

## **The Catholic Mass... Revealed!**

### *Study Guide*

Session Six (Corresponds to Booklet Chapters 26-29)

As participants gather, play the "All Glory Honor Laud" 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 6, verses 48 to 64.

"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?"

Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?"

Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him.

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

- Jesus clearly teaches that He plans to transform bread into his Body. He is conscious of the difficulty of his teaching.
- Peter, similar to when he walks out of the boat, steps out in faith. His belief in Christ overcomes the apparent difficulty of his teaching.
- What does it mean in my life to "have life because of" Jesus?
- The end of this Gospel makes a tough point: refusal to believe in the Eucharist, as Jesus teaches it, is a form of betrayal. Judas began down that path when he refused to accept this teaching.

**3. *Audiovisual Presentation*** Play the DVD tracks 19, 20, 21

*A. The Eucharistic Prayer – Offering – 10 Minutes*

- At this point of Mass, do I consciously offer myself to God with Christ, putting my whole life: thoughts, words, works, talents, desires, troubles, struggles, my whole intellect and will?
- The Catechism teaches that this is something special that the laity must do in order to live out their baptismal priesthood. Stemming from the Mass, we unite all to this act of worship in our struggle for holiness:

**901** "Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives."

- Do I think about all the Masses offered around the world? Do I feel united to all my fellow Catholics who participate as I do in this offering? With the

great saints and heroes of the Faith who were nourished at this same Table of the Eucharist?

*B. The Eucharistic Prayer – Intercessions – 10 Minutes*

- Do I feel supported by the prayers of my brothers and sisters who have reached the goal of our striving in the glory of the Saints in heaven? Does this move me to also pray for others, so that we can support each other during our earthly pilgrimage?
- Our Church is truly universal, but we all live this reality within a particular, local community. We pray for the Pope, our Bishop, and those whose mission it is to defend and transmit the Faith “who hold and teach the Catholic Faith, that comes to us from the Apostles.” Do we realize that we have a mission to support our Bishops in their mission through our prayer and our fidelity?
- Do I see this prayer for others at Mass as something I must continue throughout the day? Do I see prayer for others as a very important act of charity? Do I think those who pray for me? As the dying King Arthur says to Sir Bedivere in Tennyson’s *The Death of Arthur*, “More things are wrought by prayer / Than this world dreams of.” How much faith do I have in the power of prayer?

*C. The Eucharistic Prayer – Great Amen – 10 Minutes*

- Does this part of Mass remind me that the purpose of everything, of my whole life, is God’s glory? That true glory is only given to God through Jesus, with Him and in Him?
- Do I realize that, by saying “Amen” I am using a word that Jesus himself used, in the very language that He spoke?
- When I sing the “Great Amen,” do I realize I am saying “yes” to all that has gone before in the Eucharistic Prayer? That I am pledging my life to be united to Jesus, and to live a life of “love one another as I have loved you”?
- Do I live the rest of my life consistent with this “Amen,” following Jesus’ teaching “Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one.” (Mt 5:37)?

#### D. *The Lord's Prayer – 10 Minutes*

- Blessed Columba Marmion defines prayer as “a conversation of a child of God with its Heavenly Father.” It is something unique in the history of religions. Only because of Christ could we ever dare to be on such familiar terms with God. We are his creatures, yes, but He has willed to adopt us as his children.
- The “Our Father” teaches us how to pray. It indicates what thoughts and feelings we should cultivate in this conversation with our Heavenly father, and it teaches us what to pray for.
- We are united as a community when we pray together to Our Father, since his Paternity is the source of our fraternity.
- Have you ever considered that the Eucharist is also implied in the “daily bread” that we pray for in the Our *Father*? It is what we need “in order to have life in” us. The General Instruction reminds us of this:

In the Lord's Prayer a petition is made for daily food, which for Christians means preeminently the eucharistic bread, and also for purification from sin, so that what is holy may, in fact, be given to those who are holy. (GIRM, 81)

- The fourth section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is on prayer. It includes a beautiful explanation of the Our Father (numbers 2759 – 2865) which is the conclusion of all the teaching in the Catechism. The summary of this section is:

**2857** In the Our Father, the object of the first three petitions is the glory of the Father: the sanctification of his name, the coming of the kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. The four others present our wants to him: they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.

**2858** By asking "hallowed be thy name" we enter into God's plan, the sanctification of his name - revealed first to Moses and then in Jesus - by us and in us, in every nation and in each man.

**2859** By the second petition, the Church looks first to Christ's return and the final coming of the Reign of God. It also prays for the growth of the Kingdom of God in the "today" of our own lives.

**2860** In the third petition, we ask our Father to unite our will to that of his Son, so as to fulfill his plan of salvation in the life of the world.

**2861** In the fourth petition, by saying "give us," we express in communion with our brethren our filial trust in our heavenly Father. "Our daily bread" refers to the earthly nourishment necessary to everyone for subsistence, and also to the Bread of Life: the Word of God and the Body of Christ. It is received in God's "today," as the indispensable, (super-) essential nourishment of the feast of the coming Kingdom anticipated in the Eucharist.

**2862** The fifth petition begs God's mercy for our offences, mercy which can penetrate our hearts only if we have learned to forgive our enemies, with the example and help of Christ.

**2863** When we say "lead us not into temptation" we are asking God not to allow us to take the path that leads to sin. This petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength; it requests the grace of vigilance and final perseverance.

**2864** In the last petition, "but deliver us from evil," Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the "ruler of this world," Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation.

**2865** By the final "Amen," we express our "fiat" concerning the seven petitions: "So be it."

#### **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.