes for the Bible as well as for ordinary friendship. We especially need the help of God's Holy Spirit in reading the Bible.

2. The second truth is that the Bible is a collection of books. It is not magic.

Books have to be read, and reading is what we call an act of interpretation.

Reading means a meeting between ourselves and the words of the book - which have been influenced by the time and place and person of the writer.

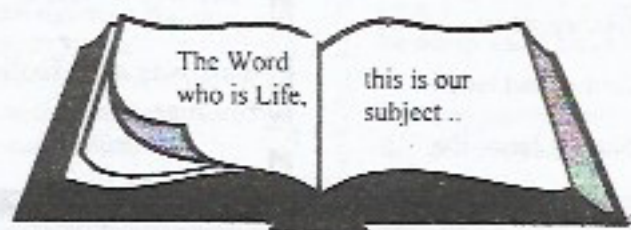
In other words, these books were written at a particular time in a particular place, in a particular culture and language, by people with their own faults and problems and insights.

We can understand the book better when we come to know and love the person who wrote it by learning about the kind of problems his people had, and the kind of people he wrote for.

3. The third truth is that we who come to read this sacred book, are ordinary people.

We have ordinary brains which do not work more efficiently when we are reading the Bible than they do when we are reading the newspaper. If I cannot understand some parts of the newspaper, then I should not be surprised to realize that I do not have complete understanding of every part of the Bible. At the same time we remember that God is not limited by our inadequacies and God can still use the Bible to help us. We just have to be prayerful in using the Bible and not be so proud that we think we know what every sentence means.

*Which parts of the
newspaper do you
read first?
What are your
favourite sections?*



*What is your
favourite section of
the Bible?*

Topic Six

Activities and Assignments

Imagine

that you have your own home, and that Jesus (a Jew) is coming to your house for a meal. What would you prepare in order to make him feel welcome and comfortable?

Think about

- ♦ food he would like,
- ♦ customs he would be used to,
- ♦ prayers he might say,
- ♦ topics of conversation he would be interested in, and so on.

Draw, write or act out some of the things.

Below is a table showing some of the images of Church that we discussed and the kind of community that each image describes.

Read about these images again, and choose one that you like the best, or that means a lot to you now in your life.

Write a paragraph saying how this image has helped you understand more about the Church and also say how you think it can help you in your everyday life.

IMAGE	DESCRIBES CHURCH AS
Disciples	Led by the Spirit
Sacrament	Jesus present in the world
People of God	Family
Hierarchy	Ordered institution
Servant	Helping others
Ecumenical	Unified and for all
Body	'Sharing Jesus' life
Herald	Sent on Mission

On Page 14 there was a story about Jesus going back to Heaven and meeting the Archangel Gabriel.

Do you think Gabriel was right? That Jesus was a bit foolish not to have another plan?

Or do you think Jesus was wise to trust us to spread the message of the salvation that he brings?

Draw two columns in your exercise book and write down some points favouring each side. You might like to have a class debate on this topic.

Jesus goes back to heaven and leaves us to finish his work

This was a wise move because

This was a bit foolish of Jesus because

Stories

1. An old Jew named Samuel, stopped going to the synagogue because someone there had publicly humiliated him.

One day a rabbi from the synagogue visited Samuel. He asked to come and sit with Samuel in front of his fire.

And so the two men sat in complete silence, watching the fire burn.

After about 20 minutes, the old rabbi picked up a stick, took a glowing coal from the fire and put it outside on the dirt.

As they watched, the coal slowly lost its glow. Then it died completely.

A few minutes later, Samuel turned to the old rabbi and said,

'I understand.

I'll come back to the synagogue'.

What did Samuel understand?

Here is one explanation:

Just as the coal lost heat when it got separated from the 'coal community' so we risk losing our faith when we separate ourselves from the 'Christian community'.

What do you think about this explanation?

2. Francesca says:

'My life with the Church has been on and off. When I was younger, my family used to go to church every week. But as I got older, we stopped going except on days like Christmas and Easter.

Lately, I have been going to church much more often than I used to. My faith now is the searching type. It seems I am asking questions or testing my faith to try to find answers. Lately, I've come to the conclusion that most of my questions can't be answered. I'm starting to understand I must put more trust in God and, if I do, I have a feeling that my questions will be answered someday.

What do you think about Francesca's faith?

Have you ever felt like this?

If you stopped going to church, what do you think you would miss the most?

Write down:

the name of your favourite hymn

the name of your favourite prayer

the name of a Christian who inspires you

Assignment:

1. Imagine you are a reporter for the Jerusalem 'National Courier'.

You have been asked to write a feature article on the extraordinary happenings that occurred in Jerusalem on the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

Begin by explaining why there were extra people in town, and include some interviews with people who were eye-witnesses to the event.

OR

2. Pretend you are part of 'JI T.V.' the most popular T.V. station in Jerusalem.

Get together with a few other members of your class and present the evening news for Pentecost Sunday.

Also include some interviews with eye-witnesses.



You will need people to act as
the newsreader,
the reporters,
the by-standers
and main characters.



Activities:

1. Read the poem on the next page.

The first 2 lines talk about the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

What do you think this magnificent enterprise is?

Choose one of the sentences beginning with 'No' in the first verse and explain it.

Look at verse 2. What does the author mean by seeds?

Write down two seeds you have planted that will one day grow.

Look at verse 3. Why does the Archbishop say it is liberating to know that we don't have to do everything?

2. Write a topic poem on the Church.

A topic poem contains five lines.

The first line contains only one word, a noun.

The second line contains two adjectives relating to the noun.

The third line contains three verbs.

The fourth line has a four word comment.

The fifth line is a single word which means the same as the word used in the first line.

e.g. Kingdom

Heavenly, earthly,
Grows, reveals, challenges
Our now and future
Salvation.

Variation: The lines have one, two, three, four, and one word the same as above, but the second describes the first, the third and fourth lines describe a movement or action, and the last line is again a single word, with the same meaning as the first word.

e.g.

Christ
God's Son
Born in Bethlehem
Saviour of all people
Lord.

3. Imagine St. Paul has come to stay in your village or suburb or settlement. He visits the church leaders and observes what happens on Sundays and also what happens on weekdays. When he gets back to his home town of Damascus he writes you a letter:

Put the title to the letter: **A letter from St Paul to the** (name your own people or place or parish). Write down what you think St Paul would say about your place.

Remember St Paul usually found some things he wanted improved and others he praised.

4. Write an ACROSTIC.

Take the word **LEADER** and think of a quality that a good leader possesses, using words beginning with each of those letters.

(Write the word '**LEADER**' going down the page and the qualities going across the page).

Do the same with the word '**CHURCH**'.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
 of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
 Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying
 that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
 No statement says all that could be said.
 No prayer fully expresses our faith.
 No confession brings perfection,
 no pastoral visit brings wholeness.
 No one programme accomplishes the Church's mission.
 No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.
 We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
 We water seeds already planted,
 knowing that they hold future promise.
 We lay foundations that will need further development.
 We provide yeast that produces effects
 far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
 and there is a sense of freedom in realizing that.
 This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
 It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning
 A step along the way,
 an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter
 and do the rest.
 We may never see the end results,
 but that is the difference
 between the master builder and the worker.

We are the workers, not the master builders
 ministers, not Messiahs.
 We are prophets of a future not our own.

Archbishop Oscar Romero (1980)



.....
did you know... there are 7
important rules for all
Catholics to keep
.....

- *To keep holy the day of the Lord's resurrection.*
- *To lead a sacramental life, with the reception of the Eucharist and penance at least once a year*
- *To study the Church's teaching throughout one's life, and to see that our children are taught the faith.*
- *To observe the marriage laws of the Church*
- *To contribute to the support of both the local and world-wide Church*
- *To do penance on the appointed days*
- *To join in the missionary outreach of the Church.*

Many people ask the same question that the jailer asked Paul and Silas "What must I do to be saved?" or that the rich young man asked Jesus "What good thing must I do to receive eternal life?" The leaders of our Church have given us these rules as a guide, believing that they will help us on our journey. Rewrite them using your own words, and explain the one you think is most important for you in your life now.





What were they called???

In the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament), God's chosen people are referred to as the Israelites or the children of Israel 608 times, as the Hebrews 32 times, and as the Jews 71 times.

In Papua New Guinea, our Prime Minister does not go around checking to see that we are all praying, and it is not a crime to be an atheist. The preamble to our Constitution does say however, that we, the people of Papua New Guinea, 'pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us, our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now'.

In the first century, the Romans were very serious about guarding their religious beliefs. Every person had to worship the Roman gods. Not to worship was a crime against the country.

You could be put in jail or even lose your life for committing this crime. There was one exception.

The Jews were allowed to practice their own religion.

So when the Jewish leaders said that the 'Followers of the Way', (those who believed in Jesus), could no longer worship in the Synagogues, and could no longer be a part of Judaism, this was a very big problem.

It meant that the Christian group within Judaism was no longer legal, and would be in trouble with the Romans for not worshipping the Roman gods. As you can imagine, this caused a lot of bitterness between the Jews who believed in Jesus and those who didn't. This separation from Judaism did not happen suddenly, or at the very beginning. For a long time those who believed in Jesus remained a group within Judaism, although attitudes and practices varied from place to place.

What were the names of some other groups within Judaism?

Can you think of reasons why the first Christians eventually had to worship in their homes or in tunnels underground?

Who was a famous Jewish person who started off persecuting those who believed in Jesus, but then ended up by preaching Jesus himself?

Try to finish this sentence - there is more than one correct answer:

Since the Jews were allowed to practice their own religion, then ...

Discuss whether it would be a good idea to have a law in our country like the Romans did, that people must worship God or be punished.

It is very important to remember that the Christian religion has its roots in Judaism.

It was a Jewish festival, the Day of Pentecost, when the first 3000 people were baptized.

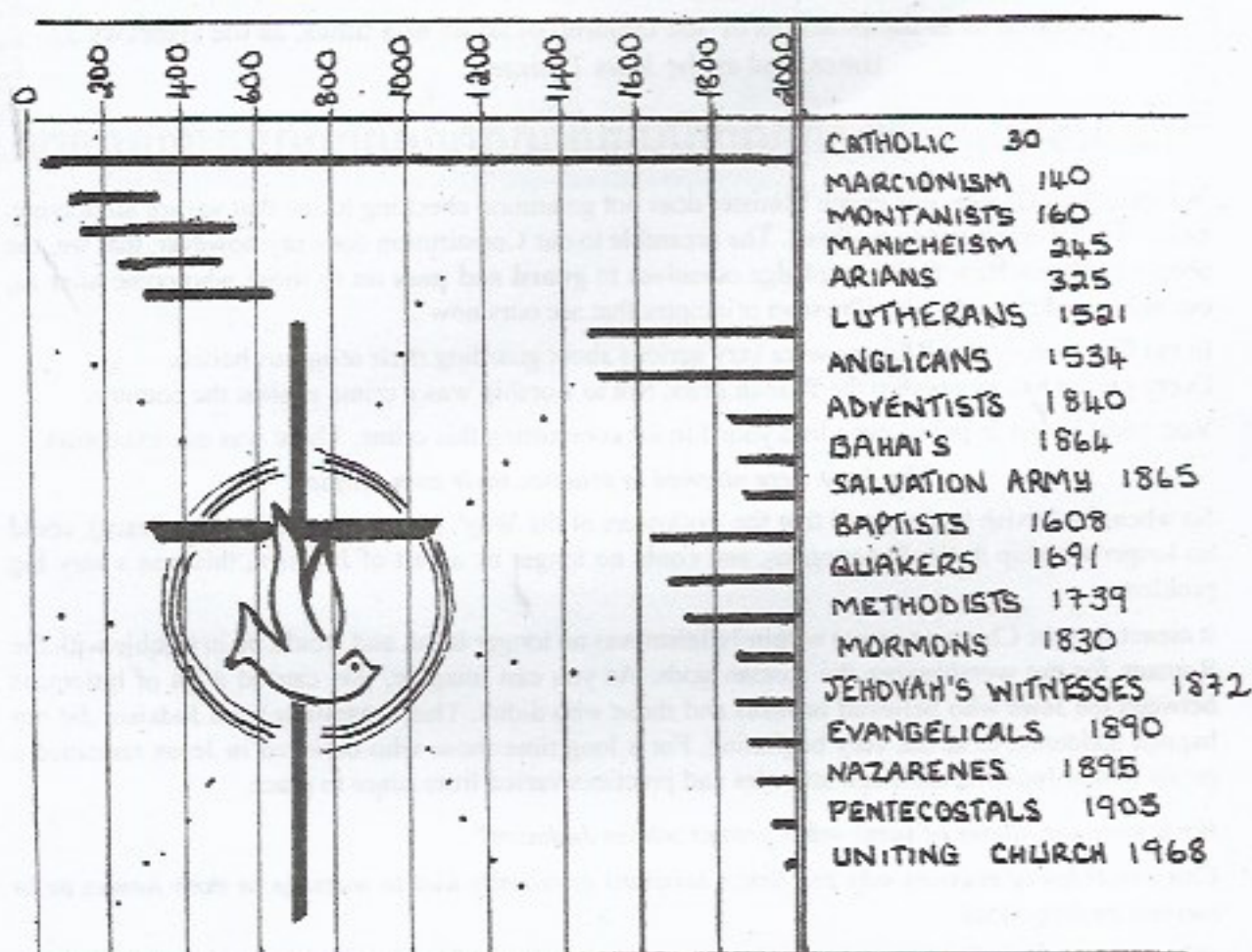
Pentecost is still an important Jewish feastday. We take this feastday as our own as well, because this feast became for us the beginning of a new era, the beginning of the Church.

Jesus had ascended into heaven but he showed on this day that his Spirit lives in us and continues his work through us.

The Jewish people however, were the first to hear the word of God. They were and are God's chosen people. God never takes back his choice. Jesus was a Jew, all the Apostles were Jews and so was Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Write a prayer thanking God for the Jewish people, and for peace between their country of Israel and their neighbours in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. See if you can find out something about all these countries.

Using the information given below, your own knowledge, and the Library if necessary, write down the list of those groups you think would be called Christian Churches. Look back at the definition of Church on Page 37.



Catholic Church: Founded by Jesus Christ, who is truly God and who was made flesh in the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. This Church started at Pentecost with the Apostles about the year 30 CE. The word Catholic means 'universal'.

Marcionism: Founded by Marcion about 140 CE. He said that there were two gods, one the creator of the material world (which he believed to be evil) and the other the master of the spiritual world.

Montanists: Founded by Montanus, a priest about 160 CE. This group believed in private revelation and personal inspiration rather than the teaching authority of the Church. They taught that there was no forgiveness of sin after Baptism.

Manicheism: Founded by a Persian, Mani, about 245 CE. Mani proclaimed himself the Spirit promised by Jesus. He rejected the Old Testament. He also rejected Acts, because of the account in Acts of the Holy Spirit coming to the Apostles.

Arians: Founded by Arius about 325 CE. He said that Jesus was just a man and rejected the idea of the Trinity. It seems Arius may have been cross from not being made a Bishop.

Lutherans: Founded by Martin Luther in 1521. He came to believe that we are justified by faith alone, without good works. Luther held the Bible to be our only authority. Preaching the Word is a very important activity in the Lutheran Church.

Anglicans: Founded by Henry VIII of England about 1534. He declared himself the head of the (Catholic) Church in England. Later this became a separate Church.

Adventists: founded about 1840 by George Whiterfield who was a Methodist preacher. Others followed, all claiming to have had revelations from God, especially one lady, a Mrs Ellen White. Adventists believe that Mrs. White's testimonies are the only true interpretation of the Bible.

Bahai's: Founded by Baha-u-Allah about 1864. Bahai's believe that there is one God and that his prophets were Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. Bahai's do not believe in the Trinity.

Salvation Army: Founded by William Booth, a Methodist minister about 1865. God is their General and their role is to fight evil and bring peace into the lives of people. They preach and are involved very actively in good works for others.

Baptists: Founded by John Smyth about 1608. He was an Anglican minister. Their baptism is directed towards adults who can maturely accept Christ as their Saviour.

Quakers: Founded by George Fox about 1650. Known as the Society of Friends, they have no official ministers and no set prayers. They practice stillness and quiet and expect a response of the Spirit which they acknowledge by revealing their experience aloud.

Methodists: Founded by John and Charles Wesley about 1739. They were Anglican ministers. They strictly keep the Lord's day, and avoid alcohol and worldliness.

Mormons: Founded by Joseph Smith in 1830. They are also known as the Church of the Latter Day Saints. They teach that the Trinity are 3 men, God the Father being Adam. They allow more than one wife.

Jehovah's Witnesses: Founded by Charles Russel about 1872. They teach that there is no Trinity, and that God will raise only the members of the Jehovah Witnesses.

Evangelicals: Founded by Hudson Taylor about 1890. They hold to a faith which has been influenced by Lutherans, Methodists and Baptists. From this movement came many other groups such as Bible Church, Evangelical Bible Mission, PNG Bible Church, Faith Mission, New Tribes and others.

Nazarenes: Founded in 1895 by a mixed group of Methodists and Baptists. They keep Sunday holy, excluding sport, work, gambling, smoking, dancing etc. They emphasize prayer and a common worship.

Pentecostals: Pentecostalism is characterized by the belief that everyone can receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit as happened at the first Pentecost. Pentecostal churches were founded in the early 20th Century. The A.O.G.'s (founded 1914) is one of the largest Pentecostal groups. Another one is the Four Square Gospel (1921). Nowadays, almost all Churches have their own charismatic membership, including Anglicans, Catholics and Lutherans.

Uniting Church: In 1968, Methodists, Calvinists, and the London Missionary Society, joined congregations to form the Uniting Church.

Do a research project on one of the above Churches. Share what you discovered with your class.

For your own reading and reflection:

The following reading is from the writings of St. Irenaeus, who died in the 2nd Century, about the year 180. What he wrote then, is still true for us today.

‘Although the Church is spread throughout the world to the ends of the earth, it received from the apostles and their disciples, the faith which it professes.

It believes in one God, the Father almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who preached through the prophets the plans of God: the coming of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, his birth from the Virgin, his passion, his resurrection from the dead and his bodily ascension into heaven, his coming from heaven to raise to life all human flesh, so that, in accordance with the will of his Father, whom no person can see, every knee may bow before Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, our Saviour and our King, and all creation be subjected to his just judgement.

Since the Church has accepted this preaching and this faith, even though it has spread throughout the world, it keeps it carefully, as though it lived in one house only. The Church believes these truths, as if it had but one soul and one heart, it preaches them and hands them on as though it had but one mouth. For although there are many different languages in the world, even so the strength of tradition is one and the same.

The Church founded in Germany believes exactly the same and hands on exactly the same as do the Spanish and Celtic Churches, and the ones in the East, those in Egypt, and Libya, and Jerusalem, the centre of the world. As the sun, which is God’s creature, is the same throughout the whole world, so the preaching of the truth shines in all places, and enlightens all those who wish to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The one who is an excellent speaker will not preach anything different from this, nor will a less good speaker lessen the tradition. Since faith is one and the same, the person who has much to say about it does not add to it, and the one who has less does not subtract from it.’

