

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

Feeding Hungry Hearts *Celebrating the Eucharist*

REFLECTIONS, QUESTIONS & EXERCISES TO COMPLEMENT THE DVD

PREPARATION & INTRODUCTORY RITES

Summary

We are called by God to gather as a community so that the empty places in our hearts may be filled with the goodness of God. We come as more than spectators, for we are called to active participation in the rituals and prayers of the Mass.

Reflection

Making others feel welcome is a natural human gesture. A handshake, or nod with a smile, or verbal greeting relays to the other person that we recognize them for who they are. Greeting people at Mass is a way to build up the support of the community and let others know that they have a right to join in the Mass. "Active participation" means that we let Christ into our hearts and minds; we believe that our lives are incomplete without his presence and we actively seek out his presence. As we continue on our journey of faith we realize that it has been God who has pursued us. Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom of God to men and women found its way into the lives of the sick, the aged, the outcast, and the sinner. While that was nearly 2,000 years ago, we are not that different from the people in the gospels, looking for welcome, forgiveness, and communion. Indeed we will come to Mass less than prepared on many occasions, full of questions and concerns that compete for our attention as we try to focus on the task of offering thanks to God. Don't be overly concerned when this happens, instead let the flow of the Mass embrace you and give you and your fellow Catholics a deep welcome.

Discussion Questions

1. Take a moment to think about "the hole in your soul" that can only be filled by God. Has there been a time in the past week or month when you felt the need for a power beyond yourself, beyond your loved ones . . . a need for God?
2. Fr. Joe reminds us that we sometimes try to distract ourselves from the empty feeling, the inner ache we experience. What "distractions" do you typically engage in to avoid the pain of loneliness or lack of intimacy?
3. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that, even if we reject God, God will continue to pursue us. In what ways does God pursue you? In other words, when do you sense God urging you, calling you to a deeper relationship?

Spiritual Exercise

Give each participant a piece of paper (perhaps cut in various shapes—circles, squares, triangles, etc.) and a pen. With music that invites reflection, ask them to quietly meditate on what they most hunger or long for in their lives. Where or when do they experience emptiness or loneliness? After some time for quiet reflection, ask them to write a few phrases or draw a symbol of their "hunger." Assure participants that all work is confidential.

Invite the members to fold and place their slips of paper on an empty plate. When all have done so, the group leader lifts the plate and prays in these or similar words:

"Oh God, hear the hungers of your people. There is an emptiness and a longing in each of our hearts. We remember that our hunger is ultimately for you. Keep us hungry and thirsting for you, oh Lord. As we leave this gathering, keep

our eyes and hearts open to the ways that you feed us.”

Put the plate back on the table and invite the group to pray the meal prayer that we often use to remind us that God does indeed feed the deepest hungers of our hearts:

All: Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts which we are about to receive from your bounty, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Summary

Fr. Joe explains that when we listen attentively and openly to Sacred Scripture, as it is proclaimed in the Church, it is **God** who is speaking directly to us.

Reflection

The Scriptures recount how men, women and children have heard the invitation from God to walk with faith. Across generations the people of Israel hungered for a place where they would be free and could worship God in the ways he instructed them. In addition to having a place to worship, they were called to live by values that included care for the poor, the widows, and orphans. When they strayed from this path the prophets would speak up and remind the leaders and people that they were not obedient to the ways of the Lord. The work of salvation is more than saying prayers; it asks us that we engage in caring for the needy and practicing justice and peace in our daily lives. While at times the scriptures have a variety of literature — poetry, parables, history, narrative — they are the inspired Word of God and remind us of the saving work of God in history that was fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Catholics enjoy a strong sacramental life and have come to appreciate the role of the Scriptures in shaping and guiding their lives. Not only has the Church squarely placed the proclamation of the Scriptures in the Eucharist, it encourages the use of the Scriptures in the other sacraments and group and private bible study.

Discussion Questions

1. It is important to create a space in our minds and in our hearts for God’s Word. Are you a person who regularly finds time for solitude and quiet, or do you typically fill your day with constant activity and/or noise? Are you comfortable with quiet “down time?” Honestly assess your current life habits. If your life is currently too noise-filled, what changes could you make to allow more time for the quiet space you need to hear the voice of God?
2. Fr. Joe talks about the “difficult word” in Scripture that sets us free. Describe one passage from Scripture that especially challenges you or perhaps makes you feel uncomfortable. If you dared to accept the challenge that God’s Word presents to you, how might your life be changed? In what way might you be “set free?”

Exercise

1. The primary purpose of the homily is “to connect our lives to the living Word of God.” Imagine that you have been assigned the task of writing the homily for the following Sunday. Choose one of the readings and reflect on it for several minutes. Write a one or two paragraph “homily” that attempts to connect the reading to your life and to your community. What is one lesson or important truth the reading contains that is still relevant today? How does the reading challenge you or inspire you?
2. Read and reflect on the Nicene Creed. Now write your own version of the Creed, emphasizing in your own words those aspects of “belief” that are most important to you right now. Reflect on what you have written. How is your version of the Creed different from that which is recited at Mass? How is it the same?

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Summary

After the Liturgy of the Word we shift from “the Table of God’s Word” to “the Table of the Eucharist,” which is both a meal table and an altar of sacrifice. The rites of the Liturgy of the Eucharist are explained and the amazing truth that all people, both living and dead, dine at this table with God is explored.

Reflection

The many grains of wheat that are harvested, milled, and baked into bread represents us who are to combine our time, talent, and treasure to bring to life God’s vision for the world. Jesus ate meals with those who were considered sinners and in so doing challenged the customs of his time. This is not unlike his courage in touching the sick and unclean while calling forth their faith and restoring them to health. Christians look to Jesus who teaches a new kind of love, a sacrificial love. If we want to lead we must serve; if we want to be first we must be last; if we want to live we must die. When Jesus took bread and wine and said, “This is my body and This is my Blood” he gave a new meaning to his mission and this became his gift to creation. Now they are the body and blood of Christ and are given to us who are baptized into his life.

Discussion Questions

1. The Lord’s Prayer reminds us that “there is no communion with the Lord unless we are in communion with our brothers and sisters.” Name the diversity you see in your faith community. Do you experience it as a blessing or a curse? Bring to mind those in your faith community whom you find most difficult to love and see goodness in. Can they possibly help you to heaven? Reflect out loud how that could be true.
2. Fr. Joe tells us that the Eucharist is truly “a meal for sinners” and not “a reward for the righteous.” What sins, if any, should keep you from Holy Communion? What sins keep you from being “in communion” with others? What are the costs of Communion?

3. The altar is also a table of sacrifice where we enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. Have you ever chosen to do something that was hard—a real sacrifice—that you are glad you did?
4. What matters more to you than your life itself? Is anybody, anything, or any dream worth your life? What would you die for?

Exercise

We all have many “good” excuses for not attending Mass on Sunday and for rejecting our Lord’s invitation to dine with him at the Eucharistic table. Often, we believe that we will not be missed and that our contribution to the Body of Christ is insignificant. At a family meal in the week to come, talk about the importance of each person at the table. Name the gifts each person brings to the family, such as a sense of humor, kindness, humility, etc. If you no longer live with your family, do the same exercise with special friends. How and why is every person important? In what ways is every person missed?

CONCLUDING RITES

Summary

During the Concluding Rites of the Mass, we are blessed and sent forth to feed “the deepest hungers” of our world.

Reflection

The word Eucharist means “thanksgiving.” Catholics show thankfulness at the Eucharist through their praise of God in words and actions. It’s when the mass is ended that we are called to live our vocations by putting our gratitude into action. Loving and serving the Lord is practiced in many ways, and the majority of us are called to do this in our families and at work. But what do we do about the larger problems and matters of poverty and racism and war? How are those dealt with? We live our vocations through our participation in public, and as Catholics, we are encouraged to take to heart the concerns and needs of our cities and

culture. Our witness to faith, hope, and love among people who don't share our faith, or who no longer practice their faith, can be a powerful reminder that God continues to invite them to a relationship that will be with them through this life into the next. God's love found in the resurrection will triumph the sin and death that surround us.

Discussion Questions

1. The word "Mass" comes from the Latin word meaning "mission." Think about your life for a moment—your family, your friends, your co-workers, your classmates, your work, your studies, your "place" in this world. What do you see as your mission? What simple actions can you take to transform your little part of the world? Think in very realistic, concrete terms and commit yourself to making a small difference in your world THIS day, and each day.

2. We have learned that while our participation in Mass is not private prayer, it is deeply personal prayer brought to God in the context of community. What is gained and lost in a life of just "private" prayer verses a life of communal prayer? Why is it important to celebrate and pray as a faith community? What do you lose or what sacrifices must you make? What do you gain by belonging to a community?

Exercise

Quietly reflect on the words attributed to St. Theresa of Avila—"Christ has no body but yours..." Write a mission statement for yourself. In three or four concise sentences, state your role, your purpose, your mission in life. How can you help feed the deepest hungers of the world?

