

The Catholic Mass... Revealed!

Study Guide

Session One (Corresponds to Booklet Chapters 1-4)

As participants gather, play a track from the soundtrack CD.

1. *Opening Prayer:*

Leader:

Heavenly Father, we come before you in thanksgiving for the gift of your Son, and particularly for his sacrifice which won the victory over sin and merited for us eternal salvation. Open our minds and hearts, Lord, so that we may learn the treasures of the Mass, in order to live each day as a preparation for our next Mass, as a thanksgiving for our last, and longing to serve You in others until we encounter You definitively and join the Liturgy of Heaven. We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

2. *Gospel Reflection:* (10-15 minutes for the Gospel to be read and each participant to share a personal insight)

Reader: Our text this evening is Matthew Chapter 12, verses 38 to 42.

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."

He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here.

At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.”

Some points for reflection/discussion: Leader acts as a guide

- We human beings are creatures of flesh and blood. We need to experience things bodily. We often seek signs. Christ Himself is God's answer to this. He is God Himself in flesh and blood.
- Christ's resurrection is prefigured by Jonah, who like Jesus called people to repentance.
- Do we take into account that Christ Himself is present at Mass in various ways: in the assembly of the baptized, in the priest, and most importantly when He descends to the altar in the Holy Eucharist?
- Will a generation condemn us for taking this lightly?

3. ***Audiovisual Presentation*** Play the DVD Chapters 1-2.

A. *Preparation for Mass – 10 Minutes*

- Is this something we think about? Do we look forward to going?
- What are some ways in which we can prepare for Mass?

Suggestion: Read one of the attached prayers before Mass

- How can we cultivate those same sentiments as a preparation for Mass?
- Do we consider Mass a privilege or do we take it for granted? Do we even consider it a burden?
- Read the song about the "Mass rock" below. What sacrifices are we willing to make to be at Mass?
- Can any of the participants share a story about overcoming obstacles in order to attend Mass?

B. *The Introductory Rites – 10 Minutes*

- Can we name them? (Hint: there listed two lines below!)
- The General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM) states, "The rites preceding the Liturgy of the Word, namely the Entrance, Greeting, Act of Penitence, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, and Collect, have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation. Their purpose is to ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily." (n. 46)
- Do we enter Mass thinking of being in communion with one another?
- Do we use these rites to quiet down inside and open our hearts to God?

C. *The Entrance – 10 Minutes*

- As Mass begins, do we remember that we are going to participate, albeit in a different way, in Christ's sacrifice of the Cross? Do we see the continuation of the Last Supper with his Apostles?
- *Suggestion:* We can recall the different names for the Mass as the celebration begins. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, speaking about the Sacrament of the Eucharist:

1328 The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words *eucharistein*¹⁴¹ and *eulogein*¹⁴² recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification.

1329 **The Lord's Supper**, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁴³

The **Breaking of Bread**, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal, when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread,¹⁴⁴ above all at the Last Supper.¹⁴⁵ It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection,¹⁴⁶ and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies;¹⁴⁷ by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him.¹⁴⁸

The **Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)**, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church.¹⁴⁹

1330 The **memorial** of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

The **Holy Sacrifice**, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. The terms *holy sacrifice of the Mass*, "**sacrifice of praise**," **spiritual sacrifice**, **pure and holy sacrifice** are also used,¹⁵⁰ since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The **Holy and Divine Liturgy**, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the **Sacred Mysteries**. We speak of the *Most Blessed Sacrament* because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name.

1331 **Holy Communion**, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.¹⁵¹ We also call it: **the holy things (ta hagia; sancta)**¹⁵² - the first meaning of the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed - **the bread of angels, bread from heaven, medicine of immortality,**¹⁵³ **viaticum.** . . .

1332 **Holy Mass (Missa)**, because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

D. The Greeting – 10 Minutes

- We begin Mass with the sign of the Cross. Do we take this for granted? It recalls our baptism. It recalls the fullness of the truth about God that Jesus came to reveal us. It is also a powerful prayer.
- See what John Henry Cardinal Newman says about it in this poem:

The Sign of the Cross

Whene'er across this sinful flesh of mine
I draw the Holy Sign,
All good thoughts stir within me, and renew
Their slumbering strength divine;
Till there springs up a courage high and true
To suffer and to do.

And who shall say, but hateful spirits around,
For their brief hour unbound,
Shudder to see, and wail their overthrow?
While on far heathen ground
Some lonely Saint hails the fresh odor, though
Its source he cannot know.

- Do you venerate the altar, bowing before it (even when there isn't a tabernacle behind it) as the place of Christ's sacrifice and the table of your parish family?
- The greeting centers us on Christ, our Head. He is the true source of our unity as brothers and sisters *in Christ*. The priest makes a prayer and a wish "The Lord be with you!" When we greet others, does our attitude of service and charity reflect that same wish and prayer?

Allow time for participants to share any other ideas and reflections.

4. Closing Prayer

Leader:

Lord, we have come here to reflect together on the great memorial You left us, the most powerful means You have given us to be fed and strengthened in the struggle for your Kingdom on earth. May this time together unite us as your family, and unite us to You, in Your Eucharist, the source and summit of our Christian life. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Prayer for Preparation for Mass

Prayer of St. Ambrose

Lord, Jesus Christ, I approach your banquet table in fear and trembling, for I am a sinner, and dare not rely on my own worth but only on your goodness and mercy. I am defiled by many sins in body and soul, and by my unguarded thoughts and words. Gracious God of majesty and awe, I seek your protection, I look for your healing, poor troubled sinner that I am, I appeal to you, the fountain of all mercy. I cannot bear your judgment, but I trust in your salvation. Lord, I show my wounds to you and uncover my shame before you. I know my sins are many and great, and they fill me with fear, but I hope in your mercies, for they cannot be numbered. Lord Jesus Christ, eternal King, God and man, crucified for mankind, look upon me with mercy and hear my prayer, for I trust in you. Have mercy on me, full of sorrow and sin, for the depth of your compassion never ends. Praise to you, saving sacrifice, offered on the wood of the cross for me and for all mankind. Praise to the noble and precious blood, flowing from the wounds of my crucified Lord Jesus Christ and washing away the sins of the whole world. Remember, Lord, your creature, whom you have redeemed with your blood. I repent my sins, and I long to put right what I have done. Merciful Father, take away all my offenses and sins; purify me in body and soul, and make me worthy to taste the holy of holies. May your body and blood, which I intend to receive, although I am unworthy, be for me the remission of my sins, the washing away of my guilt, the end of my evil thoughts, and the rebirth of my better instincts. May it incite me to do the works pleasing to you and profitable to my health in body and soul, and be a firm defense against the wiles of my enemies. Amen.

Prayer Before Mass
St. Thomas Aquinas

Almighty and ever-living God,
I approach the sacrament
of Your only-begotten Son
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
I come sick to the doctor of life,
unclean to the fountain of mercy,
blind to the radiance of eternal light,
and poor and needy to the Lord
of heaven and earth.

Lord, in your great generosity,
heal my sickness,
wash away my defilement,
enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty,
and clothe my nakedness.
May I receive the bread of angels,
the King of kings and Lord of lords,
with humble reverence,
with the purity and faith,
the repentance and love,
and the determined purpose
that will help to bring me to salvation.
May I receive the sacrament
of the Lord's Body and Blood,
and its reality and power.

Kind God,
may I receive the Body
of Your only-begotten Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
born from the womb of the Virgin Mary,
and so be received into His mystical body
and numbered among His members.

Loving Father,
as on my earthly pilgrimage
I now receive Your beloved Son
under the veil of a sacrament,
may I one day see him face to face in glory,
who lives and reigns with You for ever. Amen.

An Raibh Tu Ag An gCarraig
“Were you at the Rock?”

This song comes from a time when the Mass was prohibited in Ireland, under pain of death. Worshippers would meet at a “Mass rock” often a boulder in a clearing, and hear a clandestine priest. The remote location was often chosen so that, in case of a raid, the people could dart into the forest and escape. This song’s haunting beauty shows the strength of the Faith in times of trouble, and the Mass as a source of strength. It also shows how the people were conscious of Our Lady’s presence among them at Mass.

Did you go then to the grey rocks,
And behind a wind-swept crevice there,
Did you find our Mary gently waiting,
Our lady, sweet and fair?
Did the sun shine gently round her,
Making solid darts through her hair?
And will you stay silent as the day
When the wind has left the air?

Oh, my Mary, long we wait here
While the hunter combs the mountains high,
And the soft wind whispers "Guard her,"
Though as hunted we must die.
Oh, the dawn is longtime coming,
And the long night clings with care,
But they shall not find with their chains to bind
My Mary, pure and fair.