



Presence

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST
INTRODUCTION

LEADER GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview & Program	4
Session 1: God Is with Us	13
Session 2: The Story of the Eucharist	23
Session 3: Bread for the Journey	35
Session 4: Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist	47

PRESENCE: AN OVERVIEW

Welcome to *Presence*. These sessions have been carefully designed to help participants discover the powerful way that God is present to us in the Eucharist, inviting us into an intimate union with himself. We will examine the effects of the sacrament and its setting in the Mass, explore the scriptural foundation of the sacrament, and discover the beauty of Holy Communion and the transformative power of the grace God offers us in this sacrament.

The *Presence* series utilizes three components—this Leader Guide, the Study Guide, and session videos—to communicate its message. All three are designed to complement one another to educate and encourage.

HOW THE PRESENCE PROGRAM WORKS

The *Presence* program is comprised of four sessions: *God Is with Us*, *The Story of the Eucharist*, *Bread for the Journey*, and *Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist*.

- *God Is with Us* examines God's saving presence with his people throughout salvation history, culminating in the Incarnation and his abiding Real Presence in the Eucharist.
- *The Story of the Eucharist* looks at how the Eucharist was prefigured in the Old Testament as well as in Jesus's miracles and teaching.
- *Bread for the Journey* focuses on the necessity of the Eucharist for our spiritual nourishment and explores the different parts of the Liturgy of the Mass.
- *Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist* responds to objections to the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist with biblical apologetics. Understanding and responding to the objections of those who disagree with us (apologetics) is an important part of evangelization.

The program is structured such that the four sessions may be completed over the course of four separate meetings or together at one longer (daylong) seminar.

LEADING A PRESENCE SESSION

The Leader Guide

This guide takes the leader through the step-by-step process for each session. The various sections are carefully crafted to equip you to lead participants through an opening of their hearts and minds to God's Word and the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding the Eucharist.

What You Will Find in Each PRESENCE Session:

- 1. SESSION OVERVIEW (Leader Guide only):** An overview of the session gives the leader a simple summary of the content that will be presented and provides context for the topic.
- 2. SESSION OBJECTIVES (Leader Guide only):** The objectives clearly indicate what the participants should take away from each session.
- 3. STEP 2: CONNECT:** Each session begins with a couple questions that relate to points in the video to help participants get started thinking and talking about the topic at hand.

4. **STEP 3: VIDEO:** The video segment teaches the subject using the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church as well as by sharing stories and testimonials. The Leader Guide and Study Guide both include a brief outline that follows the key points in the teaching.
5. **STEP 4: DISCUSS:** These questions help participants reflect on the topics of the session together. If you have a large group, consider forming smaller groups for the discussion, with team members facilitating and keeping each small group on track.

(**Leader Guide only**) We have included possible responses for the DISCUSS questions in this Leader's Guide. Use these to help get a discussion started, bring greater clarity to the study topic, or answer a difficult question.
6. **STEP 5: COMMIT: Encountering God's Presence:** Participants are guided through a brief reflection related to the topic of the session. This is a very important section that calls the participants not only to more deeply understand the Sacrament of the Eucharist, but also to a deeper conversion to Christ and the Church.
7. **STEP 6: WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER:** The Wrap-Up (Leader Guide only) summarizes the key points of the session. Invite participants to read along silently or aloud with the Closing Prayer.
8. **DIGGING DEEPER:** Additional teaching and quotations or excerpts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the saints, and other Catholic works are provided to help further understanding of a particular topic.
9. **FOR FURTHER STUDY:** Each session includes suggested resources pertaining to the topics covered for continued study and reflection.

The Study Guide

The *Presence* program also includes a Study Guide that contains all of the information a participant would need to fruitfully participate in the session: the Opening Prayer, a brief Introduction to the session, an Outline of the Video, the Small Group Discussion questions, the Digging Deeper sections, the Commit reflection, and the Closing Prayer. For this study to have the greatest possible impact, each person should have his or her own Study Guide for reflecting on and writing about discussion questions, for the Digging Deeper information, and for the take-home Commit reflection.

How to Lead Small Groups

The success of any small group begins with an engaged leader. Leading a small group discussion does not mean you have to lecture or teach. A successful small group leader facilitates, getting group participants to interact with each other as they make new discoveries. Here are some tips to help you get started as you lead and facilitate your small group:

- **Set the Tone:** Let group members know from the beginning that your time together is meant to be for discussion and discovery, not lecture. Also remind participants that every question and answer is welcomed and worthy of discussion.
- **Encourage Involvement:** Work to invite all participants to engage in discussion. Don't be afraid of periods of silence, especially during the first part of the meeting. If one person gets off track, kindly acknowledge the person and invite him or her to explore that topic more after your group time. Ask questions such as "What do the rest of you think?" or "Anyone else?" to encourage several people to respond.
- **Open-Ended Questions:** Use questions that invite thought-provoking answers rather than "yes" or "no," "true" or "false," or a one-word, fill-in-the-blank answer. As a leader, your job is to get participants to think about the topic and how the Scriptures and reflections can be relevant and applicable to their own life of faith.
- **Affirm Answers:** People are often reluctant to speak up for fear of saying something wrong or giving an incorrect answer. Affirm every participant by saying things such as "Great idea," "I hadn't thought of that before," or "That's an insightful response." These types of phrases communicate that you value everyone's comments and opinions.
- **Avoid Advice:** Remember, you are acting as a facilitator—not a college professor or counselor. Instead of giving advice or lecturing, when appropriate, offer how a Scripture passage or something in the video spoke to you personally, or give an example of how you've been able to apply a specific concept in your own life.
- **Be Flexible and Real:** Sometimes your group time may veer off-track due to something that's going on in our culture or your community (for example, a natural disaster strikes your area or a group member is experiencing a family tragedy). Use relevant topics as a time to remind participants that God is always with us and that we can seek guidance from Scripture, from the Church's teachings, and from the Holy Spirit in every situation. If you model relevant discussion and transparency, your group participants are more likely to do the same.
- **Stick Around After the Meeting:** As the leader, make yourself available after your meeting time for questions, concerns, or further discussion on a topic that a participant may have been hesitant about during the scheduled time. If a question arises that has you stumped, admit that you don't have the answer and offer to contact someone who may be able to provide one, such as your parish priest, church deacon, or your diocese.

THREE SEPARATE MEETINGS OPTION

Below is the suggested outline for an individual *Presence* session when using *Presence* over **four separate 60-minute meetings**.

Use the time allotments as a guideline; the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group.

NOTE: The three video segments in session four are a combined 80-minutes. This makes them about 40-minutes longer than the typical 90- or 60-minute session.

Time	Steps	Overview
5 minutes	OPENING PRAYER/ INTRODUCTION	Begin with the Opening Prayer; then go through the Introduction of the session.
5-10 minutes	CONNECT	Ask the Connect questions to get participants acquainted with the topic.
30-40 minutes	VIDEO	Play the video segment.
10 minutes	DISCUSS	Facilitate discussion of the questions in small groups.
5 minutes	COMMIT	Facilitate discussion of the previous week's Commit reflection questions.
5 minutes	WRAP-UP / CLOSING PRAYER	End with the Closing Prayer

For each 90-minute session, use the suggested format below:

Time	Steps	Overview
5 minutes	OPENING PRAYER/ INTRODUCTION	Begin with the Opening Prayer; then go through the Introduction of the session.
15 minutes	CONNECT	Ask the Connect questions to get participants acquainted with the topic.
30-40 minutes	VIDEO	Play the video segment.
30 minutes	DISCUSS	Facilitate discussion of the questions in small groups.
5 minutes	COMMIT	Facilitate discussion of the previous week's Commit reflection questions.
5 minutes	WRAP-UP / CLOSING PRAYER	End with the Closing Prayer

Daylong Option

Presence can also be used as a daylong session.

The overall daylong schedule could look like the following:

8:30 a.m. Registration/Gathering/Introductions

9:00-10:00 a.m. Session 1

BREAK

10:15 to 11:15 a.m. Session 2

BREAK

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Session 3

BREAK

1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Session 4

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH AND PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

The Eucharist is the sacrament by which the sacrificial Death and Resurrection of Jesus is re-presented in the Liturgy of the Mass, making it possible for us to enter into his sacrifice by eating his Body and drinking his Blood. Before beginning this study on the Eucharist, it is helpful to have some background knowledge of the Church and the Sacraments.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacraments as “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). This means that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments actually give us the grace that they represent. Jesus instituted the seven sacraments as the means of offering us salvation and uniting us to himself—by bestowing his grace upon us through physical signs. The seven sacraments are:

Sacraments of Initiation	Sacraments of Healing	Sacraments at the Service of Communion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism • Confirmation • Eucharist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation • Anointing of the Sick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage • Holy Orders

THE CHURCH: SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

“Christ, having been lifted up from the earth has drawn all to Himself. Rising from the dead He sent His life-giving Spirit upon His disciples and through Him has established His Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”

—*Lumen Gentium, 48*

As the source of all grace come down from Heaven to be present to us, Jesus himself is the primary, living sacrament of God: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father... No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (John 1:14, 18).

If Jesus himself is the primary sacrament, then the Church, as the Body of Christ, can also be described as sacrament—the “sacrament of salvation”—because it is through the Church that Jesus continues to be present and at work in the world. We are called to a personal and intimate relationship with God, but he has also willed that we learn from and experience his love through the Church.

The Church is the visible sign of the invisible grace God has entrusted to her for the salvation of all. The Church “both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies” (CCC 774). The Church is a sign that points toward our individual union with God and our union with one another, but it is also the instrument by which God makes these two unions a reality.

Jesus has entrusted his work of salvation to the Church. He “manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, ‘until he comes’” (CCC 1076). He is always present in his Church, and the Church works by his power and authority to make the message of salvation known to all and to make God’s grace available to all through the sacraments. This is the nature of the Church—to communicate God’s love through preaching the Gospel and through the grace of the sacraments. The Church views reality through a sacramental lens: everything in the life of the Church and in our own individual lives can be understood as an opportunity to be an instrument of God’s love in the world.

God created us with both a body and soul, and we experience God’s love and express our love for him not only in a spiritual way, but through our physical senses as well. The signs and symbols of the sacraments provide that physical component that is necessary for us even in our physical relationship with God. The sacraments make us holy and heal our souls from the wounds of sin, but through the words and objects involved they also teach us and help us grow in faith. In the sacraments we experience the words and actions of Jesus, just as those present during his public ministry did. They are unique and transformative encounters with the God who loves us, and not mere celebrations or services.

PRAYER

“In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.”

—CCC 1073

In the sacraments—and especially in the Mass—we participate in “Christ’s own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1073). The Church’s liturgical prayer joins us to the whole host of Heaven, led by Christ our High Priest in worship of the Father. This public and communal prayer (the word “liturgy” comes from a Greek word meaning “public work”) nourishes and strengthens our personal life of prayer, just as our personal life of prayer leads to a deeper and more fruitful participation in the liturgy of the Church.

The *Catechism* describes the life of prayer as “the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him” (CCC 2565). It is not just a list of requests or even a series of conversations—it is an encounter, a relationship, that is vital to our Christian life. This communion with the Blessed Trinity is a gift from God, and we can enter into it only when we recognize that “humility is the foundation of prayer” (CCC 2559).

There are many different forms of prayer:

- **Blessing and Adoration**—responding to the blessings God has bestowed on us; worshipping him and glorifying him for his many gifts
- **Petition**—asking God to supply our every need; the first and most important prayer of petition is to ask forgiveness for our sins
- **Intercession**—petitioning on behalf of others
- **Thanksgiving**—giving thanks to God in all circumstances (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18); the most perfect prayer of thanksgiving is the Eucharist
- **Praise**—glorifying God for who he is (and not only what he has done for us)
“The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer” (CCC 2643).

Prayer can be expressed in three different ways:

- **Vocal prayer**—speaking to God in words, either mental or vocal; although it is the first and most accessible expression of prayer, it is essential to our life of prayer—both individually and in community
- **Meditation**—a quest for understanding; using our whole mind, including “thought, imagination, emotion, and desire” (CCC 2708) to come to a deeper knowledge of the love of God and therefore a closer union with him
- **Contemplative prayer**—resting in God’s presence and surrendering to his love; contemplative prayer is a gift we dispose ourselves to receive, not something we can make happen on our own

For Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 737-41 (“The Holy Spirit and the Church”), 770-80 (“The Mystery of the Church”), 849-56 (“Mission—a requirement of the Church’s catholicity”), 1066-68 (“Why the liturgy?”), 1069-70 (“What does the word liturgy mean?”), 1071-72 (“Liturgy as source of life”), 1073 (“Prayer and liturgy”), 1074-75 (“Catechesis and liturgy”), 1076-1206 (“The Sacramental Economy”), 1539-53 (“The Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Economy of Salvation”), 2558-2758 (“Prayer in the Christian Life”)



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THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION 1
GOD IS WITH US

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SESSION 1

GOD IS WITH US

SESSION OVERVIEW

Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.

You've probably heard some variation of the statement that the Bible is God's love letter to us. The story of salvation is one long romance. It's the story of the God who is Love drawing near to his people and seeking them out as they stray time and again. Finally, God himself came down from Heaven to make a way for us to be united to him. As Vatican II puts it: "Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with himself (*Dei Verbum*, 2). This is a beautiful description of the kind of intimacy God desires to have with each of us, and the Church desires that modern men and women come to know this amazing love of God.

In this session, we will see that God wants to unite us to himself, to pour his love into us, and to receive our love. He wants this so much that he humbles himself to be truly and completely present to us under the appearances of bread and wine. The Eucharist is the most perfect expression of God's love for us, and when we receive the Eucharist it is the most perfect expression of our love for him. He allows us to receive his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in this sacrament so that he can draw us into total communion and intimacy with himself.

God becoming man in the Incarnation was the culmination of his plan to be present to his people—and he continues to be present to us in all the Tabernacles of the world. He continues to accompany us on the journey of this life, just as he accompanied Israel in the wilderness under the appearance of a pillar of cloud and fire. He is present, and he is calling to each one of us to return that love through the gift of ourselves.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Understand that a sacrament is a sign instituted by Christ to communicate his grace, his divine life, to us.
- Recognize that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.
- Be able to define transubstantiation as a real change in the substance of the bread and wine, such that they truly become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, though the appearances of bread and wine remain.
- Understand that God wants to be united to us through the Eucharist.



STEP 1 | OPENING PRAYER

Begin this session by leading the OPENING PRAYER, which is also found in the Study Guide on page 10. Then read or summarize the INTRODUCTION for your group. Then discuss the related questions in Step 2: CONNECT.

Divine Savior, we come to your sacred table to nourish ourselves,
not with bread but with yourself, true Bread of eternal life.
Help us daily to make a good and perfect meal of this divine food.
Let us be continually refreshed by the perfume of your kindness and goodness.
May the Holy Spirit fill us with his love.
Meanwhile, let us prepare a place for this holy food by emptying our hearts.
Amen.

—St. Francis de Sales



STEP 2 | CONNECT

Discuss these questions with participants to help them engage with the session's topic.

What is your favorite way to enjoy the presence of your family or close friends?

We tend to enjoy the presence of others by doing something together—sharing a meal, playing a game, watching a movie, going for a hike, etc. This quality time nourishes our relationships. In a similar way, we enjoy the presence of God by adoring him in the Blessed Sacrament, and we are united to him when we receive Holy Communion.

What comes to mind when you think about God's love for you?

Some images of God's love might include the Cross, all of creation, a particular answer to prayer, a Bible verse, a sensation of being loved, etc. The gift of the Eucharist is a beautiful expression of God's love for us because in it we encounter Jesus himself and we are given a foretaste of the union we will experience with God in Heaven.



DIGGING DEEPER

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacraments as “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). This means that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments actually give us the grace that they represent.



The sacraments are visible, tangible signs that make present to us the invisible, supernatural actions of Christ. God desires that we intimately know his love and the presence and power of his grace, so these sacramental signs allow us to experience in a real and human way God’s gift of divine love and grace.

Grace is a totally free and unmerited gift from God that gives us a participation in his own divine life. The graces imparted by the Church through the sacraments are called sacramental graces. The effects of these graces are both personal and ecclesial: communion with God and with the Church (see CCC 1129; 1134). They bear fruit in daily life through fidelity to the demands of Christian life and active participation in the Church’s mission.

The *Catechism* also tells us that it is actually Jesus who is at work in the sacraments. Although we see and hear the priest speaking the words and performing the actions, it is really Jesus who is working through the sacraments to offer us the grace he won for us through his sacrifice on the Cross (see CCC 1084–85).

HOW DO I KNOW THE SACRAMENTS WORK?

The Church teaches that the sacraments act *ex opere operato*, which literally means “by the very fact of the action’s being performed” (see CCC 1127–28). The power of the sacraments comes from Christ—not from our holiness or the holiness of the one presiding over it. We can be disposed to be more or less receptive to the fruits of each sacrament, but each of the sacraments effectively communicates its proper grace. Just as the visible signs of the sacraments are humble, everyday things—water, oil, bread, wine—the effects of the sacraments are often hidden and imperceptible. Even with great faith and an open heart, we may not always feel fed when we receive the Eucharist, but the Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and if we are properly disposed to receive this sacrament with reverence, it will nourish us, whether we feel like it does or not.



STEP 3 | VIDEO

Introduce and show this video episode, which will last about 35 minutes. Participants can follow along with the outline in their Study Guides and take notes as key points are made during the teaching. Then discuss the related questions in Step 4.

I. Martyrs and heroes of the Eucharist

- A. St. Philip Neri parish, New York, 1912
- B. St. Tarcisius, Roman Empire, AD 275
- C. St. Edmund Campion, England, 1581
- D. Young girl, China, 1900
- E. St. Clare, Assisi, Italy, 1224

II. What do Catholics believe?

- A. The Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments of the Church
 1. A sacrament is a channel of grace established by Christ to convey his divine life
 2. Bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ fully present
- B. Transubstantiation
 1. “trans”—to change
 2. “substance”—the essence of something; what it really is
 3. The outward appearance remains that of bread and wine, but the substance is changed into Jesus’s Body and Blood
- C. Humble outward signs of bread and wine point to the supernatural reality of spiritual nourishment

III. God is with his people

- A. Meals are about sharing relationships with other people
- B. God is love (see 1 John 4:8). He created us out of love in order to invite us into the communion of the Trinity
- C. God’s presence in the Old Testament foreshadows the Eucharist
 1. God’s revelation of his name at the burning bush—“I AM”—communicates not just God’s existence, but his presence with his people
 2. The refrain of God’s covenants with his people is “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (for example, see Exodus 6:7)

- D. The Incarnation is the culmination of God’s plan to be with his people
- E. Jesus established the Eucharist to remain present with us
 1. At the Last Supper Jesus changed bread and wine into his Body and Blood, and then he told the Apostles to continue to do what he had just done
 2. God gives himself to us in the Eucharist not only to give us strength for our journey, but also to accompany us at every moment on the journey



DIGGING DEEPER

NAMES OF THE EUCHARIST

“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ . . . In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith” (CCC 1324, 1327).

The Eucharist is so important that the Church has many different names for it. Each name illuminates a different facet of the sacrament.



Eucharist—from the Greek word for “thanksgiving” because it is the perfect act of giving thanks to God.

The Lord’s Supper—because Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and because it points forward to the heavenly wedding feast of the Lamb.

The Breaking of Bread—because Jesus broke bread at the first Eucharist at the Last Supper, and because it was by this action that his disciples at Emmaus recognized him; this was the name given to the sacrament by the first Christians.

The Eucharistic Assembly—because the sacrament is celebrated amid the faithful gathered together.

The Memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection and The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—because it makes Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross present to us and invites us as a priestly people to make a sacrificial offering of ourselves with Christ to the Father.

The Holy and Divine Liturgy and The Sacred Mysteries—because it is the center of the Church’s whole liturgy and a participation in the heavenly liturgy.

The Most Blessed Sacrament—because it is the “Sacrament of sacraments” (CCC 1330).

Holy Communion—because it is by this sacrament that we are intimately united to Christ.

Holy Mass—(Latin *missa*)—because the liturgy ends (Latin *Ite, missa est*) by sending forth (Latin *missio*) the faithful to live out God’s will in the world.

*“What wonderful majesty!
What stupendous condescension!
O sublime humility!
That the Lord of the whole universe,
God and the Son of God, should humble Himself
like this under the form of a little bread,
for our salvation.”*

—Saint Francis of Assisi



STEP 4 | DISCUSS

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

Some of the stories of the martyrs and heroes of the Eucharist might be new. The emphasis on God’s love and how much he wants to be united to us might be striking. The significance of meals and the meaning that has for the Eucharist might be something new.

2. The Eucharist is called by many names. Which one is your favorite? Why?

See the “Digging Deeper” box on page 17 with the names of the Eucharist.

3. The video asks the questions “How big is God?” and “How small is God?” How would you answer these questions? How is God both “big” and “small” in the Eucharist?

God does not have size. We can say that he is greater than everything because he created everything. Because he created everything and upholds and sustains all things, even the smallest things, nothing is beneath God’s notice or attention. God is “big” in the Eucharist because he is present in all his Divinity—he is not divided or diminished. But he is present in the humility of coming to us under the appearance of a small piece of bread and allowing us to consume him.



STEP 5 | COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S PRESENCE

Have participants turn to page 15 and encourage them to look over the week’s COMMIT assignment and be prepared to share the next time the group meets.

How have you experienced God’s presence in your life?

From the very beginning, God has desired to be with his people. From the Garden of Eden to the Exodus, from the Tabernacle in the wilderness to the Temple in Jerusalem, the God of the universe has chosen to accompany his people and dwell with them. When he revealed his name to Moses at the burning bush, he revealed not only his power but also his presence.

Read the following verses slowly and prayerfully.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, “I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the LORD said, “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them.... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM . . . this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

—Exodus 3:2–8, 10–15



What stands out to you in this passage?

When he reveals his name, God also reveals his faithfulness—not just “I Am” but “I am with you, always.” He identifies himself according to the promises he made to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of the covenant: “I will make a covenant of peace with them. . . . My dwelling place shall be with them and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Ezekiel 37:26–27). This promise is fulfilled in the New Covenant, where in Baptism the Trinity comes to dwell in our soul, and in the Eucharist Jesus gives us his Flesh and Blood to consume. The New Covenant realities far surpasses the prefigurations in the Old Testament.

*“The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.”*

—Zephaniah 3:17

This is Jesus’s promise to you: “Behold, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). He is present in the Eucharist, to accompany you through every moment of life. How can this presence of Christ in the Eucharist be the source of strength and consolation as you journey through your life? In what ways can you grow in appreciating and embracing Christ’s presence in the Eucharist?

How can this presence of Christ in the Eucharist be the source of strength and consolation as you journey through your life? In what ways can you grow in appreciating and embracing Christ’s presence in the Eucharist?





STEP 6 | WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER

Review the key points of this session with your group, and then end in prayer.

- *A sacrament is a sign instituted by Christ to communicate his grace to us.*
- *The Eucharist is the Sacrament of sacraments and the source and summit of the Christian life.*
- *Transubstantiation means that in the Eucharist the bread and wine really change into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus, although they retain the appearance of bread and wine.*
- *God wants to be united with us, and he accomplishes this through the Eucharist.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.

With joy I will draw water from the wells of salvation.
Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the nations,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.
Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in our midst is the Holy One of Israel!
Amen.

*“The greatest love story
of all time is contained
in a tiny white host.”*

—Venerable Fulton Sheen

FOR FURTHER READING

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1077–134 (“The Liturgy—Work of the Holy Trinity” and “The Paschal Mystery in the Church’s Sacraments”), 1333–44 (“The Eucharist in the Economy of Salvation”), 1373–81 (“The Presence of Christ by the power of his word and the Holy Spirit”), 1996–2005 (“Grace”)

Joan Carroll Cruz, *Eucharistic Miracles and Eucharistic Phenomena in the Lives of the Saints* (TAN Books: 1991)

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (Ignatius Press: 2003)

Robert Barron, *Eucharist* (Orbis Books: 2008)



Presence

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION 2

THE STORY OF THE EUCHARIST

LEADER GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

Nihil Obstat: Jared Staudt, Ph.D., *Censor Deputatus*
Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver
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SESSION 2

THE STORY OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION OVERVIEW

Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.

In the first session, we looked at the profound truth of God’s love for us. He is the God who was present with his people throughout the Old Testament, and he is the God who is present with us now—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Eucharist.

In this session, we will see how the whole story of salvation history is a single narrative leading up to the climactic events of the Paschal mystery. Throughout the Old Testament, God had been preparing his people for the Eucharist through many prefigurations. Likewise, Jesus prepared his followers for the gift of the Eucharist throughout his public ministry. Through the miracles of changing water into wine and multiplying loaves of bread, Jesus was preparing for the greater miracle of changing bread and wine into his own Body and Blood. He taught his disciples what this meant in the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 and at the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. When he told his Apostles to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), he instituted the priesthood and gave the instruction to them and their successors to celebrate this new Passover as a memorial—a way of making his one-time sacrifice present and efficacious for all ages.

In giving us his own flesh and blood as true food and true drink, Jesus offers us the fruit of the Tree of Life, which Adam and Eve lost through their sin. Saint Luke’s account of the encounter between Jesus and two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus shows us that the Cross and Resurrection inaugurated a new Creation, which once again gives mankind access to the fruit of the Tree of Life in the Eucharist. When we receive this fruit, our eyes are opened to behold God and we receive eternal life. With great desire and faith, we pray: “Lord, give us this bread always” (John 6:34).

SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, participants should . . .

- Recognize how the Eucharist is prefigured in the Old Testament, especially in the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the Passover, and the manna in the wilderness.
- Recognize how the Eucharist is prefigured in Jesus’s miracles of the Wedding Feast at Cana and the multiplication of the loaves.
- Understand that Jesus teaches explicitly about the Eucharist in John 6.
- Recognize that the Eucharist is the new fruit of the Tree of Life.
- Understand that the Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s sacrifice.



STEP 1 | OPENING PRAYER

Begin this session by leading the OPENING PRAYER, which is also found in the Study Guide on page 20. Then read or summarize the INTRODUCTION for your group.

The Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
 Body of Christ, save me.
 Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
 Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
 Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
 O good Jesus, hear me.
 Within your wounds conceal me.
 Do not permit me to be parted from you.
 From the evil foe protect me.
 At the hour of my death call me.
 And bid me come to you,
 to praise you with all your saints
 for ever and ever.
 Amen.

—St. Francis de Sales



STEP 2 | CONNECT

Discuss these questions with participants to help them engage with the day's topic.

What was your favorite story as a child? Why?

Stories stick with us when they move or inspire us, when we can relate to the characters in a particular way, when they express the true, the good, and the beautiful, or when they disturb us with the reality of evil. This question prepares us for exploring how all of Scripture tells the story of the Eucharist.

How would you answer this question: “Where does belief in the Eucharist come from?”

Some participants will already be familiar with the biblical basis for the Church's teachings on the Eucharist. Some may be of the impression that it is a teaching developed by the Church at some later point. Some may not have thought to ask the question where this teaching came from. This session will look at how the Eucharist is prefigured in the Old and New Testaments.



DIGGING DEEPER

THE EUCHARIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many of Jesus's followers found his teaching on the Eucharist hard to accept. As strange as the command to eat his flesh and drink his blood may have sounded, it did not come out of the blue. The gift of the Eucharist is prefigured in many ways throughout the Old Testament.

At the very beginning of creation, Scripture reveals that mankind was created for intimate communion with God and was destined for eternal life. This reality is revealed in the context of a meal—Adam and Eve's access to the fruit of the Tree of Life located in the center of the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:9, 3:22). As a result of Adam and Eve's Original Sin, they are exiled from the Garden. No longer able to walk with God in garden or to have access to the Tree of Life and its fruit, Adam and Eve find they have lost communion and eternal life with God (see Genesis 3). Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Cross becomes the New Tree of Life, once again offering all communion with God and eternal life, and it is the Eucharist that becomes its fruit.



Melchizedek, king of Salem (later renamed Jerusalem) and the “priest of God Most High,” offers a sacrifice of bread and wine in thanksgiving for Abram's victory over his enemies (see Genesis 14:18–20). Jesus, the “King of kings” (see Revelation 19:16) and “great high priest” (Hebrews 4:14), changes bread and wine into his Body and Blood at Jerusalem and offers them as the perfect sacrifice to the Father (see Hebrews 10:1–18).

To save the Israelites from slavery and death in Egypt, God institutes the feast of Passover (see Exodus 12). This feast requires the sacrifice of a lamb “without blemish” and participation in a meal including the sacrificed lamb and unleavened bread. By the blood of the lamb spread on the wood of the lintels and doorposts of their homes and the flesh of the lamb consumed in the meal, the Israelites are saved from the angel of death and brought out of slavery. Jesus, the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), sheds his blood on the wood of the Cross and gives us his Flesh to eat in the Eucharist. By his sacrifice and our participation in this sacramental meal, we are saved from spiritual death and brought out of slavery to sin.

To sustain his people in the wilderness, God provides manna (see Exodus 16). This miraculous bread from Heaven falls for forty years without fail, and ceases only when Israel has crossed over into the Promised Land. Jesus is the new Bread from Heaven, sustaining us with the food of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist while we journey toward the Promised Land of Heaven (see John 6:32–58).



DIGGING DEEPER

THE EUCHARIST IN THE TEACHING AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

Through his miracles and his teaching, Jesus prepares his followers for the Eucharist even before he institutes the sacrament at the Last Supper.

Jesus's very first miracle, changing water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana (see John 2:1-12), points forward to the greater miracle of changing wine into his Precious Blood at the Last Supper.

On more than one occasion, Jesus multiplies loaves of bread to feed vast multitudes of people (see Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Mark 6:30-43; 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). This miraculous provision of natural food points forward to the provision of his own Body as food for the whole world through the Eucharist.

In the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus tells his followers explicitly that he will provide his own Flesh and Blood as true food and true drink and that this supernatural food will give us eternal life (see John 6:22-71).

At the Last Supper, Jesus fulfills all the foreshadowings of the Old Testament and his own ministry when he turns bread and wine into his Body and Blood and gives them to the Apostles (see Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20). He tells his Apostles, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). This miracle is not to be a one-time gift, but rather a sacrament to be continued for all ages. We know that the Apostles understand and obey this command because Saint Paul—who is not one of the Twelve at the Last Supper—continues to pass on this exact teaching almost twenty years later (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

It is the Eucharist that strengthens us to follow the instructions Jesus gives at the Last Supper: to love one another, to obey his commandments, and to abide in his love (see John 13-17).



STEP 3 | VIDEO

Introduce and show this video episode, which will last about 40 minutes. Participants can follow along with the outline in their Study Guides and take notes as key points are made during the teaching. Then discuss the related questions in Step 4.

I. John 6—Bread of Life Discourse

- A. Jesus's explicit teaching on the Eucharist
- B. Many followers leave Jesus over this teaching
- C. This teaching is so central to his mission that he lets them go

II. The Story of Scripture

- A. God's plan is for Adam and Eve to become one with him by eating from the Tree of Life
- B. Adam and Eve sever their communion with God through a meal

- C. When Adam and Eve sin, they turn away from the presence of God
- D. God promises a savior to overcome the obstacle of sin
- E. The whole Old Testament leads up to the sacrifice of the Cross

III. Passover

- A. Preparation for the tenth plague of the Exodus
- B. A sacrifice and a meal that inaugurated a rescue mission
- C. Celebrated every year to make present God's saving work in history and look forward to his ultimate salvation yet to come
- D. John 6 takes place during the Passover feast

IV. The Last Supper

- A. Jesus uses the traditional Passover meal to institute the Eucharist
- B. Applies sacrificial language to himself—he is the new Passover Lamb
- C. We participate in his sacrifice by receiving his Body and Blood in the Eucharist

V. Road to Emmaus

- A. First day of the week—new creation
 1. A test in a garden
 2. Jesus is the New Adam
 3. The Cross is the new Tree of Life, and the Eucharist is its fruit
- B. When we partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life, our eyes are opened



DIGGING DEEPER

SACRIFICIAL MEMORIAL

“The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body” (CCC 1362).

When Jesus instructs his Apostles to celebrate the Eucharist “in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), he is telling them to celebrate a memorial (*anamnesis* in Greek), which has a very specific meaning for the Jews. In Scripture, a memorial does not merely call to mind what God has done in the past, but in proclaiming the mighty works of God the memorial makes them present again. For this reason the Passover memorial is observed not just to remember what God did for one generation of Israelites, but to acknowledge and acclaim that his salvation is for the current generation as well.

Every time the Mass is celebrated, it really and truly makes present Jesus’s sacrifice at Calvary. The once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is made present to us again, so that we may participate in it and be transformed and saved by it. With the whole Church, each of us is united to Christ in his one sacrifice so that we, too, may make a perfect offering to the Father.



STEP 4 | DISCUSS

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

The very literal nature of Jesus’s words in John 6, or the way he let many followers leave over these words, may be a new insight for some participants. The parallels between the Eucharist and the Tree of Life may be new to many people.

2. What are some of the connections between Passover and the Eucharist? What does this teach us about the Eucharist?

Jesus is the Lamb of God who is sacrificed so that we may be freed from slavery to sin. The flesh of the Passover lamb was to be eaten as a part of the Passover sacrifice; the Flesh and Blood of Jesus the Lamb of God is to be eaten in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Passover sacrifice involved the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb on the wood of the mantle; the Blood of Jesus the Lamb of God is shed on the wood of the Cross. God commanded that the Passover be perpetually celebrated as a memorial of Israel’s deliverance from slavery as the center of the Old Covenant; Jesus commanded that the New Passover be perpetually celebrated in the sacrifice of the Mass as the center of the New Covenant.

3. In the celebration of the Mass, how do we participate in offering the perfect sacrifice of Christ?

We participate in the sacrifice of the Mass by uniting ourselves to the words of the Liturgy and the intentions of the priest who is acting in persona Christi capitis. Together with the whole Church, we offer the sacrifice of Christ to the Father and unite the sacrifice of our entire lives to it. It is then, through this transforming sacrifice and communion with Christ in the Eucharist, that we are sent out to bring Christ to the ordinary places of life and culture and consecrate the world itself to Christ (see Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 34).

4. In what ways is the Eucharist the fruit of the Tree of Life? What implications does this have for your own life?

See the Digging Deeper on page 25 for more details. It is the fruit of the Tree of Life because it preserves us for eternal life, as Jesus promises in John 6. Understanding the Eucharist as the fruit of the new Tree of Life can deepen my understanding of the Eucharist by connecting it to both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It reminds me that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and that it gives me spiritual life and leads to eternal life with God in Heaven. It connects the Mass to Paradise—the Garden of Eden as well as Heaven.

“The soul hungers for God, and nothing but God can satiate it. Therefore He came to dwell on earth and assumed a Body in order that this Body might become the Food of our souls.”

— Saint John Vianney



STEP 5 | COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S PRESENCE

Have participants turn to page 26-27 and encourage them to look over the week’s COMMIT assignment, and be prepared to share the next time the group meets.

Why do you receive the Eucharist? What do you hope for or expect this sacrament to accomplish in you?

Many great saints and theologians have understood the Cross to be the new Tree of Life, and the Eucharist to be the fruit of this tree. Saint Albert the Great, doctor of the Church and teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas, said: “[Christ] could not have commanded anything more beneficial, for this sacrament is the fruit of the tree of life. Anyone who receives this sacrament with the devotion of sincere faith will never taste death. It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, and blessed is he who holds it fast.”

The Tree of Life bookends the story of salvation: It is present at the beginning in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:9), and Saint John sees it in the New Jerusalem in his vision of Heaven (see Revelation 22:2). Adam and Eve lost access to the Tree of Life when they sinned, and through their sin and subsequent exile from the Garden, the tree was lost to all humanity. But in the Eucharist, Jesus offers the fruit of the new Tree of Life to all.

Read John’s vision of the Tree of Life in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.... The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let him who hears say, “Come.” And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.”



—Revelation 22:1–5, 14, 17

What stands out to you in this passage?

Consider the fruits of the Eucharist, listed in the Digging Deeper section. With which fruit(s) are you most familiar? Which one do you feel you need the most at this time in your life? Spend some time in prayer, asking our Lord especially for this fruit the next time you receive the Eucharist.

“Lord Jesus Christ, pierce my soul with your love so that I may always long for you alone, who are the bread of angels and the fulfillment of the soul’s deepest desires. May my heart always hunger for you, so that soul my may be filled with the sweetness of your presence.”

— Saint Bonaventure



DIGGING DEEPER

FRUITS OF THE EUCHARIST (CCC 1391-1397)

What does the Eucharist do for us?

It draws us closer to Christ. It is called “communion” because it brings us into an intimate union with our Lord.

It nourishes and replenishes the life of grace we received in Baptism, just as regular food nourishes our physical life.

It cleanses us from past sins and helps us to avoid sin in the future.

It strengthens us in love.

It unites us more closely to the Church, the Body of Christ.

It helps us to see Christ in the poor and to care for them.



STEP 6 | WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER

Review the following key points of this session with your group, and then end in prayer.

- *The Eucharist is prefigured in the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek, in the Passover (it is the new Passover), and in the manna in the wilderness.*
- *Jesus prepares his disciples for the Eucharist by changing water into wine and multiplying loaves of bread.*
- *Jesus teaches explicitly about the Eucharist in John 6 and lets many followers leave because they don't like this teaching.*
- *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus begin a new Creation.*
- *The Cross is the new Tree of Life, and the Eucharist is its fruit.*
- *The fruit of the Tree of Life opens our eyes to behold God and gives us eternal life.*
- *The Eucharist is the memorial of Jesus's Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.*

CLOSING PRAYER

O saving Victim, opening wide
 The gate of heaven to man below:
 Our foes press on from every side;
 Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great Name be endless praise,
 Immortal Godhead, One in Three!
 O grant us endless length of days
 In our true native land with Thee.
 Amen.

—from *Verbum Supernum* by Saint Thomas Aquinas

“The Sacrament of the Body of the Lord puts the demons to flight, defends us against the incentives to vice and to concupiscence, cleanses the soul from sin, quiets the anger of God, enlightens the understanding to know God, inflames the will and the affections with the love of God, fills the memory with spiritual sweetness, confirms the entire man in good, frees us from eternal death, multiplies the merits of a good life, leads us to our everlasting home, and re-animates the body to eternal life.”

— Saint Thomas Aquinas

FOR FURTHER READING

Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (Image: 2016)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1333–44 (“The Eucharist in the Economy of Salvation”), 1362–72 (“The sacrificial memorial of Christ and of his Body, the Church”), 1391–1401 (“The fruits of Holy Communion”)

Pope St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church (2003)

Tim Gray, *Sacraments in Scripture: Salvation History Made Present*, Chapter 1 “Sacraments in Scripture” and Chapter 4 “Sacrament of the Eucharist” (Emmaus Road: 2001)



Presence

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION 3

BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY

LEADER GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

Nihil Obstat: Jared Staudt, Ph.D., *Censor Deputatus*
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SESSION 3

BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY

SESSION OVERVIEW

Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.

In the last session, we looked at some of the ways the Eucharist was prefigured in the Old Testament, as well as how Jesus prepared for and taught about the Eucharist in his public ministry. We saw that God gave the Israelites manna to eat while they journeyed toward the Promised Land, and that this gift foreshadowed the Eucharist. We also saw that the Eucharist is the fruit of the new Tree of Life, and receiving it will bring us eternal life.

In this session we will see that, as the new manna, the Eucharist is the true Bread from Heaven to sustain us on our journey toward Heaven. It would be foolish to go on a journey without taking any provisions. This is even more true for our spiritual journey. To say that the Eucharist is our spiritual food is not a metaphor. It truly nourishes and sustains our souls, just as physical food does for our bodies: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). It might be easier to ignore or dismiss spiritual hunger than physical hunger, but the consequences are even greater.

This session will also explore the various parts of the Mass. In the first part, the Liturgy of the Word, we encounter God in Scripture, his inspired Word. This prepares us for the greater encounter in the second part of Mass, when Jesus becomes really present in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The climax of the Mass is when we are united to God in Holy Communion. After all of this the Mass ends, and we are sent forth to bring the Gospel to the ordinary places of our lives by being disciples of Jesus.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, participants should . . .

- Understand that the manna in the wilderness prefigures the Eucharist.
- Recognize that the Eucharist sustains us on our spiritual journey.
- Understand that the Eucharist unites us to Jesus and to everyone else who is in communion with God.
- Understand that the Liturgy of the Word is an encounter with God through Scripture that prepares us for the greater encounter with God in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Know the main parts of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Recognize that we participate in the Mass by offering ourselves to God united to the sacrifice of Christ.



STEP 1 | OPENING PRAYER

Begin this session by leading the OPENING PRAYER, which is also found in the Study Guide on page 32. Then read or summarize the INTRODUCTION for your group.

Stay with me, Lord,
 for it is necessary to have You present so that I do not forget You.
 You know how easily I abandon You.

Stay with me, Lord,
 because I am weak and I need Your strength, that I may not fall so often.

Stay with me, Lord,
 for You are my life, and without You, I am without fervor.

Stay with me, Lord,
 for You are my light, and without You, I am in darkness.

Stay with me Lord,
 to show me Your will.

Stay with me, Lord,
 so that I hear Your voice and follow You.

Stay with me, Lord,
 for I desire to love You very much, and always to be in Your company.

Stay with me, Lord,
 if You wish me to be faithful to You.

Let me recognize You as Your disciples did at the breaking of the bread,
 so that the Eucharistic Communion be the light which disperses the darkness,
 the force which sustains me, the unique joy of my heart.

Stay with me, Lord
 for it is You alone I look for, Your Love, Your Grace, Your Will, Your Heart,
 Your Spirit, because I love You and ask no other reward
 but to love you more and more.

Amen.

—adapted from the *Prayer of Saint Padre Pio After Communion*

“If Christ did not want to dismiss the Jews without food in the desert for fear that they would collapse on the way, it was to teach us that it is dangerous to try to get to heaven without the Bread of Heaven.” — Saint Jerome



STEP 2 | CONNECT

Discuss these questions with participants to help them engage with the day's topic.

Have you ever experienced a time when you were traveling or on a journey and were really hungry and tired? What was the experience like?

Some answers may include that it made the trip long and uncomfortable and all you could think about was satisfying your hunger and getting some rest. Hunger can also be a distraction that keeps us from the task at hand, or at least from doing it well.

What is your favorite part of the Mass? Why?

One part of the Mass might be a favorite because it feels most accessible, or because we get the most out of it, or because it is the most interesting. This question prepares participants for the deeper discussion in this session of the different parts of the Mass. It gets participants thinking about what they already know and understand about the Mass, or about what they wish they understood.



DIGGING DEEPER

OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS

By coming together with the community of the faithful and participating in the Mass, we give public witness that we belong to Jesus and to his Body, the Church. It is also a public testimony of our faith in God and our hope of salvation.

But sometimes it might seem like the priest and deacon—and perhaps the choir, lectors, and altar servers—are the ones “doing” the Mass, and the rest of us are just the audience. But the *Catechism* tells us that “it is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates” the sacramental liturgy (CCC 1140). We have different roles to play, but we are all called to participate in a profound way at each and every Mass.

It is Christ himself who presides over the Eucharist; the priest is his visible representative, acting *in persona Christi capitis* (in the Person of Christ the head) and not by his own authority or power. The Eucharistic celebration is the highest purpose of the ordained priesthood.

continued next page



DIGGING DEEPER *continued*

The various roles fulfilled by the laity in the Mass—providing music, reading from the Scriptures, serving at the altar, distributing Communion, etc.—are important contributions to the liturgy, but none of them is the primary way in which we are called to participate in the celebration of the liturgy.

The laity participates in the Mass by actively listening to the readings and liturgical prayers and by reciting the responses of the congregation, but most of all by consciously and intentionally uniting themselves to the sacrifice of Christ. We have seen how the Eucharist is a memorial—the re-presentation—of Jesus’s saving sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus doesn’t offer this sacrifice so that we don’t have to, but rather he offers it in order to draw us into his sacrifice so that we can make an offering to the Father with him.



In the Eucharist we participate in Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross, in which he offers not only himself but all of creation to the Father. United to Christ in this sacrament, we offer this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father as well. In the Eucharist we give thanks to God for his many gifts—especially the gifts of creation, redemption, and sanctification. We also give all praise, honor, and glory to God on behalf of ourselves and all of creation. We make an offering of ourselves, united to the perfect offering of Christ, and we offer this sacrifice to the Father. This self-offering is the heart of our participation in the Mass.

Our participation in the liturgy is so important that we are required to attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (unless we have a serious reason we cannot attend, such as illness). The Church also requires us to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, but she encourages us to receive the sacrament at every Mass at which we are properly disposed and prepared to do so.



STEP 3 | VIDEO

Introduce and show this video episode, which will last about 34 minutes. Participants can follow along with the outline in their Study Guides and take notes as key points are made during the teaching. Then discuss the related questions in Step 4.

I. Food for the journey

- A. God gives the Israelites manna for their journey in the wilderness
- B. The Eucharist sustains us on our spiritual journey

- C.** The Eucharist is a foretaste of Heaven
 1. We receive Christ, who is our ultimate goal
 2. We are brought into communion with God and with everyone else who is in communion with God
 3. In the Mass, we worship God together with all the angels and saints in Heaven

II. The Mass

- A.** Liturgy of the Word
 1. We encounter God in Scripture
 2. We respond in faith through the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful
- B.** Liturgy of the Eucharist
 1. The sacrifice of Jesus is made present in the Eucharist
 2. The climax of the liturgy is when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion
- C.** Story of Emmaus
 1. Liturgy of the Word—Jesus interprets the Scriptures for the disciples
 2. Liturgy of the Eucharist—Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives the bread
- D.** In the Mass, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus are made present

III. Rules for receiving the Eucharist

- A.** Never receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin (see 1 Corinthians 11:27–29)
- B.** Fast from food and drink (except water or medicine) for at least one hour before receiving
- C.** Receive at least once a year

IV. Our participation in Mass

- A.** Colossians 1:24—we participate in Christ’s sacrifice
- B.** Intentionally giving ourselves back to God when we receive the Eucharist
- C.** The Eucharist is our offering of thanksgiving to God

V. Eucharistic adoration

- A.** “I look at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me”
- B.** Jesus is present in every Tabernacle, waiting for us

VI. Sent forth

- A.** *Ite, missa est*—we are sent out from Mass with a purpose
- B.** The world needs us to share what we have received



STEP 4 | DISCUSS

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

One new insight might be that the Eucharist unites us not only to God, but to everyone else who is in communion with God—including the angels and saints in Heaven. Some of the details and explanations about the parts of the Mass might be new or might spark a deeper love for those parts of the Mass. The explanation of how we participate in the Mass by offering ourselves to God might be new or might deepen a current understanding of our participation.

2. How do we participate in the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist? What are some practical ways to be intentional about participating in this way?

We participate by receiving his gift with love and thanksgiving, and by intentionally uniting ourselves to his sacrifice on the Cross and offering ourselves back to God. Some practical ways to do this intentionally and consciously might include forming a particular intention before Mass begins, having in mind a specific joy or struggle that we want to give to God and consciously offering that to God especially at the offertory, and offering ourselves to God in prayer immediately after receiving the Eucharist. One suggestion for doing this: use the prayer from the Divine Mercy Chaplet—“Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, my Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for my sins and those of the whole world.”

3. At the end of Mass, we are dismissed with a purpose. What is our mission when we leave Mass? What can we do to live out this mission?

Our mission is to take the encounter with God we’ve just experienced and share that love with the world. God wants to transform us and the whole world—he works in our hearts through the Eucharist so that we can share that life and love with the rest of the world. One way to live out this mission is by applying what we’ve heard in the Scripture readings and homily in our lives. Another way is to say and do things to show those around us that we are trying to love them as God has loved us. This might be as simple as being patient in the parking lot after Mass, or as difficult as reaching out to an estranged family member.

“Know, O Christian, that the Mass is the holiest act of religion. You cannot do anything to glorify God more, nor profit your soul more, than by devoutly assisting at it, and assisting as often as possible.” — Saint Peter Julian Eymard



DIGGING DEEPER

MATTER, FORM, AND MINISTER

Every sacrament has essential elements that are necessary for the sacrament to be valid. The matter of a sacrament is the tangible part—the material used and the action performed. The form is the spoken words that go along with the matter. And a sacrament is only valid if it is administered by someone with the authority to do so.

In the Eucharist, the matter is bread made from wheat flour and wine made from grapes (in which a little water has been mixed). Once consecrated they are referred to as the two Eucharistic species. In the Latin Church the bread is unleavened; in the Eastern Churches it is leavened.

The form of the Eucharist is the Words of Consecration (“This is my body,” and “This is the chalice of my blood”), which are found in the Eucharistic Prayer within the Mass. The Words of Consecration are the account of what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper.

The minister of the Eucharist is a validly ordained bishop or priest, acting under the authority of the bishop. Only a bishop or priest can offer the prayers of the Mass and preside over the Sacrament.

When the priest takes bread and wine and with the intent to consecrate them speaks the words of Consecration, the bread and the wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.



STEP 5 | COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S MERCY

Have participants turn to page 37-38 and encourage them to look over the week’s COMMIT assignment and be prepared to share the next time the group meets.

Read the account of the manna from Heaven in Exodus.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not” ... “I have heard the murmurings of the sons of Israel; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.”

—Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15

Imagine that you are one of the Israelites. How do you feel at the beginning of the story? How do you feel when God sends the manna?

The Israelites call the bread from Heaven *manna*, which comes from the Hebrew phrase for “What is it?” It is something new and miraculous, which no one has ever seen before. But after forty years of receiving it, the novelty wears off and the Israelites become so unappreciative that they complain, “We loathe this worthless food” (Numbers 21:5).

The manna is a prefiguration of the Eucharist. The fulfillment is always greater than what came before—as beautiful and amazing as the miracle of the manna was, the Eucharist is still greater. The Eucharist is humble and familiar. The miracle is veiled from our senses, and so it can be easy to take it for granted and miss its incredible sweetness, as the Israelites came to do with the manna.

Consider the following meditation on the manna. Written in the second century BC, this passage from the Wisdom of Solomon, which encourages the Jews living in Alexandria to remain faithful to God’s covenant, offers a profound reflection on this miracle.

*Instead of [destruction]
 you gave your people the food of angels,
 and without their toil
 you supplied them from heaven
 with bread ready to eat,
 providing every pleasure
 and suited to every taste.
 For your sustenance manifested your sweetness
 toward your children;
 and the bread, ministering to the desire of the
 one who took it,
 was changed to suit every one’s liking.
 —Wisdom of Solomon 16:20–21*



**What stands out to you in the passage?
 How does it apply to the Eucharist even more
 than to the manna?**

The manna is the bread for the Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land. The Eucharist is our bread for the journey to Heaven—and so one of its names is *viaticum*, Latin for “provision for the journey.” This name has come to be used exclusively for the Eucharist when it is given to someone who is near death. *Viaticum* is provision for the final step of the journey to our Promised Land, the “seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection” (CCC 1524). On every step of the journey, the Eucharist is our daily bread, our sustenance, and our source of every grace and blessing.

Take some time in prayer to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist, and to ask him to help you grow in your love for this sacrament.

“O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I would like to be filled with love for You; keep me closely united with You, may my heart be near to Yours.”

—Pope St. John XXIII



DIGGING DEEPER

WHY MUST WE RECEIVE THE FORGIVENESS OF MORTAL SINS IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BEFORE RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST?

Catholics often get asked why we need to confess our sins to a priest instead of going directly to God. While God can certainly forgive us directly, Jesus makes it clear that he wants to forgive our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (see John 20:21-23).

The Church does not require us to confess our venial sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation—although it’s very good for us to do so—but the Sacrament is necessary for the forgiveness of mortal sins.

A mortal sin is **1)** a grave sin (specified by the Ten Commandments) that is **2)** committed with full knowledge and **3)** complete consent.

Any grave sin committed without full knowledge or deliberate consent is still a venial sin.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to face the reality of our sins and—if we truly repent—to know with assurance that God has forgiven us. Then we are ready to show proper reverence as we enter into intimate union with our God in Holy Communion.





STEP 6 | WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER

Review the following key points of this session with your group, and then end in prayer.

- *The manna in the wilderness prefigures the Eucharist.*
- *The Eucharist sustains us on our spiritual journey and gives us a foretaste of Heaven.*
- *In the Mass, we worship with all the angels and saints in Heaven; in the Eucharist we are united to God and to everyone else who is in communion with him.*
- *The Liturgy of the Word includes readings from Scripture, the Responsorial Psalm, the homily, the Creed, and the Prayers of the Faithful.*
- *The Liturgy of the Eucharist makes present the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross..*
- *We participate in the Mass by offering ourselves to God, united to the sacrifice of Christ.*
- *We must receive the Eucharist reverently and observe the Church's rules for doing so.*
- *The Mass sends us forth with a mission of love.*



DIGGING DEEPER

SAINT JUSTIN MARTYR AND THE MASS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The Mass has been essentially the same from the very earliest days of the Church until the present time. Saint Justin Martyr wrote to the Roman emperor Antoninus around the year AD 155 to explain some of the practices of the Christians. This is what he said about the Mass:

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray for ourselves and for... all others in every place....Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss.

There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen.

And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

continued next page



DIGGING DEEPER *continued*

And this food is called among us Eucharistia of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; But . . . we [have] been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word . . . is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

—Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, excerpts from 65-67

CLOSING PRAYER

"O Jesus, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, my only love and mercy, I commend to You all the needs of my body and soul. You can help me, because You are Mercy itself. In You lies all my hope."

—Saint Faustina

Very Bread, Good Shepherd, tend us,
Jesus, of thy love befriend us,
Thou refresh us, thou defend us,
Thine eternal goodness send us
In the land of life to see:

Thou who all things canst and knowest,
Who on earth such food bestowest,
Grant us with thy saints, though lowest,
Where the heav'nly feast thou showest,
Fellow heirs and guests to be.
Amen.

—from *Lauda Sion* by Saint Thomas Aquinas

FOR FURTHER READING

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 817–22 (“Wounds to unity”), 1140–44 (“The celebrants of the sacramental liturgy”), 1345–55 (“The Liturgical Celebration of the Eucharist”), 1359–61 (“Thanksgiving and praise to the Father”), 1373–81 (“The presence of Christ by the power of his word and the Holy Spirit”), 1384–90 (“‘Take this and eat it, all of you’: communion”), 1422–84 (“The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation”), 1524–25 (“Viaticum, the Last Sacrament of the Christian”), 1854–64 (“The Gravity of Sin: Mortal and Venial Sin”), 2041–43 (“The Precepts of the Church”), 2180–83 (“The Sunday obligation”)

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Scott Hahn, *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (Doubleday: 1999)

Scott Hahn and Regis J. Flaherty, editors, *Catholic for a Reason III: Scripture and the Mystery of the Mass* (Emmaus Road Publishing: 2004)



Presence

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION 4
BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE EUCHARIST

LEADER GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

Nihil Obstat: Jared Staudt, Ph.D., *Censor Deputatus*
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SESSION 4

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE EUCHARIST

SESSION OVERVIEW

Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.

This session covers a number of objections to the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist and responds to them with biblical apologetics. Understanding and responding to the objections of those who disagree with us (apologetics) is an important part of evangelization. Having deeper insight into the truth also strengthens our commitment.

This session includes three video segments. The first introduces the four primary groups of objections—Jewish, Pagan, Protestant, and Secular—and focuses on the first two groups. The second segment covers the Protestant objections. And the third deals with objections from contemporary secular society. Each segment examines the principle concerns and addresses them with insights from the Bible.

Through this session, participants will come to understand the Scriptural foundations of the Eucharist. They are provided with tools to answer those who may challenge their beliefs, enabling them to be instruments of grace. The beauty and coherence of the Church's teaching is shown so as to foster a greater appreciation for the gift of the Eucharist.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, participants should . . .

- Understand and articulate why it is valuable to study the objections to the doctrine of the Real Presence.
- Understand the objections of the Jews and how their objections rest on a failure to accept Christ's divinity and a resistance to let go of the Old Covenant.
- Understand how the Jewish objection regarding the Old Testament prohibition against consuming blood and the pagan objection of cannibalism are answered by the fact that the Eucharist is a communion with the living Person of Christ.
- Understand the Protestant metaphorical interpretation and how that is in fact inconsistent with the Scriptures.
- Understand the secular contemporary objection based on "reason" and the Catholic response.
- Understand how belief in Christ as God is needed to respond to all these objections.



STEP 1 | OPENING PRAYER

Begin this session by leading the Opening Prayer, which is also found in the Study Guide on page 44. Then read or summarize the Introduction for your group.

Lord Jesus Christ, on the night of the Last Supper,
you begged your Heavenly Father for the gift of unity.
Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
may we who seek to be more united with God and one another be satisfied
in our longing.

And may we satisfy Your longing, O Lord,
by helping others to know and love you in the Sacrament of Love,
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

Amen.

—based on John 17:20-22



STEP 2 | CONNECT

Have you ever watched or engaged in wrestling or other martial arts? Sometimes smaller competitors win over heavier ones. What are ways this can happen?

“The race is not [always] to the swift” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). One can win in a sport where one is at a disadvantage by using the adversary’s own weapons against them; for example, a wrestler using his opponent’s weight. Although Christians are not really at a disadvantage, they sometimes look like it in the world. Understanding and responding to the arguments of opponents can actually strengthen our own beliefs.



Describe a time in your life when you learned something by listening carefully to a person who disagreed with you?

Answers may include: "I listened to my parent/spouse/friend/teacher/priest and saw the wisdom of what they were saying." Or, "I listened to a person with weaker moral standards and understood how he was able to deem things acceptable that I knew were wrong. Even though we still disagreed, I was able to see where he was coming from." Or, "When I really listened, I discovered that we had a lot in common."



DIGGING DEEPER

In the Vatican is a magnificent painting by Raphael called "The Disputation of the Sacrament." Despite the title, the picture is not of an argument, but rather it depicts the Blessed Sacrament, with Christ in glory above, and below a great crowd of adorers. They are clearly engrossed, some with books or engaged in writing. It is an active but peaceful scene.

The Eucharist is central to our faith, and we should be eager to understand it more. All our disputes and arguments should take their cue from Raphael's painting: they should flow peacefully from faith and love and aim at producing more of the same.



Introduce and show the first of three video episodes for this session. This episode will last about 20 minutes. Participants can follow along with the outline in their Study Guides and take notes as key points are made during the teaching. Then discuss the related questions in Step 4.



STEP 3 | VIDEO PART 1 (INTRODUCTION; JEWISH AND PAGAN OBJECTIONS)

I. Introduction

- A. Objections to the doctrine of the Real Presence
- B. Value of considering objections

II. Four groups of objectors

- A. Jewish
- B. Pagan
- C. Protestant Reformation
- D. Secularist

III. Jewish and Pagan Objections

- A. Jewish difficulties, looking at John 6
 1. In calling himself the Bread from Heaven, Jesus is making a claim to be divine
 2. Jesus's insistence on eating his Flesh shows he is the new Passover Lamb, essential to participation in the New Covenant
 3. Jesus's insistence on drinking his Blood is contrary to the Old Law
 4. Reason for difference: is in the blood
- B. Pagan difficulties
 1. Evidence that the early Church really believed in the True Presence
 2. Problem: Cannibalism
 3. Response: not cannibalism, but communion with the living flesh of Christ



DIGGING DEEPER

REAL PRESENCE

Jesus is present with us in many ways—in Scripture, in prayer, in the poor and suffering. . . but he is present in a unique way in the Eucharist. The *Catechism* says that in the Blessed Sacrament “the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained” (CCC 1374). Although all appearances (also called accidents) of bread and wine remain, the substance of both the bread and the wine are truly changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus. This is what the Church means by the term transubstantiation.

This change happens at the moment of Consecration and continues as long as the Eucharistic species survive as such—in other words, until they are digested. Christ is completely present under both species, in the tiniest piece of a host and the smallest drop from the chalice. So even if you only receive under one species—only receiving the Host, or only receiving from the chalice—you are still receiving all of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.



STEP 4 | DISCUSS PART 1

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics below each question as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

Answers will vary.

2. The video focuses on two groups that have objections to the Church’s doctrine of the Real Presence. Which of these groups do you sympathize with the most?

Answers might include the following: The Jewish people, since they were the original recipients of revelation. It seems especially strange to be asked to do something contrary to the Old Law. The pagans, because it may [for some] seem kind of like cannibalism.

3. Have you ever heard the Jewish objections before? How about the pagan difficulty? What things might we say or do to help remove those objections?

The central answer is that consuming the Eucharist makes us participants in the life of Jesus Christ. That is why the Old Law prohibition regarding blood does not apply. And that is why Communion is different from cannibalism.



VIDEO PART 2 (PROTESTANT OBJECTIONS)

Play the second video segment, which will last about 30 minutes.

I. Historical background for Protestant objections

- A. Luther did not deny, although his teaching was different from the Catholic understanding of transubstantiation
- B. Others like Zwingli and Calvin did deny the Real Presence

II. Scriptural background: John 6

- A. “What if you were to see the son of man ascending . . .” a defense of his divinity
 1. “It is the Spirit that gives life. The flesh is of no avail.”
 2. In verse 66, many disciples leave

III. Protestant Interpretation and Catholic Responses

- A. “Flesh is of no avail” = no Real Presence, just a metaphor
 1. Disregards Christ’s repeated statements
 2. Christ’s words related to the soul and eternal life, distinct from earthly bread
 3. Christ’s actions show he is speaking literally
 4. He does not call disciples back (after verse 66)
 5. Belief in Eucharist rests on belief in Christ’s divinity
 6. Actual metaphorical statements are different from Bread of Life statements.
- B. Saint Paul evidence (1 Corinthians 11)
 1. A tradition handed on by the Lord himself
 - a. New Covenant in blood
 - b. Real covenant has real blood; if it were simply metaphorical blood, then it would just be a metaphorical covenant
 2. Paul’s warning against eating and drinking unworthily
 - a. A profanation deserving judgment
 - b. Evidence of divine wrath
 - c. Paul takes the Real Presence seriously, so does the Church
- C. Additional Pauline evidence
 1. “Cup of blessing is a participation in the blood . . .”
 2. Those who eat the sacrifice are partners in the altar
 3. Participation and partners related to word *koinonia*
 4. Church being the Body of Christ depends on the Real Presence



DIGGING DEEPER

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

The Church gives us some guidelines for the reception of Holy Communion to help us approach the sacrament reverently.

The Eucharist is a communion with Christ and with his Body, the Church. It is a statement of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and of unity with the entire Catholic Church. Outside of the unbroken succession of authority from the Apostles to today's bishops (apostolic succession), there is no priesthood; and without the priesthood, there is no valid Eucharist. Therefore, the bread and wine received in Protestant ecclesial communities is not Body and Blood of Jesus.

Because of these differences, only a baptized member of the Catholic Church who believes in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist may receive Holy Communion; and a Catholic must not receive communion in a Protestant service.

The Eucharist as a sign of the real unity of the Church—including all Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church—reminds us to pray earnestly that God would heal the divisions among believers.

We should not receive the Eucharist if we are conscious of having committed a mortal sin. All mortal sins must be confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving the Eucharist.

We must fast for at least one hour from food and drink (with the exceptions of water and medicine) before receiving the Eucharist.

The faithful may receive Holy Communion a maximum of two times in one day, but only if the second reception takes place during a Mass. (The exception to this is in the case of the Eucharist given as Viaticum to a person in danger of death, which may be received at any time.)



DISCUSS PART 2

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

4. What is at the heart of accepting the doctrine of the Eucharist?

Belief in Christ's divinity and trust in him beyond what we see.

5. Why do some Protestants say that Jesus's words are a metaphorical statement? How do his words about being the Bread of Life compare to other statements like "I am the vine"?

Some Protestants say that "the flesh is of no avail" means that Jesus is speaking metaphorically. They also point to other statements that are clearly metaphorical, such as "I am the Vine" or "I am the gate." However, these statements are short, while the Bread of Life discourse takes up many, many verses.

6. What are the three Passovers? How do these three events help to dispel the idea that Jesus is speaking metaphorically?

There is the progressive evidence of the three Passovers recorded in John's Gospel. First, there is the changing of water into wine at Cana; Jesus shows his power to change one substance into another at will. The next Passover has the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and the Bread of Life discourse. In the discourse, Christ promises that he will give himself, the true bread from Heaven, at a future time. At the third Passover, we have the Last Supper. The great miracle of transubstantiation (changing bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood) at the Last Supper makes sense, while a progression from miracle to miracle to metaphor seems inconsistent. [Note that, although John's Gospel does not have the words of Institution, his final Passover account is clearly the same one that is recorded by the other three Evangelists, all of which have an institution account.]

7. What is the evidence from Saint Paul that Jesus is not speaking metaphorically but metaphysically?

Saint Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 11 about the breaking of the bread are presented in the light of a Sacred Tradition that is being handed on. His teaching reflects how the early Church understood the words of Christ regarding his Body and Blood. The context for Saint Paul's writing is his concern that the breaking of the bread, the Eucharistic celebration, is being conducted irreverently. The seriousness with which he takes this irreverence indicates that he regards the bread and wine as literally the Body and Blood of Christ. Moreover, the context of the passage in chapter 10 includes a clear understanding about the transforming power of the Eucharistic communion. And chapter 12 makes an argument about the Church literally being the Mystical Body, an argument that is founded upon the union with Christ's Body in the Eucharist.



VIDEO PART 3 (SECULAR OBJECTIONS AND CONCLUSION)

Play the third video segment, which will last about 30 minutes.

I. Secular Objections

- A. You really believe that God is present?
 1. Seems insane
 2. Post-enlightenment: everything must be explained by reason or it's not true
 3. Excludes all faith

II. Response: faith is not contrary to reason, but goes above and beyond reason

- A. Key Christian belief of the Eucharist stands with the Incarnation and Resurrection
- B. It's rational and reasonable to say God changes bread and wine into his Body and Blood, but it does take faith
- C. Some truths do go beyond the comprehension of our reason; faith is necessary to have life

III. "Unless you eat the flesh...you have no life in you."

- A. Jesus is the lamb of the New Passover
 1. Must eat the lamb
 2. Must drink his blood to share divine life
- B. The Bible is framed with the theme of eating and drinking for eternal life
 1. Genesis: Tree of Life
 2. Revelation, promises to those who conquer
 - a. 2:7 - promise to eat of the Tree of Life
 - b. 2:17 - promise of the hidden manna
 - c. 3:20 - promise to come in and eat
 - d. Climax in Revelation 19 - Wedding Feast of the Lamb
 - e. Also climax of John's writings
- C. Conclusion: Faith in the Eucharist is reasonable
 1. Consistency of Scripture evidence of its divine origin
 2. Evidence of Scripture points to centrality of the Real Presence in the Eucharist



DIGGING DEEPER

WORSHIP OF THE EUCHARIST

As a sign of our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we offer this sacrament our adoration and worship both during the Mass and outside of it. We can rightly say that we worship the Eucharist because the Eucharist is Jesus.

We show our reverence by kneeling during the Consecration and bowing or making some other sign of devotion when receiving the Eucharist. Outside of Mass the consecrated Hosts are kept with care in the Tabernacle, with a candle burning near it to signify the presence of the Lord, and we genuflect to the Tabernacle. In addition, we have the unique opportunity to spend time in the presence of God, gazing upon him and worshipping him in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

We also show reverence for our Lord in the Eucharist by preparing ourselves carefully before receiving Holy Communion. God himself calls us to draw near to him in this sacrament, but it is not something to be taken lightly.





DISCUSS PART 3

Read the following questions, giving the small groups time to answer each one. Refer to the suggested answers in italics as needed to help facilitate conversation. Answers will, of course, vary.

8. What does “reasonable” mean for the secular objectors? How does the scientific interpretation limit not only belief in the Eucharist, but all belief in Jesus? Why do we say that faith is beyond reason but not contrary to reason?

For secularists, real knowledge is often defined as something you can know “scientifically”—by a measurable process. Mathematical, empirical proof is what makes a piece of information reasonable. By such a standard, all miracles are unreasonable. And so is any belief in the divinity of Jesus. But if we look at the definition of reason given by secularists, we find it is very limited—not just on a supernatural, but even on a natural level. There are many things that we accept as reasonable without mathematical proof. In daily life, everyone accepts as trustworthy the testimony of our senses, our parents, even our textbooks. When it comes to supernatural matters, we say that faith goes beyond reason. This means that we cannot prove them, either mathematically or according to common experience. What we can do is show how the teachings of the Faith don’t go against reason.

9. What is the significance of the literary arguments about the Tree of Life, Feast of the Lamb, etc.?

The literary evidence of the Scriptures indicates that there are Eucharistic themes throughout the Bible. From the Tree of Life in Genesis, to the Cross in the Gospels, to the Tree of Life in Revelation; from the Wedding Feast at Cana, to the Last Supper, to the Feast of the Lamb. These repeated themes are not just present, but central. Such stress laid on these elements makes it reasonable to accept the doctrine of the Real Presence as a true scriptural teaching.

10. How does Mary’s life show us how to approach the Eucharist in a biblical way?

Mary received the Word of God with humility and obedience. She pondered God’s words and deeds in her heart. Her own words and deeds always point to Jesus: He became Incarnate because of her fiat; at Cana she said “do whatever he tells you”; and she was present at Calvary, uniting herself with Christ’s sufferings. Above all others, Mary believed God’s word. It is because of this faith that she is able to make him known and loved. With her help, our attitude toward the Eucharist and the Scriptures that teach about the Eucharist can take on the same humble and life-giving character.



DIGGING DEEPER

“He once in Cana of Galilee, turned the water into wine, akin to blood, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? When called to a bodily marriage, He miraculously wrought that wonderful work; and on the children of the bride-chamber, shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood?”

—St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture*, 22, 2



STEP 5 | COMMIT—THE WORD MADE FLESH

Direct participants to the COMMIT section on page 52 of their Study Guides, and encourage them to live out the message that they learned these last few weeks.

Inspired by this week’s teaching on the biblical apologetics for the Real Presence, consider writing down a specific way in which you will make these arguments your own. Perhaps it will be a short summary of how Holy Communion, by uniting us to the living Christ, is not a cannibalistic act, but a sanctifying deed. Perhaps it will be meditating on the two-part argument: 1) if Christ is God, then he can change bread into his Body; 2) the Gospels make it clear that he does want just that.

The best way, of course, to make this lesson our own, is to embrace the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and to receive that Presence in Holy Communion at Mass. Make a commitment to spend some time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament this week and ask him how he wants you specifically to grow from this time of study. With God’s grace, we will grow in our capacity to live his life in us and to share that life with others.

**STEP 6 | WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER**

Review the following key points of this session with your group, and then close in prayer.

- *Honestly addressing objections to the Real Presence is a holy act because it helps others share our Faith, it strengthens our commitment to our Faith, and it deepens our understanding of our Faith.*
- *Jesus is able to make the claims he makes because he is God. Faith in his divinity is the foundation of our belief in the Eucharist.*
- *A close examination of the Scriptures reveals that in John 6, Jesus is really promising his flesh and blood to eat, and that this is neither contrary to Old Law prohibitions or permitting cannibalism because it leads to communion with the living God.*
- *The arguments that suggest Jesus is just speaking metaphorically are not consistent with either the teachings of Saint John's Gospel or the later Epistle of Saint Paul.*
- *The evidence of the Scriptures is strongly Eucharistic. And the Scriptures themselves are a work beyond mere human power. Therefore, it is "reasonable" to believe in the Eucharist.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Beloved Lord, in the Book of Revelation it is written:
“I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches.
I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.”
We, the members of your Body, the Church, say
“Come.” Come to us in the Eucharist,
come to us in the Scriptures, come to us with the fullness of life.
Through the intercession of your Mother, Mary,
may we always treasure the Word within us
and make that Word known and loved in time and in eternity.
Amen.

FOR FURTHER READING

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1333–1344 (“The Eucharist in the Economy of Salvation”),
1384–1390 (“‘Take this and eat it, all of you’: communion”), 1400 (Ecclesial communities)

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*: 22, On the Body and Blood of Christ
and 23, *On the Sacred Liturgy and Communion*

Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Rome, 2003)

