Objectives

Students will:
• Work together to experience the importance of unity and mutual dependence.
• Personalize their role as a member of the body of Christ.
• Connect the image of mutual dependence on the spiritual unity of the body of Christ.
• Focus understanding of unity in the direction of service to others.

Materials

• Journey through Holy Week zine for each student
• Chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, the source of all wisdom and truth, send down upon us the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of discernment. Enlighten the eyes of our souls with the light of Your knowledge, that we may learn from Your wisdom and grow in virtue, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

Introduction

This lesson includes the service of Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday, the Last Supper and Eucharist on Holy Thursday morning, and Christ’s betrayal on Holy Thursday evening. It begins by showing that all people should be in unity as the Body of Christ. At the Last Supper, by washing the feet of the disciples, Christ shows that humble service goes along with His unifying presence and sacrifice. This illustrates how we also are called to serve each other, and to be in unity with each other and with Christ. The next level of Christ’s unity with us is in the physical pain He feels in the Garden of Gethsemane on Holy Thursday evening.

Note: In some parishes, the sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated on Holy Wednesday during the day and the Orthros for Holy Thursday (a Bridegroom Service) is chanted that evening.

Christ heals us, makes us whole, and unites us to each other and to Him, through the sacraments of Holy Unction and Holy Communion.
PROCEDURES

1. Focusing Activity: Sentence Relay

The purpose of this activity is to show the importance of working together, depending on one another to accomplish something, and having unity. It is a “chalkboard relay,” with each team contributing a word on the board. The first team to create a complete sensible sentence on the board is the winning team. Rules: The sentence must contain as many words as there are students on that team. The sentence doesn’t have to be true, but it must really be a sentence: it must be grammatically correct and make sense.

Divide the class into two teams.

Set a timer or watch for 1–5 minutes, depending on how many students you have. The smaller your group and teams, the less time they will need.

Once the timer starts, each team sends one student at a time to the board to write a word until every student has contributed a word. (Keep an eye on the activity to note which team creates a complete sentence first.)

If both teams finish at about the same time and both have written sentences, don’t worry about declaring a winner. Remember that the point is that each team relies on every member in order to create the sentence; if both teams have succeeded in this, show support for both.

Note: If you have a small class or don’t prefer to divide your class into two teams, this activity will also work with one group; the main idea—needing each other and working together—still comes across with one “team.”

After the teams finish, lead a discussion of the activity, with the following questions:

• If you were the first person to write a word, what helped you decide what to write?

  Students may or may not say that they had to think about what might be a good start to a sentence, and how their teammates would follow their word.

• If you had to follow someone else’s word, what did you have to think about before you decided what to write?

  Students may respond that they had to think about what the person before them had written, and what might make sense for the person after them might write.

Have students again read their sentences. Point out or guide students to notice the most important part of this activity: every person needed to participate and contribute in order to write the sentence. Every word is necessary for the sentence to have been written.

2. Name present praxis

Guide students to the conclusion that our faith teaches us that we are all united in one body, the Body of Christ, and all parts of this Body are necessary for full and healthy functioning. (Just like all members of the team were necessary to write the sentence.)

3. Reflect on present praxis

Ask students:

• If we are all members of this unified Body of Christ, what part of this body do you feel that you are? Are you the hands, feet, eyes, ears, voice, etc.?

Be sure to ask them why they feel that way. If need be, allow this question to “hang,” and you may get some insightful answers, such as:

“The eyes, because I see possibilities before me; the feet, because I want to actively help people; the ears, because I help people by listening to them, and/or am trying to listen to God’s guidance; the voice, because I have a gift for sharing ideas with people; the hands,
because I help people by making or doing things for them.”

The above answers were taken from Greek Orthodox young people when this question was asked during a summer camp discussion group. Don’t be afraid to ask this unconventional question!

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Read pages 9–10.

Alternatively, you could have the students read page 9 and then discuss Holy Unction. Then have students read page 10 and discuss the Last Supper.

Explain that the sacraments of our Church help to nurture this unity, and we commemorate the celebration of two of these sacraments on Holy Wednesday and Holy Thursday: Unction and Communion.

To discuss Holy Unction (p. 9), emphasize the following points:

• Just as when we are sick or injured, we rely on each other more, we also need each other for spiritual help, too. For example, a troubled person might need a friend who is the “ears” of Christ, to listen, or a confused person might need a friend who is the “voice” of Christ, to help explain something.

• Just like in the opening activity, each person’s actions affect the whole group.

• The sacrament of Holy Unction heals each individual and unifies the whole group—the whole Body of Christ.

When you discuss Holy Communion (Holy Thursday morning, p. 10), emphasize the following points:

• Just as Holy Unction is life-giving, Christ’s sacrifice at His Mystical Supper gives life to us as His Body.

• The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and are life-giving to each person who partakes of Holy Communion.

• When we partake of Holy Communion, we unite with Him and we unite with each other because we share in a common meal, with shared food, even a shared cup and plate.

• Christ chose to wash His disciples’ feet at the Mystical Supper for a reason, and this choice teaches us something: uniting with us and bringing us life go hand-in-hand with doing humble service for others.

• Just as receiving Holy Communion is life-giving, so is service to others.

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Explain to students:

• Christ’s choice to wash His disciples’ feet answers the question, “What do I do to show that I care for or love someone?” It is an example of an action that young people can imitate in a practical way, through service. It shows that true leadership exists in service.

• Also, it connects the Orthodox Church’s
sacramental life and the call to serve. As Orthodox Christians, we start in our church, in communion with each other and with Christ, and then take Christ’s love out into the world, in our actions.

- **We are called to partake of Holy Communion, but that when we do, we are also called to follow His example of humble service.**

  One way we can serve God is to plan to attend certain Holy Week services as a group and sit together. One of the reasons we call them “services” is that our attendance and participation in them is an act of “service to God.”

**6. Decision for lived response**

**Review the main ideas of this lesson:**

- **We are one Body, and all of us need each other.**

- **We are healed and unified to each other and to Christ in the sacraments of Holy Unction and Holy Communion.**

- **We are called to sustain this unity by serving one another as Christ served others, in humility.**

**Ask students:**

- **How can your faith in these ideas change the way you live?**

Encourage students to share specific ways that they can carry forward these messages in their lives and how it may change their perspective or choices.

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**Closing Prayer**

**Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian**

O Lord and Master of my life, deliver me from the spirit of laziness, meddling, vain ambition, and idle talk. Grant to me, Your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience, and love.

Yes, Lord and King; grant me that I may see my own faults, and to not judge my brothers and sisters, for You are blessed to the ages of ages. Amen.