

## What is the Body of Christ?

Christian life emphasizes human relationships rather than human individuality. Thus, the goal of a Christian life is to live always in context of loving relationships with others. The Christian life cannot be lived in isolation from others but only in community. There is no “God and me” apart from “God and us.”

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Jesus taught us how to pray in the Our Father, the foundation for unity of the Church (Forgive us as we forgive others). Cyprian of Carthage said, “Above all, the Teacher of Peace and the Master of unity did not want prayer to be viewed as something individualistic and self-centered. For us, prayer is public and communal; and when we pray, we do so, not for one, but for the whole people because we, the whole people, are one.”

Entering into the life of another or others is not for the faint of heart. The demands are great, as are the awards. As we become closer to others we become more vulnerable.

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An isolated Catholic is a paralyzed Catholic.

*All* relationships with others are summed up in God’s words to Cain: “Where is *your* brother; what have *you* done to *your* brother?”

The total *giving of oneself to another* for the love of God is the measure of the person’s human *and* spiritual development. We must give ourselves so totally to others that we leave ourselves vulnerable.

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The body of Christ is like a jigsaw puzzle with a couple missing pieces. After assembling the puzzle and examining it, what do we notice most? We notice that it is incomplete—some of its pieces are missing. Then we search high and low for the missing pieces so that the puzzle might be complete. (Parable of the lost sheep). This is an image of the body of Christ. When we are together, we recognize that there are some missing pieces. Some of us are not present. Some have not been present for a long time. How hard to we search for the missing people and help bring them back so that our body might be complete?

The puzzle can also be thought of as part of a larger quilt that consists of many puzzles. To complete the quilt all the puzzles must be brought together. This is an image of the larger Church. It can be our local archdiocese, perhaps the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity, or mankind.

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The Church is the assembly of God’s people and the means by which we experience the Spirit today. The Church is the people of God, the body of Christ.

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The horizontal arm of the cross represents the Body of Christ.