

# SESSION 14: SOURCE

**TOPIC:** The Mass and the Eucharist



## GOAL

The goal of this session is to impart the central importance of the Mass in the Catholic faith and the journey of a young Catholic. By teaching the teens where the Mass parts come from, they will gain a greater appreciation for the holiness of the Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

## KEY CONCEPTS

The Mass is often underappreciated but is the most perfect and beautiful celebration of our Catholic faith.

The Last Supper was the first fruits of the Mass; it has been handed down over the centuries and has roots in Scripture.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ literally becomes one with us by offering His body for us to consume.

## KEY TERMS

**Eucharist:** The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church; the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation.

**Transubstantiation:** The unique change of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

## SCRIPTURE

Exodus 16:13-15, John 1:1,14, John 6:53-58, Matthew 8:8

## CATECHISM

1328, 1337, 1349, 1353

## ABOUT THIS CONFIRMATION SESSION

The Engage is a modified *Summit* session followed by a game that investigates recorded miracles related to the Eucharist. The Reflect examines the origins and meanings of the Mass and the Eucharist while encouraging the teens to view the Mass differently than they have in the past. The Respond is a guided reflection on the spiritual aspect and beauty of the Mass. The teens are then invited to bring a journal with them each time they attend Mass to write down one thing that stood out to them during the Mass. The session ends with the Come, Holy Spirit prayer.

## ENGAGE

*Open in Prayer (5 min)*

*Miracles: Fact or Fiction (15 min)*

Go through the following statements on Eucharistic Miracles and see how many your candidate can get right as Fact or Fiction.

- The Catholic Church does not have any documented or approved miracles related to the Eucharist. **Fiction**
- The term “Eucharist” means “body of Christ.” **Fiction**
- All of the documented Eucharistic miracles that have been approved by the Church have the same universal blood donor type, AB. **Fact**
- The only Eucharistic miracles documented occurred before the 1900s. **Fiction**
- The most recent Eucharistic miracle occurred in 2008. **Fact**
- There is an investigation into a Eucharistic miracle in Salt Lake City, which would be the first for the United States. **Fact**
- Pope Francis witnessed a Eucharistic miracle while he was a cardinal in Argentina. **Fact**
- The most common Eucharistic miracle reported is the host turning to flesh. **Fiction**  
*(Actually, hosts that are bleeding are the most common.)*
- A particular Eucharistic miracle involved a host turning into a piece of flesh. After scientists studied the tissue, they determined it was heart tissue and was woven into pieces of the host bread in a way that could not be reproduced by human means. **Fact**

Use the following to transition into the Reflect:

*As strange as these may sound, there have been quite a few documented Eucharistic miracles throughout the life of the Church. Some of these miracles seem truly unbelievable. Here are a few examples:*

1. *In the 700s, a priest in Lanciano, Italy was experiencing doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In the middle of celebrating Mass, during the consecration, the bread and wine transformed into real human flesh and blood. The blood coagulated into five globules. The local archbishop launched an official investigation, and the Church approved the miracle. The flesh is preserved to this day and can be visited. A professor of anatomy, Odoardo Linoli, analyzed the flesh in 1971 and concluded that the flesh was cardiac tissue, the blood appeared to be fresh blood (as opposed to blood that was 1,200 years old), and there was no trace of preservatives.*
2. *In the 1200s, a woman in Portugal was so distraught that her husband was unfaithful to her that she consulted a witch for help. The witch requested a host as payment. The woman attended Mass and attempted to take a consecrated host out of the church. As she left, the host began to bleed profusely. She tried to hide it in a trunk, but as her story goes, a light emanated from the trunk all night. She repented and confessed to her priest who retrieved the host and placed it in a monstrance, where it can be viewed to this day.*

3. *More recently at St. Mary Parish in Buenos Aires, a host began bleeding during consecration and appeared to transform into human tissue. Intense scientific studies were requested and determined that the tissue was, in fact, human flesh from the heart and specifically the left ventricle. The tissue even showed signs of being alive — the researchers found white blood cells in the tissue, which do not live long outside of a living body. Pope Francis is the bishop who commissioned the study.*

## REFLECT

### *“Source” Teaching (20 min)*

Use the following as a guide for a time of reflection:

#### **Introduction**

How often do you go to Mass but cannot recall a single thing you heard? What were the readings about? What did the priest say in the homily? The Sacrament of the Eucharist — the focal point of the Mass — is often called the “source and summit” of our faith, but what does that really mean?

The Eucharist is vital to our faith life and integral to both our community with each other and with God. We come together each week, or each day at daily Mass, as one body, to partake in the body of our Savior. The beauty of the Mass is that it fulfills all of our needs and desires. All of the other sacraments point toward it. It is the only sacrament that contains Christ Himself in the flesh. Mass is the foundation for every aspect of our relationship with God.

*Ecclesia de Eucharistia 1, CCC 1324*

- *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “It is important to go to Mass every Sunday”? Why?*
- *Why do we refer to the Mass as the “source and summit” of our faith?*

#### **What Does Eucharist Mean?**

The term “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving.” It is meant to be an act of thanksgiving for all God has done for us: our creation, redemption, and sanctification. It is a praise of the wonderful works of God, the beauty of the Savior sent for us. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist — the tool for our salvation — as a memorial of His death and Resurrection until He returns at the end of the age.

*CCC 1328, 1337*

The Last Supper was the first fruits of what we now know as the Mass. The structure has been preserved through the centuries and finds its roots in Scripture. If you listen closely, much of the wording used throughout the Mass has its basis in the Bible.

For example, during the *epiclesis*, which is Greek for “calling down from on high,” the priest uses the phrase, “Send down your Spirit upon us like the dewfall.” This references the food God sent to Moses and the Israelites when they were wandering in the desert. After they were freed from

slavery, they wandered in the desert in search of the Promised Land. When they ran out of food, God sent them manna (bread from heaven) that manifested in the morning dewfall. This reference serves as a reminder that Jesus is the true bread from heaven as well as that God provides for His people.

*CCC 1353, Exodus 16:13-15*

Another example is during the Communion Rite when we say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” We are actually repeating similar words from a story in the Gospel of Matthew when Christ healed the servant of a Roman centurion who asked for His mercy.

*Matthew 8:8*

Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, so we treat it with great reverence. We venerate it during Adoration, preserve it in a worthy place — the tabernacle — and make sure we are worthy to receive it by reconciling ourselves to God and our community.

*CCC 1378-1379*

- *Since the word “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving,” what are some things in your life for which you thank God?*
- *Why is it important for us to be grateful to God?*
- *Where else in the Mass do we hear words from Scripture?*

### **Liturgy of the Word**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). Saint John begins his Gospel with these simple yet profound words, and the structure of the Mass follows much the same way. In the beginning, we have the Liturgy of the Word, where the Old Testament, Psalm, New Testament, and Gospel are read. The Word offers us a chance to encounter Christ through the “writings of the prophets” and the “memoirs of the apostles” (CCC 1349).

- *Saint Jerome said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” What did he mean?*
- *How do we show reverence for the Bible at Mass?*

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

After we hear the Word, the Word literally becomes flesh and dwells within us. We have the opportunity to consume the actual body of Christ, which then becomes one with us as our body absorbs His into ours. Just as Christ gave up His body for us on the cross and instructed the apostles to do this in memory of Him at the Last Supper, we are able to experience our Last Supper, where Christ once again gives up His body and blood for us. The sacrifice of the Mass represents the sacrifice of Christ, allowing us to participate instead of just spectate. The next time you receive the Eucharist, really think about it. By consuming the body of Christ, your body is breaking down and integrating the body of Christ into your cells. Christ is literally becoming a part of you.

*CCC 1323*

The priest acts in the person of Christ at Mass. This means that, through his prayers and actions, he serves to unite the prayers and offerings of the people to the sacrifice of Christ. During the Eucharistic prayer, the heart of the Mass, the priest uses the same words as Christ to call on the Holy Spirit to make the body and blood of Christ sacramentally present. Unleavened bread and wine from grapes are used, just as Christ used in the Last Supper and just as the Jewish tradition before Him used for Passover.

CCC 1353, 1566

There is so much depth to the Mass. As with anything we are exposed to often, it is easy to overlook how beautiful and special it is. When we always have food to eat and clean water to drink, we tend to take them for granted. We, as Catholics, have the bread of life and the living water, and it is easy to come to Mass each week and forget the awesome power of the sacrament. Not only does it bring us into closer union with Christ, but it has the power to forgive venial (small, non-mortal) sins and protect us against grave sins. Every time we receive the Eucharist, the grace we received at our baptism increases.

CCC 1391-1392, 1394, 1397; John 4:14

As with all important undertakings, there are requirements to receive the sacrament. In order to partake in Communion, you must be a baptized member of the Church and believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist through transubstantiation, meaning you believe the bread transforms into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. Transubstantiation means we believe the bread and wine transform but retain the appearance of bread and wine. However, as evidenced by our Engage activity, there are numerous documented times when the bread and wine have changed substantially. You must also be free from grave or mortal sins and have fasted from food or drink for one hour prior to receiving.

CCC 1385, 1387

- *The Church believes the Eucharist is not just a symbol of Jesus' body and blood but is actually His physical body and blood. Do you find it easy or difficult to accept this teaching? Why?*
- *Why does God give us Eucharistic miracles occasionally?*
- *If receiving the Eucharist can forgive our venial sins, why is it important for us to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

### **How Can I Get More Out of Mass?**

So, now that you know more about this beautiful gift we have been given, how do you keep from taking it for granted? Get involved! Think about sports. If you love baseball, you most likely are going to want to play baseball, watch baseball, and live baseball. But if you expect to like it or learn more about it, you cannot just occasionally go to a game and sort of pay attention. If you want to get more out of the game, you do not sit on the bench but get on the field. You have to practice. The beauty of the Mass is that there are many opportunities to be involved and, in most places, Mass is offered daily. You have a chance to get off of the sidelines and play the game, to

be a part of something greater than yourself, something bigger than anything you will ever have a chance to experience. Heaven is literally touching Earth. What are you doing on Sunday?

- *What does it look like to “get in the game” at Mass?*

## **RESPOND**

*Eucharistic Reflection (15 min)*

*Imagine yourself at the Last Supper. You have been invited, along with the apostles, to celebrate the Jewish feast of Passover with the man they call the Messiah. You find yourself sitting at the table with Jesus. As He quiets the room, He looks you in the eyes, knowingly, and says, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.”*

*Then He takes up the bread, says a blessing over it, and breaks it apart, handing it to each of you, saying, “This is my body which is given up for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Next He raises the cup, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.”*

*Now imagine you are the only one in the room with Jesus. You and He are having a conversation, one on one. Imagine that He is saying these words directly and only to you: “given up for you,” “poured out for you,” “do this in memory of me.” Let those words wash over you. Weigh them one at a time. What do they mean to you?*

*How many times have you sat at Mass and let those words pass right through your ears? How many times have you heard those phrases and not paid attention? What is God trying to reveal to you about His sacrifice in this moment?*

Give the teens a few moments to reflect and journal on the above questions. After several minutes, proceed with the following:

*As we close with some of the prayers from the sacred liturgy, really listen to each word and think about its true meaning.*

Read the following prayer slowly and purposefully:

*Open our eyes Lord, help us see the Mass with the eyes of heaven, through the saints and angels. Send down your spirit upon us like the dewfall. Just as you gave to our ancestors in the desert in their time of need, please remember us in our time of need.*

*Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us. It is through your goodness that you give us the bread and wine, which will become for us the bread of life and the cup of salvation.*

*By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled Himself to share in our humanity. Humbly we pray that, partaking of the body and blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.*

*Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity. Remember all of your people, especially those we pray for now.*

*Lord, we are not worthy that you should enter under our roof, but only say the word and our souls shall be healed. Let us end with the prayer Christ taught us, our Father ...*

*Closing Prayer (5 min)*

Pray together the Come, Holy Spirit prayer, and give any final comments or instructions for upcoming meetings.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the Earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*