

Session 2 of 3

“Nourished” by the Eucharist: *Celebrating* the Liturgy!

Objective

In the previous session we saw how Jesus calls people of all types to the Eucharistic meal. In this session, “Nourished” by the Eucharist, we will look at how participating in the Eucharistic Liturgy is a CELEBRATION and is necessary in order to become strong and well prepared disciples of Jesus Christ.

Setting: On a table in front of the meeting space, place a basket of pita bread, a bible and a picture of a large group of people (it would be especially good if the picture is of the young people or people they know i.e. parish).

Materials: Large paper or poster, bibles, pencils, markers, pita bread, picture of youth group, class or large group of people

Opening Prayer: Jesus, Help us to realize the importance of the Eucharist in our lives and the many ways we are nourished by intentionally participating in the celebration of the Liturgy. Thank you for the gift of the Mass and the priests who make it possible for us to receive you each Sunday. May we appreciate the gift you are to us. Amen.

Leader: To the whole group ask them to imagine a Sunday and say:

It is Sunday morning and you were up late...you are too tired.

It is Sunday morning and it is gorgeous outside...the beach is calling your name.

It is Sunday morning and your mom insists you get dressed...in something other than jeans and a t-shirt.

It is Sunday morning...and you don't want to be bored.

It is Sunday evening...and you really want to finish your homework (your dad almost faints).

Sounds like it could be the beginning of a top 10 list of reasons why you don't want to go to mass doesn't it? What other excuses or reasons would you add to this list? (Leader, go ahead and finish the list with your young people. It will be used as a teaching tool.)

We have all used excuses to not attend mass. Why is it a big deal to skip mass? (Record answers). When we skip mass we deny ourselves the Eucharist. If we skip mass we can't just drive by and order “One Eucharistic meal to go” like we can a burger and fries. Something more is required. What actually goes on at mass anyway? (With your group make a list of *everything* that goes on at mass. Post this where everyone can see it.)

When the group list of “everything that goes on at mass” is completed you should be able to draw out these “Eleven Actions of Liturgy”. Prepare a poster, large paper or projector with these Eleven Actions. If any actions are missing from the group's list please add them as you go through the following:

Eleven Actions of Liturgy

1. We prepare for Liturgy

2. We sing
3. We speak prayers out loud together
4. We listen
5. We reflect and pray silently
6. We move and use gestures
7. We watch
8. We intercede
9. We thank
10. We offer
11. We receive and accept

As a group, go through each Action and identify how and in what part of the mass we do each of these. How do these actions make up part of our CELEBRATION of the Eucharist? What are we CELEBRATING anyway? (The Paschal Mystery, Eternal life!) You can also assign groups of youth to each of the actions and let them come up with an exhaustive list to be shared with the rest of the group. Make a point of sharing with the large group that these 11 items are actions; they are verbs and require us to do something more than just sit in the pew being bored, wishing we were at the beach or at home doing homework! How can you be bored with all of that going on?

Note - You can do the following section as a class or group presentation or in small groups; whichever works best for your group.

Leader: All read John 6: 35-58. Then say: If we have a desire to follow Jesus then we must live our life the way he has asked. In this scripture passage Jesus tells us we must “eat the bread of life” and that “his body and blood” is that bread. If we do not attend mass and participate in the liturgy, how will we be able to eat the “bread of life?” How will we gain eternal life? How can we become strong enough to be Jesus’ disciples without the bread of life? During the Last Supper Jesus commands the disciples and us to “do this in memory of me.” (Good spot for the clip “First Communion” chapter #74 from the *Jesus of Nazareth* DVD).

When we attend mass *and participate* we are nourished in these ways:

1. **We are nourished by the profound messages of the Word of God.** An acronym for bible is: **B**est **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth! The Word of God or the bible gives us instructions for successful Christian living. Are we really listening? Did we prepare by reading the Sunday scriptures ahead of time?
2. **We are nourished by the people in the pews around us.** We sing and pray together. We give each other the sign of peace. We offer the Church our time, talent and treasure as a community. Each one of us is an important piece of our Christian community. How good it is to see people we know, catch up on each other’s lives and worship our God together!
3. **We are nourished by the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.** The scripture passages we read in the last session show how Jesus calls each one of us to Him. He is the “bread of life” as we read in scripture today. On the walk to

Emmaus story the travel companions recognize Jesus in the “breaking of the bread.”

Leader: Discuss by saying something along these lines...When we skip mass or choose not to participate in the “breaking of the bread” we weaken our ability to live a Christian life. There is a small loaf of unleavened bread on the table before us similar to what Jesus used at the Last Supper. Unleavened bread contains no yeast, so that after baking it is a flatbread. Bread was one of the first “handmade” foods mankind made. But the making of bread is not so simple. You see the grain must be grown, irrigated and harvested. Then it must be ground or milled to separate the hull from the grain. Next, it is mixed with water and baked. Making bread is a many part process. Jesus could have picked olives, cheese or figs which were also a dietary staple of the peoples of his time. But He chose bread. Bread is an intentional food.

Being a Christian is an intentional thing too. We can be baptized; say we believe and even go through the motions during the sacraments. But to “BE” a Christian takes an intentional effort, just like making bread. To participate in Mass and be nourished by the Word, our Catholic community and the Eucharist is an intentional action too.

Note - You can go back to the list of excuses or reasons for not attending mass and break that open at this point.

Before you next participate in the Liturgy and receive the Eucharist at Mass, take time to use the following guide as a way to take ACTION and BE INTENTIONAL!

My Best Intentions for Participating in the Liturgy and Receiving the Eucharist

I will intentionally prepare for the celebration of the Liturgy by...

I will intentionally prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist by...

I will intentionally participate in the Liturgy by...

I have these questions about the Mass:

I will ask _____ to help me find answers to my questions about the Mass.