



INTERMEDIATE BOOK

Authors: Rev. Fr. P.C. George
Mrs. Diana Thomas

Mr. Joe Varghese
Ms. Susan Zachariah

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – One in Christ.....	p. 3
Chapter 2 – Challenges Being One in Christ.....	p. 6
Chapter 3 –One with the Church.....	p. 9
Chapter 4 – United as a community of believers.....	p. 12

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 1

ONE IN CHRIST



“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 1: ONE IN CHRIST

Objectives

- To know Christ is fully God and fully Man
- To understand that we imitate God by studying and learning about the life of Jesus Christ
- To understand that the Church called some men and women as “Saints” as acknowledgement that they chose to lead their lives in a Christ-like manner and therefore our role-models

Bible Verses to help prepare for the Lesson

- **Galatians 3:28** - “We are one in Christ”
- **Ephesians 2:10** - “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”

Lesson

We are special and unique. No two people are exactly the same. When the Church instructs us to be “One in Christ”, how are we to respond? How is it even possible to be *one* with God?

We also know that being a Christian is not very popular in our society. Very often the stereotype for a follower of God is a “goody two-shoe” (i.e. someone not cool or one who is not in touch with reality).

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S Lewis writes that it is “silly (to say) that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.”

The suffering a Christian endures is very hard. Those who give-in to their temptations actually have chosen an easy path. Jesus Christ did not teach by doing what was popular, but he did was right, even in the face of struggle and temptation. A Christian who seeks only glory and popularity is choosing the world over and above their calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The incarnation (Jesus Christ made flesh) enables us to become more like God. When God took the form of a human being, He has given us an example of a perfect human life and how to rejoice in our sufferings. Without Christ, we will never be able to reach the full potential that God had intended for us and we will look to the world to fill us with satisfaction that is temporary in nature. It is only by reading the Bible, surrounding ourselves with the love of other Christians and trusting the teachings of the Church that we will be able to be a good ambassador of Jesus Christ in the world.

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

The heart of the Orthodox understanding of Salvation and worship is the process of *Theosis*. *Theosis* is defined as the mysterious joining by Divine Grace (God's uncreated energy) of a created being to the Creator. As we grow in our understanding and transform ourselves to be in the same mind in word and action like Christ, we become more like Him (Matthew 5:48). This is what the Church acknowledges in the declaration of a Saint. We can better understand what it looks like to be one in Christ by studying the lives of the Saints. They have lived and died on this earth for the sole purpose of expanding the Kingdom of God. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit that St. Paul writes about in **Galatians 5:22-23**, the Holy Church has given us these holy fathers and mothers as role models. We can follow their example of humility and mercy to help us better understand Jesus Christ and develop a stronger relationship with Him. The more we seek God, the more we will understand who He is and seek to be one with Him (communion). When we choose to become like Jesus Christ, we will possess true, self sacrificing love for our brothers and sisters.

The Church has provided us many avenues by which we can unite with Jesus Christ. Regardless of who you are, where you come from, and what you have done, God desires your entire soul and body. He has loved you before you were created and will forever love you. It is up to us, as His creation, to answer His call and follow Him to the best of our abilities. We will fall, but Christ forgives and will set your paths straight – “In all your ways know wisdom, that she may cut a straight path for you; and your foot will not stumble” (**Proverbs 3:6**). Now that we have discussed what it looks like to be one with Christ, in later chapters we will contrast it with what it means to follow the world. Then we will look at how the Church helps us to be absolutely one with Christ.

Suggested Activity

In groups or individually, research and study the life of a Saint that is mentioned in the 5th *Thubden* or Litany of the Holy Qurbana.

- What characteristics or aspects of the Saint can you personally relate to?
- Identify at least two characteristics of the Saint that are like Christ, and write on how you can apply these characteristics in your life
-

Bible Verse for Memorization

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES BEING ONE IN CHRIST



“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 2: Challengers Being One in Christ

Objectives

- To compare a “Christ-like” life versus a “worldly” life.
- To understand how a life following Christ helps us to bear fruit.

Bible Verses to help prepare for the Lesson

- **John 15:19** - If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as one of its own. But because you do not belong to the world and I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you.
- **1 Corinthians 1:18** - For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Lesson

We live in a world filled with difficulties and challenges. We are constantly distracted by our busy lives with schoolwork, friends, media, computer games etc. In the midst of everything we have to do, it is so easy to forget that God is present in our lives. Since we are not aware of God’s presence, this will result in a lack of desire to attend church services regularly or find the time to pray.

We might find ourselves constantly focused on material items. If you look around, a majority of people are focused on gaining worldly riches and bearing fruits grounded in this world. Our daily routines and worldly desires can take us away from the will of God and being one in Christ.

Every challenge we face can and will overcome us if Christ is not living in our heart. These challenges can come in the form of schoolwork or maybe difficulties in our personal relationships. When we seek to be one with Christ, He will give us the strength to endure all our struggles. God will send his Holy Spirit into our hearts and help us understand how to react in a tough situation. The stronger that our faith grows in Christ, the more we will be able to withstand the pressures of this world.

When Jesus was tempted in the desert for 40 days, he relied on prayer to keep him from falling. Similarly, the Apostles and the Saints of our Church have faced challenges and temptations during their lives. They kept their faith in Jesus Christ and persevered through all their struggles. When we face challenges and struggles in our life, we are not alone. God is always present with us. The prayers of the Saints surround us. Members of the church enjoy the presence of the entire Church to help them through difficult times.

The Church is the body of Christ. As members of the Church, we are recipients of the Apostolic witness concerning Jesus Christ. When we read the bible and partake in the sacraments of the Church we are given all the resources to live a Christ-like life. Most importantly, Jesus Christ told us “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.” (John 6:56). The Holy Qurbana is essential to the life of any Christian. If we want to be one with Christ, we must partake of Him at the Holy Altar. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

never be thirsty.” (John 6:35). Hunger is a real challenge in our world today, but Jesus Christ shows us that if we look to Him, he will satisfy not only our hunger, but our every desire.

Suggested Activities

- Take a moment to reflect on your life and focus on where you spend your time and energy. Are you trying to be one with the world?
- Think about the practices you can incorporate into your life so you can avoid being one with the world

Bible Verse for Memorization

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (**Romans 12:2**)

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 3

ONE WITH THE CHURCH



CHAPTER 3: One with the Church

Objectives

- To help students see that the Sacraments are part of our Church to help reunite us to the image that God made us to be

Bible Verses to help prepare for the Lesson

- **1 Corinthians 6:17** - "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him"
- **Colossians 1:18** - "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

Lesson

What does it mean to be a Christian? The simplest definition is a person who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. What is the Church? We can define it as a building where we meet for worship. However, the Church is more than just a building – as we read in Holy Scripture, the Church is the Body of Christ (Colossians 1:18).

We see this teaching very plainly in the encounter Saul had with Christ on the road to Damascus in Chapter 9 of the Acts of the Holy Apostles. Prior to this event, Saul had been one of the great leaders of the movement against the early Christian Church. He led a mob to stone St. Stephen (chief of the Deacons and the first of the Christian martyrs) and as explained in Acts 8:3, Saul "made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."

Jesus confronted Saul with the words, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? ... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"(Acts 9:4). Even though Saul's abuse and persecution was directed toward the followers of Christ in the Church, this story helps us realize that Jesus Christ is one with his people, the Church. An attack on the Church is an attack on Jesus Christ himself.

St. Paul emphasizes the unity of Christ and the Church in the Book of Ephesians, and reminds all Christians that through the Church we are One with Him. We read in **Ephesians 4:4-6** – "There is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". How is this possible? St. Paul calls this a mystery (Ephesians 5:32). As with all Divine Mysteries (i.e., Sacraments), we must trust that the Spirit of God is at work and God's plan will be revealed to us at the proper time.

The Church is unity in Christ. At Church, we experience God through **prayer** (i.e., talking with God) and **Scripture** (i.e., the written Word). We also know that there is direct interaction with Christ when we have **fellowship** with others (Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"). The Holy Qurbana (**Eucharist**) is the ultimate act of fellowship in the Church. The real presence of Jesus Christ made manifest in the bread and wine offered on the Holy Altar (John 6:53-58). This fellowship is patterned after the early Church (Acts 2:42 - "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers.")

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

In the Holy Qurbana, we receive Jesus Christ into our bodies, which is the mark of our communion with God. If we receive the Holy Qurbana without preparation or attention, there will not be a real change in our heart toward God. If we receive the Holy Qurbana in an unworthy or unprepared manner, we are essentially approaching Christ like those who struck Him and mocked and crucified Him and this is bringing condemnation to ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). But those who partake of the Holy Qurbana with piety, love and readiness, there is an eternal closeness and unity between them and Christ. Through the sacrament of Holy Baptism we all came into union with the body of Christ. The conditions for the Holy Baptism are faith in Jesus Christ, repentance and dedication to a new life. For most, this happened when they were infants. Regardless, it is our duty to continually rededicate ourselves the vows made at Holy Baptism. This renewal happens through a regular participation in the life of the Church.

Every Sacrament of the Church transforms us and leads us toward a oneness with Jesus Christ.

Suggested Activities

- Study Ephesians 5:21-6:2. The unity of Christ and his Church is likened to the unity of the husband and wife. Also, Children are requested to honor their parents to strengthen this unity.
- Discuss the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Bible Verse for Memorization

- "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." (**John 6:56**)

CHAPTER 4

UNITED AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS



“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

CHAPTER 4: United as a Community of Believers

Objectives

- To reflect on the “fullness” of the Gospel and how this is only found in the Church
- To really understand and believe that the Christian walk is not an individual journey, but one that is undertaken with a community of believers that includes our parents & God-parents, clergy and all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Bible Verses to help prepare for the Lesson

- **Romans 12:5** - “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every member is one of another.”
- **Ephesians 1:22-23** - “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
- **Matthew 18:20** – “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”

Lesson

In St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, he writes that “if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9). Many Christians believe that this declaration is sufficient to guarantee an eternal life of happiness. This is an individualistic approach to salvation. All Orthodox Christians strongly believe and confess that Jesus Christ is God – every prayer, every song and our understanding of Scripture emphasizes this fundamental belief. St. Thomas, the Apostle of India, made this strong proclamation of Faith (John 20:28) when he said that Jesus Christ was “Lord” and “God.”. However, we must understand that our approach and understanding to the Church and Salvation is fundamentally grounded in the life of the Church.

Our understanding of Salvation helps us realize that the act of salvation is not limited to a proclamation (simply stating “I am saved”) or a one-time event. Many Christians believe that Baptism is the “guarantee” of salvation. Even though Baptism was our entrance into the Church and Body of Christ, it is only the beginning of our salvation. We will be judged by how we live. At our Baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit that helps and guides in the path of righteousness. Our Baptism into the Church, the Body of Christ, united us with God and every member of the Church. The members of the Church grow together in unity and single-mind toward the ideal of Christian perfection.

This is a mystery according to St. Paul. However, the Church has many ways of expressing the mysteries of God. One way is the icons.

Icons are very common in Eastern Orthodox Churches, and there are ancient Churches in India and Syria that have this Sacramental Art. The Icon of the Holy Trinity that is shown above was written in the 15th Century by Andrei Rublev is one of many that help us understand this teaching of unity and Oneness visually.

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)



The Holy Trinity is the One, Triune God - through a mystery we profess and believe that God is One in Three and Three in One - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are unique and distinct persons. This is the theology reflected in the Icon and is the account of the Old Testament visit of the three angels to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18). In the Icon, looking from left to right, the angels represent God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Please refer to the Activities section later to find a link that explains more about the depth of teaching of this Icon.

Although the three persons are distinct, there are elements written in the Icon to emphasize the “One” – for example, all the angels are of same height and similar posture, and have the same face. They are all in positions of lordship, but at the same time the head of the middle and right angels (Christ and the Holy Spirit) are tilted toward the first angel (the Father), which is stated in the Nicene Creed when we profess the order of the Holy Trinity. We also note that the colors of the angels are distinct but blend together.] In particular, the color of the robes and golden band on the middle Angel is also present on most other icons depicting the incarnate Christ (Icons of the Glorified or Resurrected Christ are often written in all-white).

There is another lesson woven into this Holy Icon that helps us understand the Oneness in Christ, through the Church. As mentioned, the three Angels depict the Holy

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

Trinity with the center angel representing the second person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ the Word. If we look carefully at the posture of the angels, and in particular the left and right angels we notice that their bodies form the outline of a chalice.

When we trace the outline, we notice that not only is Christ in the center but on the table is the wine that is being blessed by all (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) ... which is the experience during the Holy Qurbana! In the Church, we experience Christ in ways that cannot be described fully in words. In the Church, we as individuals enter together through prayer, Scripture and fellowship. We participate in a communal meal, centered on the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Through the chalice, we are in physical communion with God.

Our unity is through the Church, which is the Body of Christ. It is only through Christ that we experience this miracle of many distinct and unique people being brought together as one body. In Church, we experience Christ in His fullness - through Scripture, Eucharist or Qurbana, prayer and in fellowship (Acts 2:42).

Suggested Activities

- A Holy Icon is written in a very distinct way to teach specific lessons on the Faith. It is not a painting or a photograph, but rather a proclamation of our Faith. Make copies of the Icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev and walk the class through the points that are brought out in this or any other Orthodox Christian explanation of the Icon - http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/lord_trinity_rublev.html.
Point out any particular characteristics of Icons in general, such as inverse proportion, attributes that are attributed to Saints or Angels, etc.

Bible Verse for Memorization

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42)

“We are one in Christ.” (Galatians 3:28)

