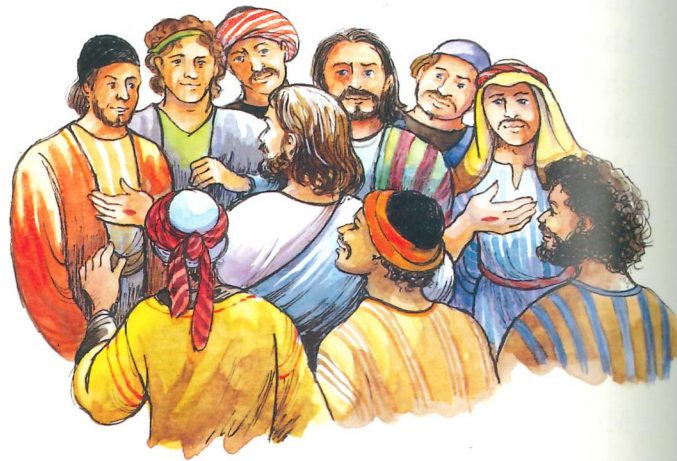


Know that Jesus gave his mission, power and authority to the apostles. Reflect on what this means for us.

## Jesus bids Farewell

For forty days after rising from the dead, Jesus stayed on earth and frequently came to see his chosen disciples to prepare them for the time to come when he would no longer be with them.

One evening, the disciples were in the Upper Room with the door locked because they feared the Jews. "Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (Jn. 20:19-23).

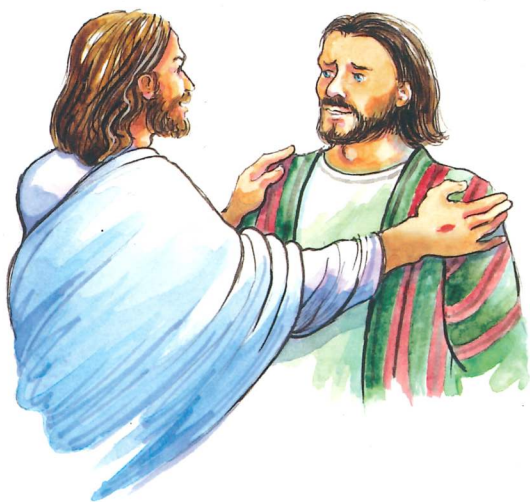


## Peter is Chosen

Jesus wanted the eleven disciples to be his representatives on earth. He wanted them to form a community with Peter as the leader, but before saying this to Peter, he tested him to see if he was ready!

### Jesus and Simon Peter

Jesus said to Peter,  
**"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?"**  
 Peter replied, **"Lord, you know I love you."**  
 Jesus said, **"Feed my lambs."**  
 Again, Jesus said,  
**"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"**  
**"Yes, Lord, you know I love you,"** said Peter.  
 Jesus said, **"Tend my sheep."**  
 And again, Jesus said,  
**"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"**  
 Peter was upset that he asked him a third time and said,  
**"Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."**  
 Jesus said, **"Feed my sheep"** (Jn. 21:15-17).



## Pause to Reflect



Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the same question three times? Think deeply before you answer and try to give more than one reason. (Clue Mk. 14:66-72).

## Peter is Chosen as Leader

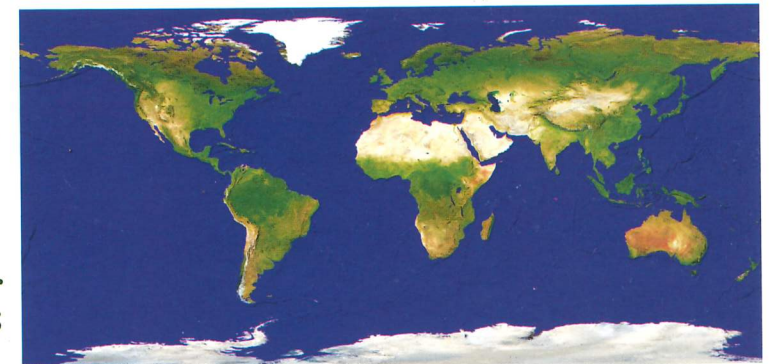
On an earlier occasion, when Jesus had asked his disciples who they thought he was, it was Peter who spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus knew that it was God who had revealed this to him.

**"I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"** (Mt. 16:18-19).

So Peter was chosen to be the leader of the new community.

## Jesus gives His Mission, Power and Authority

To Peter and the chosen disciples Jesus said,  
**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes to the end of time"** (Mt. 28:18-20).



## Activities

- What tasks does Jesus give to his chosen disciples?
  - What words of comfort does Jesus give? Do those words apply to us? How do you know?
- Research Task**  
 Use the worksheet that your teacher will give you.
  - In box 1 write your own explanation of the Church.
  - Ask six people to explain to you what the Church is.

When finished, give the paper to your teacher for use later on.

KEY WORDS: prevail, bind, loose



Understand how the Church began.  
Think about the message it has for us.

## Scattered... Shattered... Amazed... Astonished ...

Within a period of fifty days, the disciples had seen their Lord and Master crucified, they had fled in fear of their own lives and had just lost all hope when they witnessed the risen Jesus **ALIVE** and with them. They had experienced a whirlwind of astonishing events, one after another and even saw him ascend to heaven. Now they were on their own again.

### Pentecost

As instructed by Jesus, the disciples went to the Upper Room in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. They were fearful so they locked the door. They remembered Jesus dying on the cross and were afraid they would end up like him. But when Pentecost day came round ...

"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. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them all the gift of speech" (Acts 2: 1-4).



### The effects ...

They suddenly felt very strong, brave, cheerful and ready for anything!

They were able to speak in languages they had never learned!

They were ready to give their lives to spread God's Kingdom over the world.

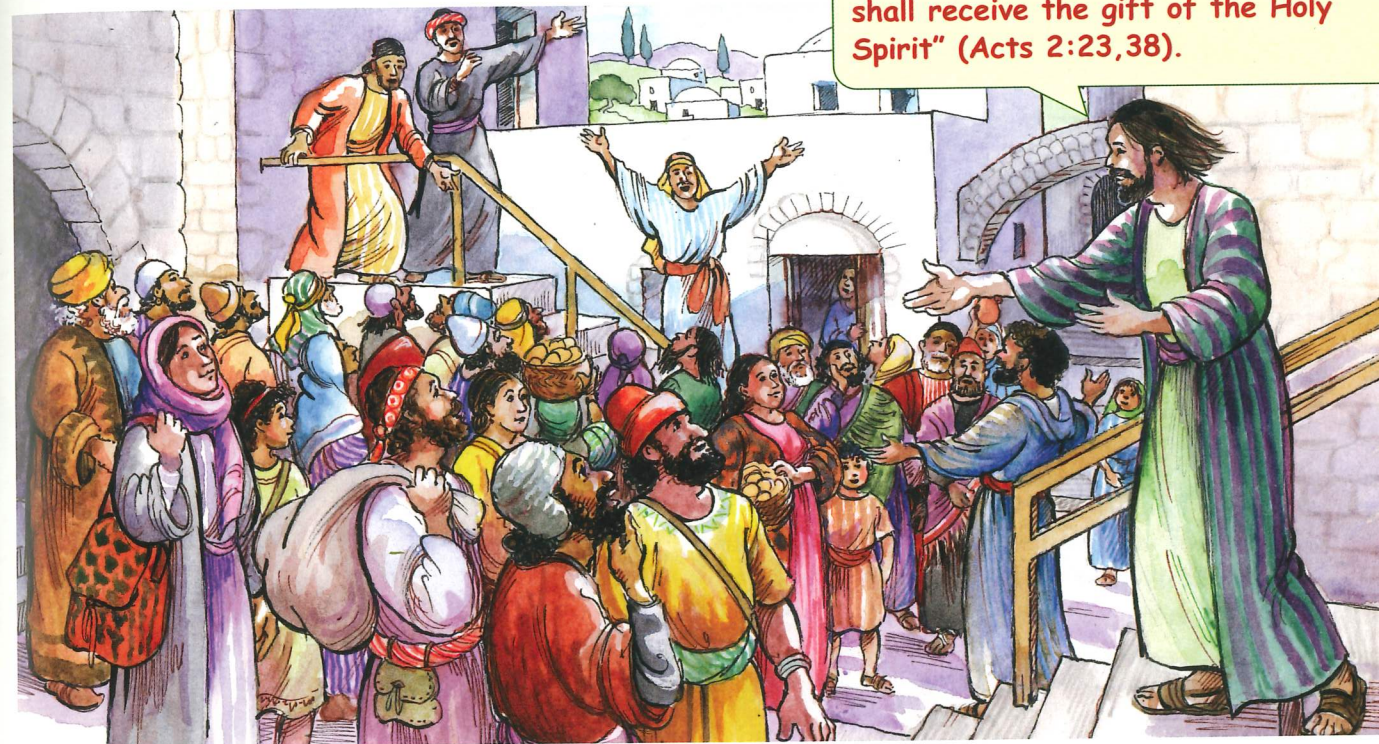
KEY WORD: Pentecost

At the time, there were a great many people in Jerusalem who came from other countries for the Jewish feast of Pentecost which was held every year in memory of the giving of the Law of the Old Testament to Moses. On receiving the Holy Spirit, the apostles came running out into the streets and began to speak about Jesus. All the foreigners were astonished that they understood them in their own language. Of course, there were some sceptics around who said, 'Take no notice, these men are drunk' (Acts 2: 13).

Peter went on to preach the Good News boldly and confidently. He reminded the people of the miracles, wonders and signs which God worked through Jesus and then confronted them with the stark facts.

"This Jesus ... you crucified and killed ... But God raised him up".

"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:23,38).



What Peter and the other apostles said impressed the crowds so much that three thousand people were converted that first day. And that was only the beginning.

### Activities

1. In groups, plan a script and act out the events of Pentecost. Show how the coming of the Holy Spirit transformed you from a group of quivering wrecks to people who are willing to risk your lives for the truth.
2. a) Research a variety of illustrations of Pentecost and reflect on them.  
b) Draw your own illustration of Pentecost.  
c) Explain the symbols you have used and the reason for them.

## Birth of the Church

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost about 30 AD marked the birth of the Church. The twelve apostles were the first members of the Church because they had been the companions of Jesus. They heard all his teaching. They were witnesses of his miracles and his resurrection. Matthias was chosen to fill the place of Judas. Peter, as head of this Christian community, made decisions and governed the infant Church acting with the other apostles. They met together to study, pray and break bread. All who saw them were filled with awe. They knew God was with them.

Read about the early Christian Community Acts 2:42-47 and make a 'Bubble Map' to show six things about the way they lived.

Activities

### God works through the Apostles

One day, when Peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of prayer a man who was lame from birth looked at Peter and John expecting to get some money. Peter placed in his hands, not coins, but new life from God.

**First, the man clasps Peter's hand.**

**Then, he is pulled shakily to his feet.**

**Next, he takes a few wobbly steps.**

**Finally, he runs and jumps up and down like an excited child praising God.**

**He cannot contain himself.**

**No longer is he condemned to sit and beg.**

(Acts 3:1-7 adapted)



Activities

"God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame".

- How does the account of the man who was lame illustrate this?
- Try to think of an example from your own life or of someone else's.



Be aware of some of the challenges the first Christians encountered. Reflect on the challenges we face as Christians.

## Drama Unfolds

Before returning to his Father in heaven, Jesus had warned the apostles that they would be brought before governors and kings to be tried as enemies for doing his work. They must expect to be imprisoned, beaten and even killed, but just the same, the work would go on and nothing would stop it. He would always be with them, even to the end of the world.

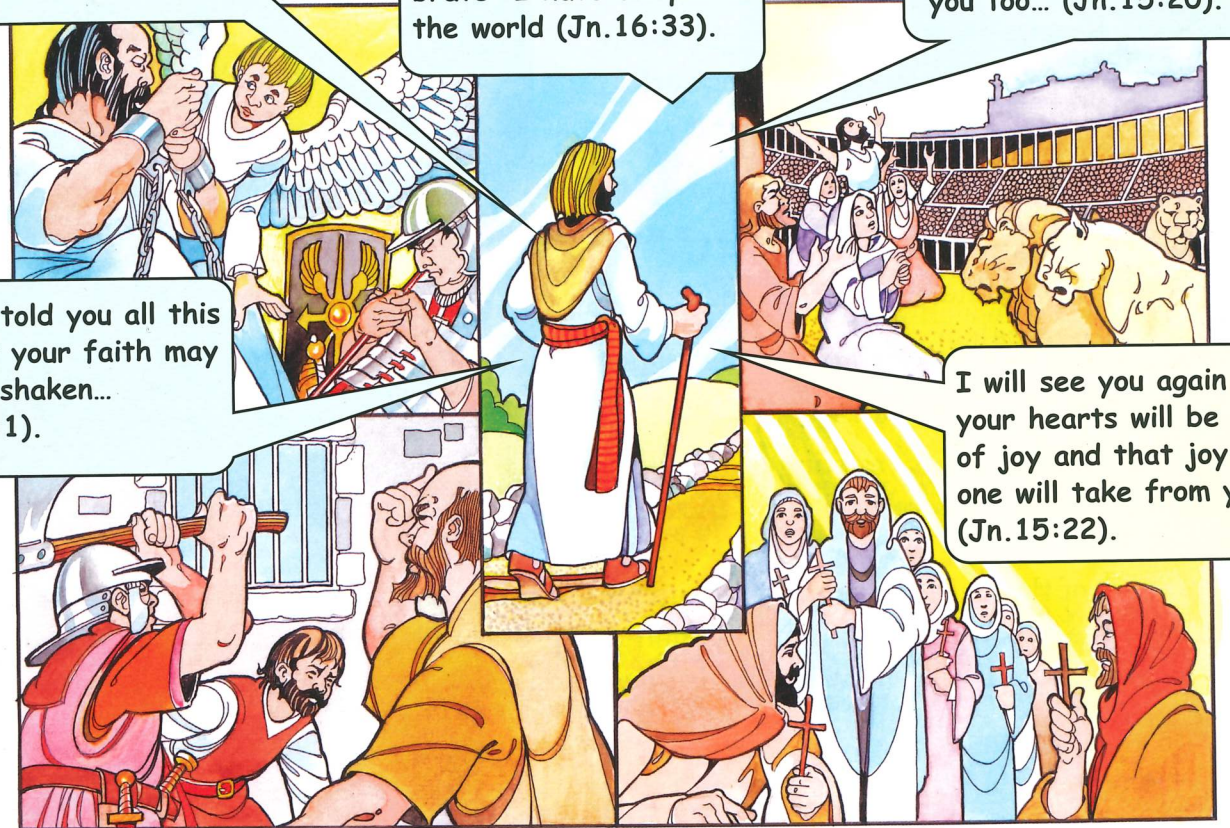
If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you (Jn.15:18).

In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world (Jn.16:33).

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too... (Jn.15:20).

I have told you all this so that your faith may not be shaken... (Jn.16:1).

I will see you again and your hearts will be full of joy and that joy no one will take from you (Jn.15:22).



The apostles remembered that Jesus had forewarned them – but they had no idea how quickly events would unfold. Things worked out exactly as Jesus had warned them in the long farewell talk he had with them at the Last Supper (John's Gospel, chapters 13-17). Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter and the other apostles preached openly and confidently about the Resurrection of Jesus. They worked many miracles among the people, who flocked to listen to them.

"So many signs and wonders were worked by the apostles that the sick were even taken out into the streets and laid on beds and sleeping-mats in the hope that at least the shadow of Peter might fall across some of them as he went past" (Acts 5:15).

## Apostles arrested

The excitement generated by such cures was exactly what the Jewish authorities feared. The high priest was jealous. With the backing of the Sadducees they had the apostles put in prison. God was with the apostles: **“At night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison gates and said as he led them out, ‘Go and stand in the Temple, and tell all the people about the new Life’”** (Acts 5:19-21).

## Stoning of Stephen

As the number of disciples steadily increased, the apostles elected Stephen, a man of great faith, to help them. Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people.

Before long, he was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, the high council. In a powerful speech he showed how the Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus.

He ended by attacking the emptiness of the Temple worship and the blindness of the religious authorities of Jerusalem:

“You stubborn people, with your pagan hearts and pagan ears. You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do” (Acts 7: 51).



The members of the council were raging and took what he said as blasphemy. They dragged him outside the city and stoned him. Stephen was praying all the time and when the great stones began to strike him, he went on his knees and cried aloud, “Lord, do not count this sin against them!”

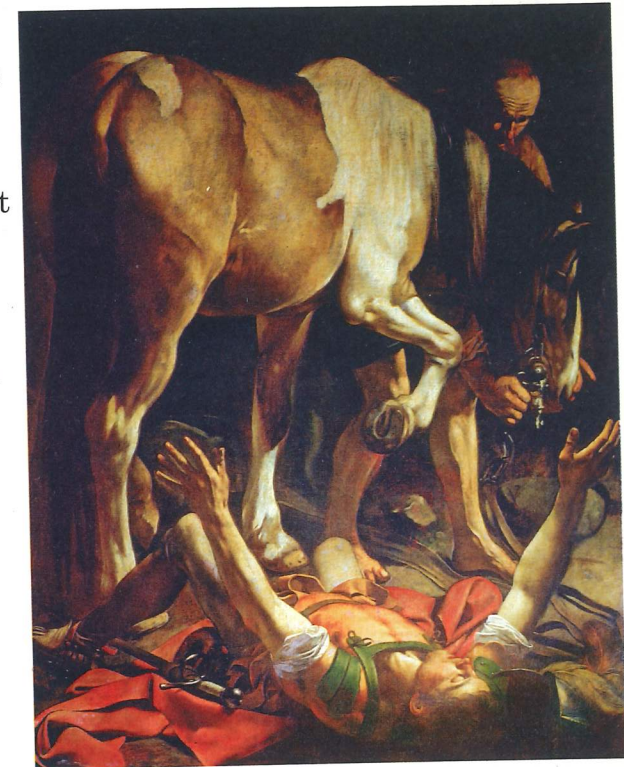
An onlooker named Saul approved of the murder. But God had other plans for him!

1. Stephen was on his own, no one had taken his side. He could have apologised and taken back what he had said. What would you have done if you were in his situation and why?
2. a) Read Stephen's Speech which your teacher will give you.  
b) Pick out four of the most important events that Stephen has mentioned in his speech.  
c) Place them on a timeline.

### Activities

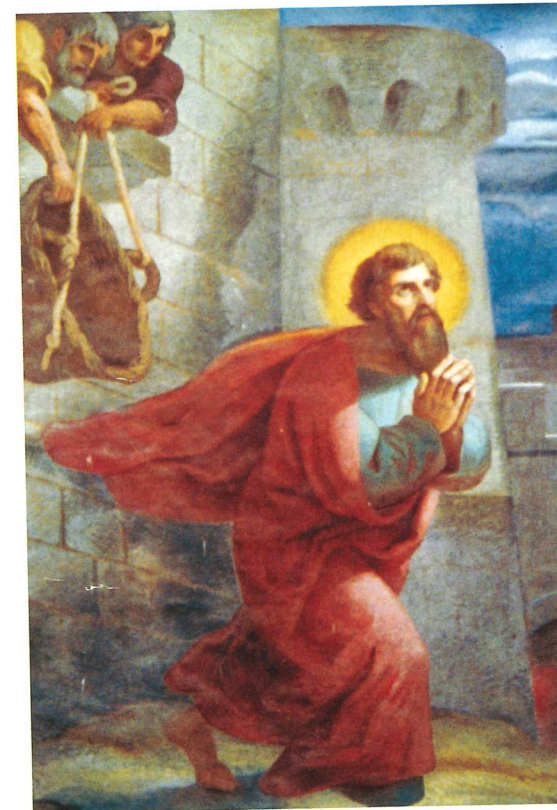
## Saul's Experience

Saul planned to go on persecuting the first Christians until there were none left anywhere. He heard there were many in Damascus, a city about 150 miles from Jerusalem. He set out on his journey determined that no one should stand in his way. Just before he reached the city, suddenly and without warning, a great light, much stronger than the sun, shone around him. He fell down on the ground and heard a voice say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” he asked, and the voice answered, “I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me. Get up and go into the city and you will be told what you have to do.” Saul was soon to understand that persecuting the Christians was the same as persecuting Jesus.



Saul experienced a deep conversion. (You can read

about it in Acts 9:1-19). He began to preach **for** and not **against** Jesus. He showed the Jews that Jesus was really risen from the dead and had sent his Spirit to be with all who believed in him. No matter what happened he wouldn't stop preaching; his arguments were convincing and everyone was listening to him. At last, the Jewish authorities could bear it no longer, so they made a plot to kill him. News of it reached Saul.



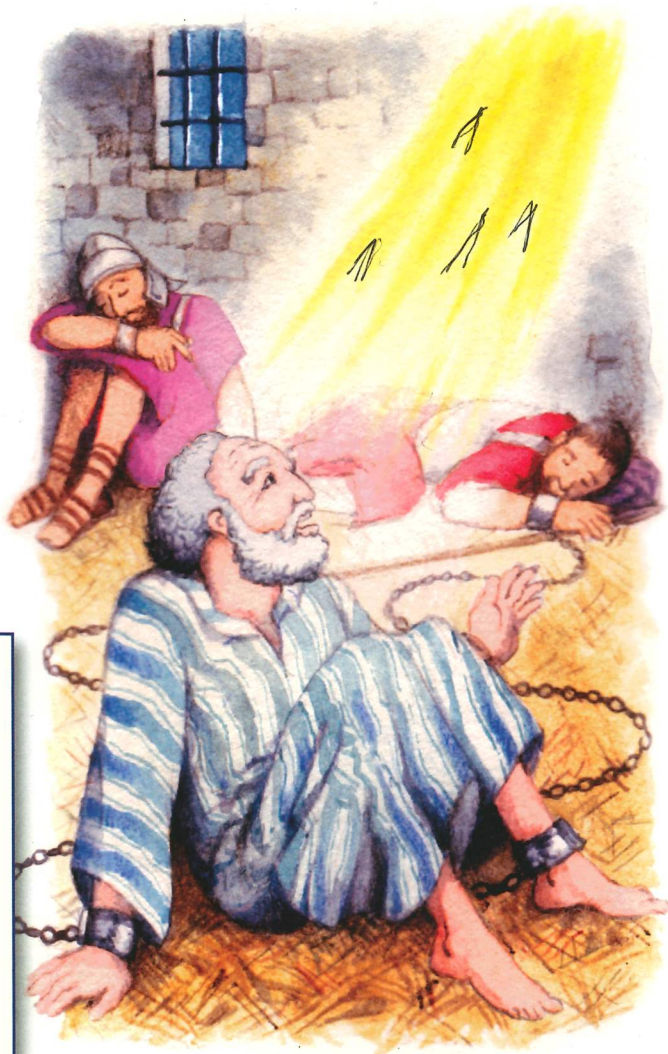
Damascus was a city with very high walls. The gates were guarded day and night, but when it was dark the disciples took Saul and let him down from the top of the wall, lowering him in a basket (Acts 9:20-25). It was around this time that Saul's name was changed to Paul.

- a) What lesson did Jesus teach Saul on the road to Damascus?
- b) How does that lesson apply to us today?
- c) Design a logo to help you remember this lesson.

### Activities

## Peter's Arrest

"It was about the time when King Herod started persecuting certain members of the Church. He beheaded James, the brother of John, and when he saw how that pleased the Jews he decided to arrest Peter as well." This time, he made certain that there would be no escaping and ordered twelve soldiers to guard him. Nevertheless, in the middle of the night, when Peter and two of the soldiers chained to him were asleep and another two standing guard at the door, an angel appeared in the prison cell. Peter tells what happened.



There I was, chained between two guards but fell asleep nevertheless. Suddenly, someone tapped on my shoulder. "Get up!" he said. "Hurry!" The chains just fell from me. Before my very eyes the cell door opened. Stunned, I quickly followed the angel, not knowing where he was leading me. We passed two lots of guards – strange, they didn't seem to see us. Next thing, there I was outside the big iron gate all alone, but free. (Acts 12:1-19 adapted)

Much more could be told about the apostles, particularly Peter and Paul. Writing in his second letter to the Corinthians Paul said:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

In spite of all their sufferings, they experienced a profound joy in knowing that Jesus was with them and they were doing his work.

Peter went immediately to tell his friends

- How do you think Peter's story might have helped them?
- Explain how it might help you or other people today. Give examples.

Activities

## Nero's Persecution

In 64 AD, during the reign of the Emperor Nero, there was a great fire which destroyed a large area of Rome. The Emperor used the Christians as a scapegoat, blaming them for the fire. He had many of them brutally killed. Details of their death are too horrific to describe.



About this time, Peter was in Rome preaching to the new Christians. A famous legend is that the Christians in Rome persuaded Peter, their leader, to flee from Nero's persecutions. As he travelled south from the city along the Appian Way, Peter met Jesus coming the other way.

'Quo vadis Domine? Where are you going, Lord?' Peter asked.  
'I am going to Rome to be crucified a second time,' replied Jesus.  
At this Peter realised that he could not run away from his mission, so he turned around willingly to accept whatever cross was to come to him.

Tradition also has it that Peter did not consider himself worthy to die in the same way as Jesus, so he asked to be crucified upside down.

Activities

- INQUIRY BRIEF – Work in pairs: one of you takes the part of Paul and the other is a lawyer appointed by the Roman Governor to cross-examine him. The evidence base for both of you is the account given in Acts 22. You must study this and make notes before the inquiry starts.**
- Look back at the prophecies of Jesus made on page 67. How have the prophecies been fulfilled in the stories you have read?**
- Imagine you are one of the twelve apostles. A number of years have passed since that first Pentecost and you have been looking back on your life. You are amazed at how things have turned out. You decide you need to write down some of these memories.**
  - Write a short chapter on the dramatic events that took place in your life.
  - Explain how your experiences affected your life in the years after Pentecost.

KEY WORD: scapegoat



Understand how the Church began.  
Think about the message it has for us.

## The People of God are the Church

God took the initiative to bring scattered people together and chose Moses to lead them out of slavery in Egypt to be his very own people.

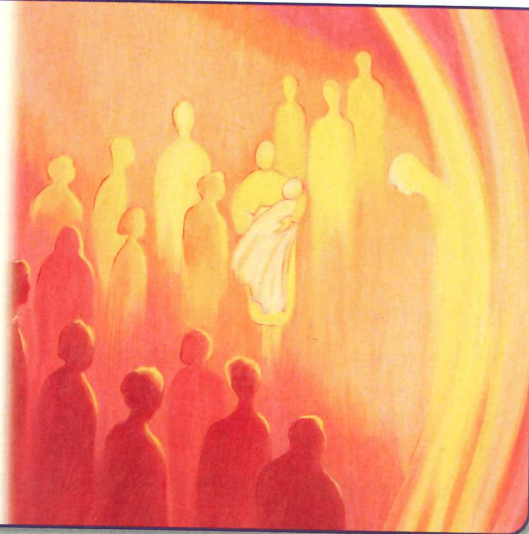
Do you remember when God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai? God made a covenant with Moses and the people. He wanted them to be His Chosen People. He promised to be their God and in return asked them to be His people:

**“If you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My own possession among all peoples” (Ex. 19:4-6).**

Now Jesus has come for us. In and through Jesus, God has made a new Covenant with us.

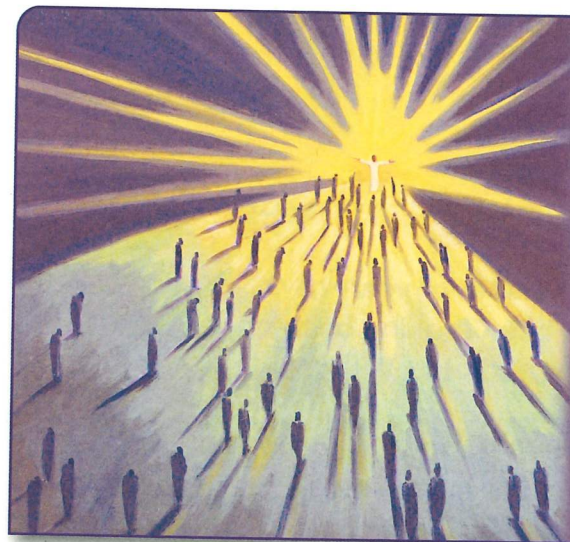
In this new Covenant Jesus handed over himself in love to the Father for us. He died on the Cross for us. So for us to fulfil our part of the covenant, we have to hand over ourselves to God.

St. Peter tells us: “Once you were no people but now you are God’s people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy”.



### WHO ARE WE?

We are the Church. We are a people whom God called “out of darkness into his wonderful light”. The light we live in is the knowledge that we have been chosen, loved and owned by Jesus. Jesus has given us our new identity. Why? So “that we may declare the wonderful deeds of God” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).



## As Members of the Church - what do we have to do?

The challenge each day for each one of us is to hand over our lives to God and with God’s help, to one another. This means that our lives have to focus on how we can love and help one another. Instead of thinking all the time of what we want for ourselves, we find ways of putting the needs of others first.

God can work wonders through us when we hand over our lives to Him: **LET GO, LET GOD!** When our lives are centred on God they take on a new meaning and purpose. God has given us our identity so that **HIS** identity might shine through us!

### Activities

1. a) Explain in your own words what Jesus has done for us.  
b) Why has he done this?  
c) What can we do in return?
2. • Imagine you are either Peter or Paul and you are looking back on your life.  
• How did you hand over your life to Jesus?  
• With the gift of His Spirit, how did you help others?  
• What did it cost you?  
• Was it worth it? Why? Why not?  
• What advice would you give to young people preparing for their future?
3. **God has given us our identity so that HIS identity might shine through us.** Give examples to explain what this means.
4. Work in groups.  
a) Re-read the text above on what we have to do as the People of God, the Church.  
b) List all that staff and students in your school do which show that they are the People of God, the Church; don’t just choose the obvious things.  
c) On your own, design a webpage ‘Witnesses Today’ illustrating two or three things you and others do. It can be a personal experience of what you did for another person or someone did for you in school.  
d) Explain the influence this had on your life and the lives of others.
5. Research: Look at the Young Christian Workers’ website.  
a) What is the YCW?  
b) What is their vision and mission?  
c) What is ‘Impact’?  
d) What does ‘Impact’ do for young people?  
e) In what ways do you think YCW helps young people to live as members of the Church?  
f) What do you think is the meaning of their logo ‘The difference is you’?

**YCW**  
The Difference  
Is You



Know that the Church is the Body of Christ.  
Reflect on what this means for us.

## The Church: The Body of Christ



### Pause to Reflect

- If we are the People of God that make the Church, then what is it that will draw us together?
- What or who will give us the strength to build a strong community of faith?
- Who will give us the courage to love others so that all will know that we are the disciples of Jesus?



### The EUCHARIST makes us CHURCH

The Church cannot be Church, cannot live, exist or survive without the Eucharist.

St. Paul tells us that, at the Last Supper Jesus had with his apostles before he died, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, **“This is my body which is handed over for you. Do this in remembrance of me”** (1 Cor. 11: 23-24). We know that the following day, Good Friday, Jesus freely offered his life on the Cross for us.

When Jesus said **“Do this in remembrance of me”**, he meant, **“Hand over yourselves as I handed over myself”**. So, when we hand ourselves over to Jesus, we become deeply united with **HIM** and with each other. We become **“Church”**. We live the mystery of the Church when, with Jesus, we hand over ourselves to him. Then, with his help, we strive to help others.

Your teacher will give you examples of what some people try to do in order to hand over their lives to Jesus. Make a plan of what you could do.

Activities

## Handing over: becoming the Body of Christ – the Church

What does it mean to hand over our lives?

To hand over our lives to Jesus means to get out of self-interest, self-will and self-pity.

That's tough! How can we do it?

First, we ask Jesus everyday for HIS HELP and with his help we can help others.

It is natural for us to think of what we want, what we need, what we would like, what we prefer before we think of others. There is a selfish streak in all of us.

### How can we tell if we are handing over ourselves to Jesus?

We remember that what we do to one another we do to Jesus.

So instead of thinking just of ME, I think of those with me to see how I can be of help to them.

Instead of just wanting to do my own will – I find out what others would like.

When I feel angry I try to think of what Jesus would do in my situation and ask HIM for help.

When I am feeling sad or hurt I could turn in on myself, full of pity. Instead, I can offer this suffering to Jesus and with HIS help think of ways to be kind to others.



OUR AIM is to HAND OVER to Jesus in our daily life, in our family, in school and with friends. So when we receive the BODY OF CHRIST at Mass, we know that we receive Jesus himself. So we can truly say, AMEN, which means, 'I am committed to being the Body of Christ' – that is THE CHURCH.

It is in the EUCHARIST that Jesus will give us the strength and courage to hand over our lives to loving and serving others so that we are truly HIS BODY – the CHURCH.



## Pause to Reflect

In times of persecution, it was the Eucharist that mattered. Around 200 AD, when Christians were being arrested, tortured and even put to death, they went underground to celebrate the Eucharist so that they could draw strength from it to endure all that lay before them.

In 16<sup>th</sup>-century England, during the time of Queen Elizabeth I, members of the Catholic Church were being hounded down and priests had to seek refuge in hiding places like dilapidated barns, holes in walls and attics. No matter what happened during these times of persecution, the one thing the people would not give up was the Mass. It was the Mass that mattered. In the Mass, they handed their lives over to Jesus and he gave himself to them. In this way, they drew strength to face whatever lay ahead.



1. Watch the Power Point presentation: Priests' hiding holes.
2. a) Give reasons why the Eucharist (Mass) was so important in times of persecution.  
b) Why do you think it is important today?

## Living the Eucharist today

Today, we are the new People of God, asked to live fully committed lives - handing over self and building up the Body of Christ in order to be CHURCH. So just as the human body counts on each cell to do its part, the Body of Christ counts on each of us to do our part. As St. Paul said, "If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).



We may think that this challenge is far too great for us. We look at our lives and think of the things we do wrong. We see others like ourselves, sinful yet struggling to become what God wants us to be.

It is true the Church is full of sinners and some great sinners! But Jesus exists in the human Church and he is always ready to forgive us when we turn to him for help. We have seen in the many examples of Jesus with sinners that he always accepted them. He didn't approve of their sin or wrongdoing. He said: "Go and sin no more" and he continued to love them.



1. Your teacher will give you back your 'Research Sheet' on the Church.
  - a) Read your own explanation of the Church.
  - b) Write another explanation - but first, think of all that you have been studying.
2. Study the explanations other people gave of the Church. Choose a way to explain the meaning of the Church that you could pass on to others. It might be a poster, booklet, Power Point presentation or something for the school website.
3. Each time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist we celebrate being Church. At the end of the celebration we are told: **Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. On each day this week, take time to reflect upon how you can fulfil this command. Keep a daily diary of your reflections.**
4. How far would you agree with the following statement? **'It was easier to become a Christian in AD30 than it is today.'** Give reasons for your answers and try to look at things from more than one point of view.



Know some of the history of the Early Church. Reflect on what we can learn from it.

## Spread of Christianity

The rapid spread of Christianity was amazing. By the end of the first century, there were approximately half a million Christians; by the year 200 AD there were two million and by 350 AD there were about ten million.

We may wonder why and how Christianity spread so quickly. One of the reasons for this was that St. Paul completely changed his whole life after Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Before that, he was a very strong Pharisee bent on persecuting the Christians. But his experience on this road made him realise that he wanted to completely and utterly change. From that moment, he no longer persecuted the Christians but joined them. He took himself off for a few years to reflect on it and then he became the most important missionary in the history of the Church.



Paul writes:  
"Five times I was given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas and dangers from false friends" (2 Cor. 11:24-27).

"I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake for it is when I am weak that I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

However, most of the work of spreading the Good News of Jesus was done by ordinary Christians, people whose everyday work and care for others brought them into contact with people who had not heard the Gospel.

At this time, many people had lost faith in the pagan gods and were looking for something to give meaning to their lives. They no longer trusted their political leaders. Their cruel sports had lost their appeal and they had experienced the emptiness of drunkenness and other sorts of amusements. There were a number of new religious movements from the East attracting attention, but none had the lasting appeal of Christianity. Christianity was based on a real historical person – Jesus Christ. Its message of God's love and forgiveness made a lot of sense to people wanting to lead a good life.

Most of all, it was the example of the young Christian communities living out what they believed, which was clear evidence that this was the true Church. "See how these Christians love one another," people said, and this contrasted with the emptiness of their own lives.

## Activities

Why did Christianity spread so quickly?

- The Romans had built good roads.
- Paul was a gifted preacher.
- The Spirit of God was at work.
- Roman rule brought peace, so it was safe to travel.
- The Greek language was common to all so the message could be spread.
- People were searching for truth.
- Some people were tired of polytheism.
- Christianity brought a message of love, forgiveness and hope.
- Sea travel was comparatively safe.

From the above list choose the three most important reasons why you believe Christianity spread so quickly. Say how you chose them.

## Christians go underground

During the first three centuries Christians lived in fear of their lives. Most of the other religions were accepted probably because it was considered a good idea to have as many gods (polytheism) as possible looking after the people.

At first, the Roman authorities accepted the new Christians. However, when they witnessed the growth of the Christian communities they became suspicious of them. Why? It was because they worshipped only one God (monotheism) and did not consider the Emperor of Rome a god and would not worship him.

In 200 AD, a law was passed that all Roman citizens must have a certificate stating that they had offered sacrifice to the Emperor. For anyone who did not have it, the penalty was death. As a result many Christians were arrested, tortured and put to death.

It was during this time that the Christians used code words and signs as a means of communication. One of the most famous was the Chi Rho, formed from the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ.

As it was no longer safe for the Christians to meet in the city, they took advantage of the law which allowed them to have underground burial places and met there. These meeting places were usually around the crypt of a martyr and were large enough to hold a number of worshippers. They are known as the 'catacombs' which comes from the Greek meaning 'beside the caves'.

There are several Christian catacombs in Rome which can be visited today, the most famous are St. Calixtus, St. Sebastian, and St. Priscilla.



KEY WORDS: crypt, martyr

Here are some of the symbols that the Early Christians used to communicate with each other:



Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. They mean that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end of all things.



The cross with the anchor means perseverance in bearing with difficulties.



IXΘΥC

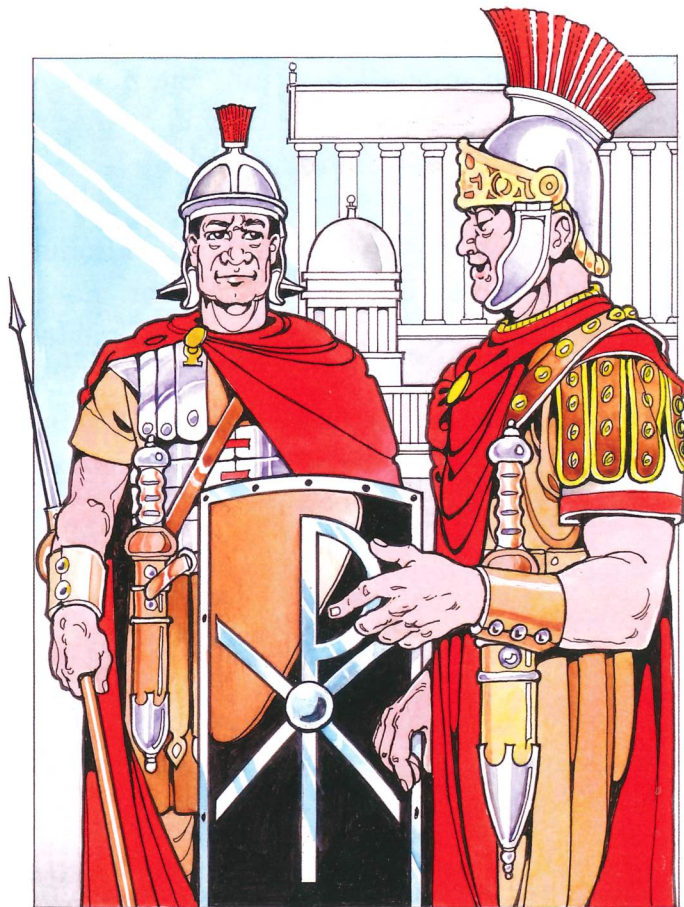
The fish is a symbol of Jesus Christ. The initials of the Greek word IXΘΥC mean: (I) Jesus, (X) Christ, (Θ) of God, (Y) Son, (C) Saviour.

## Constantine's Conversion

While there were many conversions throughout the history of the Church, one of the most notable for the early Church was that of the Roman Emperor, Constantine.

In 312 AD, while preparing his army for battle, he had a very vivid dream. In this dream he saw a cross in the sky and on it were the words, 'In this sign you will conquer'. He understood that he was to put this sign on his soldiers' shields.

Constantine won the battle and believed that the Christians' God had helped him. So after it, he had the CHI RHO sign inscribed on the Imperial banners and the soldiers' shields. He even regarded himself as a Christian even though he was not baptised until he was on his deathbed in 337 AD.



From that time, persecution of Christians by the Romans stopped and they were even given donations of large buildings (basilicas) to use for worship.

In 380 AD, Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and paganism was forbidden. After a short period, the Catholic Church spread throughout Europe and it had a tremendous influence on the lives of all Europeans – on politics, law, morality, family life and education.

## Activities

- Imagine you are a non Christian reporter for the Roman newspaper 'REPUBLICA'. You have been sent undercover to investigate the secret movement known as Christians or 'The Way'. You are aware that many Romans are fearful and suspicious of the Christians whom they persecute. In your report include:
  - What they believe.
  - What they do and where they meet.
  - Are they to be feared?
  - What gives them courage?
  - You need to evaluate whether Roman fears and suspicions about them are justified.
- Work in pairs:
  - List the challenges that the early Christians encountered.
  - Now list the challenges you face as a Christian today.
  - What are the causes?
  - What are the solutions?
- If Christianity were outlawed in this country today how would this affect:
  - your life?
  - your family?
  - your education?
  - our society?
- Watch the Power Point presentation on the Church in China.
  - Research the 'Aid to the Church in Need' website.
  - In approximately how many countries are Christians suffering for their faith?
  - Choose one country and try to explain why Christians are suffering.
  - Think of one thing you can do help this country.





**Know that the mission, power and authority that Jesus gave to the apostles have been handed on to the Church today. Think about the impact this has on your life.**

## The Ordained Ministry of the People of God

We know that every country in the world has to have some form of government for it to function. Today, the Catholic Church has spread all over the world. The word 'catholic' comes from the Greek word meaning 'universal'. It is a world Church. It is much, much larger than even a cluster of countries put together so, of necessity, it has to have a structure or government.

We know Jesus appointed Peter as head of the Church on earth. He became the first Pope and the cardinals, archbishops and bishops are the successors of the apostles.

### PETER AND THE APOSTLES...then

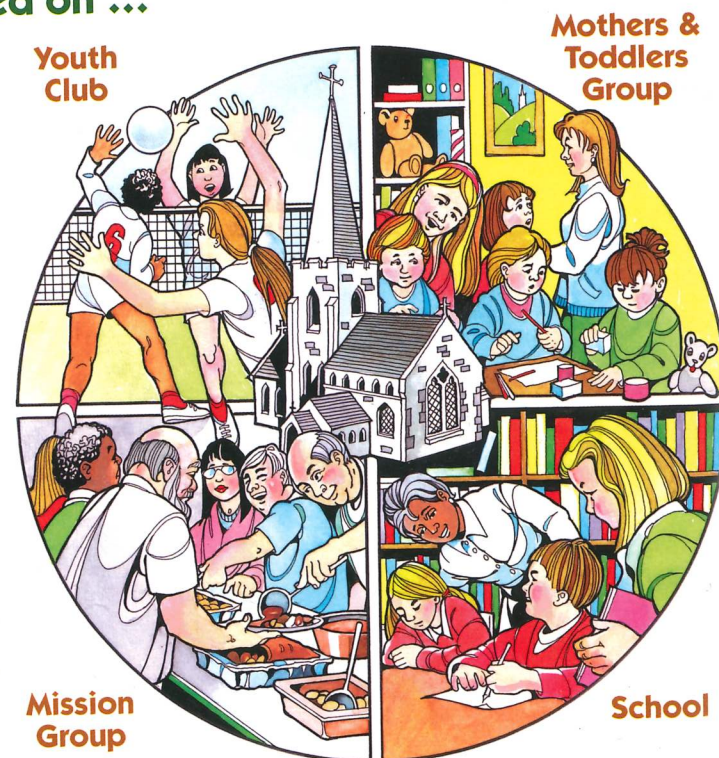


**ALL APPOINTED TO SERVE THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

The cardinals elect a new Pope. The archbishops are responsible for very large dioceses known as archdioceses. The bishops are responsible for a local area or 'diocese'. Each diocese is made up of parishes with a parish priest who reports to the bishop.

### Mission, Power and Authority passed on ...

Jesus has passed on his mission, power and authority to the apostles (Mt. 28: 16-20). They have passed it on to the Church today. All of us, because we have received the Sacrament of Baptism, have a responsibility to witness to Jesus by the way we live. We have to remember that **WE** are the Church, you and I are the Church. I cannot be a true Christian without being Church and I cannot be Church without the Eucharist.



The Pope, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, together with the cardinals, archbishops and bishops, guides the Church. They keep the Church free from error in matters of faith and morals.

Together with the priests, they are the ordained ministers of the sacraments and they have to pass on the teaching of the Church and preach the Word of God.

The specific duty of the bishop is to care for all the people in his diocese and to pass on the teaching of the Church to them.

The lay people are all those baptised who are not called by God to the ordained ministry within the Church. They are called in a special way to bring Jesus Christ to the world through a variety of different ministries, such as mothers, fathers, doctors, nurses, teachers, builders, secretaries, chefs, politicians and many other roles.

The Religious Orders are another important part of the Church. They are men and women who have taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and have chosen to live their lives as monks, priests, brothers, sisters or nuns. The Religious Orders have spread all over the world; many of them have brought Christianity to the far corners of the earth.

### Activities

- What is the name of the Pope?
  - Which diocese do you live in?
  - Who is your bishop?
  - What is the name of your parish priest?
  - What is the name of your church?
  - What do you know about the name of your church?
- Bring in your parish Newsletter.**

  - In pairs, discuss how it reflects the mission of the Church. Are there any activities or groups that are not represented that you think should be there?
  - Take photos of your parish church building.
  - Make a presentation or a poster to explain the key features of the building.
- In Parish Groups: Discuss what you could do to contribute to the life of your parish. Decide on one or two definite things and write as a group to your parish priest to present your proposals to him.**
- Work in groups: Your teacher will give you a worksheet. Imagine you are lay missionaries on a very poor island. You have been given 6,000 units to improve the quality of life for the people. Think carefully about the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Decide what you will spend your units on and give detailed reasons for your decisions.**
- Research Project: Research the life of a Religious Order. Make a Power Point presentation or an Information Booklet: explain their mission, work, prayer life and the countries they are in.**