

The Catholic Mass... Revealed!

Study Guide

Session Seven (Corresponds to Booklet Chapters 30-33)

As participants gather, play the "Agnus Dei" 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 Luke Chapter 24, verses 13 to 35.

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with

us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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

- These disciples undergo a true encounter with Our Lord, which follows a definite pattern. They come weary, lacking faith and hope. They are chastened by Christ for being slow to believe. They have the Scriptures explained to them. They pray that Our Lord remain with them. They recognize Him in the breaking of the bread, at table with Him. They leave refreshed, strengthened and burning to share this message with others.
- Isn't this what Mass should be for us? Can't we find the Penitential Rite, Readings, Homily, Offering, Consecration and Dismissal all in that passage?
- When Christ breaks the bread and shares it, he "vanishes". His physical presence is no longer there when his Eucharistic presence is manifest. We would often like to see Jesus in the flesh. Isn't he telling us we are "of little faith" when He wills his Eucharistic presence to "stay with us" until the end of time?
- On a lighter note, Cleophas has to return and face his wife, one of the women who had been at the tomb and whom he had not believed. Indeed, sometimes it is hardest

to share our experience of Christ with those nearest to us, but that is what these disciples do first. A poet paints the meeting this way:

"Oh, really, Cleophas, now you believe
For He has shown Himself along the way?
No longer was I trying to deceive,
Hallucinating angel words today?

I am your wife and so I must be glad
That such a grace was given to a male,
Yet as your wife I'm right to be still mad
You thought the Risen Christ a woman's tale.

So let's agree on this, God will repay us:
I won't tell you of any resurrections,
And, Darling, when you're going to Emmaus,
Please always ask a Stranger for directions."

All this he heard without words, packed within
A tapping foot, and eyebrow-arching grin.

3. ***Audiovisual Presentation*** Play the DVD tracks 22, 23, 24

A. *The Sign of Peace – 10 Minutes*

- At this point, we are preparing to receive Christ in Communion. True Communion with Christ requires Communion with “the whole Christ,” Christ as the Head and all the faithful as his members. Do I see the sign of peace as a commitment to build a community of faith with those around me, first and foremost in my family and in my parish?
- Do I commit myself to order my life around God, and thus reach the “tranquility of order” as St. Augustine defines peace?
- Do I renew my commitment to live on earth as a citizen of Heaven?
- What is my reaction to the phrase “We love Christ as much as we love the person we like the least.”?

B. *The Breaking of the Bread – Lamb of God – 10 Minutes*

- Do I feel honored to have been invited to “break bread” with Jesus? To have been invited to have a seat at the family table, as an adopted son or daughter, of the Royal

Family of the Universe? Does this lead me to want to live in a way that corresponds to such a dignity?

- Am I awed when I recall that the “breaking” of this bread was the breaking of Christ’s Body on the Cross? That Christ had to suffer and die so that I may have peace with God and be able to sit at his Table?
- As Christ’s Body was glorious and unbroken in the Resurrection, do I renew my faith in the Resurrection of the Body? Does this influence the way I treat my own body and that of others? The Catechism reminds us:

1003 United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God." The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory."

1004 In expectation of that day, the believer's body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering:

The body [is meant] for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? You are not your own; So glorify God in your body.

- Even while recognizing our true unworthiness to receive Christ, do we make a true act of Faith that his Word is enough to heal us?

C. *Holy Communion – 10 Minutes*

- Do I realize that by receiving Communion I am, in a way, present at the very same meal of the Last Supper with Christ and his apostles? That I am celebrating the fulfillment of the Passover, in which I am saved from a death sentence, and given a life to live in true freedom from slavery, a life of faith and following God, who is ever faithful to his promises? This experience would be incomplete if I failed to receive Communion. The General Instruction reminds us: Since the Eucharistic Celebration is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that in keeping with the Lord's command, his Body and Blood should be received by the faithful who are properly disposed as spiritual food. (GIRM, 80)
- Do I see the singing of the Communion hymns as a way for me to be in communion also with my parish family, by praising and thanking God in song for this gift of gifts?
- What gives God glory? God receives glory when his plan works as planned, just like we are “glorified” by a project which has gone well. Nature gives glory to God by

following its natural course. Humans give God glory by following his will. Even when we fail, returning to Him and begging Him for mercy gives Him glory, for He understands our weakness. What He wants us to understand is his goodness.

- Do I spend time in deep prayer, knowing I will never be closer to Christ on earth than at this moment when He has come into me through Communion?
- Think of Our Lady. She suffered greatly when she no longer saw her Son again. And yet, imagine what her heart was like after receiving Communion from St. John, one of the first priests ever ordained? Do I ask her to help me unite myself to her Son after Communion?
- Do I thank Jesus for this great gift? The booklet includes the wonderful prayer after Communion by St. Thomas Aquinas. Another great prayer, included with St. Thomas' prayer in the Roman Missal, is the "Universal Prayer", attributed to Pope Clement XI:

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith. I trust in you: strengthen my trust. I love you: let me love you more and more. I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning, I long for you as my last end, I praise you as my constant helper, And call on you as my loving protector.

Guide me by your wisdom, correct me with your justice, Comfort me with your mercy, protect me with your power.

I offer you, Lord, my thoughts: to be fixed on you; My words: to have you for their theme; My actions: to reflect my love for you; My sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.

I want to do what you ask of me: In the way you ask, For as long as you ask, Because you ask it.

Lord, enlighten my understanding, strengthen my will, Purify my heart, and make me holy.

Help me to repent of my past sins And to resist temptation in the future. Help me to rise above my human weaknesses And to grow stronger as a Christian.

Let me love you, my Lord and my God, And see myself as I really am: A pilgrim in this world, A Christian called to respect and love All whose lives I touch, Those under my authority, My friends and my enemies.

Help me to conquer anger with gentleness, Greed by generosity, Apathy by fervor. Help me to forget myself And reach out toward others.

Make me prudent in planning, Courageous in taking risks. Make me patient in suffering, unassuming in prosperity. Keep me, Lord, attentive at prayer, Temperate in food and drink, Diligent in my work, Firm in my good intentions.

Let my conscience be clear, My conduct without fault, My speech blameless, My life well-ordered. Put me on guard against my human weaknesses. Let me cherish your love for me, Keep you law, And come at last to your salvation.

Teach me to realize that this world is passing, That my true future is the happiness of heaven, That life on earth is short, And the life to come eternal. Help me to prepare for death with a proper fear of judgment, But a greater trust in your goodness. Lead me safely through death to the endless joy of heaven.

Grand this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Do I answer the priest's call when for the last time he says "Let us pray"? The Prayer after Communion is a moment when we may be tempted to distraction, and yet they are so beautifully written. They often ask that the grace of Communion and all we have celebrated may remain with us and transform us. What more do we need to pray for? The use of a missal may help me re-read that prayer later and consider what I am asking.

D. The Concluding Rites – 10 Minutes

- At this point we often hear about the different ways in which our parish is extending the blessings of the Eucharist to all the needs of the community. Am I attentive to how the Holy Spirit is prompting me to serve others?
- Once again the priest says "The Lord be with you." This should be our abiding wish for all, so that the presence of the Lord may dwell in every heart. But at this point of the Mass, we must make the commitment to spread God's presence, especially since we bear the Eucharist on our hearts.
- Do I realize that, "Go in peace" is a commissioning? I am being dismissed from Mass, yes, but more properly "sent out" to love and serve the Lord through all that I do. Just as Jesus multiplied the loaves and then gave them to his apostles to distribute, I have been filled with Jesus' love and grace in order to make each person I encounter a sharer in these gifts from heaven.
- Do I ever pray to live my Mass better during the day? The better I live it, the better prepared I will be to receive the immense graces of the Mass the next time.

4. Watch together the Conclusion of the DVD

- As you conclude these sessions, perhaps your group could make a commitment to share this information with others, or do some other work of charity in order to live out the commandment of Jesus to “Go and Teach all nations.”
- Ask your Pastor “What can I do to help the parish?”

5. 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.