

The Mystical Body

How I See Myself

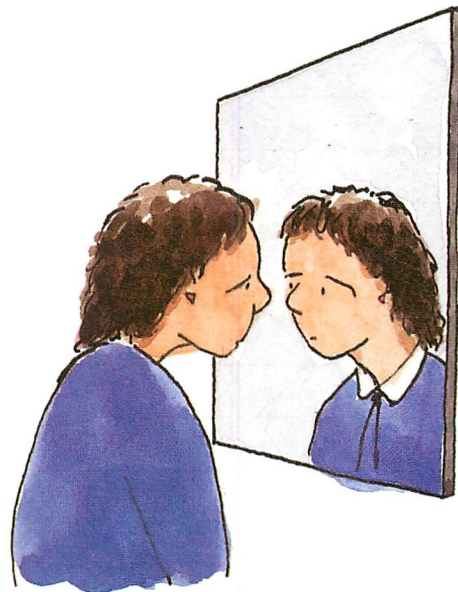
Complete Part A by choosing any of the words which best describe how you feel. Fill in the blanks.

Part A.

1. My name is _____.
2. I am a _____ Christian.
3. Sometimes I _____ God and this makes me feel _____.
4. My faith teaches me who Jesus is. I _____
feel his presence _____.
5. I can pray when _____.
6. I believe in an Almighty Creator because _____.
7. I can see and experience God's presence whenever _____.

Word choice for Part A: (2-7):

strong	sad	sometimes
weak	glad	in the world
Armenian	afraid	nothing
good	always	never
doubt	in my home	know
never	with others	the Church
often	I am told to	believe
alone	more faith	my faith
I want to	patience	the Bible
I need to	more understanding	hardly
wonder	love	with a friend
strongly	forgiving	everything



In your own words, complete part B.

Part B.

1. I think a sincere Christian _____.
 2. Christ is shown to be real to me in _____.
 3. If I were to show someone that Christ really exists, I would _____.
 4. I believe the most important thing that Christ did or taught was _____.
 5. His _____ is what makes me feel good.
 6. _____ unites us with each other as Christians.
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Now that you've shared with one another how you identify yourself as a Christian and how you personally respond to your faith let's focus our attention on what it is that makes this all possible.

The Church is both a visible and invisible creation.

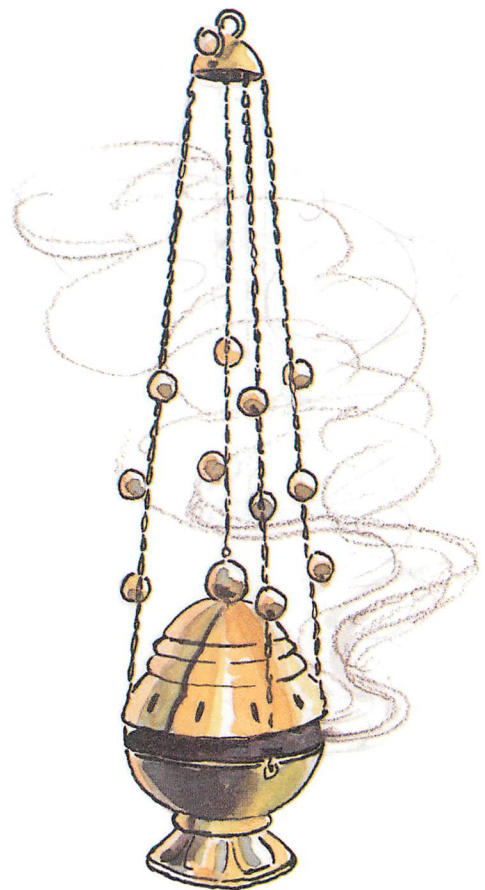
List the ways the Church is seen in its physical sense.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

What is meant when we say that the Church, the believing community, is a "mystical body?" What is mystical? What makes the church exist in a mystical way?

Read the following hymns and prayers from the worship of our church and explain in your own words the terms mystery, mystical, mystically.

a. O profound **MYSTERY**, who is eternal and beyond our knowledge, you who have furnished



your heavenly region to be a residence of your approachable light and with splendid glory did adorn it with the ranks of (angelic) fiery spirits. (Hymn of Vesting, *Khorhoort Khorin*)

b. We who **MYSTICALLY** represent the cherubim, and sing the "thrice-holy" hymn to the life-giving Trinity. Let us lay aside all worldly cares, that we may receive the king of all invisibly escorted by the order of angels (Cherubic Hymn of the Great Entrance)

c. Lord God of hosts and creator of all things, who has brought into visible existence all things out of nothing, who also in thy love of mankind has ordained us to be ministers of so awful and ineffable a *MYSTERY*, thou, O Lord to whom we offer these oblations, accept from us this presentation and consummate it to be the mystery of the body and blood of thine Only-Begotten and grant this bread and this cup to be to us, that taste of them; a remedy of forgiveness for our sins.

(The Prayer of the Laying of the Gifts)

d. Spirit of God, who descending from heaven makes through us (and our prayers) the *MYS-TERY* of him that is glorified with thee, by the shedding of his blood, we beseech thee, grant rest to the souls of those of us that are fallen asleep.

Now read the following Scripture passages:

John 20:19–22

Matthew 28:16–20

Acts 2:1–4

From these biblical passages, what would you say about the Church as the mystical body of Christ?

List some ways that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the mystical body of Christ (the Church) takes form and action.

Unit VIII: The Life of Christ

Session 1—The Mystical Body

Key Concepts

1. We, the Christian Church, are the mystical body of Christ.
2. We identify “mystery” as the Holy Spirit of God, his energy which invisibly vivifies the Church and makes manifest the presence of God.
3. The liturgy makes physical what is “mystical.”

Objectives

Students will

1. Evaluate their own experiences of God.
2. List ways the church takes physical form.
3. Define “mystical.”
4. Explain the concept of the church as the mystical body of Christ.
5. Read hymns and prayers from our worship that convey the idea of mystery.
6. Read scriptural passages from the New Testament about the Spirit of God which gives form to his mystical body.

Background for Teacher

When we live the Christian life, we are truly being not only imitators of Christ, but revealers of Christ, of God’s presence. Sometimes it’s hard to explain what we do, why we do it, how we feel, and why we feel a certain way as Christians. The “what,” the “why,” and the “how,” when properly defined and studied, help us finally to explain the “who”—that is, who we are. This identity will always retain a dimension of mystery.

The early Christians, as individuals and as community, always gave the answer that it was Christ Jesus himself who gave them their true identity. His spirit created faith and it was their faith that created both their individuality and community. The value of life was totally founded upon the teaching of our Lord.

Even in the Armenian Church history we studied this year, we saw how often Armenians turned to Christ to discover who they were as a community of faithful, physically and spiritually.

From the evangelization of Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew to the enlightenment by St. Gregory the Illuminator, and the great saints, martyrs, and holy fathers of our Church, we have rediscovered our identity over and over, become stronger and stronger because it was our Lord that gave us a faith which made us what we are today.

In this unit we will attempt to learn more about ourselves through Christ.

Materials Needed

- Bibles

Procedure

1. Opening Prayer. Havadamk in Armenian. (5 min.)
2. Greet your class and enumerate the many areas of study you shared this year: Bible, Feasts, Prayer, Sacraments, Special People of the Church, History, Liturgy, etc. Ask which unit of study was most meaningful to them and let students explain why. (10 min.)
3. Have them now do the activity in their texts, “How I See Myself.” (Parts A and B)

Have students share their answers with the other class members. Take each question one at a time. Let them do most of the talking. Conclude discussion with the exercise on the physical dimension of Church. (Suggested answers: building, incense, music, vestments, etc.) (15 min.)

4. Have students read the hymns of the Divine Liturgy in their texts (page 100) that talk about Christians being the “mystical body” of Christ. Then have them read the Biblical passages listed.

Ask students: How do we “mystically reveal Christ” as individuals? As a collective group?

Point out that the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is *the source of energy* within each Christian that mystically, invisibly motivates us to respond to God’s presence on earth.

Aids in Understanding Hymns and Prayers

- a. “Mystery” means . . . God the Father’s Spirit and power.
- b. “Mystically” means . . . with “spiritual” energy.
- c. “Mystery” means . . . with God’s presence, the spiritual becoming physical.
- d. “Mystery” means . . . physical presence.

Now read the Scripture passages; these point towards the Holy Spirit as being the force which energizes the “mystical body” to finally manifest God’s presence physically in the world. (20 min.)

5. Have students list some ways the Holy Spirit mystically energizes the church to take physical shape. Examples: Acts of charity, collective worship, healing through prayers and medicine, education, etc. (10 min.)