

THE MASS: AN INTRODUCTION

This introduction to the Mass is produced by the Archdiocese of Mobile in association with 4 p.m. Media. There are many wonderful series produced about the beauty of the Mass and much of the symbolism within the Mass. This production is different, and much more basic. Why go to Church at all? Why worship in the context of a meal? Why the rituals? How can it be that God comes to us in such ordinary ways? In this four-part series we seek to answer these questions in a very conversational format.

For a parish youth ministry program, this series can be used to encourage our young people to enter more deeply into the mystery of the Mass. Each video segment is approximately fifteen minutes in length, making it ideal for a one-hour youth session. There is time for gathering fellowship before the video and time for journal and discussion after the video is shown. This guide will help you facilitate this introduction to the Mass in a youth ministry setting. Please email the Office for Youth Ministry with comments, and especially with suggestions to include in the facilitator's guide.

Suggested Format of the Evening:

Gather – An ice breaker, song, prayer, or activity that ideally can be tied in with the focus of the video as an introduction or review of the previous video. This does not need to be lengthy, just something to make the young people feel more comfortable and open to reflecting and growing in their faith.

Video - After the opening activity and beginning discussion, show the video to the teens. Teens should be discouraged from texting or engaging in social media during the video, but should be aware of emotions or reactions stirred during the video.

Journal/Small Group Discussion – Give the teens time to journal with a few questions selected for each session. Warm up and in depth questions are provided here; choose some from each category to create a journal experience. Play soft or instrumental music underneath if you would like. After a few minutes to journal, invite them into small groups to discuss one or two of the questions; you may include small group leaders from your volunteers or core team to help facilitate fruitful conversation.

Prayer and Sent Wrap up and close the session with prayer, a preview of the next session (if applicable), and a challenge to the young people that ties in with the theme of the video.

Session 1: Why Worship at All?

The purpose of this session is to answer the question, "Why worship God?" "Why do I have to go to church?"

Suggested Gather activity: Survey the teens with the following questions – can be done anonymously as they come in: What is your first memory of the Mass? Have you ever asked your parents why do you have to go to Church? Is Mass something you look forward to? Have you ever felt bored or disconnected at Mass?

After answers are collected, survey them quickly to see how many have felt bored or disconnected at Mass? Explain that this is not sinful or "bad," but that we hope this introduction will help us enter deeper into the mystery of the Mass.

Show video

After showing the video, give teens time to journal and have small group discussion. Choose questions from each section but do not overwhelm them with too many questions.

Warm Up:

When you think of the Mass, what experiences do you think of?

What do your non-Catholic friends or classmates think of the Mass?

What's your favorite part of Mass? Why?

How do you set Sunday apart as the Lord's Day?

In Depth:

"If we forget who God is, we forget who we are" - Archbishop Rodi Have you ever felt lost or away from God? In those cases where we have forgotten God, how could it be related to our reception of the sacraments?

Is Mass something to do or experience? Explain.

What does Archbishop Rodi mean by a “weekend mentality” versus a “Sabbath mentality”? Which do you live out?

Like Dr. Meyer, have you visited other churches? What were you looking for, and did you find it?

Have you wanted to do something on Sunday but the Lord’s Day took precedence? What was the situation, and how did you react? How has that experience shaped you?

“You were made in the image of God, and you are loved by him.” Is this your experience of God, of your faith life? How can that fact radically change your life?

Prayer and Sent: Read the account of the Last Supper, or the account of God giving us the Ten Commandments in Scripture. Challenge the young people to be more aware of their experience at Mass, and to recognize when they are living a weekend or Sabbath mentality.

Session 2: Why Worship in the Context of a Meal?

The purpose of this session is to answer the question, “Why do we worship in the context of a sacred meal?”

Suggested Gather activities (choose one): Name a holiday/event associated with a meal and have teens name the meal (Thanksgiving – turkey, 4th of July – BBQ, St. Patrick Day – cabbage, Christmas – ham, etc.) Begin discussing events or ceremonies that take place within a meal. OR Each teen can go around and share their family meal traditions – such as fried turkey on Thanksgiving, special meals, etc. OR Begin this evening with a meal or snack technology-free: no electronics, no cell phones, etc.

Explain that meals have a special place in our celebrations of life. In today’s video, we will explore that further.

Show video

After showing the video, give teens time to journal and have small group discussion. Choose questions from each section but do not overwhelm them with too many questions.

Warm Up:

What’s your favorite family meal? Why?

How often do you gather as a family around the table? What does that look like?

What is your school meal routine? Who do you eat with, where, etc.? Why is that a better experience than eating alone?

In Depth:

How does your family share the joys and struggles around a meal? What family traditions do you all experience?

Place yourself at the scene of the Last Supper. How would the apostles react? How do you think Jesus felt?

“We feast on Word and Eucharist” – Is this your experience of the Mass? Why or why not?

How do you explain the Mass to your non-Catholic friends or classmates who may believe that the bread is only a symbol?

The highest compliment is being invited to dinner. God has invited you to a sacred meal. How have you responded in the past? How will you respond moving forward?

After listening to Archbishop Rodi, how do we respond or react to God wanting us to be reconciled to one another and to share a meal as children of God?

Prayer and Sent: Invite teens to picture the Mass while you read the account of the Last Supper. Challenge teens to enjoy a meal at home with no technology. Challenge young people to find a time to serve and to eat a meal at a homeless shelter or nursing home.

Session 3: Why is this Meal so Ritualized?

The purpose of this session is to explain why this meal, the Mass is so ritualized and not just a regular meal.

Suggested Gather activities (choose one): Once young people are gathered, ask them to stand, then to sit, then to stand again, then to sit, then to kneel, etc. These "Catholic Calisthenics" should remind us of Mass and can lead into a discussion of the reasoning behind them. OR Play a version of Charades but with parts of the Mass – write different actions or parts of the Mass on index cards and have a few teens take turns pulling a card then acting it out.

Explain that our full, active, and conscious participation is needed at Mass, even when we are not able to fully enter into worship of God. We know God wants us to worship him through a sacred meal, but why is the Mass set up the way it is?

Show video

After showing the video, give teens time to journal and have small group discussion. Choose questions from each section but do not overwhelm them with too many questions.

Warm Up:

Have you discussed your faith and the Mass with your non-Catholic friends or classmates? How did they react, or what questions were you asked?

How do you think the early Church celebrated the Mass?

How can you share the Mass with others?

In Depth:

Have you been asked when Catholics came up with the Mass, or why we celebrate Mass? How do you answer?

Do you experience the unfolding of the Mass in the same way as the early Christians? Why or why not?

Is there a particular part or specific thing within the Mass that you find boring or have difficulty understanding? Can the Mass "make sense" to you?

Imagine St. Justin walking into your parish for Mass. What would he find familiar? What would he find different?

Imagine walking into a non-Catholic worship service with St. Justin or another early Christian. How do they react? What do you experience?

Recognizing that our traditions and rituals have been passed, unbroken, from the apostles, will you be able to experience the Mass in the same way again? Why or why not?

Prayer and Sent: Ask the Holy Spirit to renew and refresh us, so that we may see the Mass as the early Christians did. Challenge the young people to do more research on St. Justin, or to attend a Mass outside of their Sunday obligation..

Session 4: Why Does God Come to Us in Such Ordinary Ways?

The purpose of this session is to explain why God chooses to come to us in such common place things such as bread, wine, and a book.

Suggested Gather activities (choose one): Ask the young people what some of their favorite foods are and if they know where they come from; for example, butter, eggs and flour on their own do not taste delicious, but mixing them together and with other ingredients can become delicious cake. OR Begin this session in the church with the pastor, and have him give a tour of the sacristy where they can see and touch the ordinary items that become extraordinary during Mass.

Explain that a meal seems ordinary, but God uses the ordinary to communicate and to share himself with us.

Show video

After showing the video, give teens time to journal and have small group discussion. Choose questions from each section but do not overwhelm them with too many questions.

Warm Up:

How do you experience God in ordinary or “normal” ways? How can you be more aware of him in the ordinary?

How does the Mass deepen your relationship with God?

How can you build up your faith life through the Mass?

In Depth:

If you have felt bored or un-entertained at Mass before, why? How can your experience of the Mass deepen beyond entertainment?

Do you experience God in your emotions only? How do you pray when you feel away from God?

How can you experience a newness at Mass?

Is it easy or difficult to accept the gifts that God gives you? Why or why not?

What memory do you have of your first communion? How is your experience of Mass different? Why?

“Our worship of God should never be boring” – how can you make this a reality in your life?

Prayer and Sent: Remind the young people that this is only an introduction, a beginning to the Mass. They are now being called and encouraged to dive deeper into their understanding and experience of the Mass. Challenge them to invite friends and family to a Mass. Challenge them to attend Mass as a group outside of Sunday obligation.