



SYMBOLON™

THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

PART 1 KNOWING THE FAITH

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

SESSIONS 1-10

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General Editor

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SYMBOLON FAITH STUDY SCHEDULE

Where?

- Holy Cross Collegiate (HCC – Room 238A – Please use south parking lot doors.)

When?

- Sundays at 7:00 PM.

For more information please contact Tomás Rochford at 403-324-3795 or email at trochford@redeemer.ab.ca

Schedule of Weekly Meetings from November 2022 to April 2023.

Date	Video and Discussion	Love Unveiled (Sri) Reading	Compendium Paragraphs
<i>Part 1: Knowing the Faith</i>			
Sunday, November 20, 2022	Session 1: The Journey of Faith	pp. 11-31	#25-32, 572-576, 53, 44-49
Sunday, November 27, 2022	Session 2: Divine Revelation	pp. 32-46	#1-17
Sunday, December 4, 2022	Session 3: The Bible	pp. 32-46	#18-24
Sunday, December 11, 2022	Session 4: The Story of Salvation	pp. 47-61	#63, 66-78, 85, 166-172, 144-145, 214-215
Sunday, December 18, 2022	Session 5: Who is Jesus?	pp. 62-82	#9-10, 79-93, 112-113, 117-135
Sunday, January 8, 2023	Session 6: The Paschal Mystery	pp. 83-99	#46-47, 83-84
Sunday, January 15, 2023	Session 7: The Holy Spirit and the Life of Grace	pp. 100-116	#136-146, 422-428
Sunday, January 22, 2023	Session 8: Why Do I Need the Church?	pp. 117-135	#147-160, 160-171, 177-193
Sunday, January 29, 2023	Session 9: Mary and the Saints	pp. 136-153	#96-100, 194-199
Sunday, February 5, 2023	Session 10: The Last Things	pp. 154-169	#200-216, 354-356
<i>Part 2: Living the Faith</i>			
Sunday, February 12, 2023	Session 11: The Sacraments	pp. 170-185	#220, 224-232, 250-270, 351-353
Sunday, February 19, 2023	Session 12: The Eucharist	pp. 186-203	#271-294
Sunday, February 26, 2023	Session 13: Walk through the Mass	pp. 204-214	#218-223, 233-249, 277, 286-289, 450-454
Sunday, March 5, 2023	Session 14: Penance & Anointing the Sick	pp. 215-227	#295-320

SYMBOLON FAITH STUDY SCHEDULE

Date	Video and Discussion	<i>Love Unveiled (Sri)</i> Reading	<i>Compendium</i> Paragraphs	
Sunday, March 12, 2023	Session 15: Matrimony & Holy Orders	/	#321-350	
Sunday, March 19, 2023	Session 16: A Catholic Moral Vision	pp. 228-240	#357-400, 429-433	
Sunday, March 26, 2023	Session 17: A Love that Lasts – Discovering Authentic Love	pp. 241-258	#434-466, 487-491	
Sunday, April 2, 2023	Session 18: A Love that Lasts – God’s Plan for Sexuality	pp. 241-258	#487-502	
Sunday, April 16, 2023	Session 19: Catholic Social Teaching – Civilization of Love	/	#401-421, 455-465, 466-479	
Sunday, April 23, 2023	Session 20: Catholic Social Teaching – Dignity of the Person	pp. 259-278	/	

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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 in 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.

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 ten 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 videos, 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 Guide 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 Guide 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:

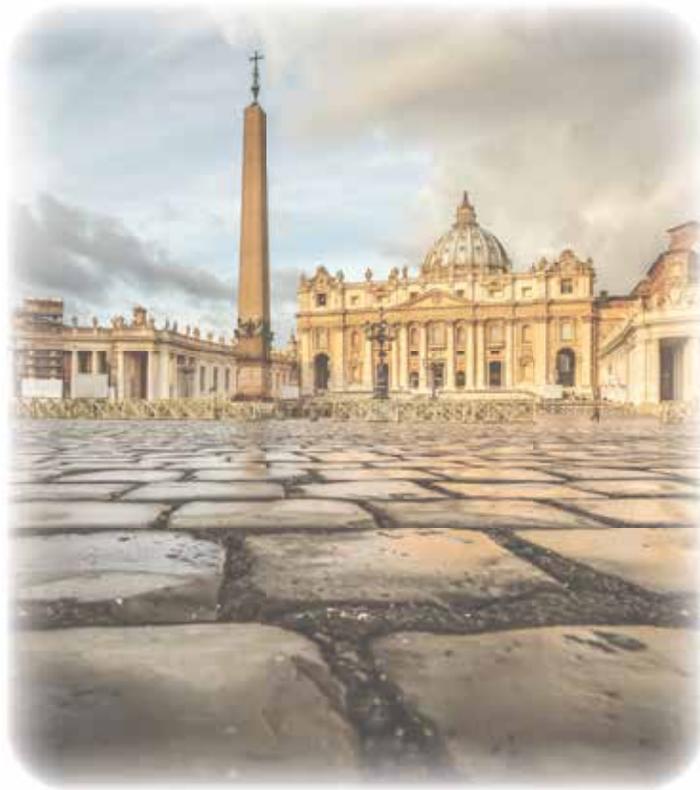
- **Opening Prayer:** The session opens with a prayer drawn from the rich tradition of the Church and writings of the saints. You can read along during the prayer and refer back to it during the week.
- **Introduction:** Your leader will give a brief overview of the topic, including the key points for 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, the "Call to Conversion" will help apply what you have learned to your daily life through prayer and reflection on key verses from Scripture, teachings, and practical personal reflection questions.
- **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.

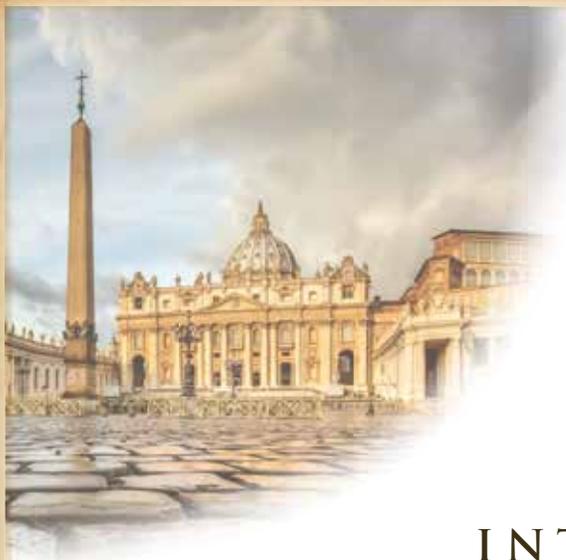
In addition, your Participant's Guide contains references and resources for further reading and study. You are encouraged to memorize and reflect on a Scripture Verse of the Week that is included with every session. These bonus materials will help you nurture the grace and faith that has been poured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

Session 1



THE JOURNEY OF FAITH



THE JOURNEY OF FAITH: Trinity, Faith, & the God Who Is Love

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first session of *Symbolon*. This week you and your fellow participants are beginning a journey of faith that will delve into the heart of the teachings of the Catholic faith. Some of the things we cover you may already be familiar with, and others may be totally new, but today we begin with some basic fundamentals like the Creed—the statement of belief that lies at the heart of the faith—and the Trinity, the great mystery of the one God who exists as three Persons.

May this journey we are beginning prove to be rewarding, inspiring, and most of all life-changing!

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The God who is Love—the mystery of the Holy Trinity**
- **Why God made us and the relationship he wants to have with us**
- **How faith is our response to God's invitation**
- **How to live our relationship with God: three practical tips for prayer**

OPENING PRAYER

 “O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path
and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
For it was you
who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together
in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made.” —Psalm 139:1-4, 13-14



“Prayer is the inner bath of love into which the soul plunges itself.”
—St. John Vianney

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Faith is our response to the God who longs to make himself known to us. How do we make that response and how is faith more than just believing in God?
2. The Holy Trinity is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. In other words, God wanted us to know, as the *Catechism* says, that “God is one but not solitary” (CCC 254).

Why do you think God wants you to know that he is not solitary?

3. According to the video, what are three key elements of prayer?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Jesus says to each of us, “Come, follow me.” Envision Jesus saying that to you right now. How would you respond? What fears or hesitations might you have about following Jesus in your life? Remember that Jesus repeatedly said, “Do not be afraid.”



#2 As in any relationship, a relationship with God involves conversation. What can you do this week to make more time for prayer—for talking to God—in my life? Choose a time of day that you will reserve for getting to know God better. You may want to put it as an appointment in your calendar so that you don't forget.

#3 Reflect on the following quote about prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits.

“We must speak to God as a friend speaks to his friend, servant to his master; now asking some favor, now acknowledging our faults, and communicating to Him all that concerns us, our thoughts, our fears, our projects, our desires, and in all things seeking His counsel.”

What is your experience with prayer? Have you ever spoken to God as a friend? Do you feel comfortable sharing all of your thoughts, even

your fears and desires, with God? Write down one fear and one desire that you could share with God this week.

#4 Jesus called those who came to him to believe in him, that they might have life abundant. Not everyone, however, answered the call to follow him. How will you respond?

CLOSING PRAYER

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd,
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.
You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.



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:



“With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

—Ephesians 6:16

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 11-31 -- Introduction & Chapter 1

Compendium #25-32, 572-576, 53, 44-49

For further study:

- *Faith as our response to God: CCC 166*
- *Prayer: CCC 2725, 2737, 2742–2745*
- *Why God made us: CCC 294*
- *The Trinity: CCC 238–248*

If you don't have an approved Catholic translation of the Bible, such as the New American Bible or the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, in your home, obtain one or find one online at www.ignatius.com

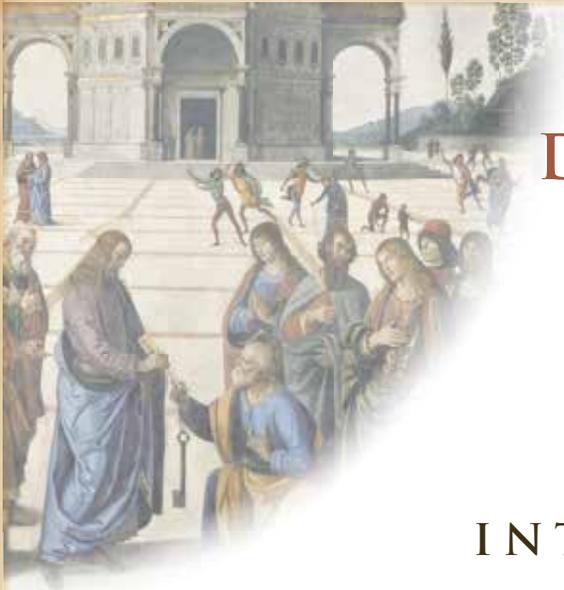
Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 1, 5, 35, 36*
- *Time for God by Jacques Philippe*
- *Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales*
- *Praying Scripture for a Change by Tim Gray*

Session 2



DIVINE REVELATION



DIVINE REVELATION: God Seeking Us & the Compass for our Lives

INTRODUCTION

Today, when people think about God, they often envision an impersonal force “out there”—a God who exists, who made the universe and who may even be a good God, but not someone who interacts in this world and is personally involved in our lives. Christians, however, believe in a personal God—a God who loves us, has a plan for our lives, and wants a personal relationship with us. He loves us so much that he actually seeks us out and makes himself known to us.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Divine Revelation: why and how God reveals himself to us**
- **Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s revelation**
- **The transmission of Divine Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition**
- **The Magisterium as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture and Tradition**

OPENING PRAYER

Father in Heaven,
Give us the power of your grace
that we might always walk
in the way you have revealed
through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Free us from the darkness of our own desires
and bring us into the light of your truth.
Form our lives according to your will,
mold our hearts by your love.
And grant that we might always
be open and receptive
to the guidance of your Church.
We ask this in the name of the One who has
promised to be with us always,
now and forever. Amen.



“God seeks us where we are, not so that we stay there, but so that we may come to be where He is, so that we may get beyond ourselves.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is inconsistent with this line of reasoning: “There is a God, God is love, but we can’t know with confidence who God is and what his will is for us”?
2. Why do you think the Church from earliest times chose to use the word revelation, or unveiling, to describe how God has communicated to us?
3. In the video, the presenter used the imagery of a three-legged stool to describe how Divine Revelation is handed on. What are the three “legs” of the stool?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). Do I really accept Jesus’s revelation as the standard of truth for my life, or do I tend to make up my own moral and religious truth? Do I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ measures my life, or do I view myself as measuring him, picking and choosing what I want to accept from Christ’s teachings, and setting aside what I don’t want to follow?

#2 What can I do this week to allow God’s revelation to guide me more in my life—in my moral decisions, in my prayer, in my relationships, and in what I consider most important in life? How can I entrust my life more to Jesus and follow God’s ways more?

#3 Reflect on the following quote about the teaching authority of the Catholic Church from George Weigel, biographer of Pope St. John Paul II.

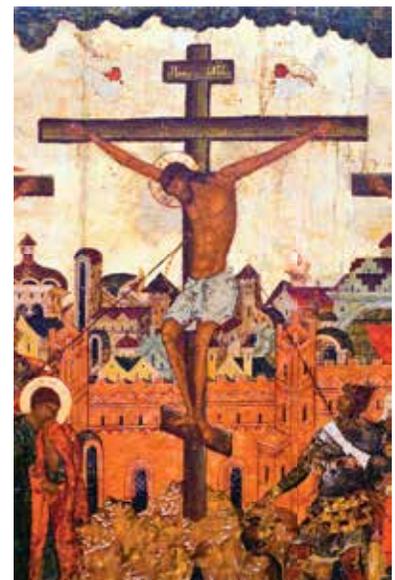
“The Catholic Church believes that the truths it has been given by Christ free us as well as bind us. They are liberating truths. To accept the Church’s teaching as authoritative and binding is only a ‘restriction’ on my freedom if I imagine freedom to be an unbridled exercise of my imagination and will. (And in that case, I have chained myself to my own willfulness.) If freedom has something to do with learning what is genuinely good, for myself and for others, then the truth about what is good for me and others isn’t a restriction. It’s a means of liberation” (from *The Courage to be Catholic*).

According to this quote, how can the teaching authority of the Church be a means of freedom for my life, rather than something restrictive that limits my freedom?

CLOSING PRAYER

Teach me, O LORD,
the way of thy statutes;
And I will keep it to the end.
Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law
And observe it with my whole heart.
Lead me in the path of thy commandments,
For I delight in it...
How sweet are thy words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through thy precepts I get understanding...
Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

—Psalm 119:33–35, 103–105



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:



"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

—Psalm 119:105

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 32-46 -- Chapter 2
Compendium #1-17

For further study:

- *Revelation and the Plan of Salvation: CCC 50–53*
- *How God has revealed himself in the Old Testament: CCC 54–64*
- *Jesus, the fullness of Revelation: CCC 65–73*
- *How this Revelation is handed on to us: CCC 74*
- *Apostolic Tradition and Authority: CCC 75–79*
- *The Magisterium CCC 84–95*

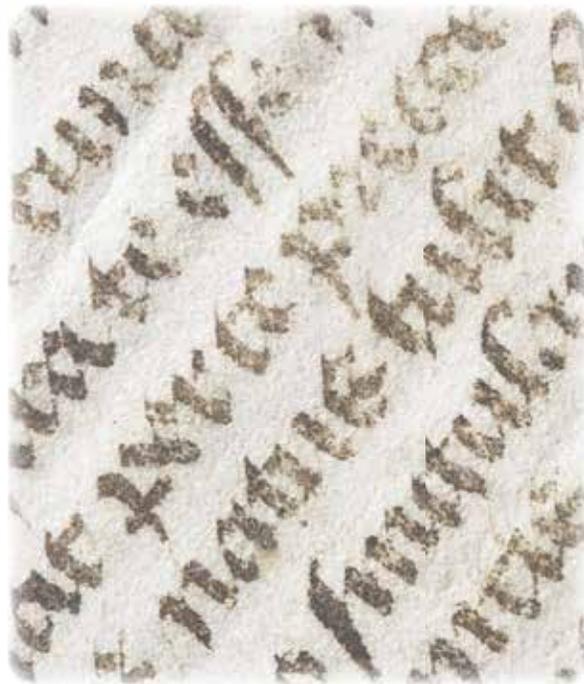
Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 2 and 3*
- *The Bible Compass by Dr. Edward Sri*

For additional information on Apostolic and Authority, see the following Scripture passages:

- *Matthew 10:1–6, 10, 40*
- *Matthew 16:18–22*
- *2 Thessalonians 2:15*
- *1 Corinthians 11:23–24*
- *1 Corinthians 15:3–5*

Session 3



THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE: God's Love Letter to Humanity

INTRODUCTION

What do you know about the Bible? Perhaps you are coming from a faith tradition that emphasizes Scripture reading, and you know a great deal. But maybe all you know about the Bible is that it is a famous and holy book. Whatever you know (or don't know), this week's session will introduce you to the Catholic understanding of Scripture, how it fits into God's plan of salvation for our lives, and how the Catholic Church has been the guardian of the Bible since the very beginning of Christianity.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The Bible as God's loving communication with each of us**
- **What we mean when we say the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit**
- **The Catholic approach to interpreting Scripture correctly**
- **How the Church discerns which books are part of the Bible (the canon of Scripture)**
- **How we can know with confidence that the Bible contains God's revelation for our lives**
- **How to start studying the Bible and praying with God's Word**



OPENING PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ,
 open the eyes of my heart,
 that I may hear your word
 and understand and do your will,
 for I am a sojourner upon the earth.
 Hide not your commandments from me,
 but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of your law.
 Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of your wisdom.
 On you do I set my hope, O my God,
 that you shall enlighten my mind
 and understanding with the light of your knowledge,
 not only to cherish those things
 which are written, but to do them;
 that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints
 I may not sin,
 but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment
 and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul,
 and the inheritance of life everlasting.
 For you are the enlightenment of those
 who lie in darkness,
 and from you comes every good deed
 and every gift. Amen.

—St. John Chrysostom

*“If you believe what you
 like in the gospels, and
 reject what you don’t like,
 it is not the gospel you
 believe, but yourself.”*

—St. Augustine



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it true that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”?
2. According to the video, what does it mean that Catholics don’t interpret the Bible in a literalistic way, but they do read the Bible literarily? What examples does the presenter give?
3. Let’s say a friend of yours, while speaking about a passage she was reading in the Bible, states, “It was like God was speaking directly to me—directly into a situation in my life—when I read the passage.” How is this possible?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.” What does this passage mean to me? Am I willing to read God’s Word in Scripture with an open heart and mind, expecting that God will give me insights for my life?



“As Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” —St. Jerome

#2 What can I do this week to make the reading of Scripture a greater part of my life? (Consider reading the Bible, perhaps starting with the Gospel of Luke as suggested in the video.)

#3 Reflect on the following quote from Pope St. Gregory:

“The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind’s eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection.”

How might thinking of the Bible as a mirror and as a way to learn about my spiritual progress make a difference in how I listen to the readings at Mass? What can I do to be better prepared for the Scripture readings each week?



CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

We praise and thank you
glorious Lord Jesus Christ,
for being present among us
and in us.

In us you praise the Father
with the voice of the Spirit,
whom you have given us.

Lord, may this voice of the Spirit
be roused in us as we listen to the words
of Scripture in a manner
that is worthy and fitting,

appropriate to the meaning
of the text and in harmony
with what is revealed to us.
Make us ready to recognize
how we can correspond
to the teaching and example
proposed to us, for you are God,
living and reigning
for ever and ever. Amen.

—Carlo Maria Martini, SJ

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:



“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” —Hebrews 4:12

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 32-46 -- Chapter 2
Compendium #18-24

For further study:

- *Christ as the Word of God: CCC 101–104*
- *Inspiration and the truth of Scripture: CCC 105–108*
- *The Holy Spirit and Sacred Scripture: CCC 109–119*
- *Books of the Old Testament: CCC 120–123*
- *The New Testament canon: CCC 124–127*
- *Scripture and the Church: CCC 131–133*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 3*
- *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* by **Scott Hahn**
- *Walking with God: A Journey through the Bible* by **Tim Gray** and **Jeff Cavins**
- *Catholic Bible Dictionary* by **Scott Hahn**
- *Where is THAT in the Bible?* by **Patrick Madrid**
- *The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures* by **Edward Sri**
- *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible series* by **Scott Hahn** and **Curtis Mitch**

Session 4



THE STORY OF SALVATION



THE STORY OF SALVATION: Creation, Fall, & Redemption

INTRODUCTION

We all want to know that our lives have meaning. But the modern world tries to tell us that we are simply insignificant specks in the universe, and that there is no real meaning to life. Our choices don't matter. How we live our lives doesn't matter. Each individual should just do whatever he or she pleases.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Our lives are a part of a much larger story. We are God's beloved children, created in his own image, and made for greatness. Despite the fact that we live in a fallen world, God, who is all-powerful and all-loving, reaches out to us, desiring to bring us back into unity with him and inviting us to help bring his goodness and his love into a broken world that has turned away from him.

This story of salvation, which we recall through the words of the Creed, reminds us that there is a reason for our existence. Because each of us is loved by God, each of us has a role to play in God's creation and his great story of love, a role that only we can play. When we refuse God's loving invitation, all of creation is the poorer.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The three major parts in the story of salvation: Creation, Fall, and Redemption**
- **How originally we were united with God and experienced harmony within the human family**
- **How sin broke our unity and left us with an inclination toward sin, called concupiscence**
- **How Jesus came to restore us to the Father, but also to establish the Catholic Church to gather the broken family of humanity into the united family of God**

OPENING PRAYER

We pray to you, O Lord,
who are the supreme Truth,
and all truth is from you.

We beseech you, O Lord,
who are the highest Wisdom,
and all the wise depend on you for their wisdom.

You are the supreme Joy,
and all who are happy
owe it to you.

You are the Light of minds,
and all receive their understanding from you.

We love, we love you above all.

We seek you, we follow you,
and we are ready to serve you.

We desire to dwell under your power
for you are the King of all. Amen.

—St. Albert the Great, one of the great teachers or Doctors of the Church

“O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!”
(From the Exsultet or Easter Proclamation)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sri talks about the story of salvation and how this story plays a role in each of our lives. What does it mean that “our modern world has lost its story,” and why does that matter?
2. Dr. Sri speaks of a timeline that demonstrates how salvation history is the growth of God’s family as he draws mankind back to himself. Here is the process by which God’s family grows:

One Couple→ One Family→ One Tribe→ One Nation→ One Kingdom→ One Church
(Adam & Eve)→ (Noah)→ (Abraham)→ (Moses)→ (David)→ (Jesus and the Apostles)

Consistent throughout salvation history are covenants. How does entering into a covenant “define the relationship” between God and his people?

3. In the video, we were reminded that we all have an inclination toward sin. As St. Paul says in Romans 7:15, “For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate.” Recall sometime in the last week when you didn’t do something that you knew you should or did something that you knew you shouldn’t. Ask God to help you make a better choice the next time a similar circumstance arises.

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

- #1** Now is your time to enter the story of salvation. What might you be putting off with regard to your faith? Is God asking you to do something right now? If you have been reluctant or afraid to commit your life to Jesus, spend some time writing about the reasons why. Are you afraid of what your friends or members of your family might say? Pray with the father who asked Jesus to cure his son: “Lord, I believe. Help my disbelief!”



#2 Read the following quote from Pope Benedict XVI:

“Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed. Each of us is loved. Each of us is necessary.”

List two or three roles that you play in your life, such as parent, worker, or friend. Now consider what would happen if you didn't live those relationships well. Who would suffer? What wouldn't be accomplished? Say a prayer of gratitude that you have been, in the words of Psalm 139:14, “fearfully and wonderfully made” and ask God for the grace to help you fulfill your responsibilities with the people and missions he has entrusted to you.

#3 In his “Meditation on Two Standards,” St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, challenges us to see the real struggle between good and evil in the world today. Following the spirit of his meditation, prayerfully imagine a battlefield with Jesus, the commander-in-chief of good, on one side calling all people under his standard (his flag). He calls men and women to follow him with humility, patience, generosity, purity, poverty, and sacrificial love. Next, imagine on the other side of the field Satan, the chief enemy of all that is good, inviting people under his flag. He entices people away from Jesus through the lure of riches, the pursuit of worldly honor and success, pride, and lust, and he distracts them from the true meaning of life with constant busyness and amusements. Finally, put yourself on that field and honestly consider: Which side attracts you the most? In what ways are you pursuing the standard of Christ? In what ways do you find yourself lured by the standard of the devil? In what ways can you live more for Christ's kingdom and not Satan's?



CLOSING PRAYER

We give you praise,
Father most holy,
for you are great
and you have fashioned all your works
in wisdom and in love.
You formed man in your own image
and entrusted the whole world to his care,
so that in serving you alone, the Creator,
he might have dominion over all creatures.
And when through disobedience
he had lost your friendship,
you did not abandon him
to the domain of death...
And you so loved the world,
Father most holy
that in the fullness of time
you sent your Only Begotten Son
to be our Savior...
To accomplish your plan,
he gave himself up to death, and,
rising from the dead,
he destroyed death and restored life.
And that we might live no longer for ourselves
but for him who died and rose again for us,
he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father,
as the first fruits for those who believe,
so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world,
he might sanctify creation to the full.

—From the *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV



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:



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” —John 3:16

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 47-61 -- Chapter 3

Compendium #63, 66-72, 73-78, 85, 166-172. 144-145,
214-215

For further study:

- *Created in the image of God: CCC 356–358*
- *Before the Fall: CCC 376–379*
- *Original Sin: CCC 396–405*
- *The gift of Jesus: CCC 457–460*
- *The Catholic Church: CCC 830–848*
- *Sending of the Holy Spirit: CCC 731–737*
- *The Last Judgment: CCC 1038–1041*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 6–10*
- *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of Faith* by Fr. Robert Barron

Session 5



WHO
IS JESUS?



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’s identity is simple: he is God, come to live with us.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How, in the fullness of time, God has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus**
- **How Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, took on human nature without losing his divine nature**
- **That Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man**
- **That Jesus is one divine person who possesses two natures**
- **Why Jesus became man so that we can be reconciled to God and know God’s love**



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.”

—Pope St. 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?
3. Dr. Sri explained to us the meaning of the painting of Jesus in the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome. How does that painting confront us with a decision we all have to make?

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's *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’s 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

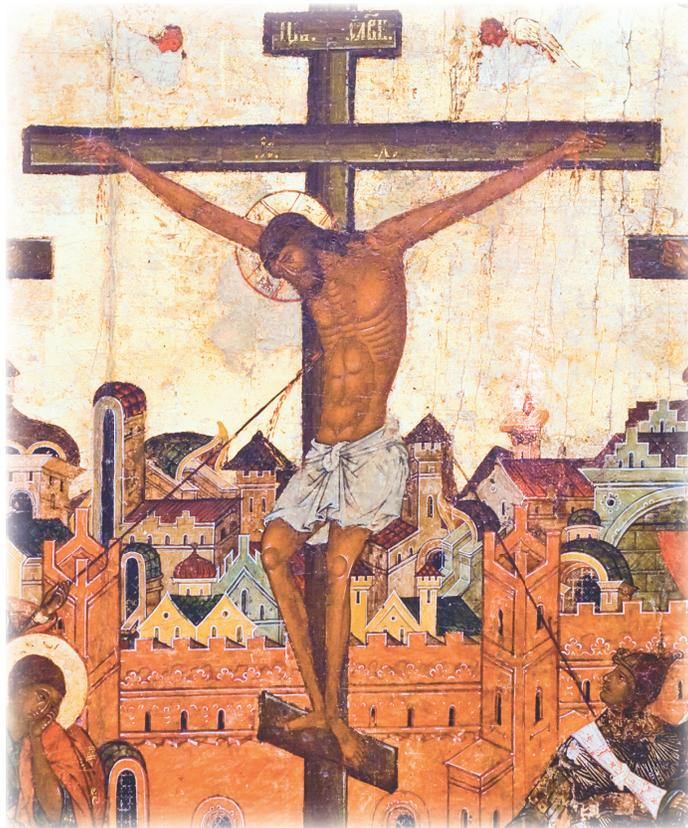
Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“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

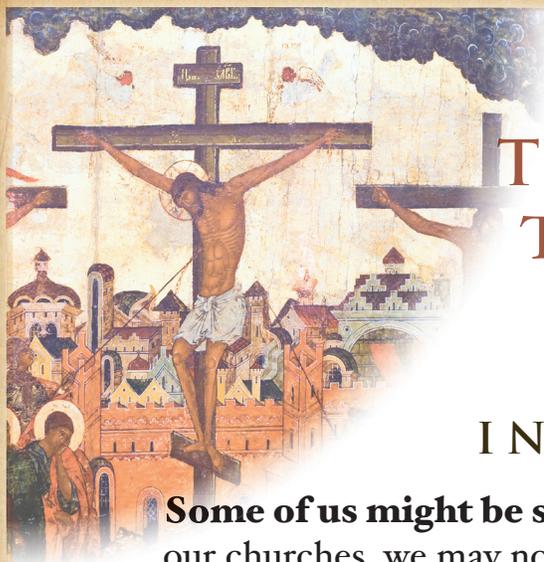
Session 6



THE PASCHAL MYSTERY



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED



THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: The Mystery of Jesus's Death & 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's Death on the Cross that we have been given the gift of salvation and eternal life.

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

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Cross “works”—how it brings about our salvation**
- **How Christ, being fully human and fully divine, was able to heal our relationship with God through his sacrificial Death**
- **The meaning of Jesus going to the realm of the dead and opening Heaven's gates**
- **That by his Death, Jesus liberates us from sin**
- **That by his Resurrection, he opens us to new life**
- **How Jesus invites us to unite our entire lives with his self-giving love on the Cross**



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’s 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’s self-sacrificial love be an example for our lives?
2. Generally people try to avoid suffering. In the news we might even hear about some people with terminal illnesses who have committed suicide in order to avoid their suffering. But let’s consider for a moment this quote from John 12:24: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth

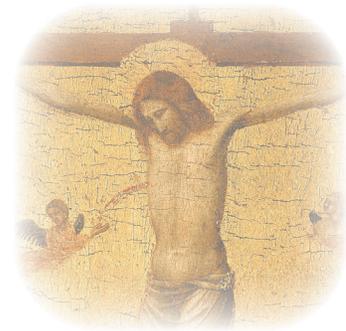
and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Here’s another way of saying that: “Every death presents an opportunity for a resurrection. Every suffering can be a tremendous gift.” How can suffering or carrying a cross be a great gift?

3. Dr. Sri says that there are two ways to live your life: the way of self and the way of the Cross. Why is there more joy and fulfillment found in the way of the Cross?

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 St. 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” (1 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:

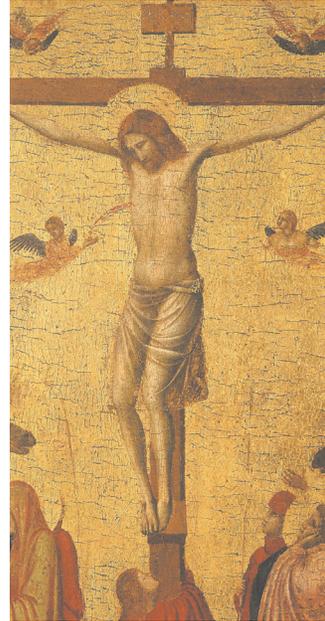
“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” —Luke 9:23

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

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

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 83-99 -- Chapter 5

Compendium #46-47, 83-84

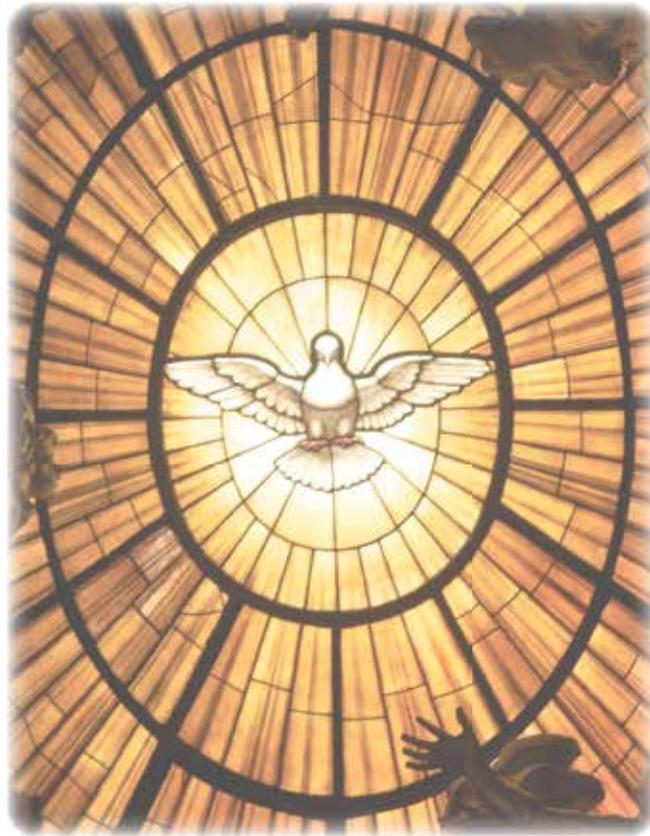
For further study:

- *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*

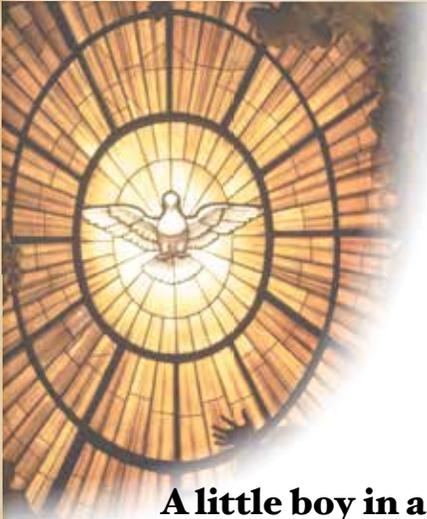
Other Resources:

- *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

Session 7



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIFE OF GRACE



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIFE OF GRACE: God's Divine Life Within Us

INTRODUCTION

A little boy in a best-selling book who is said to have died and gone to Heaven was asked to describe the Holy Spirit. He paused for a moment and then said, “Hmm, that’s kind of a hard one.” I think we can all identify. Describing the Holy Spirit is hard. We all have mental images of Jesus and God the Father, but the Holy Spirit...?

Perhaps you picture a dove, or tongues of fire, or a rushing wind as at the first Pentecost. Alternatively, maybe you don’t have any mental picture at all. That’s okay. What’s more important than an image is your relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity—the bond of love between the Father and the Son—who comes into our souls at Baptism, making us sons and daughters of the Living God. By learning to know and love the Holy Spirit, we become transformed and we can, in the words of the traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit, help “renew the face of the earth.”

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Holy Spirit builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church, bringing souls into communion with God so that they bear fruit and give witness to Christ**
- **How the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son, and how God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit**
- **The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit**
- **The ways the Holy Spirit sanctifies, or makes us holy**
- **How we are saved, and the relationship between faith and works in this process of sanctification**

 **OPENING PRAYER**

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.

*“O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully
 into my heart. Enlighten the dark
 corners of this neglected dwelling and
 scatter there Thy cheerful beams.”*
 —St. Augustine



 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. The Holy Spirit makes sanctification possible. We know that we cannot get to Heaven on our own—we need help to get there. Justification is a very important concept to understand. What did justification, through an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, do for us?

2. How do we grow in our relationship with the Holy Spirit?

3. Let's say your friend says to you, "All you need to do is accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior to be saved. He did all the work for us." How would you respond?

CALL TO CONVERSION

At the end of the video, we were asked two essential questions:

#1 At the end of the video, we were asked two essential questions: Will you develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit? Will you take time to ask the Spirit to guide and shape your daily life? Reflect now on your response.

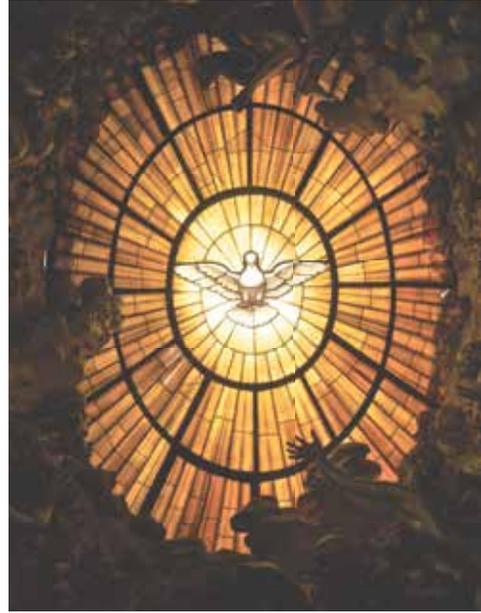
#2 The fruits of the Holy Spirit include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and self-control. If you could choose one of these to be made manifest more in your life now, which one would you choose? Which one seems the easiest? Which one seems the hardest? Pray now that the Spirit will enter into your life and transform you with his fruits.



CLOSING PRAYER

“Come Holy Ghost, Creator Blest,
 And in our hearts take up Thy rest;
 Come with Thy grace and heav’nly aid
 To fill the hearts which Thou hast made,
 To fill the hearts which Thou hast made.
 O Comfort Blest to Thee we cry,
 Thou heav’nly Gift of God most high;
 Thou fount of life and fire of love,
 And sweet anointing from above,
 And sweet anointing from above.
 Praise be to Thee Father and Son,
 And Holy Spirit Three in one;
 And may the Son on us bestow
 The gifts that from the Spirit flow,
 The gifts that from the Spirit flow.”

—Words: Latin, tenth century; trans. Edward Caswall, 1849,
 Richard Mant, 1837, and Robert Campbell, 1850.



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:



“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”

—Romans 8:26

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 100-116 -- Chapter 6
Compendium #136-146, 422-428

For further study:

- *The Name of the Spirit: CCC 691*
- *Symbols of the Spirit: CCC 694–701*
- *The Holy Spirit as God’s Gift: CCC 733–736*
- *The Spirit and the Church: CCC 737–741*
- *Justification and sanctification: CCC 1996–2000*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 5, 9*
- **Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* “Lord and Giver of Life” on the Holy Spirit by John Paul II**
- *The Holy Spirit* (www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/spirmenu.htm)
- *Justification in Catholic Teaching* by James Akin
(www.ewtn.com/library/answers/justif.htm)

Session 8



WHY DO I
NEED THE
CHURCH?



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED



WHY DO I NEED THE CHURCH?

The Mystery of the Catholic Church

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard people say they were “spiritual but not religious”? It can be hard to tell what they mean. They may mean they believe in God or a “higher power” but don’t attend church. Or they might mean they don’t want to have to obey any so-called “man-made” rules or regulations.

As sincere as these people may be (and many are very sincere), religion and spirituality are intricately interwoven. Jesus never expected us to follow a spiritual path without a community, the Church. The truly spiritual life is, as Jesus himself said, like a vine in which he is the trunk and we are the branches. He intends us to be united in his Church through our beliefs, our worship, and the Apostles and their successors whom he left on earth to guide us. And once we begin to understand the mystery of the Church, we realize that it is as impossible to be spiritual without being religious as it is to swim without getting into the water.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The mystery of the Church and what it means in our lives**
- **How the Church has two dimensions: human and divine**
- **The three ways the unity of the Church is made manifest**
- **The four marks (or chief characteristics) of the Church**
- **Why Jesus established only one Church**
- **How the Church can be holy when it is filled with sinners**
- **What it means when we say the Church is apostolic**
- **Why we call the Church “Catholic”**

OPENING PRAYER

We praise you,
O almighty and eternal God!
Who through Jesus Christ
hast revealed your glory to all nations,
to preserve the works of your mercy,
that your Church,
being spread through
the whole world,
may continue with unchanging faith
in the confession of your name.
Amen.

—www.catholic.org



“... God has saved a people. There is no full identity without belonging to a people. No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual, but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community. God enters into this dynamic, this participation in the web of human relationships.”

—Pope Francis

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Church is unique among all institutions in the world, because it has both divine and human dimensions that come together in perfect unity. What are the three ways this unity of the Church is made manifest?
2. The Church has four characteristics or distinctive marks that sets her apart from all other Christian denominations. What are these “marks of the Church” and what do they mean?
3. Let’s say that your friend says to you that he (or she) is “spiritual” but not a “religious” person. What is the problem with that statement?

CALL TO CONVERSION

#1 In the video, we heard that Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with us in his Church, but not a private, individualistic relationship. What are the differences between a personal relationship with God in his Church and an individualistic relationship with God?

#2 Reflect on the following quote:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” — John 15:5–7

Jesus describes himself as the vine and we, united to him in the Church, are the branches. In what ways can you “remain” in Jesus? What comes to mind when you read Jesus’s promise that if we remain in him, we will bear much fruit? What kind of fruit would you like to bear in this life?

#3 Even though most Americans claim to believe in God, more and more embrace the idea of being “spiritual” but not belonging to an organized religion or church. One of the fundamental reasons for this attitude, according to the presenters in the video, is that we don’t like the idea that there is something outside of ourselves with an objective standard that has the right to guide, inform, and correct our beliefs and behavior. Some people might want the benefits of being “spiritual,” but they don’t want the challenges that come with real growth and transformation. Are there ways that you keep the Church and her teachings at a distance because you don’t want to be challenged or have to change your life? What would you have to change or give up to fully embrace all the teachings of the Church? How might your life be different if you gave yourself over completely to Christ and his Church?



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
at your Last Supper
you prayed to the Father
that all should be one.
Send your Holy Spirit
upon all who bear your name
and seek to serve you.
Strengthen our faith in you,
and lead us to love one another
in humility.
May we who have been reborn
in one Baptism
be united in one faith under one Shepherd.
Amen.

—www.prayer-and-prayers.info/catholic-prayers/prayer-for-christian-unity.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 am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

—John 15:5

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 117-135 -- Chapter 7

Compendium #147-160, 161-177, 177-193

For further study:

- ***The Church is One: CCC 813–814***
- ***The Church is Holy: CCC 823–825***
- ***The Church is Catholic: CCC 830–831***
- ***The Church is Apostolic: CCC 857***
- ***The bonds of unity in the Church: CCC 815***
- ***Bishops as successors of the Apostles: CCC 861–862***

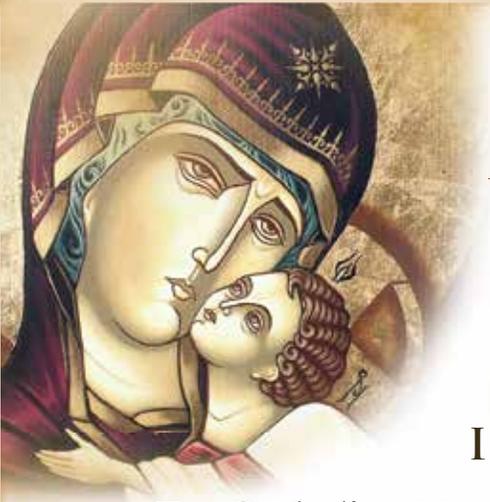
Other Resources:

- ***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 10, 11***
- ***Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger**
- ***The Compact History of the Catholic Church* by Alan Schreck Ph.D.**
- ***Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Catholic History* by Matthew Bunson**
- ***By What Authority? An Evangelical Discovers Catholic Tradition* by Mark P. Shea**

Session 9



MARY AND THE SAINTS



MARY AND THE SAINTS: Our Spiritual Mother and the Communion of Saints

INTRODUCTION

For Catholics, Mary and the saints are important parts of daily life and devotion. Yet many outside the Church are confused as to what Catholics really believe. Do they worship Mary? Do they pray to the saints? And how does the saving action of Jesus fit into all of this?

Underlying everything the Church teaches about Mary and the saints is Jesus. The attention Catholics give to them does not distract from God, but enables us to draw into a more intimate communion with him, for just as fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters on earth draws us closer to Jesus, so our communion with Mary and the saints draws us closer to him as well. Devotion to Mary and the saints is one way that Catholics come to know and love God and more deeply appreciate the great gift of salvation.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The four basic dogmas the Church teaches about Mary**
- **How Jesus is at the heart of everything Catholics believe about Mary**
- **Why Catholics don't worship Mary and the saints, but honor them as models for all Christians**
- **What Catholics really mean when they say they "pray to" Mary and the saints**
- **Why Mary is the "Queen of Heaven"**
- **The mysteries of the rosary**
- **What role Mary should play in the life of every believer**

OPENING PRAYER

Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

*“Never be afraid of loving
the Blessed Virgin too
much. You can never love
her more than Jesus did.”
—St. Maximilian Kolbe*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do Catholics honor the saints?
Why are the saints' prayers for us so powerful?
2. What are the four Catholic dogmas about Mary?
What do they teach us about Jesus and the Father's plan of salvation?
3. How is Jesus's command to St. John to "Behold your mother" a challenge to us in our own prayer life and journey with Jesus?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Reflect on the following words from St. Louis Marie de Montfort:

“We never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor his Mother, and we honor her simply and solely to honor him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek—Jesus, her Son.”

Consider the four dogmas you learned about Mary in this week’s lesson. How can accepting those teachings bring you to a deeper understanding of Jesus and his love for you?

#2 At the end of the video, the presenter talked about who Mary is and what it means to develop a relationship with her. Take a few minutes to ask yourself what your relationship with Mary is like, and what you would like it to be. Ask God in prayer what keeps you from developing a closer relationship with Mary.

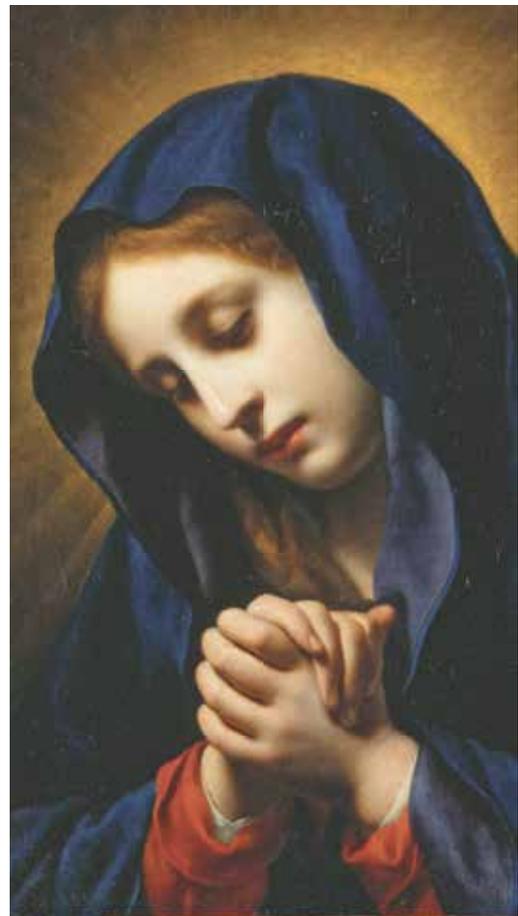
#3 There are many prayers and devotions in the Church dedicated to Mary, with the most prominent one being the Rosary. Take some time this week either to pray a Rosary if you are familiar with the prayer, or to learn more about how to pray a Rosary. As you do, reflect on how each mystery of the Rosary points us to Christ through Mary.



CLOSING PRAYER

The Memorare

Remember,
O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help
or sought thy intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence,
we fly unto thee,
O Virgin of virgins our Mother;
to thee do we come,
before thee we stand,
sinful and sorrowful;
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not our petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer us.
Amen.



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:



“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.” —Luke 1:47-48

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 136-153 -- Chapter 8
Compendium #96-100, 194-199

For further study:

- *Immaculate Conception: CCC 490–493*
- *Mother of God: CCC 495*
- *Perpetual Virginity: CCC 496–500*
- *Assumption: CCC 966*
- *Devotion to Mary: CCC 971*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 12*
- *Apostolic Letter on the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Rosarium Virginis Mariae* by **John Paul II**
- *The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries* by **Edward Sri**
- *Butler's Lives of the Saints* by **Alban Butler**
- *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God* by **Scott Hahn**
- *365 Saints* by **Woodeene Koenig-Bricker**

Session 10



THE LAST THINGS



THE LAST THINGS: What Happens After We Die?

INTRODUCTION

At some point in our lives we all wonder what will happen after we die. Of course, none of us can know exactly what will occur—despite the numerous books written about near-death experiences—but as Christians we have One Who Has Gone Before Us in the person of Jesus, whose Death and Resurrection shed light on what awaits us. He has given us some indication of what awaits, and the Church has continued to help us with her instruction.

The Church teaches that if we are to grow and mature as Christians, we need to take time to prayerfully consider the Four Last Things—death, judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Unless and until we take these things seriously, our life here on earth will lack meaning and focus. It's only when we consider the decisions we make in the light of eternity that our entire lives begin to make sense and our relationship with God can come to full maturity.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The particular judgment of each soul at the moment of death**
- **Hell: what it is, and why, if we fail to repent, we will be separated from God forever**
- **Heaven, the perfect communion of life and love with the Trinity**
- **Purgatory, the purification some need before entering into full communion with God**
- **Why Catholics pray for the dead**



OPENING PRAYER

A Prayer for a Happy Death

Lord Jesus Christ,
 who willest that no man should perish,
 and to whom supplication is never
 made without the hope of mercy,
 for Thou saidst
 with Thine Own holy and blessed lips:
 “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in My name,
 shall be done unto you”;
 I ask of Thee, O LORD,
 for Thy holy Name’s sake,
 to grant me at the hour of my death
 full consciousness and the power of speech,
 sincere contrition for my sins,
 true faith, firm hope and perfect charity,
 that I may be able to say unto Thee with a clean heart:
 Into Thy hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit:
 Thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth,
 who art blessed forever and ever. Amen.

—St. Vincent Ferrer

*“O my dear
 parishioners, let
 us endeavor to get
 to heaven! There
 we shall see God.
 How happy we shall
 feel! We must get to
 heaven! What a pity
 it would be if some
 of you were to find
 yourselves on the
 other side!”*
 —St. John Vianney



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We all have various images of Heaven, but according to the video, what is Heaven?

2. In the presentation, the Catholic teaching on Purgatory is discussed. What are some of the misconceptions about Purgatory? What does the Catholic Church really teach about Purgatory? And why can Purgatory be seen, at least in some sense, as something for which we should be grateful?

3. Why is it accurate to state, “God doesn’t send people to Hell”?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 In the words of a traditional Catechism, “God made us to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in heaven.” As we go through our lives, the single most important question we need to ask in light of eternity is *How can we know, love, and serve God?* If we want our lives on earth to have meaning, we need to explore this question in depth. What do you think it means to know God? What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to serve God? What is one way this week that you can get to know God better? To love him more deeply? To serve him more completely? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance—and courage—to follow through on your commitment.

#2 Reflect on the following quote from the Ash Wednesday liturgy:
“Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”
How does this quote make you feel? Why do you think that the Church asks us to reflect on this statement at the beginning of Lent? How might this prayer help you focus more on what is truly important in this life?

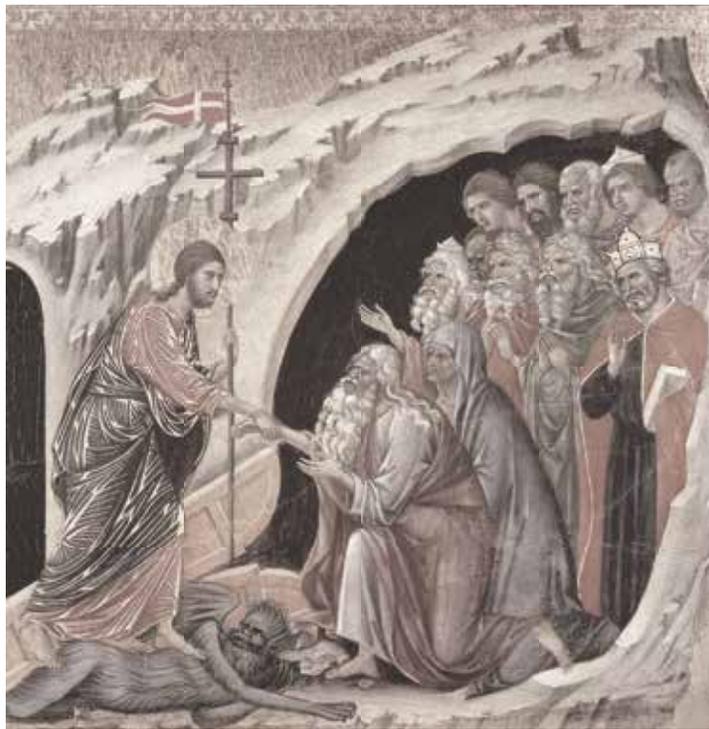
#3 At the end of the presentation, Dr. Sri asks a fundamental question:
“Are you moving toward eternity with Jesus or without him?” Take some time to look over your life, your priorities, the way you spend your days. Is your life moving toward Jesus or away from him? How would your life be different if you were truly making all your decisions in the light of your eternal destiny?



CLOSING PRAYER

St. Alphonsus Liguori's Night Prayer

Jesus Christ, my God,
I adore you and thank you
for all the graces
you have given me this day.
I offer you my sleep
and all the moments of this night,
and I beg of you to keep me without sin.
Therefore, I put myself
within your sacred side
and under the mantle of our lady,
my Mother.
Let your holy angels
stand about me and keep me in peace;
and let your blessing be upon me.
Amen.



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:



“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

—Hebrews 9:27

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 54-169 -- Chapter 9
Compendium #200-216, 354-356

For further study:

- *Particular Judgment: CCC 1021–1022*
- *Heaven: CCC 1023–1029*
- *Hell: CCC 1033–1037*
- *Purgatory: CCC 1030–1032*
- *Last Judgment: CCC 1038–1041*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 13*
- *The Last Things* by Regis Martin
- *Heaven, the Heart's Deepest Longing* by Peter Kreeft
- *Encyclical Letter, Saved by Hope* by Pope Benedict XVI
(www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html)



SYMBOLON[®]

THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

PART 2
LIVING THE FAITH
PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

SESSIONS 1-10

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Session 1



THE SACRAMENTS

BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION

THE SACRAMENTS

Baptism & Confirmation

INTRODUCTION

In the Catholic Church, there are seven sacraments that are part of a Christian's spiritual life from birth to death. They are signs of grace instituted by Christ to give his divine life to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

But what are these sacraments? Why are they necessary for a relationship with Jesus? And how do the sacraments affect our lives on a daily basis?

These are some of the questions we will be talking about this week. We will be looking at the seven sacraments recognized by the Catholic Church in general, and then we will focus more specifically on two Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism and Confirmation. Along the way, we will see how the sacraments are part of our “toolkit” as we grow and mature in our faith and our relationship with the Church.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **What is a sacrament?**
- **The different kinds of sacraments**
- **How the sacraments are a key part of the Christian life**
- **Why Baptism is considered the “gateway” to the Christian life**
- **Why Catholics baptize infants**
- **The significance of Confirmation and its relationship to Baptism**



OPENING PRAYER

Praise the Lord!

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who have pleasure in them.

Full of honor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures for ever.

He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.

He provides food for those who fear him;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.

He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the heritage of the nations.

The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy,
they are established for ever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant for ever.

Holy and awesome is his name!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
a good understanding have all those who practice it.

His praise endures for ever! —Psalm 111

“These three things God requires of all the Baptized: right faith in the heart, truth on the tongue, temperance in the body.”
—St. Gregory Nazianzen

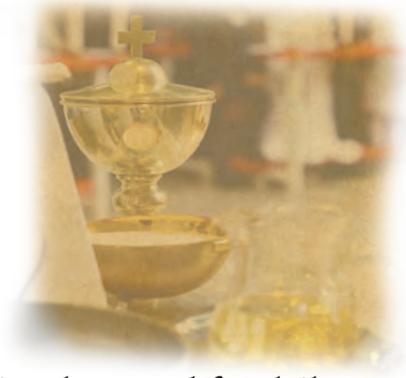


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you respond to someone who asks: “Why have you Catholics made Christianity so complicated with all your rules and rituals?”
2. What are some of the outward signs and symbols used in Baptism, and what do they represent?
3. Why is it significant that in Confirmation we are anointed with Sacred Chrism?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 In the video, we are told that the sacraments are “our toolkit as we step out every day as a believer.”

What does this mean to you? How can Baptism be a tool for daily life? If you have been baptized, what does this mean to you? If you are anticipating Baptism, what are you looking forward to? In what other ways can the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, become your “toolkit” for your spiritual life?

#2 Consider the following quote from St. Diadochos of Photiki:

“Before holy baptism, grace encourages the soul towards good from the outside, while Satan lurks in its depths, trying to block all the intellect’s ways of approach to the divine. But from the moment that we are reborn through baptism, the demon is outside, grace is within. Thus, whereas before baptism error ruled the soul, after baptism truth rules it.”

What does it mean that after Baptism “grace is within”? How does the knowledge that through Baptism you have the power and the ability to resist temptation affect you? If you truly acted as if you knew you had that power, how would your life be different from now on?

#3 In the video, we heard that the sacraments fill us with Christ's life and draw us deeper into communion with God. When we want to grow spiritually or morally, we need to go to the sacraments where Jesus waits to heal, sanctify, and restore us. The presenter then asked questions that we must all answer: Will you make it a priority to frequent the sacraments? Are you willing to make the sacraments an essential part of your life? How can you begin to encounter Christ in the frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and make this encounter a main emphasis in your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

(If you have not yet been baptized, silently reflect on these words and the Christian life you may soon be entering.)

V. Do you reject Satan?

R. I do.

V. And all his works?

R. I do.

V. And all his empty promises?

R. I do.

V. Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

R. I do.

V. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

R. I do.

V. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

R. I do.

V. God, the all-powerful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and forgiven all our sins. May he also keep us faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever.

R. Amen.

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:



“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

—1 Corinthians 12:13

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 170-185 -- Chapter 10

Compendium #220, 224-232, 250-270, 351-353

For further study:

- *The Sacraments: CCC 1210–1211*
- *Baptism: CCC 1214–1284*
- *Confirmation: CCC 1285–1321*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapters 15–16*
- *Sacraments in Scripture* by Tim Gray
- *Living the Sacraments: Grace into Action* by Bert Ghezzi
- *Swear to God: The Promise and Power of the Sacraments* by Scott Hahn

Session 2



THE EUCHARIST

SOURCE & SUMMIT OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE EUCHARIST

Source & Summit of Christian Life

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the Eucharist is not a “what,” but a “who.”

At the very center of the Catholic faith is the belief that the Eucharist is not merely a symbol of Jesus or a reminder of Jesus. No, the Eucharist is much more than that. At Mass, the bread and wine on the altar are actually changed into the very Body and Blood of Jesus. When we receive the Eucharist, therefore, we are united with Jesus himself in the most intimate way possible here on earth. The almighty God, Creator of the universe, humbles himself so that he can become one with each of us. God is within us, within our very souls, each time we attend Mass and receive communion. What an amazing gift the Eucharist is!

But how can this be? Is Jesus really present in the Eucharist? Is the Eucharist *really* a “who”—the real presence of Jesus among us? The Eucharist at Mass doesn’t look like flesh and blood. The Eucharist looks like bread and wine—how can Catholicism claim that it’s Jesus’ Body and Blood? These are some of the questions we will consider in this week’s session.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How we know Jesus was speaking literally and not figuratively when he said to eat his body and drink his blood**
- **How the Eucharist can really be Jesus’ body and blood when it still looks like bread and wine**
- **What Catholics mean when they say the Mass is a holy “sacrifice”**
- **How Jesus longs to be united with us in Holy Communion**

OPENING PRAYER

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification;
 Body of Christ, be my salvation;
 Blood of Christ, fill all my veins;
 Water of Christ's side, wash out my stains;
 Passion of Christ, my comfort be;
 O good Jesus, listen to me;
 In Thy wounds I fain would hide;
 Ne'er to be parted from Thy side;
 Guard me, should the foe assail me;
 Call me when my life shall fail me;
 Bid me come to Thee above,
 With Thy saints to sing Thy love,
 World without end. Amen.

—Prayer known as the Anima Christi

“This food is known among us as the Eucharist. We do not receive these things as common bread and common drink but as Jesus Christ, our Savior, being made flesh by the word of God.”
 —St. Justin Martyr, 2nd century

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Let's begin with a quick review. First, what does the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist mean? Second, how would you explain to someone how what looks and tastes like bread and wine really is Christ's body and blood?

2. What is the relationship between the Eucharist and the Jewish feast of Passover? How might the Passover background shed light on the need to receive Jesus in Holy Communion? How might the Passover background shed light on the Mass as sacrifice?

3. How can the Eucharist be a true sacrifice when Jesus is no longer dying on the cross, but has been raised from the dead and is seated in heaven?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 When you consider that the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord, how does that change or deepen your appreciation for the Mass? If you have already received your first communion, how can you show your love for Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, more fully and completely?

#2 In the video, we learned some ways to build a closer relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist, including visiting him at a Eucharistic Adoration chapel, spending a few minutes after Mass in thanksgiving, and attending daily Mass. What is one way that you could begin to spend more time with Jesus this week?

#3 Reflect on the following quote from St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

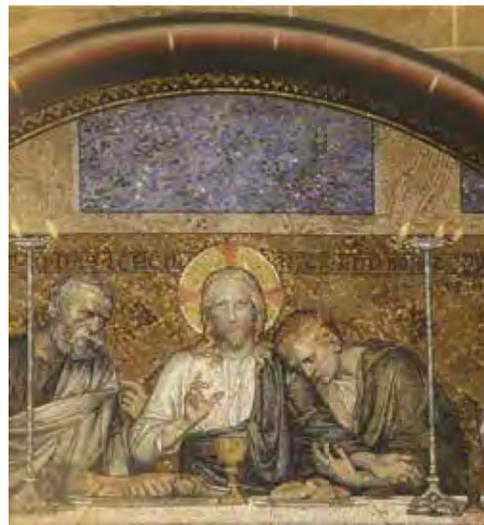
*“Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you—
for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...go
without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love...”*

When you read that Jesus is waiting for you alone, what thoughts
come to mind? How can you best respond to this invitation of love?
What fears or concerns are holding you back? Can you let them go
and “receive the Jesus of peace and love”?



CLOSING PRAYER

May the partaking of your Holy Mysteries, O Lord,
be not for my judgment or condemnation,
but for the healing of soul and body.
O Lord, I also believe and profess
that this (which I am about to receive)
is truly your most precious Body
and your life-giving Blood,
which, I pray, make me worthy to receive
for the remission of all my sins
and for life everlasting. Amen.
—From the Byzantine Liturgy



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:



“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” —Corinthians 11:26

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 186-203 -- Chapter 11

Compendium #271-294

For further study:

- *The Names of the Sacrament: CCC 1328-1332*
- *Bread and Wine; Body and Blood: CCC 1333ff*
- *Institution of the Eucharist: CCC 1337-1344*
- *Sacramental Sacrifice: CCC 1357-1368*
- *Transubstantiation: CCC 1376-1377*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults Chapter 17*
- *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*
by **Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger**

Session 3



WALK THROUGH THE MASS

EXPLORING THE SACRED LITURGY

WALK THROUGH THE MASS

Exploring the Sacred Liturgy

INTRODUCTION

One of the things that makes the Roman Catholic Mass unique is that no matter where in the world you go, the Mass will be the same. Of course, the language may be different and so may the music and decorations, but the essence will be the same from Australia to Zimbabwe. Every Mass will have the Scripture readings and the consecration of the bread and wine. It's one reason why it is "Catholic"—the very word means "universal," and the Mass is indeed universal.

The sacred rites that make up the Mass come to us directly from the days of the Apostles. In Acts and the Epistles, we read how believers gathered on the Lord's Day to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Readings from Scripture, a homily, prayers of petition, and the offering of bread and wine were key aspects of the Mass then, just as they are today.

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we participate in the one sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary. In order to understand what is happening, in this session we will look at how the Mass is constructed and what happens in the two major parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We will see how, when we participate in Mass, we truly enter into the most profound union possible with God.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Mass we celebrate today links back to apostolic times**
- **The four main sections of the Mass**
- **How we encounter God in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist**
- **What we can do to "get more" out of every Mass**
- **Why we must attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation**



OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God,
behold I come to the Sacrament
of thine only-begotten Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ:

I come as one infirm to the physician of life,
as one unclean to the fountain of mercy,
as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness,
as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth.
Therefore I implore the abundance of thy measureless bounty
that thou wouldst vouchsafe to heal my infirmity,
wash my uncleanness,
enlighten my blindness,
enrich my poverty
and clothe my nakedness,
that I may receive the Bread of Angels,
the King of kings, the Lord of lords,
with such reverence and humility,
with such sorrow and devotion,
with such purity and faith,
with such purpose and intention
as may be profitable to my soul's salvation.
Amen.

— From the Prayer before Mass by St. Thomas Aquinas

*“The celebration of Holy
Mass is as valuable as
the death of Jesus on
the cross.”*

—St. Thomas Aquinas



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some examples of words in the Mass that come directly from Scripture? What are some examples that come from the earliest days of the Church?
2. In the video presentation, we learned that in the Mass, Christ's sacrifice is made present. In what ways are we called to unite our lives to Christ's sacrifice made present in the Mass?
3. What would you say to a friend who says it is not necessary to attend Mass every Sunday?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 Do I come to Mass to receive or to give? What am I doing to prepare my soul for Mass?

#2 In the video, we learned some ways to “get more out of the Mass,” including praying in the car on the way to church, listening for a specific point or prayer that particularly touches us, and remaining for a few minutes after Mass to give thanks. What is one thing that you could do this week to prepare for Mass?

#3 Reflect on the following quote from St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina:

“It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass.”

Prayerfully consider how St. Padre Pio’s statement expresses the importance of the Mass. How does this change the way you view the obligation to attend Mass? How can you more completely give yourself to Jesus at each Mass?



CLOSING PRAYER

I give thanks to thee, O Lord,
most holy, Father almighty, eternal God,
that thou hast vouchsafed,
for no merit of mine own,
but out of thy pure mercy,
to appease the hunger
of my soul with the precious
body and blood of thy Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Humbly I implore thee,
let not this Holy Communion
be to me an increase of guilt
unto my punishment,
but an availing plea unto pardon
and salvation.
Amen.

— From the Prayer after Mass
by St. Thomas Aquinas



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:



“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

—John 6:53

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 204-214 -- Chapter 12

Compendium #218-223, 233-249, 277, 286-289, 351-353

For further study:

- *The Mass through the Ages: CCC 1345*
- *The Structure of the Mass: CCC 1346*
- *Introductory Rites: CCC 1348*
- *The Liturgy of the Word: CCC 1349*
- *The Offertory: CCC 1350*
- *The Liturgy of the Eucharist: CCC 1351–1353*
- *Sunday Obligation: CCC 1389, 1417*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapter 14*
- *A Biblical Walk through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy* by Dr. Edward Sri
- *The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition* by Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina
- *The Mass of the Early Christians* by Mike Aquilina
- *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn

Session 4



PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK GOD'S MERCY REVEALED

PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK

God's Mercy Revealed

INTRODUCTION

We are all in need of healing. Some of us may need physical or emotional healing, but all of us need spiritual healing. St. Paul says in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

God knows that we cannot make amends for our sins on our own. That is the fundamental reason that he sent Jesus—to save us from our sins. But in our everyday life, we often “fall short.” For that reason, God has provided us with two sacraments designed especially for healing: the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

In the Sacrament of Penance, we obtain God's pardon for our sins, and, at the same time, we are reconciled to the Church and God's people. Through this sacrament, we receive the spiritual healing we all need.

At times, however, we may also benefit from the second sacrament of healing—the Anointing of the Sick. In this sacrament, a baptized person who is in danger of death because of illness or old age receives strength, courage, and peace to endure their suffering, and the forgiveness of sins if the person is not able to receive the Sacrament of Penance. The sacrament also can bring restoration of health, if it is conducive to the person's salvation, and it prepares them for passing to eternal life.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

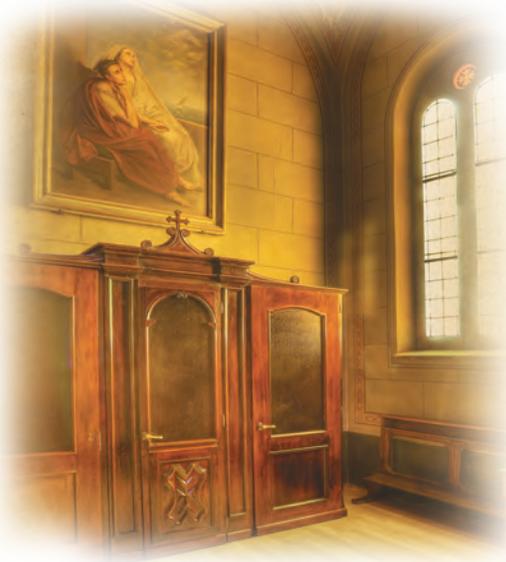
- **Why Penance is such an important part of the Catholic Faith**
- **Why we confess our sins to a priest**
- **A step-by-step guide to the reception of the Sacrament of Penance**
- **The benefits and graces of frequent Confession**
- **And finally, a look at the other sacrament of healing—
The Anointing of the Sick**



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, you invite all who are burdened to come to you.
Allow your healing hand to heal me.
Touch my soul with your compassion for others.
Touch my heart with your
courage and infinite love for all.
Touch my mind with your wisdom,
that my mouth may always
proclaim your praise.
Teach me to reach out to
you in my need,
and help me to lead others to
you by my example.
Most loving heart of Jesus,
bring me health in body and spirit
that I may serve you with
all my strength.
Touch gently this life
which you have created, now and forever. Amen.

—www.ourcatholicfaith.org



“But if a person, whether a layperson, priest or sister, goes to confession and converts, the Lord forgives. And when the Lord forgives, he forgets.”

—Pope Francis



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus so that we are not susceptible to sin?
2. According to the presenters, what are the effects of the Sacrament of Penance?
3. What is keeping you from encountering Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance more often?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Recall the Gospel story of the woman caught in adultery and the story of the prodigal son. What do these stories reveal about God's mercy and his desire to forgive and heal you?

#2 Read and reflect on the following message from Pope Francis to the General Audience at St. Peter's Square (2/19/14):

“One might say: I confess only to God. Yes, you can say to God ‘forgive me’ and say your sins, but our sins are also committed against the brethren, and against the Church. That is why it is necessary to ask pardon of the Church, and of the brethren in the person of the priest. ‘But Father, I am ashamed’ Shame is also good, it is healthy to feel a little shame, because being ashamed is salutary. When a person feels no shame, in my country we say that he is ‘shameless’; ‘sin vergüenza.’ But shame too does good, because it makes us more humble, and the priest receives this confession with love and tenderness and forgives us on God’s behalf. Also from a human point of view, in order to unburden oneself, it is good to talk with a brother and tell the priest these things which are weighing so much on my heart. And one feels that one is unburdening oneself before God, with the Church, with his brother. Do not be afraid of Confession! When one is in line to go to Confession, one feels all these things, even shame, but then when one finishes Confession one leaves free, grand, beautiful, forgiven, candid, happy. This is the beauty of Confession!”

#3 What is keeping you from encountering Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance? Is there something that you need to confess in order to be “restored to health”? Remember what Pope St. John Paul II said:

“Confession is an act of honesty and courage—an act of entrusting ourselves, beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and forgiving God.”

Examination of Conscience Based on the Ten Commandments

1. I am the LORD your God. You shall have no false gods before me.

Do I put God before my spouse? My children?
My work?
Do I believe that God loves me?
Do I have any "false gods" in my life like money, fame, power, or possessions?
Have I been involved in fortune-telling, astrology, palm-reading or witchcraft?
Do I pray daily?

2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Do I use curse words?
Have I made oaths or sworn promises to God that I haven't kept?
Have I allowed others to swear in my presence?

3. Remember to keep holy the LORD's Day.

Do I attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation?
Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sundays?
Do I avoid unnecessary shopping on Sundays?

4. Honor your father and mother.

Do I show love to my parents, regardless of their age?
Do I help them when I can?
Do I respect my employer and others in authority?
If I am a parent, have I given a bad example in word or deed to my children?
Am I raising my children in the Catholic Faith?

5. You shall not kill.

Have I killed or seriously injured anyone?
Do I gossip?
Have I had an abortion or helped someone get an abortion?
Have I lost my temper, given into anger, or harbored resentment against my neighbor?
Do I bear grudges?
Have I ever harmed anyone physically, mentally or emotionally?
Do I take care of the environment?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

Have I used pornography?
Have I watched movies that are overly violent or sexual?
Have I consented to lustful thoughts?
Have I masturbated?
Have I had premarital sex?
Have I treated anyone as an object, rather than a person?
Do I eat or drink in excess?
Have I lost sobriety through drunkenness or drug use?

7. You shall not steal.

Have I stolen anything?
Do I always give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
Do I cheat in school or in business?
Am I fair in paying my employees?
Am I honest in paying my taxes?
Have I wasted time?
Have I been generous in serving the poor?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I told a lie, even a white lie?
Have I told lies to avoid getting in trouble?
Have I revealed other people's secrets?
Have I failed to mind my own business?
Have I accused someone falsely?
Have I judged others harshly?
Have I been prejudiced or discriminated against anyone?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I been unfaithful to my spouse in either my actions or my thoughts?
Have I used my wife or husband merely to satisfy my sexual urges?
Have I acted inappropriately with those of the opposite sex?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's property.

Have I envied anyone else's possessions, money, fame, or success?
Have I used more than my fair share of resources?



CLOSING PRAYER

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

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:



"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

—Psalm 32:1



Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 215-227 -- Chapter 13

Compendium #295-320

For further study:

- *Jesus Reconciles Us to the Father: CCC 1485*
- *Names of the Sacrament of Penance: CCC 1423–1424*
- *God Alone Forgives Sin: CCC 1441*
- *Priests Given Power of Forgiveness: CCC 1442, 1444–1445*
- *The Spiritual Effects of the Sacrament of Penance: CCC 1496*
- *Contrition: CCC 1451*
- *Absolution: CCC 1449*
- *Anointing of the Sick: CCC 1532*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapters 18–19*
- *Apostolic Exhortation, Reconcilio et Paenitentia* by Pope St. John Paul II
- *Lord, Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession* by Scott Hahn
- *Going to Confession?* by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Go in Peace: Your Guide to the Purpose and Power of Confession* by Father Mitch Pacwa and Sean Brown
- *The Light Is On for You: The Life-Changing Power of Confession* by Cardinal Donald Wuerl
- *Pastoral Care of the Sick (Bilingual Edition)* by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Session 5



MATRIMONY AND HOLY ORDERS

THE SACRAMENTS
OF SERVICE & COMMUNION



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

MATRIMONY AND HOLY ORDERS

The Sacraments of Service & Communion

INTRODUCTION

All marriages begin with hopes and dreams, but according to Professor Scott Stanley at the University of Denver, a young couple marrying for the first time today has a lifetime divorce risk of forty percent. And of those married couples who do stay together, how many truly reflect the loving union of man and woman that God intended marriage to be?

Perhaps part of the reason so many marriages struggle is that we forget marriage is a sacrament. The wedding ceremony is a wonderful event, but the Sacrament of Matrimony doesn't end with the vows on the wedding day; it just begins then. Through the sacrament, God gives married couples the grace they need to live their call to service, sacrifice, mutual sanctification, openness to new life, and lifelong faithfulness to each other.

A strong marriage is formed day by day, over a lifetime, as a husband and wife grow in love, trust, and mutual self-giving.

None of these things are easy. But through the graces of the sacrament, those who are called to the married state are given strength to love as Christ loved—and to make their marriage a witness to God's own love for the world.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Why marriage is a sacrament**
- **The concrete ways the sacrament helps couples every day**
- **How Christ's love for his Church is the model for marriage**
- **The importance of the lifelong commitment of marriage**
- **What an annulment is...and isn't**
- **The second sacrament of service—Holy Orders—and how this sacrament comes in an unbroken line from the Apostles**



OPENING PRAYER

God our Father, we give you thanks
for the gift of marriage: the bond of life and love,
and the font of the family.

The love of husband and wife enriches your Church with children,
fills the world with a multitude of spiritual fruitfulness and service,
and is the sign of the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, for his Church.

May your Holy Spirit enlighten our society
to treasure the heroic love of husband and wife,
and guide our leaders to sustain and protect
the singular place of mothers and fathers
in the lives of their children.

We ask all these things through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

—Prayer for the Defense of Marriage from the U.S. Catholic Bishops

“If two pieces of wood are carefully glued together, their union will be so close that it is easier to break them in some fresh place than where they were joined; and God so united man and wife, that it is easier to sever soul and body than those two.”
—St. Francis de Sales



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the four aspects of Catholic marriage as reflected in the Sacrament of Matrimony, and what does each entail?
2. After his second divorce, a popular American entertainer had this to say about marriage in an interview on television: “Well if you have to work at it then maybe it’s not worth having... I have to work at everything else in my life. I have to work at my work. I just think a marriage should be easy, not hard.” How would you respond to that comment?
3. A priest said: “While it is true that no one will ever call me ‘daddy,’ thousands call me ‘Father.’” Why do we call priests “Father”?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 If you are married, how does your union signify the union of Christ and the Church? In what areas do you fall short? Where can you improve? Are you asking God for the daily grace of the Sacrament?

#2 If you aren't married, how can you use your single state to reflect Christ's sacrificial love and service to others more?

#3 Reflect on the following quote from Pope St. John Paul II:

“Marriage is an act of will that signifies and involves a mutual gift, which unites the spouses and binds them to their eventual souls, with whom they make up a sole family—a domestic church.”

How is the marriage relationship not just a feeling but an “act of the will”? How does this differ from what the world thinks about marriage?



CLOSING PRAYER

O God, Father of all mercies,
Provider of a bountiful harvest,
send your graces upon those
you have called to gather the
fruits of your labor;
preserve and strengthen them
in their lifelong service of you.

Open the hearts of your children
that they may discern your holy will;
inspire in them a love and desire to
surrender themselves to serving others
in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.



Teach all your faithful to follow their respective paths in life
guided by your divine Word and truth.

Through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary,
all the angels, and saints, humbly hear our prayers
and grant your Church's needs, through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

—U.S. Catholic Bishops' Prayer for the Discernment of Vocations

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:**



*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife,
and they become one flesh.*

—Genesis 2:24

Readings for Next Week:

Compendium #321-350

For further study:

- *Marriage in God's Plan: CCC 1602–1605*
- *Marriage in the Lord: CCC 1612*
- *Marriage as a Model of Christ's Union with the Church: CCC 1616*
- *The Rites of Marriage: CCC 1621–1624*
- *Matrimonial Consent: CCC 1625–1629*
- *Mixed Marriage and Disparity of Cult: CCC 1633–1636*
- *Permanence of Marriage: CCC 1638–1640*
- *Grace of the Sacrament: CCC 1641–1642*
- *The Indissolubility of Marriage: CCC 1644*
- *Fidelity of Conjugal Love: CCC 1646*
- *Openness to Fertility: CCC 1652–1654*
- *Holy Orders: CCC 1536–1538*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapters 20–21*
- *Life-Giving Love: Embracing God's Beautiful Design for Marriage* by Scott Hahn and Kimberly Hahn
- *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility* by Edward Sri
- *Three to Get Married* by Venerable Fulton J. Sheen
- *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* by Dietrich Von Hildebrand
- *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* from USCCB United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* by Pope St. John Paul II

Session 6



A CATHOLIC MORAL VISION

VIRTUE, GRACE,
& THE PATH TO HAPPINESS



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

A CATHOLIC MORAL VISION

Virtue, Grace, & the Path to Happiness

INTRODUCTION

The dictionary defines *morality* as “a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct.” The problem today is that our culture doesn’t accept that there is an absolute standard for right and wrong. Instead, much of what the world believes is based on moral relativism: the idea that there isn’t really right or wrong, truth or falsehood—all that matters is what you think and feel is right. Any moral law that applies to everyone is viewed as a restriction of your freedom.

This stands in stark contrast to Catholic teaching, which says that living a moral life according to the guidance God has given us is the key to true happiness and freedom. According to Catholic thought, morality is the map that helps us build a life that allows us to become all that God has created us to be. Rather than being restrictive, morality liberates us from sin and enslavement to our own selfish desires.

We will look at God’s moral vision for our lives and how by following it, we become authentically whole and holy.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **What leads to true happiness**
- **The difference between the modern view of freedom and the biblical view of freedom**
- **Virtue and why we need it to live life well**
- **The three things that make an act moral**
- **Why we can never do evil so that good may result—in other words, why the end never justifies the means**
- **Sin and how it hinders our pursuit of happiness**
- **What we need to have a correctly formed conscience**



OPENING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, Sweet Lord,
why have I ever loved,
why in my whole life
have I ever desired anything except you,
Jesus my God?
Where was I when I was not in spirit with you?
Now, from this time forth,
do you, all my desires, grow hot,
and flow out upon the Lord Jesus...
O, Sweet Jesus,
may every good feeling that is fitted
for your praise,
love you, delight in you, adore you!
God of my heart,
and my Portion, Christ Jesus,
may my heart faint away in spirit,
and may you be my Life within me!

—St. Augustine of Hippo

*“O my dear
parishioners, let
us endeavor to get
to heaven! There
we shall see God.
How happy we shall
feel! We must get to
heaven! What a pity
it would be if some
of you were to find
yourselves on the
other side!”*
—St. John Vianney



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What, according to the presenter, is the hallmark of true freedom? What do we need to be truly free?
2. How do we know whether our choices are morally good? What are the three elements of a good moral act?
3. American novelist Mark Twain said: “It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” What is your interpretation of this quote?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 In the video, the presenters talked about how our relativistic culture says there are no moral truths for everyone to follow. Prayerfully consider some of the ways in which the relativistic culture affects you. Are you sometimes afraid or hesitant to say there are some things that are morally wrong for everyone? Are there some areas of your life where you rationalize certain immoral choices, preferring to “make up your own morality” instead of allowing the teaching of Christ and the Church to guide you?

#2 Today’s session discussed virtue as a habitual disposition to do the good. Prayerfully consider how well your life reflects the cardinal virtues.

a. How well do I live a prudent life, making wise decisions based on what is truly most important in life?

b. How well do I live a temperate life, exhibiting self-control especially in attraction to pleasures of food, drink, and sex?

c. How well do I live out courage, exhibiting a consistent willingness to endure pain and suffering for what is good?

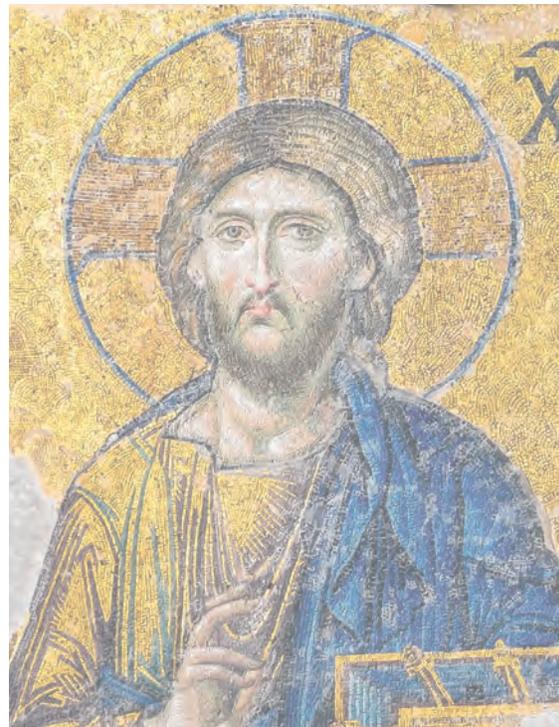
d. How well do I exhibit justice in my daily life, fulfilling my responsibilities toward God and others in my family, friendships, workplace, and society?

#3 Which of these virtues do you think you need to grow in most? What is one thing you can do this week to help you grow in this area? Turn to God each day in prayer, asking for his divine assistance.



CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.



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:



“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

—Psalm 34:14

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 228-240 -- Chapter 14

Compendium #357-400, 429-433

For further study:

- *Freedom and Responsibility: CCC 1731–1734*
- *Freedom as a Right: CCC 1747*
- *Sources of Morality: CCC 1750–1754*
- *Good and Evil Acts: CCC 1755*
- *Formation of Conscience: CCC 1783–1785*
- *Necessity to Obey Conscience: CCC 1800*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapters 23–34*
- *An Introduction to Moral Theology* by William May
- *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* by Peter Kreeft
- *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions* by Peter Kreeft
- Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor* by Pope St. John Paul II
- *The Heart of Virtue* by Donald DeMarco

Session 7



A LOVE THAT LASTS
DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC LOVE



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

A LOVE THAT LASTS

Discovering Authentic Love

INTRODUCTION

A Grammy-winning song asks “What’s love got to do with it?” For a Catholic, the answer is everything. Love is what every human heart desires. It is, as Pope St. John Paul II says, “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”

So what’s gone wrong with our culture, where people seek love but so often fail to find the deep, committed relationships they desire?

The problem is that all too often we focus on love that is based on passion and pleasure—love that seeks what it can get rather than what it can give—instead of the total, committed, unconditional, and sacrificial love that God has for us.

When we base our relationships on what’s in it for ourselves, we are living in what is sometimes called *eros*, the passionate love that seeks pleasure in the company of a beloved. This kind of love can feel good at the beginning, but, when the tough times come, it has no lasting foundation.

Agape love, on the other hand, is the love that God has for each one of us. It is a total, committed, and unconditional love that centers not on what we can get from the other person, but on what we can give.

We may live in a culture that praises *eros*, but our hearts long for *agape*. If we are ever to find the peace and fulfillment that we all crave, we must learn how God calls us beyond *eros love* to *agape love* to make a sincere gift of ourselves, seeking the highest good of those we love, and making our own wants and needs secondary. Only then will we know true and authentic love.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The essential differences between *eros* and *agape***
- **What it means to love according to God’s plan**
- **Why the only way we can find the love we desire is by living God’s authentic love**
- **The joy and freedom that comes from living *agape*—the love that lasts**
- **The essential characteristics of this authentic love**



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

— Prayer from early 1900s. (Not St. Francis of Assisi)

*“Love is therefore the
fundamental and innate
vocation of every human
being.”*

— Pope St. John Paul II



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the characteristics of *agape*? Why does *agape* fulfill us in ways that *eros* alone cannot?
2. How has the entertainment industry distorted the meaning of love?
3. What do you think it means that “man cannot fully find himself, except through a sincere gift of himself”?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 In the video, the presenter encourages us to prayerfully consider how the world's view of love has changed how we look at relationships. In what ways have you been influenced by the world's view of love? How might this have affected your previous (or current) relationships?

#2 Think about what a love built on wanting the very best for another person would look like. Take some time now and reflect on how this way of loving would change your relationships with:

- Your spouse (if you have one)
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend (if you have one)
- Your children (if you have them)
- Your friends
- Your co-workers
- Your relatives

#3 Reflect on the following quote from Pope Francis about *agape*.

“Agape, the love of each one of us for the other, from the closest to the furthest, is in fact the only way that Jesus has given us to find the way of salvation and of the Beatitudes.”

Why do you think Pope Francis says that *agape* is the “only way” to find the way of salvation? How can you live out this in your own life?



CLOSING PRAYER

God, my Father,
may I love you in all things and above all things.
May I reach the joy which you have prepared
for me in heaven.
Nothing is good that is against your will,
and all that is good comes from your hand.
Place in my heart a desire to please you
and fill my mind with thoughts of your love,
so that I may grow in your wisdom and
enjoy your peace.

—<http://www.catholic.org/prayers>



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:



So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
—1 Corinthians 13:13

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 241-258 -- Chapter 15
Compendium #434-446, 487-491

For further study:

- *God is Love: CCC 2331*
- *Love as Vocation: CCC 2392*
- *Chastity: CCC 2337–2339*

Other Resources:

- *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*
by USCCB
- Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* by Pope Benedict XVI
- *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from St. John Paul II's Love and Responsibility* by Edward Sri

Session 8



A LOVE THAT LASTS GOD'S PLAN FOR SEXUALITY



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

A LOVE THAT LASTS

God's Plan for Sexuality

INTRODUCTION

God has a plan for every part of our lives—including our sexuality. The marital act is God's gift to husbands and wives, enabling them to give completely and totally of themselves to each other. In this intimate act, the couple expresses with their bodies what God means when he says two shall be one.

When a husband and wife come together, they show that God has united them in a life-long covenant of love. Sex is the way that married couples express both the physical and spiritual aspects of their love. It is the way they say, "I give myself to you totally and faithfully, holding nothing back—I give myself to you spiritually, emotionally and physically" (CCC 2360–2361).

This union of man and woman in marriage is a reflection of Christ's own love. It must be faithful, a commitment that ends only with death, and fruitful, open to the transmission of new life. The Church offers guidance that is intended to help us say "yes" to God's plan for love so that through our sexuality we can experience authentic love.

As Pope St. John Paul II said, "We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus." The proper use of our sexuality is one way that we show the sum of that love and fulfill our capacity to become the image of Christ.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Why sex is meant to be an expression of total, self-giving love, a love in which couples give themselves to each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually**
- **How marital sex must be both unitive and procreative**
- **How the marital embrace fits into the total, free, faithful, and fruitful aspects of marriage**
- **What the Church teaches about contraception**
- **Why the separation of pleasure from self-giving love is so destructive**
- **The challenge—and joy—of lifelong love**



OPENING PRAYER

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

—I John 4:7-12

“Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them—every day begin the task anew.”

—St. Francis de Sales



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is total and self-giving love at the very heart of our sexuality?
2. It has been said that sex is like atomic power. When used according to God’s plan, it creates massive amounts of energy...but when used contrary to God’s plan, it destroys. What are some examples that demonstrate this point?
3. Contraception was supposed to make marriages better, but from 1965 to 1975 the divorce rate doubled. Why do you think that is?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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



#1 Reflect on the following quote from Pope St. John Paul II:

“Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.” (Familiaris Consortio, 11)

- If you are married, consider how you use your sexuality in your marriage. Do you truly give a total gift of yourself to your spouse, physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Is your sexual relationship with your spouse an expression of personal trust, intimacy, and union, or more about use, gratification, and pleasure?
- If you are single, and considering marriage, do you respect the gift of your sexuality as a gift that you may someday give to your spouse in the Sacrament of Matrimony?

#2 Do you need any healing or forgiveness in the area of sexuality and purity? Start now by entrusting yourself to the mercy of Christ, and trust that he will give you the grace to love your spouse or possible future spouse with a total and authentic love. Do not be afraid to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where Christ is waiting to forgive, heal, and strengthen you.



CLOSING PRAYER

Love is patient, love is kind.
It is not jealous,
love is not pompous,
it is not inflated,
it is not rude,
it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered,
it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.

—I Corinthians 13:4-7



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:



Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.

—1 Peter 4:8

Readings for Next Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 241-258 -- Chapter 15
Compendium #487-502

For further study:

- *Sexuality: CCC 2333-2335, 2360–2362*
- *Fecundity of Marriage: CCC 2366*
- *Regulation of Procreation: CCC 2368*

Other Resources:

- **Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, by Pope Paul VI**
- **Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* by Pope St. John Paul II**
- ***Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, & Defense, 3rd Edition* by William May, Joseph Boyle, Ronald Lawler**
- ***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 30 and 33***
- ***Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching* by Christopher West**

Session 9



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

BUILDING A
CIVILIZATION OF LOVE



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Building a Civilization of Love

INTRODUCTION

Washing the feet was the kind of task a slave would perform for his master. Yet this is what Jesus did for his disciples the night before he died at the Last Supper. He rose from the table, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet.

Jesus, the Divine Son of God, lowered himself, taking on the role of a slave, to humbly serve his disciples. In doing so, he also wanted to teach them a crucial lesson, a new commandment: "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

Ever since the time of the Apostles, Christians have been striving to build a community that is shaped by Christ's command to "love one another" as he loved us. Indeed, already in the early Church, the Gospel message touched on all aspects of human life—marriage and family, education, work, culture, serving the poor, caring for widows, and protecting human life. And it inspired Christians not just to seek their own interests, but to serve each other in all these areas. Through a rich 2,000-year history of striving to live out Christ's call to "wash one another's feet," the Church has also reflected on how to build a just society in which all human beings can flourish. That reflection has been embodied in various principles and guidelines from the Church known as Catholic social teaching.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Church’s social teaching helps us love one another as Christ loves us**
- **How we are called to imitate Jesus in serving the people right around us: in our families, workplaces, churches, and local communities**
- **How serving and caring for others, especially the poor, is a key characteristic of being a disciple of Christ**
- **How some of the greatest poverty in the world is not material poverty, but a poverty of love or what Pope Francis calls a “poverty of relationships”**
- **The ways that Catholic social teaching affects our lives today and helps us to apply the Gospel to the many social issues we face**
- **The call to responsibility encounter and care for the poor and the most vulnerable around us**



OPENING PRAYER

Father and maker of all,
you adorn all creation
with splendor and beauty,
and fashion human lives
in your image and likeness.
Awaken in every heart
reverence for the work of your hands,
and renew among your people
a readiness to nurture and sustain
your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in
the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.

—Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers at www.usccb.org

“To love God and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: it means seeing in every person and face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, in the face of Jesus.”

—Pope Francis



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the very beginning, the Church cared for the poor, the sick, and the abandoned. The Church created the education system and the health care system, and has fed, clothed, and housed more people than any other group or institution in history.

How does this statement embody Catholic social teaching: “To know Jesus is to want to make him known”?

2. St. Katharine Drexel witnessed with her life that joy is found in what you give and not in what you have. Why do you think true joy is found in generosity and service?
3. How is “encounter” at the heart of social justice?

CALL TO CONVERSION

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

#1 Reflect on the following quote from Saint Teresa of Calcutta:

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.”

- In what ways does this statement speak to you?

#2 What poverty do you see around you? Who do you know who is unwanted, unloved, or uncared for? How do you treat the members of your own family? Do you know someone who is going through a very difficult time in their lives?

#3 What is one concrete action you can take this week to begin to meet the needs of those God has placed in your life?





CLOSING PRAYER

Come, O Holy Spirit!

Come, open us to the wonder, beauty,
and dignity of the diversity found in each culture,
in each face, and in each experience we have of the other among us.

Come, fill us with generosity as we are challenged to let go and allow
others to share with us the goods and beauty of earth.

Come, heal the divisions that keep us from seeing the face of Christ in all
men, women, and children.

Come, free us to stand with and for those who must leave their own lands
in order to find work, security, and welcome in a new land, one that has
enough to share.

Come, bring us understanding, inspiration, wisdom, and the courage
needed to embrace change and stay on the journey.

Come, O Holy Spirit,
Show us the way.

— www.usccb.org



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:



“Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!”

—Proverbs 31:9

Readings for Next Week:

Compendium #401-421, 455-465, 466-479

For further study:

- *Respect for the Human Person: CCC 1928–1933*
- *Solidarity as Part of Social Justice: CCC 1939–1942*
- *Love of Neighbor: CCC 1878*
- *Human Person at the Center of Every Social Organization: CCC 1892*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapter 24*
- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (available online from www.vatican.va)
- *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Encyclical Letter, Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI

Session 10



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

PROTECTING THE DIGNITY
OF THE HUMAN PERSON



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Protecting the Dignity of the Human Person

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus went out of his way to associate with the poor, the suffering, and those most vulnerable in society. He visited their homes, came to their assistance, spoke to them as friends, and brought comfort and healing to them. Jesus identified himself so much with the poor that he said the way we treat the poor directly affects our relationship with him.

In a dramatic scene from Matthew 25, Jesus describes how when we go before the judgment seat of God, the chief criterion he will use to evaluate our lives will be how well we served those in need. Did we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned? Those who fail to help the poor and suffering will be cast into eternal punishment, and Jesus explains why: “As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me” (Matthew 25:45).

This is why Saint Teresa of Calcutta often taught that the Gospel message can be summed up with these five words from Jesus: “You did it to me.” In this session, we are going to go deeper into our consideration of Catholic social teaching, exploring how we have a profound responsibility to care for the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the suffering in the world and in our daily lives. And when we do so, we are loving Jesus, who is present in a special way in the poor.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Why Catholic social teaching contributes to the flourishing of all peoples, not just Catholics**
- **The difference between rights and responsibilities in society**
- **Why the essential dignity of each human person is at the heart of Catholic social teaching**
- **Why abortion and euthanasia are always morally wrong**
- **What the Church means by a “preferential option for the poor”**
- **How Catholic social teaching inspires the proper attitude toward earthly possessions and social economic relationships**
- **What Catholic social teaching tells us about our economic activity and participation in political life**



OPENING PRAYER

O God, our Creator,
all life is in your hands
from conception until death.
Help us to cherish our children
and to reverence the awesome privilege
of our share in creation.
May all people live and die in dignity and love.
Bless all those who defend the rights of the unborn,
the handicapped and the aged.
Enlighten and be merciful toward those
who fail to love, and give them peace.
Let freedom be tempered by responsibility,
integrity and morality.

*“If you want peace,
work for justice!”*
—Pope Paul VI

—<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=228>

? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of Catholic social teaching challenge you the most, and why?
2. Reflect on the following quote from St. Basil the Great:

“The bread you do not use is the bread of the hungry. The garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of the person who is naked. The shoes you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot. The money you keep locked away is the money of the poor. The acts of charity you do not perform are the injustices you commit.”

How does this quote challenge you to be more aware of the needs of the poor? What is something specific you can do in your own life to be a more generous steward of the goods God has entrusted to you, so you can use them not for yourself but to help others?

3. How does the Catholic view of rights and responsibilities differ from the world’s view?

CALL TO CONVERSION

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25, Jesus tells us that the primary criterion for how God will judge us is how we loved and cared for others. Now imagine that you are going before the judgment seat of God and you see that Jesus is dividing up the people and placing the “sheep” on his right (those who are righteous) and the “goats” on his left (the wicked, who are condemned). You then hear him say to the sheep on the right:

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:35-36, 40)

Then you hear Jesus say to the goats on his left:

“Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me... Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.” (Matthew 25:41-43, 45)

#1 If you were to go before the judgment seat of God today, which side would you be on?

#2 What changes can you make in your life now to move you even more toward those on the right, who are entering eternal glory?





CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You sift through my travels and my rest;
with all my ways you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
Lord, you know it all...

You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!
My very self you know.
My bones are not hidden from you.
When I was being made in secret,
fashioned in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw me unformed;
in your book all are written down;
my days were shaped, before one came to be.

—Psalm 139



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:



“And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

—Matthew 25:40

Readings after this Week:

Love Unveiled (Sri) pp. 259-278 -- Chapter 16 & Conclusion

For further study:

- *Human Rights: CCC 1928*
- *Preferential Option for the Poor: CCC 1932*
- *Dignity of Human Life: CCC 2258*
- *Opposition to Abortion: CCC 2270–2275*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 24, 28–29, 31–32, 34*
- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (available online from www.vatican.va)
- *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Encyclical Letters, *Laborem Exercens* and *Centesimus Annus* by Pope St. John Paul II
- Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI

