

The Catholic Mass... Revealed!

Study Guide

Session Five (Corresponds to Booklet Chapters 22-25)

As participants gather, play the "O Sacred Head Surrounded" 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 John Chapter 13, verses 13 to 38.

"My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, 'Where I go you cannot come,' so now I say it to you. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Simon Peter said to him, "Master, where are you going?" Jesus answered (him), "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, though you will follow later."

Peter said to him, "Master, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times."

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

- St. John relates for us the contrast between God's glory and our weakness. They are constants in our life. Our Lady shows how they fit in together, by allowing God to

- come upon our littleness. (Pope Paul VI used to write three “M’s” in his journal, signifying “Misery, Mercy, Mary” a microcosm of this message.)
- On this solemn night, Jesus gave a new commandment. Love of *everyone* had never been explicitly commanded in the Old Testament. This is a new Moses giving a new law! It is a commandment, HIS commandment. Do I make it the first thing I examine when I examine my conscience?
 - Jesus makes the living of this commandment the sign to the world that we are his followers. It is of utmost importance to Him.
 - Jesus gave this commandment even knowing how weak we are, how weak Peter was. But He also knew that He was going to be there to strengthen us. At Mass, we receive that strength!

3. *Audiovisual Presentation* Play the DVD tracks 17 and 18

A. The Eucharistic Prayer – Institution Narrative – 10 Minutes

- We recall when and how Christ instituted the Eucharist and his holy priesthood. Do I ever thank God for all the priests that have guided me throughout my life?
- Does your Parish or diocese have a vocations prayer? Do you pray it?
- Our religion is of heaven, but it is also of earth. God became incarnate and lived at a particular time, in a particular place. His words and gestures that first Holy Thursday night were what they were and not others. This teaches us that even little things can have great value, if we let God touch them. We who are not priests do not act “in persona Christi” (“in the person of Christ,”) but we are called to be “other Christs” in this world.
- The bread and wine are now transformed into Jesus: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!

B. The Eucharistic Prayer – Elevation – 10 Minutes

- What were Christ’s thoughts, the feelings of his heart, the movements of his will as He was lifted up on the Cross for us? These are what we are to imitate in an act of adoration as we see Christ elevated again, though through the veil of the Sacramental appearances of bread and wine, at Mass. Do I unite myself to Christ, at the foot of the Cross with Mary and St. John?
- As the Body and Blood of Christ are consecrated separately, do I recall this central truth of my Faith: Somebody DIED FOR ME? This one truth was enough to transform St. Paul’s entire life: “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, *I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.*” (Gal 2:20)

- All the sentiments converge at this moment: adoration and praise for the presence of God, thanksgiving for his love, sacrifice, mercy, and humility. Can anyone share a light they received from God at the moment of the consecration?
- Do I renew my faith at this moment in Mass, like St. Thomas the Apostle who touched the wounds of Christ and proclaimed, "My Lord and my God"?

C. Transubstantiation – Miracle of Miracles – 10 Minutes – Leader reads a few points

- Here is it good to recall what the Church teaches about Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. (You can pause and read the following numbers silently):

1373 "Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church: in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in my name," in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But "he is present . . . most especially in the Eucharistic species."

1374 The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*" "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."

1375 It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. The Church Fathers strongly affirmed the faith of the Church in the efficacy of the Word of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about this conversion. Thus St. John Chrysostom declares:

It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.

And St. Ambrose says about this conversion:

Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed. . . . Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.

1376 The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation."

1377 The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.

1378 *Worship of the Eucharist.* In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."

1379 The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent outside of Mass. As faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species. It is for this reason that the tabernacle should be located in an especially worthy place in the church and should be constructed in such a way that it emphasizes and manifests the truth of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

1380 It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end," even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love:

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.

- Are we aware of Christ's Presence at Mass, especially from the Consecration forward? How does this affect our behavior?
- Do we cultivate a love for and worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass? What practices foster this? (Eucharistic visits, adoration, benediction, Forty Hours devotion, etc.) Do we participate in these acts of worship? Could doing so deepen our love for Christ and others?
- Do I thank Jesus for finding this wonderful way of staying with me, to be with us until the end of time? Do I make reparation for his loneliness in many tabernacles where He is not visited?
- What could I do to foster this love and worship of the Eucharist in my parish?
- We can also reflect on what Pope John Paul II taught in his last Encyclical, on the theme of the Eucharist:

"When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and "the work of our redemption is carried out". This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits. This is the faith from which generations of Christians down the ages have lived. The Church's Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed this faith with joyful gratitude for its inestimable gift. I wish once

more to recall this truth and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes “to the end” (cf. *Jn* 13:1), a love which knows no measure.” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 11)

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.