

# EUCHARIST

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DISCOVERING THE MASS IN THE BIBLE

## LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

SESSION 1

**SAMPLE**



### LECTIO

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

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Nil Stat: Dr. Joseph E. Burns, Censor Deputatus

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# SESSION 1

## SOURCE AND SUMMIT: INTRODUCING THE EUCHARIST

### SESSION OVERVIEW

*Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.*

Eucharist. The Holy Mass. For “cradle Catholics,” this is often a sacrament they’ve participated in nearly every week of their lives—for some, every day. For non-Catholics, it is a foreign rite that many are cautious to approach. In both groups there is likely a varied understanding of the Eucharist and what the Church teaches about this sacrament, described as the “source and summit of the Christian life.”

While the information may be new to some and a refresher for others, important questions lead us all to discovery and clarity. For example: How do we respond to the Eucharist? How do we react to the idea that the Mass is the most dynamic and powerful sacrifice in all of human history? How do we respond to the Church’s teaching that it is a profound encounter with the life of the Trinity, imparting grace and strength to us and changing us from within? What does it mean when we claim that, in the Mass, the Paschal mystery—Christ’s life, death, and resurrection—is made present? Do we experience the reality that Jesus Christ is truly present in every Eucharist that has ever been, is, or ever will be celebrated? Do we believe that Jesus is longing to be united with us in this most blessed sacrament?

Over the course of this study, Dr. Brant Pitre will take us back to the biblical roots of the Eucharist. Together we’ll see how this sacrament is deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture. We’ll explore its origins, its foreshadowing in the many mysterious and miraculous events of the Old Testament and gospels, and the essential purpose and reality of Jesus’ words and actions at the Last Supper. In the end, we’ll examine how the Eucharist is not just a *something*, but rather *Someone* with whom we are meant to be in communion.

In this opening session, Dr. Pitre will introduce us to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He will explain the various names for this sacrament and tell us why the Church calls the Eucharist the “source and summit of the Christian life.”



## CONNECT

*Begin this session by leading the Opening Prayer and reading aloud the Introduction, both found in the Study Guide.*

1. Introduce yourself to the group and share one or two things that most interest you about the Eucharist. *Hopefully everyone in the group is here because they have an interest in the topic of the Eucharist. Sharing a common interest is always a great way to connect with others, so give everyone a chance to share. The Study Guide introduction noted that Dr. Pitre will reflect on eight names of this sacrament, and asked participants how many names they could think of. If discussion is slow on this first question, you might see how many names your small group can come up with.*

2. Describe a time when you shared a meal with someone or a group of people to celebrate an important event or milestone, such as a birthday, wedding, anniversary, or graduation. What made the meal memorable?  
*Personal responses from participants. Looking ahead to our study, the Old Testament Passover celebrated the freedom of God's people in the Exodus. At each Mass we celebrate Jesus' Last Supper and his death and resurrection.*

3. Why do you think sharing meals with other people is important in most cultures? How can they help people be present to one another and communicate better?  
*Personal responses from participants. One response might be that even today, but especially in ancient cultures, meals were shared with family. Friends who join the family meal become part of the family in some way. Family members share a common bond and care for one another, and the intimacy of family and friends gathered around one table for a meal shows this bond.*

*Participants can follow along with the outline in their Study Guides and take notes as key points are made during the video teaching. Then discuss the questions after each segment.*



## DISCUSS

*Following are suggested answers to the DISCUSS questions.*

### PART 1 – INTRODUCING THE EUCHARIST



*Play the first video segment, which will last about 14 minutes. At the end of the segment, discuss the following questions.*

1. What is one topic or term that you learned from this video segment? What has been your personal experience of the Mass up to this point in your life?

*Allow time for brief personal reflection and response.*

2. According to Dr. Pitre, what makes the Eucharist a “Trinitarian” mystery? How do Catholics participate in the life of the Trinity when they receive the Eucharist?

*The Holy Trinity is one God in three divine Persons with one divine nature; each of the Persons is eternally united. Jesus Christ is the incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Through the Eucharist we participate in the life and the love of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist—body, blood, soul, and divinity—we are also receiving the First and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity; or rather, we are being received by them, and we can offer ourselves in union with Jesus to the Father in the Holy Spirit.*

3. In this segment, Dr. Pitre tells us that what we believe about the Eucharist is going to affect how we see all of reality. What does this mean? What are some ways in which the Eucharist “shapes” your worldview?

*Dr. Pitre explains that how we see the Eucharist will affect how we see reality—how we see both the physical and the spiritual world. Dr. Pitre gives the example that often all the teachings of the Church seem to fall into place for someone looking into Catholicism once they come to understand the Eucharist.*

Another example might be that as we encounter Christ's self-sacrificial love in the Eucharist, we are given grace to imitate him in this way. Dr. Pitre also mentions the example of how the understanding that the Eucharist is the Body of Christ countered the false belief of Gnosticism that the body was "bad." Allow time for brief personal reflection and response to the last question.



## PART 2 – THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD



Play the second video segment. This segment will last for approximately 11 minutes. Then discuss the following questions.

4. What is the name used for the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:20–22? What can we learn about the Eucharist from this name?

*In this passage St. Paul calls the Eucharist “the Lord’s supper.” From this verse, we learn that the Eucharist is meant to be a kind of meal—a sharing at the altar of the Lord. As Dr. Pitre will also explain, sharing the meal of an altar indicates the language of sacrifice, which is another term for the Mass. The meal of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ; this reality will be explained in further detail as our study progresses over the ten sessions.*

5. What is the name used for the Eucharist in Acts 2:41–42? What can we learn about the Eucharist from this name?

*St. Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, calls the Eucharist “the breaking of bread.” From this verse we learn that the early Christian Church began celebrating the Eucharist immediately after Christ’s resurrection and ascension. Thus the celebration of the Mass goes back to the earliest days of the Church (and as we’ll learn in this study, the prefigurements of the Mass in the Old Testament go back even further!).*

6. What name(s) for the Eucharist come from Jesus’ words in Luke 22:19? What can we learn about the Eucharist from this?

*There are actually two names for the Eucharist found in Luke 22:19. First, St. Luke describes what Jesus is doing: “And he took bread, and when he had **given thanks** he broke it and gave it to them” In other places, emphasis added is in parenthesis (emphasis added). The Greek word used here for “given thanks” or “thanksgiving” is eucharistēsas, from which the word “Eucharist” is derived. In this same verse we also find the words of Jesus, who says, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance [anamnesis] of me.” The Greek word anamnesis can be translated as “remembrance” or “memorial”; this is where we get the term “The Memorial” to refer to the sacrifice of the Eucharist. From this verse, then, we can learn three very important realities: (1) that Jesus is saying and doing something very intentional at the Last Supper, (2) that the name “Eucharist” has a biblical foundation in the Greek text of the New Testament, and (3) that this thanksgiving and memorial of Jesus is both commanded and intended by him, when he says “Do this...”.*



## PART 3 – THE MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY



Play the third video segment. This segment will last for approximately 13 minutes. Then discuss the following questions.

7. Dr. Pitre describes eight different names for the sacrament of the Eucharist. Which of these strikes you the most? Why?

*Allow time for brief personal reflection and response.*

8. Is “the medicine of immortality” a term you have heard for the Eucharist before? How does the Eucharist give us eternal life?

*The Eucharist gives us eternal life because it is Jesus himself. And Jesus tells us: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).*

9. What makes the Mass a “mission”? How does the Eucharist empower us to participate in this mission?

*As Catholics, we are called by God to go out and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all nations (Matthew 28:19–20). Jesus, who is himself the good news, is united with us and dwells within us in the Most Holy Eucharist. By believing in and allowing this reality to transform our entire lives, we can become better witnesses to Jesus’ saving power and, with God’s grace, help bring the world to greater knowledge and love of God.*

*Direct participants to this session’s Memory Verse in their Study Guides, and read it together. Then lead the Closing Prayer. Encourage participants to do the COMMIT reflections on their own before you meet again as a group.*



## COMMIT

*Following are suggested answers to the questions participants will be asked to reflect upon in their daily COMMIT reflections. Emphasis (bold text) has been added to some of the Scripture passages to indicate how the passage answers the question.*

### COMMIT DAY 1 – SOURCE AND SUMMIT: ORIGIN & GOAL

*Participants will reflect on why the Church calls the Eucharist the “the source and summit of the Christian life.”*

The Trinity is the source of man and woman. Read Genesis 1:26-27. How do we see the Trinity in these verses? (Hint: Pay attention to the pronouns used.)

*Genesis 1:26 begins, “Then God said, ‘Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...’”. The use of these plural pronouns points to the Trinitarian life of God.*

The Trinity is also the “summit,” the goal of our lives. We are created in the image of the Trinity and called to return, like Jesus, to share in the life of the Trinity for eternity. Read John 14:2–3. How does Jesus describe that he is waiting for us?

*In this passage of John’s gospel, Jesus speaks of his “Father’s house” and says that he is going to “prepare a place” for us, and that he will “come again and will take you to myself.” This is the goal of our lives, to live forever with Christ in his Father’s house.*

Toward the end of their lives, both Peter and Paul describe the summit to which their fidelity to Christ is leading them. How do they describe what is waiting for them, and us, in the following verses?

2 Corinthians 4:14 – Paul recounts how God the Father “who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.”

2 Timothy 4:7–8 – Paul refers to “the crown of righteousness” that is laid up for him in heaven.

2 Peter 1:3, 10–11 – Peter refers to Jesus “who called us to his own glory and excellence” and then exhorts the early Christians to be zealous in their faith because “there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Chart in Study Guide to be filled in by participants reflecting on what they know already about the Eucharist, what they learned in the current session, and questions they still have regarding the Eucharist.



## COMMIT DAY 2 – NAMES OF THE SACRAMENT

Participants will reflect on a few of the various names for this sacrament.

Several of the names for this sacrament come directly from Jesus’ words spoken at the Last Supper Passover meal. Read Luke 22:19. Once Jesus takes the bread, what is his next action?

Luke 22:19 begins, “And he took bread, and when he had **given thanks...**”

“Thanksgiving” is an action that God’s people are continually exhorted to give to God. Look up the following examples:

Isaiah 12:1–2 – “You will say in that day: ‘I will give thanks to thee, O LORD, for though thou wast angry with me, thy anger turned away, and thou didst comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.’”

Psalms 95:1–3 – “O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.”

Psalms 118:28–29 – “Thou art my God, and I will give thanks to thee; thou art my God, I will extol thee. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Luke 22:19. After giving thanks, what is Jesus’ next action?

Luke’s gospel describes how Jesus took the bread and “**broke it**” (before giving it to the Apostles with the words “This is my body”). Even Paul records this action of Jesus breaking the bread in 1 Corinthians 11:24.

Acts 2:42. How is this sacrament described here?

Among other things, Acts tells us that the early Christians devoted themselves to “the breaking of bread.”

1 Corinthians 10:16. How does Paul describe the Eucharistic bread in this verse?

Paul refers to “the bread which we break.”

Look back at Luke 22:19. After Jesus gives the bread to his Apostles saying, “This is my body which is given for you,” what does Jesus tell his Apostles to do?

Jesus continues his words saying, “Do this in **remembrance of me**” (Luke 22:19).

The (CCC 1363) quote from the *Catechism* refers to the Old Testament understanding of memorial regarding the Passover. Read Exodus 13:1–9. Note the use of “remember” and “memorial.” In Exodus 13:8, what is each father to tell his son during the Passover memorial?

*Each father is to say, “It is because of what the LORD did **for me when I came out of Egypt**” (Exodus 13:8).*



## COMMIT DAY 3 – LECTIO - KOINONIA: HOLY COMMUNION

*Participants will reflect on 1 Corinthians 10:14–17.*

### LECTIO

In the opening line of this passage, what is Paul calling the Christians at Corinth to “shun”?

*Paul calls the Christians in Corinth to “shun the worship of idols” (1 Corinthians 10:14).*

St. Paul repeats a particular word in making the connection between the “cup” and “the blood of Christ,” and between the “bread” and the “body of Christ.” What word is this?

*The word that Paul uses to make these connections is “participation.” As Dr. Pitre explains in his teaching, the original Greek word used here is koinonia, which can be translated “participation,” but also “communion” or “fellowship.”*

How many times is the word “one” used in the last verse? What two things are described with the adjective “one”? Paul connects these two things in a cause-effect relationship; which of these two things is the “cause,” and which is the “effect”?

*The word “one” is repeated three times in verse 17. The word “one” is used as an adjective to describe both “bread” and “body.” Paul describes a cause-effect relationship between the bread and the body; it is because Christians partake of the one bread that they are one body.*

Paul used this same verb earlier in this letter. Look up 1 Corinthians 6:15–20. What does Paul exhort the Corinthians to “shun” in this passage? And why?

*Paul exhorts the Corinthians to “shun immorality.” Paul teaches that a Christian’s body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,” and this intimate communion with the Holy Trinity should cause us to live in a completely new way.*

### MEDITATIO

What false idols do you need to shun so that you can experience a deeper communion with Jesus Christ?

*Personal answers from participants.*

Reflect on the last Holy Communion you received. Thank Jesus for his invitation to “abide in him.” Take a moment now to make a spiritual communion and make a resolution to consciously “abide in Christ” in the moments after you next receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Write down some of the words you want to say to Jesus after receiving your next Holy Communion.

*Personal answers from participants.*

1 Corinthians 12:12–27. What topic is Paul discussing in this passage? In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to charity. As a member of Christ's body, how is God calling you to love and serve others? *Paul is discussing how we are all members of the body of Christ. Chapters 11, 12 and 13 are connected. As members of Christ's body and having received Jesus in the Eucharist, we are empowered to imitate Jesus' love and charity for others. Personal answers from participants for the final question.*



## COMMIT DAY 4 – “ITE, MISSA EST” – Go!

*Participants will reflect on the sacrifice of the Mass, and what it means to be sent on mission by Jesus Christ.*

Look up the following passages. Who is sent, and for what purpose?

Exodus 3:4–10 – *After Moses approaches the burning bush, God reveals himself and declares that he is sending Moses to Pharaoh that he might free God's people from slavery in Egypt.*

Isaiah 6:7–8 – *After Isaiah receives God's forgiveness and responds to God's call, Isaiah is sent to preach to God's people who are unfaithful (hearing but not understanding).*

John 3:17 – *Jesus, the Son of God, is sent by God the Father for the salvation of the world.*

John 15:15–16 – *Jesus calls his followers to “go and bear fruit.”*

And Jesus calls each of us to be the means by which the grace of the gospel reaches to the ends of the earth.

Look up Matthew 28:19–20. What does Jesus send us to do?

*Jesus sends out his Apostles, saying, “Go therefore and make disciples...” In Luke 10, Jesus also sent out 70 other disciples, telling them to “Go your way” and instructing them to proclaim to those they met, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” Jesus sends out his followers to share the good news of salvation that he brings.*

This exhortation in the Mass' dismissal to share the gospel message, and Jesus' words in Matthew 28, can feel intimidating for us. How am I to “share the gospel”? What words will I use? How do I even begin? But we can take encouragement from the following Scripture passage. Look up Mark 5:1–20. To whom is this disciple sent?

Mark 5:1–20 – *After Jesus heals a man who had been possessed by an unclean spirit, he instructs him to “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”*

The secret to our missionary success is to keep our intimate communion with Christ. After he is healed from the unclean spirit, what is this man's request in Mark 5:18?

*As Jesus is about to depart in the boat, the man “begged him that he might be with him.”*

Make one resolution for how you want to respond to this charge to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ and his Church.

*Personal answers from participants.*



## COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

*Participants will reflect on Juan de Juanes' Last Supper painting.*

Jesus and his Apostles encircle the table upon which they celebrate the Passover meal. Take a closer look at the Apostles. In what three ways is Judas Iscariot set apart from the other Apostles?

*Judas Iscariot is in the far right of the picture. The eleven Apostles have halos encircling their heads, but Judas has no halo (the eleven Apostles' names appear in their halos, while Judas' name is engraved on his stool). The eleven Apostles are clothed in robes of red and green, but Judas' robe is yellow, a color that was often used to represent envy. Finally, Judas holds the money purse in his right hand (see John 13:29). Additionally, the other Apostles are all turned toward Jesus, but while Judas' face looks at Jesus, his twisted body positions his back to Jesus to image Judas' betrayal and turning away from Jesus.*

Take a closer look at the faces and hands of the Apostles. What do these express?

*The eyes of the Apostles are fixed upon Jesus and the Host. The one Apostle that is not looking at Jesus looks to a disciple next to him in order to direct him by pointing to Jesus. Several of the Apostles clasp their hands in prayer, while others raise their hands in praise and adoration; others press their hands to their breast in humility and reverence before the gift of himself that Jesus gives at this Last Supper.*

John's gospel records Jesus' final teaching to the Apostles as they are gathered for the Passover meal. Read John 13:1–15. What does Jesus do before beginning the meal and teaching?

*John's gospel recounts how Jesus "rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded." Jesus concludes this action saying, "I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."*

## NOTES

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