

# EUCHARIST

---

DISCOVERING THE MASS IN THE BIBLE

STUDY GUIDE

SESSION 1

**SAMPLE**



LECTIO

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

BRANT PITRE



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

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L. Archbishop of Denver, May, 2015.

Copyright © 2015 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Educators of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modification from the Editio Typica copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Aurora Cerulli, Ashley Crane, Kate Flannery, Kris Gray, Jill Kotrba, Therese Obagi

Media: Steve Flanigan, Jon Ervin, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, Ted Mast, John Schmidt

Print Production/Graphic Design: Justin Deister, Ann Diaz, Brenda Kraft, Jane Myers, Devin Schadt

**Augustine Institute**

6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

FORMED.org

AugustineInstitute.org

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-9862288-1-0

# SESSION 1

## SOURCE & SUMMIT: INTRODUCING THE EUCHARIST



### OPENING PRAYER

Sweetest Jesus,  
Body and Blood most Holy,  
be the delight and pleasure of my soul,  
my strength and salvation in all temptations,  
my joy and peace in every trial,  
my light and guide in every word and deed,  
and my final protection in death. Amen.

—St. Thomas Aquinas' Short Prayer After Communion from *The Aquinas Prayer Book*, Sophia Institute Press

### INTRODUCTION

When we think of how the Mass or the Eucharist is presented in the Bible, likely the first passages that come to mind are the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, when Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover and broke bread with his Apostles. This isn't surprising, as it is from these gospel accounts that we find the words of Jesus that the priest repeats at each Mass. But what Bible passage on the Eucharist would you look up next? For many of us, finding that second passage about the Eucharist might prove more difficult. We might even wonder if there is another passage about the Eucharist in the Bible.

Over the sessions of this study, Dr. Brant Pitre will show us that prefigurements of, and teachings about, this sacrament are found in numerous books of both the Old and New Testaments. The Eucharist was not a sudden revelation of Jesus at the Last Supper, but rather something prepared for by Jesus in his teaching and miracles, prefigured in numerous events throughout the Old Covenant, participated in by the early Church in the days immediately following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, and consistently taught on by the Church beginning with such apostolic giants as St. Paul.

In this opening session, Dr. Pitre will introduce us to the Eucharist. We'll discover why the Church refers to the Eucharist as the "source and summit of the Christian life." And we'll take a look at various names for this sacrament. Dr. Pitre will reflect on eight different names—how many can you think of?

*Last Supper* © shutterstock.com







# CONNECT

1. Introduce yourself to the group, and share one or two things that most interest you about the Eucharist.
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?
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?

# DISCUSS



## PART 1—INTRODUCING THE EUCHARIST

*Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*

- I. Finding the Eucharist in Sacred Scripture is a journey from Genesis to Revelation; need to study both the Old Testament and the New Testament
- II. The Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life”
  - A. The Mass is the most visible sign of what it means to be a Catholic
  - B. 4 key reasons/explanations why it’s the “source and summit”:



1. The Eucharist is Jesus: not a something, but a Someone; we receive Jesus Christ himself; CCC 1324
2. The Eucharist is a Trinitarian mystery: we participate in the life and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; offered to the Father, in and through Christ, in the Holy Spirit; CCC 1325, 260
3. The Eucharist gives us a taste of heaven and of the end of time: points us both upward and forward; foretaste of eternal life; CCC 1326
4. The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: what we believe about the Eucharist shapes our worldview; CCC 1327

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## DISCUSS

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?

---

---

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?

---

---

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?

---

---





## PART 2—THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.

### I. We have a number of names for the Eucharist

A. Each comes from Sacred Scripture  
and Sacred Tradition

B. These help illustrate the many facets of  
this inexhaustible mystery, like the facets  
of a beautiful diamond

### II. The names for this sacrament:

#### A. Eucharist (Luke 22:19)

1. From the Greek word *eucharistēsas*,  
meaning “thanksgiving”

2. Jesus giving thanks at the Last Supper,  
the night before his crucifixion

#### B. The Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-22)

1. Name that is directly given to us in the  
New Testament

2. Term used by early Christian communities  
to signify gathering to eat and drink  
the Body and Blood of the Lord

#### C. The Breaking of the Bread (Acts 2:41-42)

1. The earliest name for the Eucharist in  
the apostolic churches

2. After Peter preaches and brings 3,000 souls  
to Christ in one day, Scripture tells us that  
they devoted themselves to “the breaking  
of bread and the prayers”

#### D. The Memorial (Luke 22:19)

1. During the words of institution, Jesus says,  
“Do this in remembrance of me”

2. The Greek word *anamnesis* literally means  
“to remember”; the Eucharist is not only  
an intellectual remembering, but a true  
making present of what took place in the  
Upper Room



## DISCUSS

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?



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

---



---

6. What names for the Eucharist come from Jesus' words in Luke 22:19? What can we learn about the Eucharist from this?

---



---



### PART 3—THE MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY

*Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*

I. The names for this sacrament (continued):

A. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

1. The Eucharist is the making present of the one sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary
2. In the Old Testament, food received from an altar is a sacrifice (Hebrews 13:9–15)

---



---



---

B. Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 10:15-17)

1. Term from St. Paul in the original Greek, *koinonia*, which means “communion,” “fellowship,” or “participation”
2. Christ wants something deeper than a personal relationship with us

---



---



---

C. The Medicine of Immortality

1. Term given by St. Ignatius of Antioch
2. Eucharist is a “medicine” that will extend our supernatural life

---



---



---

D. The Holy Mass

1. The “Mass” is the mission of every Catholic; we are called to receive Christ, and then go out to share and proclaim him to the world
2. The Eucharist brings us into intimate communion with Jesus Christ

---



---



---



## DISCUSS

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

---



---



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

---

---

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

---

---

*“The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfillment of the promise: ‘Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’ (Mt 28:20), but in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity... filling [us] with confident hope.”*

—St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*

## MEMORY VERSE

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

—Acts 2:42



## CLOSING PRAYER

Eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we thank you for this gift of yourself in the Most Holy Eucharist. You are our source and our summit. Only by your pure gift of love and grace are we created, and only by your power can we hope to live out the Christian life. Help us to remain faithful to your will for our lives, and to grow in our understanding of this profound mystery of the Eucharist. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## FOR FURTHER READING

St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (*Church from the Eucharist*), Encyclical Letter, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: April 17, 2003



# COMMIT—DAY 1

## SOURCE AND SUMMIT: ORIGIN & GOAL



*Pikes Peak and Garden of the Gods © John R. McNair / shutterstock. com*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting the Second Vatican Council, says that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324). In this session, Dr. Pitre teaches that there are four key reasons why the Church refers to the Eucharist with this description.

First, the Eucharist truly *is* Jesus. It is not just something, but Someone. When we receive the Eucharist, we are not simply receiving a symbol or a reminder, we are actually receiving Jesus Christ himself—his body and blood given to us at the Last Supper. As the Vatican Council says, “The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church, that is, Christ himself, our Pasch and Living Bread...” The expression that the Church draws her life from the Eucharist is true, because the Eucharist is Jesus and the Church draws her life from Jesus.

Second, the Eucharist is a Trinitarian mystery. As the incarnate Son and Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus is eternally united with the First and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity—God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Through the sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus gives us the gift of himself, and we are in turn called to imitate Jesus, offering ourselves in union with the Son, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, and in this way to participate in the very life and love of the Trinity.

Third, the Eucharist gives us a taste of heaven and the end of time. The opening paragraph of the *Catechism* says that “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life” (CCC 1). We are made by God to return to him. He is our beginning and our end, “the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 22:13), and “the source and summit”—our origin, goal, and very highest point—of our entire lives.



The Trinity is the source of all creation. Genesis begins with the words, “In the beginning, God created...,” later tells that the “Spirit of God” was moving over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:1-2), and then describes creation coming into being with God’s Word, “Let there be...” St. John opens his gospel reminding us that the “Word,” Jesus, was with God in the beginning and that all things were made through him (John 1:1–3). So the source of all is found in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is also 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.)

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?

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 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Timothy 4:7–8 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Peter 1:3, 10–11 \_\_\_\_\_

The Eucharist helps us reach the goal of eternal life in the divine love of the Trinity by bringing us into a deeper union with God in this life. The Mass is a participation in the life of heaven, which is the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity. Every time we receive the Eucharist we are in communion with the life of heaven—God himself.

Fourth, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith. What we believe about the Eucharist shapes our entire worldview. Think back to Dr. Pitre’s teaching in this session and your reflections on how the Eucharist shapes your worldview and reality. If you truly believe that the Eucharist is what Jesus says it is—his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—then it should transform your entire life. Jesus tells us: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Without Jesus, none of us can reach heaven. Jesus in the Eucharist fortifies us to grow in holiness and attain eternal life. We must return to the source to reach the summit.



© Augustine Institute photo. All rights reserved.

If the Eucharist truly is the source and summit of the Christian life, then the more we grow in understanding and partaking of this sacrament, the fuller our Christian life will be. By studying and reflecting on the Eucharist, we can enter into a more intimate relationship with Jesus, our Lord. Take time to reflect and fill in the three columns below. Come back to these columns as your knowledge grows and as your questions are answered during the ten sessions of this study. If they are not answered, be sure to ask your study leader, parish priest, RCIA instructor, or another trusted source to learn more!

A sample set of columns is provided below, followed by a blank set for you to use.

What I knew about the Eucharist before this session	What I learned about the Eucharist from this session	Questions I still have about the Eucharist and the Mass
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the Church's sacraments</li> <li>Catholics believe the Eucharist is Jesus' real Body and Blood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One name for the Eucharist is "the Medicine of Immortality"</li> <li>The early Christians celebrated the Eucharist</li> <li>The Greek word <i>koinonia</i> means "communion"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why are there two parts to the mass?</li> <li>Why do we fast before receiving Communion?</li> <li>Why does the Last Supper take place at Passover?</li> </ul>

What I knew about the Eucharist before this session	What I learned about the Eucharist from this session	Questions I still have about the Eucharist and the Mass
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>





# COMMIT – DAY 2

## NAMES OF THE SACRAMENT

“The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it” (CCC 1328). Just as an exquisitely cut diamond can be turned and viewed from various angles to see how the light reflects off each facet, so too the various names of the Eucharist allow us to see this incredible sacrament from various vantage points. Let’s take a look at some of these names.

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

---

As Dr. Pitre points out in his teaching, the English “given thanks” translates the original Greek word *eucharistēsas*, from which we derive the name Eucharist. “Thanksgiving” is an action that God’s people are continually exhorted to give to God. Look up the following examples. How, and why, are God’s people exhorted to give thanks?

Isaiah 12:1–2 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 95:1–3 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 118:1, 28–29 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 5:18 \_\_\_\_\_



We owe thanksgiving to God, who is all good, who bestows on us every blessing, and who is our salvation. In the gospels Jesus highlights the thankfulness of the lone leper who returns and falls at his feet, and he rebukes the lack of gratitude in the other nine (see Luke 17:11–19). But even in Jewish history, thanksgiving was more than a matter of words. Among the numerous types of sacrificial offerings described in the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus lists a particular *thanksgiving* sacrifice: the “thank offering,” which was offered with unleavened bread to give thanks to God for his deliverance, and anticipates the New Testament sacrament.

*Christ blessing bread and wine / bpk, Berlin / Gemaeldegalerie / Carlo Dolci / Art Resource, NY*

Let’s take a look at another name for this sacrament.

Luke 22:19– After giving thanks, what is Jesus’ next action? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Acts 2:42– How is this sacrament described here? \_\_\_\_\_

---

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

---

The earliest name of this sacrament refers to it as the “breaking of bread.” That Jesus “broke the bread” at first seems like an unexpected detail to note. But in light of what is to follow after the Last Supper meal—the harsh treatment, scourging, and crucifixion that will break Jesus’ body such that blood and water pour from his side—this act of “breaking bread” both recalls Jesus’ total gift of himself, and reminds each of us of the kind of love that Jesus calls his followers to imitate.

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 commands his Apostles to repeat what he has done and says, “in remembrance of me,” thus instituting the Eucharist as a memorial.

*“In the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.”*  
(CCC 1363, emphasis in original)

This sacramental memorial is more than just recalling; it is a making present.

The above quotation 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?

---

God commanded his people to keep the Passover feast each year. By the time that Israel entered the Promised Land, nearly all those who had lived through God’s mighty deeds of the Exodus had died. Later generations would not have been physically enslaved in Egypt or seen God’s miraculous deeds of the plagues or crossed the Red Sea, but nonetheless these later generations were able to proclaim, “What the LORD did for me.” The signs and wonders wrought so long ago in time were in some sense made present for God’s people in the Passover’s memorial remembering. The Eucharistic celebration, as we will see in our future sessions, makes present on the altar Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross in such a manner that we can partake of the actual body and blood of Christ.



*Jewish Passover / Cameraphoto Arte, Venice / Art Resource, NY*

In addition to “Eucharist,” “Breaking of Bread,” and “Memorial,” there are several additional names listed in the *Catechism*. Take some time to read paragraphs 1328–1332 in the *Catechism* and reflect on the richness of what these varied names teach us about this incredible sacrament. Which names are your personal favorites? Take a moment to thank God for his lavishness in giving us this sacrament, and ask him to increase your love of the Eucharist over the next weeks of this study.





# COMMIT—DAY 3

## LECTIO KOINONIA—HOLY COMMUNION

In his first letter to the Church at Corinth, St. Paul addresses this community's struggles and temptations as they strive to live out the Christian faith. At this time the Corinthians were contending with immorality and false teachings in their community, particularly in matters of liturgical practice, sexual purity, resolving disputes, and the difficulty of following Jesus among non-believers. Like the Corinthians, we often find ourselves straying or falling away. And, like the Corinthians, we should consider St. Paul's words as the inspired Word of God, allowing that God is speaking to us as well.

**LECTIO:** The practice of praying with Scripture, *lectio divina*, begins with an active and close reading of the Scripture passage. Read the verse below and then answer the questions to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage.

*"Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."*

—1 Corinthians 10:14–17

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

---

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?

---

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"?

---

**MEDITATIO:** *Lectio*, close reading and rereading, is followed by *meditatio*, time to reflect on the Scripture passage, to ponder the reason for particular events, descriptions, details, phrases, and even echoes from other Scripture passages that were noticed during *lectio*. Take some time now to mediate on the above verse.

Here is a short reflection taken from St. John Paul II's encyclical letter on the Eucharist and some questions to help you get started.

*"Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. We can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us. He enters into friendship with us: 'You are my friends' (John 15:14). Indeed, it is because of him that we have life: 'He who eats me will live because of me' (John 6:57). Eucharistic communion brings about in a sublime way the mutual 'abiding' of Christ and each of his followers: 'Abide in me, and I in you' (John 15:4)....*

*"Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. Saint Paul refers to this unifying power of participation in the banquet of the Eucharist when he writes to the Corinthians: 'The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Cor 10:16-17). Saint John Chrysostom's commentary on these words is profound and perceptive: 'For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ—not many bodies but one body. For as bread is completely one, though made of up many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.' The argument is compelling: our union with Christ, which is a gift and grace for each of us, makes it possible for us, in him, to share in the unity of his body which is the Church..."*

In the verses before our *lectio* passage (1 Corinthians 10:1–13), St. Paul recounts Israel's failures during the Exodus. Even though Israel experienced God's protection in crossing the Red Sea ("under the cloud" and "through the sea," 1 Corinthians 10:1–2), and even though God gave them manna and water to sustain them in their travels (they ate "supernatural food" and drank "supernatural drink," 1 Corinthians 10:3–4), still many turned away from God and either worshipped the golden calf ("idolaters as some of them were," 1 Corinthians 10:7, see Exodus 32) or worshipped the gods of Moab and committed immorality ("indulge in immorality," 1 Corinthians 10:8, see Numbers 25). It is after these opening verses of 1 Corinthians 10 that Paul exhorts the Corinthians "shun the worship of idols" (1 Corinthians 10:14). Paul reminds the Corinthians of Israel's failure so long ago so that the Corinthians might not also turn away from the God who has so richly blessed them with his gifts.



*The Manna from Heaven / Alfredo Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY*

The city of Corinth was infamous, even among the many pagan cities of the time, for its immorality. For those who had come to faith and been baptized into Christ, the culture in which they lived provided daily tests of their fidelity to Christ. In our *lectio* passage, Paul is about to speak of the communion that is the fruit of the Eucharist, but before he does so he admonishes the Christian community to take pains to avoid the false unions of the pagan worship, using the strong verb "shun."

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?



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

---

By using the Greek word *koinonia*, Paul emphasizes that the sacrament of the Eucharist brings about an intimate communion between ourselves and our Lord, whom we receive in this sacrament. With it, St. Paul points toward both the deeper reality of Jesus' presence with us in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and Jesus' desire to make himself available to us in this radical way. He wants to become one with us. In the above meditation, John Paul II referred to the mutual "abiding" of Christ and each of his followers that the Eucharistic communion brings about. 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 (see below). 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 your next Holy Communion.

---



---

## SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

St. John Paul II, in his encyclical on the Eucharist, writes, "It is good to *cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist*. This was the origin of the practice of 'spiritual communion', which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: 'When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.'" A spiritual communion can be made using our own words, or words such as the following composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori:

*"My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you have already come, and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen."*

Jesus desires *communion (koinonia)* with us—with each of us individually, and also together as members of his Body, the Church. St. Paul points out the relationship between the "bread" of the Eucharist and the "body" of Christ, the Church, when he says, "We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."

Paul also shows this connection in the order of the topics he addresses in his letter to the Corinthians. He first teaches on the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, before moving on to the topic of chapter 12. Look up 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?

---



---

# COMMIT—DAY 4

## “ITE, MISSA EST”—GO!



In this session, Dr. Pitre recalls a time in his life when he couldn't really understand or relate to the Mass, and was even relieved when it was over. When the priest says, “The Mass is ended, go in peace,” we may find ourselves replying a little too enthusiastically, “Thanks be to God!” and miss what is actually happening. There is a far deeper reality than our permission to run to the parking lot.

In Latin, the closing words of the Mass are “*Ite, missa est*,” literally “Go, it is the Mass.” Having received our Lord in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we are sent out with the charge, “Go.”

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

Exodus 3:4–10 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 6:1–8 \_\_\_\_\_

John 3:17 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:15–16 \_\_\_\_\_

While God does not require our assistance, he most often chooses to work through men and women to accomplish his will. God could have worked his signs and miracles without Moses, but from the burning bush he called a shepherd and worked through him to bring freedom to his people. When the kings and people of Israel turned away from God and his ways, he called Isaiah and the other prophets to preach repentance. And when he desired to bring salvation to men and women, God the Father sent his incarnate Son.



*The Burning Bush* © Tawfik Dajani / shutterstock.com

And Jesus calls each of us to be the messengers by which the grace of the gospel reaches to the ends of the earth. Through us he desires to touch the lives of our family members, neighbors, co-workers and acquaintances. Look up Matthew 28:19–20. What does Jesus send us to do?

---

In the closing words of the Mass “*Ite, missa est*,” the word *missa*, from which we derive the name “Mass,” comes from the Latin word *missio*, meaning “mission.” St. John Paul II described the Mass and its exhortation to share in the mission of Jesus Christ this way in his apostolic letter for the 2004–2005 Year of the Eucharist (emphasis in original):

*“Once we have truly met the Risen One by partaking of his body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we have experienced. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization. ... entering into communion with Christ in the memorial of his Pasch also means sensing the duty to be a missionary of the event made present in that rite. The dismissal at the end of each Mass is a charge given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values.”*



Thus at the end of Mass, when the priest tells us to go in peace, he is also reminding us that Jesus has sent us out on a mission to proclaim his good news to the entire world!

This exhortation 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?

---

God sends us first to those close at hand: to our family, friends, and acquaintances. He simply asks us to share with others what he has done in our lives. No big theological treatise must be given. No preaching is necessary. God sends us out to share the love of God that we have received.

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

---

Having encountered Jesus, this man "begs" that he might be "with Jesus." We too need to desire and strive to remain close to Jesus. We need to "abide in him" and let Jesus abide in us, and it is precisely here that the Eucharist and the Mass are an incredible gift that supplements and deepens our encounter with Jesus in our personal prayer and meditation.

It is precisely because of this man's desire to remain "with Jesus" that Jesus sends him out to share the gospel. Even though Jesus departs in the boat, this man abides and remains "with Jesus" and proclaims all that Jesus has done for him. And we are told that "all men marveled" (Mark 5:20). In fact, Mark's gospel records that the next time Jesus comes to Gennesaret, the people recognized Jesus and ran about the neighborhood bringing to him those who needed healing (see Mark 6:53–56). Having encountered Jesus in his own life, this man now loves Jesus in evangelizing and serving those around him.

Take a moment to consider the closing words of the Mass, "Go, it is the Mass," with which we are sent out to the world. And with the following words of Pope Francis, reflect on the question: How do I live this?

*We all go to Mass because we love Jesus and we want to share, through the Eucharist, in His passion and His resurrection. But do we love, as Jesus wishes, those brothers and sisters who are the most needy? ... I wonder, and each one of us should wonder: I who go to Mass, how do I live this? Do I try to help, to approach and pray for those in difficulty? Or am I a little indifferent? ... Or perhaps do I just want to talk: 'Did you see how this or that one is dressed?' Sometimes this happens after Mass and it should not! We must concern ourselves with our brothers and sisters who need us because of an illness, a problem. Today, it would do us such good to think of these brothers and sisters ... Let us ask Jesus, whom we receive in the Eucharist, to help us to help them.*

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

---

# COMMIT-DAY 5

## TRUTH AND BEAUTY



Juan de Juanes, *La Santa Cena (The Last Supper)*, c. 1560

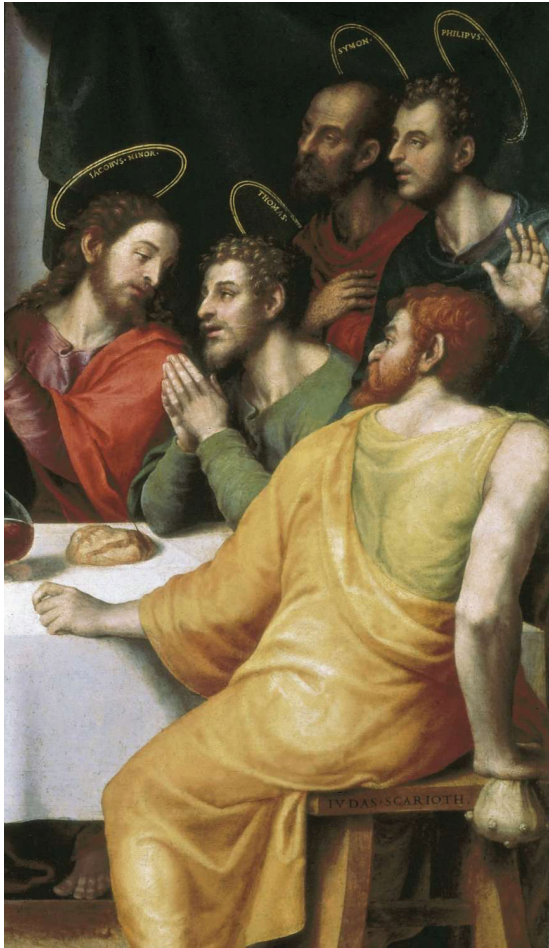


*Last Supper* © shutterstock.com

Juan de Juanes painted his *Last Supper* for the base of the main altarpiece in the Church of San Esteban in Valencia, Spain. On either side of this work were panels showing *The Agony in the Garden* and *The Crowning with Thorns*. While this work seems influenced by Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Last Supper* (a copy of which was at that time in the Cathedral of Valencia), Juan de Juanes' technique, including his colors and figures, recall Raphael. In fact, Juan de Juanes is sometimes referred to as the Spanish Raphael.

The painting depicts Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (see Matthew 26:20–35; Mark 14:17–31; Luke 22:14–38).





*Last Supper* © shutterstock.com

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?

---



---



---

The gospels tell us that while they were eating,

*“[Jesus] took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’”*

—Mark 14:22

Juanes captures the moment just after these words, and beautifully places Jesus’ hands to emphasize the Church’s consistent teaching throughout the centuries. Jesus’ right hand raises up the Host, the “this” of Jesus’ words. Jesus’ left hand touches his breast, the “my body” of his words. Thus Jesus’ hands connect the Eucharistic Host with the body of Christ—the host is Christ, and Christ is the host. As the *Catechism* says, “For in the blessed Eucharist is...Christ himself”(CCC 1324).

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

---



---

Radiating adoration, the eyes and faces of the Apostles are fixed upon Jesus and the gift he presents to them, his Real Presence in the Eucharist. Earlier in his ministry Jesus had taught that “the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6). Here at the Last Supper, Jesus now fulfills these words. Echoing the words of creation where the world was brought into being when God said, “Let there be...,” Jesus institutes the Eucharist, the sacrament of the new creation, saying, “This is...”

While Juanes’ work reflects Da Vinci’s *Last Supper* in its arrangement, with Jesus in the center framed by the window of the upper room, there is a striking difference: Da Vinci’s work, painted in the late 15th century, displays no chalice or host. Juanes, however, paints his *Last Supper* during the Counter Reformation. In the 16th century, many had left the Catholic Church to follow Protestant leaders who disputed the Church’s ancient teachings, including denying that the Eucharist truly was Jesus’ body and blood.

Wanting to redirect his viewers to the apostolic teaching of the gospels and the Church, Juanes purposefully recalls both the ancient Passover meal of Jesus and his Apostles, and Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at this meal. Into the scene of the Last Supper Juanes has placed the host and the chalice, displaying the body and blood of Christ in the forms that the viewer of his day saw at each Mass, and communicating that the host received by his Renaissance audience is the same unleavened bread, the same body and blood of the Lord, that the Apostles received from the hand of Jesus. In fact, to emphasize this point, the chalice in front of Jesus is the Holy Chalice that was in the Valencia Cathedral (a holy relic which had arrived in Valencia as a gift from King Alfonso V in 1424).

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 the meal begins?

---



---



---



*Last Supper* © shutterstock.com

The large pitcher and basin placed on the floor in the foreground of the painting allude to the foot washing that took place before the supper. When Peter objects to Jesus washing his feet, Jesus responds, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me” (John 13:8). Thus this washing represents the waters of baptism that wash us clean of sin and initiate us into the family of God wherein we can partake of the mystery of the Eucharist.

Jesus tells his Apostles, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). In washing the Apostles’ feet, Jesus gives these closest disciples and future priests of the New Covenant a model of the servant’s heart they are always to possess. Thus the pitcher and basin in the foreground bring us back to the painting’s central character, Jesus Christ, *the* Servant of the Lord, whose gift of himself in this first Eucharist anticipates the self-gift he is about to make for each of us on the Cross.



## SESSION 1

## SOURCE & SUMMIT: INTRODUCING THE EUCHARIST

Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text or the discussion questions. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you've learned into specific action?

This image shows a single sheet of cream-colored paper with horizontal ruling lines. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor discoloration and faint smudges. There are 20 horizontal lines in total, evenly spaced across the page. The lines are a light brown or tan color. The paper is oriented vertically and occupies the entire frame.