

YEAR LEVEL	Foundation
TITLE	Our Church
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	5 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What does the Church look like in our community? How can I be like Jesus in my community?



Unit Focus

In this unit students will discover that people belong to the Church. They will begin to develop an understanding of the Church as a welcoming and caring community that gathers together to celebrate.

Achievement Standards

By the end of **Foundation**:

Students identify the Church as a community where people gather to celebrate their faith.

They describe physical aspects of the local Church building.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of the unit students should be able to:

1. Describe the concept of belonging as it relates to family, school, parish and community.
2. Identify a variety of people who belong to the Church.
3. Identify ways in which the Church celebrates.

Key Understandings for Students

- The Church is a community of people who come together to celebrate faith.
- We celebrate as a Church in different ways.
- When we celebrate as a Church community, we feel like a family.

Student Context

Students come to school knowing that they belong to a family and other communities. Their understanding of 'family' will have been shaped by their experience. To have an understanding of the Church, the students need to understand that they can belong to more than one family or community (e.g. The school/parish community and that such communities can be groups of people who work, play and/or celebrate together.). This sense of belonging

will be developed by their experience of their class as a welcoming, celebrating community. This understanding can then be extended to the school and parish.

At this stage children love stories and their daily life is structured by routines and rituals. They are able to explore their experiences of belonging and of being welcomed. Their ability to use symbols, words and images in communication is rapidly developing. The concepts developed throughout this unit are of interest to them and are appropriate as they become involved in the school community.

Theological Background for Teachers

- Early followers of Jesus emphasized that families were the key building blocks of the spiritual family of God's chosen ones. In a sense they saw the entire Christian community as the household of God's family. Most primitive Christian gatherings for prayer and celebration of the Eucharist occurred in 'house churches', with ordinary Christian householders hosting and presiding over the sacred rituals.
- In recent decades, Catholic congregations have been actively reclaiming and re-emphasizing the traditional notion of the family household as a 'church of the home' and a 'church in miniature'. This is an appropriate point from which to develop a sense of the church as community. The church is often referred to as a true community of Christ's followers, especially in the celebration of the sacraments and in other communal acts of worship and through the living witness to Christian values. (Ekstrom, 2000, p 52).

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity Read to the students '*A Peek into my Church*' by Veronica Kelly. (You may like to read only half of the story). Ask students to respond by drawing a picture of one of the elements in the story.

- Students list different ways they celebrate together with their families or in a school community (eg. birthdays, opening school Masses, Assemblies). Each student draws a celebration they have experienced. Collage the drawings with the heading 'We Celebrate in Many Ways'.
- Discuss with students that the Church is a special building where the community gathers to celebrate and share the Word of God. Share with students the name of the Parish that their school is in. Visit the local Church, if possible invite the Parish Priest or someone from the Parish to speak about the special items in the Church. When students return from visiting the Church they draw the outside of the Church.
- As a class students list all the things that are found in the Church. Ask the children what they saw or noticed. As the teacher records the responses, draw students to various objects. Invite the students to wonder about objects and ask questions about what they noticed in the Church. Discuss with the students the purpose of the items and how, when and why they are used. Why are they important? Tell the 'story' of the items. Focus on: the altar and the tabernacle, the lectern, the crucifix, the paschal candle, the Baptismal font. Using any material available, students in pairs are invited to create these and then underneath the item they have created, students write a sentence explaining what their item is used for in the Church.

- The Church is a special building that connects to their Parish and community. Each Church has similar objects in it. Show students this link of a cathedral
<https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/craft/explore-the-cathedral/>
- Students create a piece of artwork that depicts themselves together with their school community inside the Church being welcomed in and celebrating. This can be displayed in the classroom.
- Students create an invitation to take home inviting their family members to attend a normal weekday Parish Mass. Students attend this Mass with their class and families.
- Discuss the special rituals (things that we do) in our Church (eg. bless ourselves with the Holy Water, we genuflect etc.). Students draw an image of themselves making the Sign of the cross. Support students to become familiar with this by practising this during class prayer.
- Students learn a song about belonging. Eg: Andrew Chinn 'Together as One'. Create actions to accompany the song. This could be shared at a school assembly.
- One way of celebrating as a Church community is by praying together. Write a class prayer that reflects on all the gifts that are present in the community (eg: Thank you God for blessing us with the welcoming community of 'Name of the school community'. We pray that we will all learn and grow together this year. Amen. Place this around the prayer focus.

Prayer and Ritual

Invite students to gather together around the prayer focus. (If the Parish Church is onsite this prayer ritual may be celebrated in the Church). Make the Sign of the cross. The educator welcomes the students into the prayer space and lights the candle. Around the prayer focus place the drawings from students that depict the name of the Parish and Church Community they belong to.

Students and the teacher pray together with the prayer written for the community. Play the song that students learnt together and invite them to sing.

Complete the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

