



SAMPLE

SYMBOLON™

THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED



SESSIONS 5-6

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE™



SYMBOLON™

THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

SESSIONS 5—6

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AN INTRODUCTION TO SYMBOLON

Welcome to *Symbolon*! Whether you are looking to grow in your faith or just learning about the Catholic Church for the first time, *Symbolon* will take you through a journey into the timeless beauty and truths of the Catholic faith and reveal God's incredible love for us—the story of our salvation.

These 10 sessions of *Symbolon—Knowing the Faith*, will take you through the Creed, or statement of beliefs that Catholics all around the world profess at every Mass. Filmed on location in Rome, the Holy Land, Calcutta, and in the Augustine Institute studios in Denver, CO, *Symbolon* is not just about an intellectual understanding of Catholicism, but a journey of faith, discovery, and friendship with Christ that will make a lasting impression on our lives. Featuring dozens of nationally known teachers, *Symbolon* unveils the beauty and richness of the Catholic story, and brings us into a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, his plan for our lives, and how we can live this plan more deeply in our daily lives.

Your Participant's Guide will be your companion on this journey of faith as you view the DVD's, participate in small group discussion, and engage in prayerful meditation on God's plan for your life.

PARTICIPATING IN A SYMBOLON SESSION

Everything you need to participate in a *Symbolon* session is provided for you. Your Participant's Journal and other resources are carefully crafted to lead you through an opening of your heart and mind to God's Word, into the key truths of the particular doctrine that is the focus of the session, and ultimately to make a response of faith by turning more fully to the Lord with each session.

Your Participant's Journal will guide you through the steps of the session and provide plenty of space for you to take notes and make reflections for later consideration.

A typical *Symbolon* session consists of:

- **Opening Prayer:** The session opens with a prayer drawn from the rich tradition of the Church and writings of the saints. You can read along during the prayer and refer back to it during the week.
- **Introduction:** Your leader will give a brief overview of the topic, including the key points for the session. This helps you see the “big picture” of the topic and its relevance for your daily life.
- **Video Part I:** The first video introduces the topic and helps establish its relevance as you seek to deepen your relationship with God and his Church.

- **Proclamation:** Your leader will give a brief summary statement of the doctrine that is the focus of the session. It is a bold statement of faith in what God has revealed and an overview of the doctrine you will be learning about in more detail in the rest of the video.
- **Video Part II:** The second video goes into more depth on the topic and gives a brief but thorough explanation of the essential truths that can unlock your understanding of the Church's teaching. It also includes a section on life application, calling you to a deeper conversion and inviting you to give your life more to Jesus through a particular aspect of the faith.
- **Life Application:** After the video, you will have a chance to reflect on discussion questions designed to help you more deeply understand and explore the key points of the session. In addition, you will be asked to apply what you have learned to your daily life in the upcoming week in a "Call to Conversion."
- **Closing Prayer:** Each session concludes with a prayer that reflects fundamental teachings and helps you to focus more deeply on the truths that were revealed.

In addition, your Participant's Guide contains references and resources for further reading and study. You are encouraged to memorize and reflect on a Scripture Verse of the Week that is included with every session. These bonus materials will help you nurture the grace and faith that has been poured out through your catechetical session.

Symbolon is your guide to the depth and breadth of the Catholic faith. By bearing witness to the beauty of the teachings and the tradition of the Catholic Church, *Symbolon* enables you to grow in knowledge of the Catholic faith and in relationship with our Lord along with others in your community. Through this comprehensive program, your life, we hope, will be transformed by God's truth and grace.



What does *Symbolon* mean?

In the early Church, Christians described their Creed, their summary statement of faith, as the *symbolon*, the “seal” or “symbol of the faith.”

In the ancient world, the Greek word *symbolon* typically described an object like a piece of parchment, a seal, or a coin that was cut in half and given to two parties. It served as a means of recognition and confirmed a relationship between the two. When the halves of the *symbolon* were reassembled, the owner’s identity was verified and the relationship confirmed.

In like manner, the Creed served as a means of Christian recognition. Someone who confessed the Creed could be identified as a true Christian. Moreover, they were assured that what they professed in the Creed brought them into unity with the faith the Apostles originally proclaimed.

This series is called *Symbolon* because it intends to help bring people deeper into that communion of apostolic faith that has existed for 2,000 years in the Church that Christ founded.

Session 5



WHO IS JESUS?



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WHO IS JESUS?

Just a Good Man or Lord of our Lives?

INTRODUCTION

Who is Jesus?

People have been asking that question for 2,000 years. Today most would agree that Jesus was a historical figure, a first-century Jew who was crucified by the Romans in the city of Jerusalem. Many would even agree that he offered some good moral teachings. However, the idea that Jesus could actually be God is as controversial now as it was in his own time.

However, that is exactly what Christians profess in the Creed—"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father."

For Christians, the answer to the question of Jesus' identity is simple: he is God, come to live with us.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Who Jesus really is**
- **Why it doesn't make sense to think of Jesus as merely a good moral teacher**
- **How Jesus can be both God and man at the same time**
- **The real reason Jesus came to live with us**



OPENING PRAYER

O my Divine Savior,
Transform me into yourself.
May my hands be the hands of Jesus.
Grant that every faculty of my body
May serve only to glorify you.
Above all,
Transform my soul and all its powers
So that my memory, will and affection
May be the memory, will and affections
Of Jesus.
I pray you
To destroy in me
All that is not of you.
Grant that I may live
But in you, by you and for you,
So that I may truly say,
With St. Paul,
'I live—now not I—
But Christ lives in me.'
Amen.

— St. John Gabriel Perboyre, a French priest who
died as a martyr in China on September 11, 1840

"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle."

—Blessed Pope John Paul II, August 19, 2000 at World Youth Day in Rome

www.calledbychrist.com/mn-vocations/E-News-2011-05-Blessed-John-Paul-II-Champion-of-Catholic-Youth-and-Vocations.pdf



? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the video, what are three things Jesus did during his public ministry that point to his being truly God?
2. What do you think it means for Jesus, the divine Son of God, to be truly and fully human? Can you imagine Jesus being tired, hungry, or angry? How does seeing Jesus as having all the same feelings and experiences you have (except for sin) change the way you tell him your needs and desires in prayer?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

- #1** Prayerfully read the following quote from C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, which was mentioned in the video.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a

lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

(C.S. Lewis was an Oxford professor and a famous 20th century defender of the Christian faith. He is also the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.)

Now, prayerfully imagine Jesus standing before you and asking you the question he asked his Apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” How would you answer him?

#2 Jesus tells us to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). What do you seek first in your life? Do you truly put Jesus first in your life? Or do you seek other things to fulfill you, and have God as just a part of your life?



#3 Allowing Jesus to reign over our lives as Lord requires submitting our will to his. It means following his teachings, living the way he wants us to live and trusting that he knows and desires what is best for us. Write down one or two areas in your life where the way you are living now could be more in line with Jesus' teachings. What can you do this week to begin living more with Jesus as Lord of your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty,
my memory, my understanding and my whole will.
All that I am and all that I possess you have given me:
I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to your will.
Give me only your love and your grace;
with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more. Amen.
– St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except but by me.’” —John 14:6

DO YOU WANT JESUS TO BE THE LORD OF YOUR LIFE?

Visit www.SymbolonCatholic.org

As a participant in *Symbolon*, you have access to online resources to help answer your questions and enrich your faith.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about the Jesus, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Jesus Christ: “Mediator and fullness of all revelation”*: CCC 65–67
- *True God and true man*: CCC 464–469, 479–483
- *Jesus reconciles us with God*: CCC 457–460
- *The two natures of Jesus*: CCC 470–478

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 7*
- *Jesus of Nazareth (three volumes)* by Pope Benedict XVI
- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Life of Christ* by Venerable Fulton Sheen
- *To Know Jesus Christ* by Frank Sheed
- *Made for More* by Curtis Martin

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of cream-colored paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

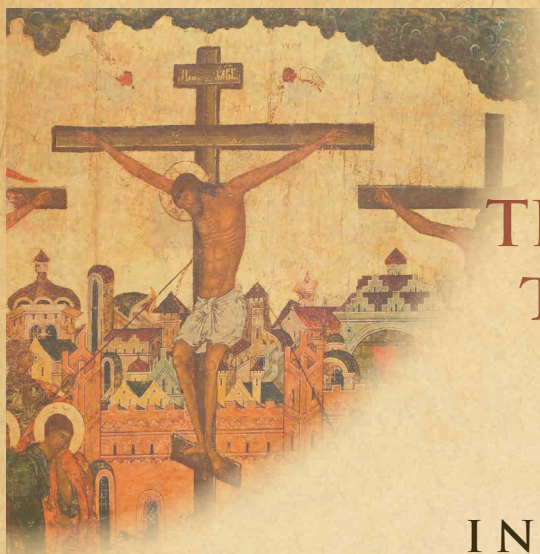
Session 6



THE PASCHAL MYSTERY



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THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: The Mystery of Jesus' Death and Resurrection

INTRODUCTION

Some of us might be so accustomed to seeing images of crosses in our churches, we may not realize that in the ancient world, the cross was a horrifying image. For people living 2,000 years ago, wearing a cross like jewelry around one's neck would be as shocking as wearing a little electric chair around our necks would be today. The cross was a well-known means of capital punishment, just as an electric chair has been in modern times. And yet the cross is the primary symbol of our faith because it is through Jesus' death on the cross that we have been given the gift of salvation and eternal life.

We call Jesus' work of redemption, accomplished principally through his passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, the Paschal Mystery. The word *Paschal* refers to Jesus' offering of his life as the new Passover (or Paschal) lamb for our salvation.

IN THIS WE LEARN ABOUT:

- **How the Cross “works”—how it brings about our salvation**
- **How Christ, being both God and man, was able to heal our relationship with God through his death on the cross**
- **What it means when we say that Jesus “descended into hell”**
- **What Jesus' death and Resurrection mean for our lives today**



OPENING PRAYER

Hail, sweet Jesus!
 Praise, honor, and glory be to you, O Christ,
 Who of your own accord did embrace death,
 and, recommending yourself to your heavenly Father,
 bowing down your venerable head, did yield up your spirit.
 Truly thus giving up your life for your sheep,
 You have shown yourself to be a good shepherd.
 You did die, O only-begotten Son of God.
 You did die, O my beloved Savior, that I might live forever.
 O how great hope,
 how great confidence have I reposed in your death and your Blood!
 I glorify and praise your Holy Name,
 acknowledging my infinite obligations to you.
 O good Jesus,
 by your bitter death and Passion,
 give me grace and pardon.
 Give unto the faithful departed rest and life everlasting.
 Amen. — Dom Augustine Baker, 1575–1641

“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.”

—From St. Alphonsus Liguori’s Stations of the Cross, a devotion meditating on Jesus’ carrying the cross and his death on Calvary



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Scripture tells us that the Son of God humbled himself to become man, and was obedient to the Father even to his death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–11). What does God’s willingness to enter our world, embrace our humanity and die for our sins tell us about God’s love for us? How can Jesus’ self-sacrificial love be an example for our lives?
2. According to the video, what does it mean when we say in the Creed that Jesus descended into hell?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:



#1 Have you ever considered what it means that Jesus died for you and paid the price for your sins? Take a few minutes now to thank him for the great gift that he gave you. You may want to silently pray the following prayer called the Act of Contrition, which expresses heartfelt sorrow for our sins:

“My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.”

#2 In the video, we heard that because we live in a broken world, we should never ask, “Will I suffer?” but rather “What will I do when I suffer?” As Peter says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (2 Peter 4:12). In fact, Jesus himself entered our humanity and has shared in our suffering. And he wants to be with us to help us in the midst of our trials. What do you do when you encounter suffering in your life? Do you turn to God or do you turn away from God? Make a commitment now to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters your life.

#3 Reflect on the following quote:

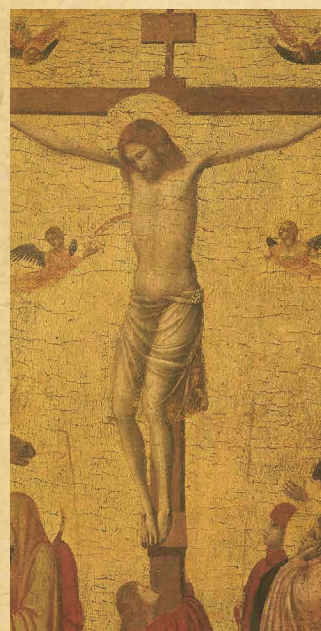
“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” —Luke 9:23

Consider some ways you can imitate Christ’s sacrificial love more in your life. For example, how can you be more generous in your relationship with God? What are some ways you can deny yourself—your time, comfort, or desires—and make sacrifices to serve better the people God has placed in your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

O Jesus, you have called me to suffer
because you on your part suffered for me,
leaving me an example that I might follow.
When you were insulted,
you did not return the insult.
When you were mistreated,
you did not counter with threats
but entrusted yourself to the One who judges justly.
By your wounds we are healed.
Help me to imitate you in suffering.
Let me break with sin by means of my sufferings,
so that I may no longer live
according to the lusts of sinners
but according to the will of the Father.
Since you yourself have suffered and been tempted,
I know that you are able to bring aid to all
who suffer and are tempted.
I entrust myself to you and to the Father, my Creator,
knowing that you will never fail me.
Amen. —Prayer to Imitate the Suffering Christ
<http://www.2heartsnetwork.org/wounds.htm>



SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." —Galatians 2:20

DO YOU WANT TO UNITE YOUR LIFE MORE WITH JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION?

Visit **www.SymbolonCatholic.org**

As a participant in *Symbolon*, you have access to online resources to help answer your questions and enrich your faith.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about the paschal mystery, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *The Trinity: CCC 238-248, 452-455*
- *Value of Christ's sacrifice: CCC 616-617*
- *The descent into hell: CCC 632-635*
- *The meaning of the Resurrection: CCC 651-655*
- *Jesus precedes us into heaven: CCC 665-667*
- *Our participation in Christ's sacrifice: CCC 618*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 8*
- *Making Sense Out of Suffering* by Peter Kreeft
- *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week* by Pope Benedict XVI

NOTES

