

# For Families at Home

## Eucharist: The Thanksgiving Table

**Objective:** To explore the meaning of the Real Presence of Christ in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, and that the Mass is Sacrifice as well as Supper.

### **Leader Preparation**

- Read this lesson through before you begin with your family.
- You don't have to do the whole lesson at once – decide how you might divide up the parts over the space of your week.
- From your Bible, or from the attached page, read Luke's account of the Last Supper (Luke 22:7-27)
- Consider the people in the account. Consider who in your family could pay attention to that person as you later read the gospel passage:
  - Jesus
  - John
  - Peter
  - Judas
  - Man carrying jar of water
  - Disciples at the table

### **ENGAGE:**

- **LEADER:**

Tell the family that Mass can be described in many ways:

In ways it is like a family meal celebration (such as Thanksgiving):

Family Meal

We gather  
We tell our stories  
We share a meal  
Set the table  
Say grace  
Eat and drink  
Return home

Eucharistic Meal

We gather (Introductory Rites)  
We tell our story (Liturgy of the Word)  
We share a meal (Liturgy of the Eucharist)  
Preparation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer  
Communion Rite  
Return home (Commissioning)

Mass is also described as a sacrifice.

In Mass, and we believe that Christ is truly present in many ways.

We are going to deepen our understanding of Mass as Christ being truly present with us. We are all growing in wisdom and understanding, and we can always deepen our participation in Mass.

- **Giving of ourselves to be remembered**

- Discuss if anyone has ever had to be separated from someone for good. (e.g. moving far away from a friend, or the friend moved far away, or if death comes up, gently discuss it in terms of the dead one remaining a part of the life of the living)

- Brainstorm on this scenario: You are going to move to Australia and be separated from their best friends for a long time. What will you do to remain part of each other's lives? Discuss as many ideas as possible of how to remain best friends despite distance.
- Many ideas will involve means of digital communication. Discuss how this is different from being in the personal presence of someone. Seek out the best ideas that come closest to replicating actually being with someone. See if someone comes up with giving something that is important to them to the person who is not coming with them.

## **EXPLORE:**

### **Jesus' gift of himself.**

- Assign to each family member a person to pay close attention to in the story.
- Have someone read Luke's account of the Last Supper.
- Afterward, do Bible Charades. Have each one silently act out the character on their paper. Others guess who they are.
- After the charades, discuss as the character their thoughts and feelings about their encounter with Jesus. Challenge them to visualize the sights, sounds, energy, and emotions of the scene as well as to enter into the role of their character.

(adapted from *Teaching Activities Manual for the Catholic Youth Bible*, Saint Mary's Press, 2000.)

## **EXPERIENCE:**

- Recall the initial activity of how they would give of themselves to keep connected to their best friend. (If your best friend gave you something that he or she used to cherish in order for you to have a piece of themselves, you would treat it with care.)
- Connect that to Jesus' gift of himself in your own words based on this teaching:
  - When Jesus was about to be arrested and crucified, he wanted to find a way to stay with his disciples forever. He wanted to give them a way to remember that would last always. So when he was eating with his disciples for the last time, he did something unique. What he did is now the central action of our Eucharistic liturgy. (From the Eucharistic Prayer III: "On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks and praise. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take this all of you and eat it, this is my body which will be given up for you. When supper was ended, he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.") The consecration is the part of the Eucharistic prayer in which we remember and make present the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper.
  - The bread and the wine that we offered to God now becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus. The bread still tastes like bread, and the wine still tastes like wine, but Jesus is really present under the appearances of bread and wine. When we come to communion, the priest or Eucharistic Minister says "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ." Our "Amen" means that we believe it.

- But those words have another meaning too. When we eat the Body of Christ, we become the Body of Christ. When we drink the cup of blessing, we drink the living spirit of Jesus. Not only is the bread and wine changed; we are changed. We are changed not just as individuals but as a community. We are in communion with all the people who are at Mass with us and with everyone who shares in communion anywhere in the world. We are all the Body of Christ.
- We believe that Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine. We also believe that he is truly present in the priest, in the people assembled in church, and in the words of scripture that are proclaimed among us.
- Because we believe that the bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Jesus, we treat the consecrated bread and wine with great reverence. If any Eucharistic wine is left over, the ministers drink it. If any Eucharistic bread is left over, it may be consumed or it may be placed in the tabernacle. The Eucharistic bread remains in the tabernacle in case someone who is ill or dying wants communion. The tabernacle is also a place people come to pray. People pray by the tabernacle because the consecrated bread is still the presence of Jesus, even when Mass is over.
- Because we believe that we continually become the Body of Christ every time we share in common, we should treat each other with great respect. It makes no sense to be careful with the Eucharistic bread and wine and careless with each other. We must show reverence to all.
- Through communion, we are united with all the friends of Jesus all over the world. Some members of the Body of Christ have trouble learning to read. Some members of the Body of Christ have no one to play with in the school yard. Some members of the Body of Christ live in your house and need a kind word from you. Some members of the Body of Christ need help learning English when they come to this country. Some members of the Body of Christ can't walk. Some members of the Body of Christ can't afford to go to the doctor when they are sick. We are united with all these members of the Body of Christ.

(adapted from *Learning About Liturgy: Catechesis for Children and Their Families*, by Dorothy Kosinski Carola. Resource Publications, 2001.)

## **APPLY:**

- Consider what we do to “do this is remembrance of me,” in addition to sharing in Mass. Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper “Love one another as I have loved you.” He tells us to love as he loved. He asks us to reach out in love and be willing to accept the sacrifices when they come as a result of loving. He gave his love unconditionally. He asks us to do the same. Usually we are willing to do something that has a “return,” at least appreciation. But he asks us to sacrifice to give love unconditionally. (adapted from *Celebrating Community*, by Kathleen Chesto. Liguori, 2000.)

- Have you ever let go of something dear to you? Sacrifices big and small happen in many families every day: giving up going to the movies to babysit a brother or sister; giving up a weeknight to go to help a neighbor; not attending a party to volunteer at a soup kitchen; donating a kidney to a sick brother or sister. When we do these things with love, and without expecting reward, we are making spiritual as well as physical sacrifices. We are acting like Jesus.

(adapted from *The Catholic Faith & Family Bible*.

HarperCollins, The Center for Ministry Development, Our Sunday Visitor, 2010.)

- Read together the four scenarios on the handout, and for each scenario, brainstorm five ways of dealing with the situation. Choose the solution they themselves would most likely use in real life; they should also decide what Jesus would do in each scenario. Discuss answers with the entire group; make sure that they understand that sacrifice is something we do out of love, and that we all make sacrifices every day. Jesus' sacrifice is the ultimate sacrifice, done out of love for us. Discuss if they think they could do what Jesus did.
- Next time we gather for Mass, let's listen for the words "This is my Body," and "This is my Blood." Let's listen also for all the times that the priest mentions "sacrifice," both the sacrifice of Christ, and the sacrifice that we are called to be.

## To Live as Jesus Lived

Directions: For each scenario, brainstorm five solutions; then, decide what you would be most likely to do, and what you think Jesus would do.

1. Your family has planned a sight-seeing and learning vacation to Washington DC. However, a friend has invited you to go to Myrtle Beach with his/her family. You really like the beach, but the rest of the family wants to go to DC. You're free to choose. What would you do?
2. You are supposed to use your own money to buy a gift for the giving tree, and you have just enough for the gift the person requested. But you haven't been out with your friends in ages, and you all want to go to a movie, and out for pizza. But if you pay for this, you won't have enough money for the gift. What do you do?
3. The big football game is Friday, but your grandparents are in town for one day only to celebrate your cousin's birthday, and they really want to see you. What do you do?
4. There is a new kid at school who doesn't really fit in, and is having trouble making friends. The kids in your group have started making fun of him/her. What would you do?

## **A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke (22:7-27)**

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there." So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another which of them it could be who would do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

**The gospel of the Lord.**