

# **Leaders' Guideline (Roman Missal III)**

## **Understanding the Revised Mass Texts**

### **Session I**

### **Why and How Have the Mass Texts Been Revised**

#### **Welcome**

Invite your group to gather and seat themselves comfortably. Introduce yourself and thank them for coming. Review housekeeping details, such as the location of bathrooms or snacks, the time of breaks, the ending time, etc. Distribute the guidelines, and explain that your goal is to understand the revised translation, not as a passive spectator but as active participants in the Mass. As the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) says: "Christ's faithful...should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement (CSL. 48).

#### **Opening Prayer**

Invite those present to quiet themselves for an opening prayer. Then after a few moments of silence, begin with an opening song that is used in your parish at Mass.

**Good and gracious God,  
open our minds and hearts to a new approach.  
Help us to listen carefully,  
to trust in the work of your Holy Spirit,  
and to find your presence in this, as in all our lives.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

#### **Initial Icebreaker**

Unless you have an unusually large group, you may want to make sure participants know each other. (With a group of 25 or more, you could break into smaller groups for this activity and some of the discussion.) This familiarity can be accomplished by using name tags, so no one needs to say, "I agree with the lady

in the red shirt.” You may also lead a brief icebreaker activity. For example, invite everyone to take turn saying their name and giving 2 to 3 adjective that describe how they’re feeling now about being present or the learning that lies ahead.

You may wish to give some thought to how your meeting space is arranged. Since the sessions often include group discussion, the best arrangement would probably be small tables with 4 to 5 chairs at a table. If this isn’t possible, try to meet in a place where the chairs are movable. This will allow people to form small clusters for discussion. Try to avoid a classroom arrangement where all the chairs are in rows facing the podium or desk. The room arrangement should convey that this is not school. Part of the experience will be prayerful, and much will be participative. Therefore, if you can’t use small tables, place the chairs in a semicircle, with the understanding that they will be moved into small groups at times.

## **Setting the Stage**

Either in large or small discussion groups, address the following question: When in your experience have you worried about a change, or have been frustrated with a change, then learned to adjust and live with it? (Some examples: moving to a new home, shifting to a new job, retiring, living in more environmentally conscious ways like conserving water or energy, etc.)

Then say, in your own words if possible: We find ourselves in a similar situation. Many of us have grown accustomed, maybe overly familiar, with the prayers of the Mass. They haven’t changed since 1973, so 37 years (adapt number) is most of an adult lifetime. We grew up with them, we’re used to their cadence, we could probably say the response in our sleep. Like any of the other life changes you discussed before, you may feel initially resistant to this one. But like those other changes, you may grow into the new prayers, and after a while, see they weren’t such a big obstacle. (Emphasize that there are new words for the prayers, but the Mass itself hasn’t changed).

Ask: Have you ever been fond of a book, then disappointed in the movie version? Give an example, explain your frustration, then suggest ways you would’ve improved the movie.

After adequate discussion, say: The translators found themselves in a similar situation. They wanted the Mass prayers to be more faithful to the book: the original Latin texts and the scriptures from which they come. They’ve made some

changes, just as you wanted to improve the film version of your favorite book. (Emphasize again that the Mass hasn't changed.)

Ask the questions: Do any of you remember the changes after Vatican II? (Mass in vernacular languages; priest facing people; exchanging the sign of peace; Holy Communion with wine as well as bread, etc.) How have you adapted to these changes some forty years later? When you've undergone change before, either in your life or in church, what has kept you grounded or rooted so that you weren't knocked off your feet by the unfamiliar? Some of you may have mentioned holding onto familiar anchors or routines when you felt everything around you was changing. So, too, with this translation: the flow of the Mass remains the same. Many familiar phrases haven't changed. And the scripture readings will stay the same for now.

For instance, the four parts of the Mass remain the same. Does anyone recall what those are? (Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Concluding Rites.)

## Activity

Do this role-play in whatever form seems best: with small groups, partners, or four volunteers (speeding ticket receiver, judge, officer, spouse) to perform for the large group. Imagine the following scenario. You got a speeding ticket. How do you explain it to a) the judge at the court? b) the police officer c) your spouse? For most of us, the tone changes considerably, depending on our audience.

Now consider this dilemma: Explaining the situation to God. Stress that God is not punitive. However, we would adjust our language when addressing him, as we did with the other three audiences. Rather than saying, "Hey, what's up?" we'd use more formal words.

Some experts distinguish levels of discourse, from intimate, to casual, to formal, and finally to ritual language, which seldom changes (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, words to "Silent Night" or the national anthem, wedding vows). Because it is so rare to change ritual language, we're doing these sessions to understand the reasons for the changes in the Roman Missal.

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## Leader's Hint

1. In your preparation, try to bring your own personality and life experience to the text you've been given. You don't need to be the perfect expert, but you do need to be concerned for the people in your group. Remember how hard it may have been for some of them to come here. Others may have left difficult situations at home or at work that have left them tense or tired.
2. Your role is to draw out the gifts, insights, and experiences of those in your group. That is why much of this material relies on discussion rather than lecture method. It also depends on your reflecting about the questions ahead of time, perhaps with a friend or two, to see how you would answer them yourself.
3. Positive reinforcement is a powerful learning aid for adults. Especially in an area where we lack confidence (such as liturgy), we like to be affirmed for making an effort. So punctuate your discussion with compliments such as, "Good point," "I haven't thought of that!" "Does anyone else feel the same way?" or simply "Thank you."
4. Another kind of reinforcement is to add to the speaker's statement some personal experience that is similar and relevant. Remember to keep it brief: the purpose in sharing something similar that happened to you is to establish connection with a group member, not to give your full autobiography.

## Session 2

### The Introductory Rites

#### Prayer

Any suggested opening songs will work for this session. Consider also settings of the “Magnificat”. “Holy Is Your Name (David Haas), “Canticle of the Turning” (Rory Cooney) are good variations of this canticle. Pause in silence, sing, and then use the opening prayer in the previous session.

#### Introductory Rites

##### Background

Explain the meaning of the Introductory Rites by using these or similar words:

Our gathering begins long before we stand and sing the Opening song or Entrance Chant. As Cardinal Roger Mahoney explained in “Gather faithfully Together”, his letter to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, it begins as alarm clocks ring in homes and apartments, dormitories and trailer courts all over the parish. The Holy Spirit draws people together from different socioeconomic backgrounds, races, and age groups. They speak many different native languages and have many concerns on their minds.

The Introductory Rites are the first sign of unity for the assembly and help the gathered faithful to prepare themselves to hear the Word and receive Eucharist. These rites remind us of our identity in Christ, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9). As all the different people sing and pray together, they become one voice, one people in Christ. All are marked with the sign of the Cross, signifying that all belong to Christ. We are all precious to God, redeemed, and filled with grace.

Lead an informal discussion about how participants prepare for Mass:



#### Guide Questions for Discussion:

1. If your first language is not English, have you noticed how few citizens of the U.S.A. speak another language, or how few of our signs appear in a language other than English.

2. What is your understanding of Why the Mass prayers have been revised?
3. Do you wake early and go over the readings? Or is it a mad dash to get everyone in the family dressed and to church promptly?
4. Once you've arrived at Mass, what do you do? Do you welcome others, prepare for a liturgical ministry, collapse in relief, or center yourself in prayer? When do you feel you've best prepared for Mass?

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## **The Greeting and Response**

### **Background**

Explain the priest's initial greeting:

Note that "the Lord be with you" echoes a long history of Biblical greetings. Invite five volunteers to read the following five passages aloud (have Bibles handy).

#### **Judges 6:11-12:**

Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Oprah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior."

#### **Ruth 2:4:**

Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you." They answered, "The Lord bless you."

#### **2 Chronicles 15:1-2:**

The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: "The Lord is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you.

#### **Luke 1:26-28:**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of

David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.

**Matthew 28:20:**

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The people's response also has a long Biblical history: Invite four volunteers to read the following passages aloud:

**2 Timothy 4:22:**

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

**Galatians 6:18:**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

**Philippians 4:23:**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

**Philemon 25:**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

The new translation "And with your spirit" will make our response more like what is currently used throughout the world. (See box below.)



***French: Et avec votre esprit.***

***Spanish: Y con tu espíritu.***

***German: Und mit deinem Geiste.***

***Italian: 'E con il tuo spirit.***



If there are members of your group whose first language isn't English, invite them to say, "And with your spirit" in their native tongue.

As Peter Finn (Associate Executive Secretary of the International Commission on English in Liturgy-ICEL) writes in “Preparing Your Parish for the Revised Roman Missal, Part I (LTP), the greeting “ ‘the Lord be with you’ is a call for a rekindling of the Spirit’s activity in the minds and hearts of God’s people gathered for worship.”

At this time, you could invite the group to share examples of parishioners who clearly live up to being “God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9). You could also discuss ways in which your parish is compassionate, kind, and active for justice.

## **Penitential Act**

### **Background**

Explain the Penitential Act by using these or similar words: the Penitential Act brings out different aspects of reconciliation: personal wrongdoing against God and other people, God’s forgiveness, and the communal aspects of sin. It begins with an invitation to recognize our place before God. It shows how God spans the wide gap between divine goodness and human beings who sin. This part of the Mass should not be confused with the sacramental Rite of Penance or the examination of conscience within that rite. The Penitential Act during Mass acknowledges that we are sinners, while rejoicing in God’s never ending mercy and love.

Note to people that there are three different options for the Penitential Act. First explain the third option of the Penitential Act:

### **Explain:**

The third penitential option, probably the most popular option, emphasizes Christ’s power to forgive sins. The litany is directed to Christ, and these verses emphasize our belief in the Christ who is greater than death, than darkness, than sin. It is a litany of praise for the Christ who heals, who comes to save sinners, and who invites many to the heavenly banquet.

Explain that another common or popular option of the Penitential Act is the Confiteor (See separate sheet).

Ask a volunteer to read the prayer, or have all recite it together.

## **Explain:**

The first option (the Confiteor) is a general confession of sins. The new and former translations of the Confiteor (“I confess”) focus on the personal aspects of sin. However, the phrase “I ask...you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God” acknowledges the need for prayers from Mary, the angels, saints, and each other to overcome sin and its effects in our lives. It also echoes the Our Father’s words, “forgive us our trespasses,/ as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

## **Emphasize this:**

Refer the group to the second option. Recite out loud. You (the leader) can take the priest’s part, and the group responds. The second option deals with the sinner’s offense against God and request for healing. “Salvation” comes from the Latin word for the process of healing. Sometimes we seek forgiveness of sin but do not allow ourselves to experience spiritual wholeness.

## **The Collect**

### **Background**

Explain this part of the Mass by saying these or similar words: “The word comes from the Latin, meaning “to bring together” or “to collect.” The purpose of this prayer, then, is to bring our thoughts and minds together, to this place, in this assembly. The members of the assembly may have many other things on their minds. But this prayer joins us together as one people with one voice. The prayer directs our thoughts to the celebration, to the Word we will hear, and the Eucharist we will share.

### **Activity**

Invite your group to name other events in which words, songs, or rituals bring people’s minds, attention, and actions together. (e.g. A football game, a birthday party, a dance, a wedding, a theater presentation).

## **Points to Ponder:**

- How does the penitential Act resonate with your experience? For example, have you ever felt badly about hurting a spouse, a friend, or family member? If so how did you apologize?
- Remembering that experience, do you see any similarities in our apology during this rite, to God, and to each other? Why do we do it so early in the Mass?
- Remind all about Matthew 5:23-24. Think how tense a dinner can be if diners have unresolved issues; relate it to Mass. "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."

## **Leader's Hint:**

Engage the group in talking about collections of things. Ask them about what someone means when he or she says, "I need to collect my thoughts." Explain the meaning and purpose of the Collect. Discuss why we might need to collect our thoughts at the beginning of Mass. Point out that this is why the priest pauses in silence before praying it aloud. Standing together, lead them in a Collect from Mass.

## **Session 3**

# **The Gloria and the Liturgy of the Word**

## **Prayer**

You could easily integrate music into the opening prayer. Begin with a setting of the Alleluia ( use the setting which is most commonly used in your parish) or a familiar setting of a Responsorial Psalm or any responsorial setting of Psalm 96, Psalm 98 or Psalm 145 would be appropriate for this type of gathering.

## **The Gloria**

### **Background**

The ancient and joyful, prayer called the Gloria, which begins with the words that the angels sang at the birth of Jesus, has been sung and prayed for ages. This prayer praises God in several ways. In it we name some of the many wonderful things God has done, such as taking away the sins of the world. We describe who God is “heavenly king,” “Lord,” “Holy One,” etc. We ask God to “receive our prayer” and “to have mercy on us.” We acknowledge that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this hymn we give glory to God and pray for peace to his people here on earth. It is very appropriate to begin our celebration by praising him in this way and by reminding ourselves of who our wonderful God is.

Songs of praise are both common and important in both scripture and in tradition. We see this in then many psalms of praise; we see it in Mary’s Magnificat (see Luke 1:46-55) and in traditional prayers such as the canticle of Saint Francis. The Gloria in Mass is, above all, proclaiming our praise of God.

### **Activity 1**

Divide the group into two sections. Have the first section recite the previous translation. Have the second section recite the new translation. Point out the differences.

### **Activity 2**

Explain to the group that to understand the scriptural origin of the Gloria, it is useful to recall Luke’s infancy narratives (chapters 1 and 2- provide Bibles if it would be helpful.) Although the first line of the Gloria is from Luke’s account of

the angel's appearance to the shepherds, it is helpful to review the full scope of giving God praise and glory throughout the infancy narratives.

Remember the response of Zechariah when he heard from the angel Gabriel about his wife's pregnancy? Offered the promise of joy, he refused it. He balked at believing the good news, and protested that they were too old. He was then struck speechless for his lack of faith. Invite two volunteers to read aloud the dialogue between Gabriel and Zechariah, emphasizing the old man's stubbornness:

**Gabriel:** Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice in his birth, for he will be great in (the) sight of the Lord....

**Zechariah:** How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.

**Gabriel:** I am Gabriel, who stands before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.

On the other hand, when Mary received Gabriel's greeting, she was so overjoyed she couldn't wait to tell her cousin Elizabeth. Trusting the angel that "nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37), Mary cooperated with the plan, even though it was puzzling.

Again, invite volunteers to read this dialogue.

**Gabriel:** Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus....

**Mary:** Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. (Luke 1:28, 30-32, 38).

Mary wasn't a superwoman; she had questions and doubts. But she responded with the joy and enthusiasm of a yes Zechariah simply couldn't muster. (He gets a chance later, and speaks again.) If anyone thinks Christianity is about dour, grim people who plod through then rule books, read this passage from Luke-and the Gloria!

Mary set out "with haste" (Luke 1:39) to visit Elizabeth and share then joy of both pregnancies. When Jesus was born, the angels announced then "good news" (Luke 2:10). The theme continued; lavish praise of God

Ask two volunteers (parts A and B) to read this passage about (Luke 2:8-14):

A: In that region there were shepherds living in the fields,, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and then glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them.

B: "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

A. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying.

B. "Glory to God in the highest heaven,/ and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

After reading,, invite group members to compare the scripture text with the revised translation of the Gloria.

Conclude by singing a new or revised setting your parish will, be using in the Liturgy.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think we are encouraged to sing the Gloria rather than recite then text?
2. During what seasons do we sing (or recite) the Gloria?

3. Are there times when we do not sing (or recite) the Gloria? Why or why not?
4. Imagine that you've suddenly been introduced to one of your heroes: the Pope, the President, a great humanitarian, or a celebrity. What do you say? Might you babble or stammer in awe?
5. Do you find any similarity with how we address God in the Gloria, "We praise you,/ we bless you,/we adore you,/ we glorify you." etc.?
6. Where in your ordinary day do you find examples of God's glory? (For instance, a brilliant mind, a snowscape or seascape, beautiful art or nature.)
7. How do the added texts to the English translation of the Gloria express our need to praise God?

## Leader's Hint

Emphasize that the revised translation more accurately translates the original Latin texts. It also better connects this great prayer to the scriptural origins of the first line of the prayer. (Luke 2:14)

### Liturgy of the Word Background

Few changes have been made to the Liturgy of the Word. Outline the parts of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Second Vatican Council urged that "the treasures of the Bible (were) to be opened up more lavishly, so that a richer share in God's word may be provided for the faithful." (CSL ., 51). To give Catholics this broader exposure after Vatican II, the cycle of readings repeats every 3 years for Sundays (Year A, Matthew; Year B, Mark; Year C, Luke with parts of John read every year during Easter season) and every two years for weekday readings. Some may complain about hearing the same readings over and over, but the reality is, although the readings remain the same, we change. At least, we shouldn't be the same. We have aged, experienced different situations – challenges, joys, disappointments-and hopefully have grown. In the same way, we could read the same great novel at age 20, age 40, and age 60. It would continue to entertain us and give us insights because we aren't the same person who read it the first time. A recovering alcoholic once remarked, "I used to think that the Bible was irrelevant to me and modern times.

Now in recovery, I realize I was out of touch with the Bible. I know now what it is to suffer, die, and rise to new life. It's happening to me every day I don't have a drink and feel the love of my children, grandchildren, and friends."

Emphasize: "...Christ is present in his word, as he carries out them mystery of salvation, he sanctifies humanity and offers the father perfect worship.

Moreover,, the word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the economy of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the Liturgy." (Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass, 4)

## **Prayers of the Faithful**

### **Background**

The Prayer of the Faithful concludes the Liturgy of the Word. The word catholic means universal; the Catholic Church embraces the world. Praying for the world's needs seems important at a time just before we become one bread, one body with that world in Christ. If someone suffers from a tsunami in Malaysia, we share that suffering in Baltimore or San Diego. This corresponds to the work of the Church at its best. If a hurricane strikes the Florida Keys, people turn to the churches for food, water, and shelter. International organizations such as the Jesuit Volunteers, the Mercy Corps, or Catholic Relief Services are often the first to help at the scene of a natural disaster. To keep parishioners connected with the greater, and often suffering, world, the liturgy has intercessions for the world at large.

### **Activity 3**

(If it seems helpful, provide copies of today's newspaper for this activity).

Imagine that you've been asked to compose the Prayer of the Faithful for your parish this week. For what would you pray in each of these areas?

If your group is large, divide into four smaller groups, with each one taking a different area. When all are finished, read the prayers to each other.)

### **Questions for Discussion.**

- Can you recall an example when the Prayer of the Faithful called you to be broader, more internationally mindful than your own personal concerns?
- Were you surprised or especially touched by any of the prayers composed by members of your group in the previous activity? If so, which ones? Why?

## Session 4

### The Profession of Faith

#### Background

The word Credo means “I believe.” This statement contains our most cherished beliefs. (Refer to the booklet/handout).

#### Activity

Furnish participants with scratch paper and pens or pencils. Ask them to list what they’d include in a personal credo. What is it that they believe? They may mention things that are already contained in the Nicene Creed, but many important elements of our Catholic faith aren’t mentioned there; for instance, the Eucharist. They may keep their lists private, or volunteers may wish to share.

Then say: This exercise may give us some idea how hard it was to gather many diverse beliefs in one statement of faith. It took approximately three centuries after the death of Christ to formulate this bedrock of Christian belief. When the Emperor Constantine raised Christianity to an approved religion, he encountered many theological disputes, especially about the nature of Christ. Therefore, he convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, and a majority of bishops attending signed their assent to this Creed. Differences weren’t so easily resolved, however. Indeed, armies clashed and battles were fought over some controversial points. You might ask the following questions:

- Why is it important to articulate our beliefs? If we don’t articulate our beliefs do we run the risk of taking what is precious for granted?
- In the age of immediate Internet connections, where friendship thrive on Facebook, what value do you see in making a weekly connection to believers around the world through the Creed?

#### Background

If it seems helpful, you could read this passage from Ephesians aloud, slowly and reflectively as a prayer before, during, or after your session. As Saint Paul points out:

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making

every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Who is above all and through all and in all.” **(Ephesians 4:1-6)**

Then say: This plea for unity helps us understand why we should stand together on common ground and share our most important beliefs. Catholics have always had different approaches and opinions. For instance, Benedictines, Franciscans and Jesuits have different works, spiritualities, and charisms. But all, in their unique ways, have made enormous contributions to the Church. And all hold dear the most fundamental beliefs, crucial to our identity as Catholics.

Since we last met, our activity has been fragmented and we’ve been distracted by many different demands. It’s heartening to speak in union with many other people (sometimes hundreds of them). Together, we affirm what we treasure. The voices join together: masculine and feminine, old and young, strong and weak, confident and hesitant. Our unity transcends our differences.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Name other statements of belief that can’t be compromised, similar to the Creed (Pledge of Allegiance, Boy/Girl Scout Pledge, citizenship oath).
2. Why do you think it’s so hard for people to agree on religious beliefs? Or, why are religious wars some of the bloodiest?
3. If you were to explain your core beliefs to someone interested in exploring the Catholic faith, how could you say to them succinctly in five sentences?

## Background

The Nicene Creed is both a prayer and a statement of belief. When we pray this Creed, we echo what Catholics have prayed and believed through all those centuries. What a wonderful reminder of what we hold as central to our faith! Praying it is a kind of catechetical review. The Creed begins with the Trinity, specifying the role of the Father as Creator. It recalls what we believe about Jesus Christ, his role in the Trinity, his life, death, and Resurrection as well as the future in his eternal kingdom. The Creed then states the important role of the Holy Spirit. Finally, we pray about our belief in the Catholic Church, the importance of Baptism, and our future bodily resurrection in eternity. This prayer is rich with meaning, history, and faith. It is to be prayed with conviction and one voice with the entire community.

The say: Words are limited. How can we define God or what's most important? We try to enter God's vast mystery with small steps. Ultimately, we know it's impossible to name God. Why, then, do we repeat the Creed?

The Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus aren't past events. Their power flows into us now. Members in the mystical body, we do not proclaim the Creed arrogantly, but with the humility of forgiven sinners.

We also speak with gratitude. The phrase "he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day" telescopes the greatest events of human history into 13 words.

## Activity 2

Invite group members to pair up to do this.

### **Emphasize:** (Consubstantial and incarnate)

Consubstantial and incarnate, as the author points out, are words we don't use often. Try saying them aloud a few times, until they start feeling more comfortable. Then discuss this question: How do you understand the meaning of these two words?

As a group, stand and practice saying the new translation of the Profession of Faith aloud together. Afterward, discuss:

- How was that experience for you?
- Did you feel uncomfortable or at ease?
- Did it help to have a group around you, saying the same words?
- Having had this experience, how might you help people who suddenly encounter the new translation at mass, without any preparation?

## Activity 3

Invite a man and a woman to read aloud Martha's and Peter's profession of faith.

### **John 11:27:**

(Martha said to Jesus), "Yes, O Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

### **Matthew 16:15-16:**

(Jesus) said to (his disciples), "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

You could comment on the irony: even with Peter's bold profession, he is still a limited human being. A few verses later, he rebukes Jesus for the prediction that he must suffer and die. Have a volunteer read the next line from Scripture.

**Matthew 16:23:**

But (Jesus) turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.

## Questions for Discussion

- When you profess your faith, you are standing in a long historical line, stretching back to Martha and Peter, and around the world to millions of Catholics who share your beliefs. How do you feel about this?

## Closing Prayer

There is a lovely Taizé' mantra called "There is One Lord." The text is based on Ephesians 4:1-6. Its simple melody would make it very easy to conclude this session on the Creed. Perhaps go to the church as a group and gather around the baptismal font. Begin singing the mantra and, as a reminder of the beliefs they were baptized into, invite all to sign themselves with the blessed water in the font. Invite people to share what it means for them to be a Christian and how their beliefs have shaped their lives. Pause in silence, pray the Our Father, exchange the sign of peace, and conclude the session.

## Points to Ponder:

- How did the session on the Profession of faith affect your core beliefs?
- If you were to explain what you hold most dear to a younger person, say, a child or grandchild, would you include any of the thoughts you began considering today? If so, which ones? Why? Does the revised translation of the Creed affect these beliefs in any way?
- Knowing the great diversity in the world, how do you feel about standing as one in faith with countless people who speak different languages, follow different customs, and eat different foods from those you eat?

## Session 5

# The Liturgy of the Eucharist

## Preparation of the Gifts

If your group knows and likes a hymn sung at this time during the Mass (Offertory Chant), you may wish to sing it together. Consider “We Come to Your Feast” by Michael Joncas or any setting of “Ubi Caritas”.

## Background

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Preparation of the Gifts. A hymn is sometimes sung, the gifts are collected, and the altar is prepared. During the Preparation of the Gifts, a collection is taken not only to support the pastoral and liturgical ministries of the parish community, but also to feed the poor and help the disadvantaged.

Special collections are for efforts of missionary orders and special needs. Caring for the needs of the unfortunate is key to the mission of the Church. In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Church defined herself as existing not for herself but for spreading the Good News of the Gospel and caring for the abandoned and needy. Some people believe the Church is the only organization that does not exist for itself. The priest prays over the gifts of bread and wine.

The Prayer over the Gifts eloquently and succinctly describes how God provides for us through the work of others; from farm workers who plant wheat seed, the cultivators, the harvesters, the millers, the bakers, etc.’ or the wine growers who plant, prune, and tend grapes. In contrast, many Americans infused with the frontier myth of the rugged individual view themselves as being self-made and self-sustaining. This prayer also relates what is ordinary (the work of human hands) to what will become extraordinary (the bread of life).

The Hebrew prayer “Berakha” begins in the same way, and is used to bless the bread and wine at meals in Jewish homes, as well as at synagogue liturgies. At his Last Supper Jesus was simply following the prayer form he knew: to bless and thank God for the abundant gifts he held in his hands.

Most of the changes in this part of the Mass are to the priest’s prayers. When he asks the assembly to pray, “that my sacrifice and yours/ may be acceptable to God/the almighty Father,” he indicates that we play an important part in the sacrifice. At this time we offer all we are to God: our relationships, our concerns,

our work, our joys, our frustrations, our disappointments. We bring ourselves, like the bread and wine on the altar, asking that we too may be transformed into Jesus. We want to become his heart and hands to a lonely and hurting world.

In his Holy Thursday homily, April 9, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI commented on this part of the Mass. "As she prays at this central moment, the Church is fully in tune with the event that took place in the Upper Room (when Jesus gave God thanks and praise). The Lord gives thanks. When we thank, we acknowledge that a certain thing is a gift that has come from another. The Lord gives thanks, and in so doing gives back to God the bread, "the fruit of the earth and work of human hands,' so as to receive it anew from him. Thanksgiving becomes blessing. The offering that we have placed in God's hands returns from him blessed and transformed."

## Questions for Discussion:

- Does your parish have a local ministry it supports? Do you have a favorite charity?
- Name ways (other than financial) that parish members can help people marginalized by discrimination, poor health, or economics.
- How is it evident in the Eucharistic Prayer that the ordinary does indeed become extraordinary?
- How does the traditional grace before meals reflect the presentation of the bread and of the wine?

## Activity 1

In small groups, or as individuals, write a grace before meals based on the priest's Prayer Over the Offerings.

## The Eucharistic Prayer

### Background

#### Emphasize:

The Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of the Mass, the template of our lives. It tells the story of God's saving love for God's people, from creation to Jesus and his last Supper, then his death, Resurrection, and presence in our midst at this table. This story reminds us who we are and whose we are. Even more, it helps us become what we eat and drink, the Body and Blood of Christ.

Eucharist, as we all know, means thanksgiving. To be thankful is to be grateful – to offer gratitude. Thank you is the response we make to someone who has either given something to us or has done something for us. God did not give us something, as much as he gave us someone: his very own Son. In the Eucharistic Prayer we pray to God the Father, through the Son, that the Holy Spirit will transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ so that we might enter into deeper communion with God and one another. We also pray that we are transformed, so that we, “filled with his Holy Spirit/ may become one body, one spirit in Christ.” This prayer, then, is our response to God’s immense gift of love given to us, especially in the Eucharist.

Although the entire Mass is a prayer of thanksgiving, the Eucharistic Prayer holds a special place. It is the great prayer of thanksgiving that the priest prays in our name. It is important that we pray this prayer by listening carefully to what he prays by making it our prayer in the silence of our hearts. In addition to praying at Mass, we pray at other times, of course. We pray to ask for forgiveness. Some of our prayers are prayers of petition, or asking God for help. Some prayers are prayers of praise in which we give praise and glory to God. Others are prayers of adoration. In these prayers our words show that we adore the God who created us, redeemed us, and loves us forever. Prayers of thanksgiving-even apart from the great Prayer of Thanksgiving in Mass-help us remember the many reasons we have to be thankful.

Because this prayer is the summit, everything that happens in the liturgy is leading us to this high point. The altar is prepared, and gifts of bread and wine are brought up in a procession, given to the priest celebrant (or deacon) so that these gifts might be prepared. Then, the Eucharistic Prayer begins with the priest presiding proclaiming, “The Lord be with you.” The great prayer concludes with the liturgical assembly singing, “Amen.”

The presence of Christ in Eucharist is an essential belief for Catholics. Some Christian denominations believe that their Communion is a remembrance. For Catholics, although we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer that Christ said to “do this in memory of me.” We hold that it is more than a mere memorial. We believe that Christ is truly present in both the consecrated bread and wine. This is one of the most important mysteries of our faith. The bread and the wine obviously do not change in their appearance, but rather in their substance. Christ is now fully and totally present in both of these species. We are encouraged to do as Christ told his followers at the Last Supper to do: “Take and eat. Take and drink.”

In the last century the tradition and privilege of both eating and drinking was returned to common practice. Christ is equally present in both species, and we receive the fullness of his presence even when we only receive the consecrated bread. In many places we are blessed to be able to receive both the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood. It is in the Eucharistic Prayer that this miracle of change from bread and wine to Christ's body and blood takes place.

(Review the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer with those in your group.)

## **Points to Ponder...**

Remember a recent, special meal. (Possibilities: a birthday meal, Sunday dinner, Thanksgiving, Christmas, a summer picnic or barbeque). To prompt your memory, recall :

- who was there;
- what the location was;
- what food you ate;
- what you drank;
- what you talked about;
- how you felt afterward;
- what you were celebrating;

With that memory in mind, why do you think Jesus chose a meal as the way for his followers to remember him? He could've been remembered in any way he wanted: with a sword, a code of law, a statue, a book. Why do you think he chose something we do every day?

## **Questions for Discussion**

- Before you began this session, were you aware of the distinct parts in the flow of the Eucharistic Prayer?
- What do you think prevents our concentrating on this prayer?
- What helps us to unite ourselves with it?
- Eucharis means thanksgiving. How is the Eucharistic Prayer a prayer of thanksgiving?
- How else do we give God thanks? How can we best receive God's gift?
- What ways have you found to build in yourself and others around you a spirit of thanksgiving that flows from the Eucharist?
- How do you give God thanks and praise?

# Session 6

## The Eucharistic Prayer

### Opening Dialogue

#### Activity

Divide your group into two sections. Invite them to read aloud the revised translation of the dialogue that begins the Eucharistic Prayer. Side A takes the priest's part and Side B reads the part of the "people."

#### Afterward, discuss:

- What do you think it means to "lift up your hearts"? When have you experienced a lifted heart? (Examples: sunlight after a week of rain, leaving work after a grueling day, seeing an old friend after a long time apart, getting a good medical diagnosis after dreading a bad one, waking refreshed after a deep night's sleep, forgetting anxiety to concentrate on a beautiful view).
- When we assure the priest that we have lifted our hearts to God, what do we mean by that?
- What do you imagine when you read on page 31 the literal Latin translation, Hearts aloft!? You could suggest other things we raise aloft, such as banners, sails, or flags. All rise high, and sometimes catch the breeze.
- Are there other experiences in your life where you could affirm, "it is right and just"? For example, legislation passes to help poor; a notorious criminal is tried and jailed; a hard-working, responsible colleague gets a promotion; a truce finally resolves a war; a brilliant, dedicated student wins a scholarship. Do these experiences help you understand why "it is right and just" to give God thanks and praise.

### The Preface

#### Background

The Preface is the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer. The words of the Preface give joyful thanks for all God has done through Christ in the works of salvation. There are many prefaces in the Roman Missal, and many celebrations have

particular prefaces assigned. This is because the texts of the Preface often point to the particular mysteries celebrated in the Mass. (Refer to the text).

Group members may have already noticed that different prefaces are used for different seasons or feasts. If you have the Sacramentary available (use the Roman Missal once it has been published and made available.), read excerpts to show differences. You could invite people to mention a favorite season or feast, then read the Preface for that time or day. Invite discussion. Continue to point out how important themes recur in the structure of the Mass. For example, the forgiveness of sins appears in the Penitential Act, memorial Acclamations, the Lord's Prayer, and the Lamb of God. So, too, the theme of praise repeats throughout the Mass. Catholics are perhaps more familiar with prayers of petition or intercession, thanksgiving, and contrition, but praise is also vital. People come to praise God through different paths. For instance, the prodigal son returns to the forgiving father, asks forgiveness, receives it beyond his limited, self-centered focus, and comes to appreciate his father in a deeper way (see Luke 15:11-32).

Petitions, thanksgiving, and contrition all lead to God and the realization that God is goodness beyond our understanding. Praise makes the difference between honoring God, because God grants us favors or forgives our sins, and relating to God as a Person, because of his pure goodness and love. One way to this relationship is through the experience of communal praise.

## **Activity**

Invite a group member to read Psalm 136 aloud or play a musical version of it. Ask these questions: How do you think the author came to recognize God's goodness? What is another form of prayer mentioned above, contained in Psalm 136 (thanksgiving).

### **Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

O give thanks to the God of gods,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

O give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

who alone does great wonders,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

who by understanding made the heavens,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
who spread out the earth on the waters,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
who made the great lights,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
the sun to rule over the day  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
the moon and the stars to rule over the night,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

It is he who remembered us in our low estate,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
and rescued us from our foes,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
who gives food to all flesh,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

O give thanks to the God of heaven,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

## **Holy, Holy, Holy**

### Background

Explain that the following Bible passage is the basis for the first line of the Holy, Holy, Holy. Then ask a volunteer to read it aloud.

### **(Isaiah 6:1-3)**

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;/the whole earth is full of his glory!”

The assembly joins with the whole creation, as with one voice the entire communion of saints gives glory to God. The Holy, Holy, Holy is a prayer that actually continues the Preface that the priest is praying. However, at this point in

the prayer, the people and the choir join in and sing this ancient prayer/song. The Holy, Holy, Holy is part of the liturgy in both the eastern and Western Church. It is an ancient prayer that has been prayed at Mass since before the year 400. It is clearly in two parts. Scripture inspires both parts, and each part ends with "Hosanna in the highest." The first section comes from Isaiah 6:3 (remind group they heard this earlier). The second part, from Matthew 21, hearkens to Jesus coming with his disciples into Jerusalem on a donkey (see verse 1-11). The people shouted out their praise and hope for salvation with these words. Then the priest prays over the bread and wine, and Christ becomes present in both these elements just as he promised at the last Supper.

Even after all his theological treatises, Saint Thomas Aquinas stated that the way to God is through analogy because God is unknowable in human terms. Religious experience, awareness of the totally other, inspires a sense of awe, humility, and energy. In Latin, *mysterium tremendum* describes this awe-inspiring, soul humbling mystery.

**Pause to discuss:** Can you recall from Scriptures, literature, the arts (including movies) moments of such overwhelming awe?

The Catholic tradition has honored both theologians who categorize God in rational terms and mystics who describe their experience of God as beyond rationality. Communal worship offers experiences of divine mystery. Through the Eucharist, the sacred and human meet. Separating God from human creatures creates a false spiritual-secular dichotomy. Eucharist offers moments of God meeting us and our meeting God, both individually and together.

Praise can be a mountaintop experience, but then like Jesus and the apostles after the Transfiguration, we return to more ordinary lives. Saint Teresa of Avila wrote of finding God in the midst of the pots and pans. Surely there was a connection between that and more profound, transcendent experiences.

All of us have had such meetings with the holy: at peak moments like marriage or childbirth, climbing a mountain, achievement in a career, or profound prayer. We have also found God's presence in our humdrum routines. We can call to mind all of these when we say or sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

## **Doxology and Great Amen**

### **Background**

At this time, the priest celebrant lifts up the host and chalice so that everyone in the assembly can see them. The words of the doxology sum up what we should

be doing throughout our lives: giving glory to the Trinity. Our “Amen” is a great affirmation of this praise. Sometimes, we say this word routinely, off-handedly, unaware of its power. Perhaps when we sing it fully and robustly we give it more of the attention it deserves. If it seems helpful, discuss with your group how to be more deliberate, careful, and conscious of the assembly’s role at this time.

## Questions for Discussion:

1. Can you think of other examples where we use dialogue in liturgy? (Example: questions and answers between the priest celebrant/deacon and the parents of infants being baptized, or the Bishop and those being confirmed, or the priest celebrant and catechumens and candidates for full initiation).
2. In your own life, do you experience the needs for both sameness (familiar routine) and variety (a change in routine)? Give examples.
3. While the Eucharistic Prayer remains essentially the same, the words of the Preface can change. How does that meet our needs for both sameness and variety?
4. What have you come to know about God through the experience of forgiveness?
5. What is the difference between thanking God privately and thanking God with a community?
6. Have you ever seen a sight so splendid that all you could do was repeat, “beautiful, beautiful, beautiful” in stunned disbelief? Or have you ever been so impressed you were speechless?
7. Does that experience help you understand why the seraphim are so in awe of God’s glory, that they can only repeat the word “holy?”
8. How do you feel about joining the angels, saints, and all of creation in their song of praise?
9. How were individuals in the crowd different after they shouted their Hosanna! To Jesus (Matthew 21:9)?
10. How are we different after we sing the Holy, Holy, Holy?
11. Can you describe a moment(s) of meeting the holy or having a spiritual experience by yourself? With the community?
12. Can you think of any other examples, besides these mentioned here, of a word like Amen that expresses something so perfectly we leave it in the original language when we bring it into ours?

## Session 7

# The Mystery of Faith

## Institution Narrative

### Reflection

As an opening meditation, or a reflective pause during a longer session, you might wish to read the following words from Pope Benedict XVI's Holy Thursday homily, 2009.

...breaking the bread is an act of communion, an act of uniting through sharing. Thus, in the act itself, the intimate nature of the Eucharist is already indicated: it is agape, it is love made corporeal. In the word 'agape,' the meanings of Eucharist and love intertwine. In Jesus' act of breaking the bread, the love that is shared has attained its most radical form: Jesus allows himself to be broken as living bread. In the bread that is distributed, we recognize the mystery of the grain of wheat that dies, and so bears fruit. We recognize the new multiplication of the loaves, which derives from the dying of the grain of wheat and will continue until the end of the world. At the same time, we see that the Eucharist can never be just a liturgical action. It is complete only if the liturgical agape then becomes love in daily life. In Christian worship, the two things become one-experiencing the Lord's love in the act of worship and fostering love for one's neighbor. At this hour, we ask the Lord for the grace to learn to live the mystery of the Eucharist ever more deeply, in such a way that the transformation of the world can begin to take place.

He continues to say that in the Eucharist, God transcends the infinite distance between God and humans. God thus makes us partners in co-creation.

### Activity 1

Divide your group into four sections. Give each section one scripture reference to look up and read. Then invite someone from that section to briefly summarize the passage for the larger group. Refer to these passages:

1. Wedding feast at Cana (**John 2:1-11**).
2. Multiplication of loaves and fishes (**Luke 9:10-17**).
3. The meal at the Pharisee's house where a woman anoints Jesus' feet with oil. (**Luke 7:36-50**).

#### 4. The post-Resurrection breakfast (**John 21:3-14**).

**Ask:** What importance does the meal seem to have for Jesus?

Then invite a volunteer to read Luke 2:1-7 to the whole group. Point out that Bethlehem means house of bread; that the Holy family was turned away from the inn, or official place of hospitality, and that Jesus was laid in a manger or feeding trough.

**Say:** The shared meal was important to Jesus, and should be to us. Throughout the Hebrew-Christian tradition, people have shared not only food, but their stories and experiences. Because of our sacramental faith, we should make every effort to preserve the family meal. Many people protest that they have work, meetings, or sports practices at dinner time. Encourage those who schedule parish events to avoid dinner times. Suggest that parents arrange their calendars creatively, making meal times a priority.

## Activity 2

Read aloud Matthew 26:27 and mark 14:24 (see below). Jesus was celebrating the Jewish Passover meal when he gave us this sacrament. Discuss the connection between the words in Matthew and the words of the consecration at Mass. Explain what we mean by “words of institution” when the bread and wine are changed into Christ’s Body and Blood.

### **Matthew 26:27**

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

### **Mark 14:24**

He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

**Say:** The words of the consecration are especially dear to us. These are the main differences in the new translation: (You may want to write these on a whiteboard or newsprint).

- “cup” becomes “chalice”
- “everlasting” becomes “eternal”

- “shed” becomes “poured out”
- “for all” becomes “for many”

Invite each group member to find a partner. Partners should alternate explaining to each other the reason for the change, using the core material. So, partner 1 explains changing “cup” to “chalice”, partner 2 explains changing “everlasting” to “eternal;” etc. If they are still unclear about the reason for the change, or have questions, they should raise these with the larger group.

## **Memorial Acclamation**

### **Background**

After the priest prays the words of consecration, we affirm our faith in this mystery by joining in none of the options for this acclamation. It is very important for the assembly to join in. the Eucharistic acclamation are our way of affirming what has just taken place on the altar. What is on the altar is no longer bread and wine. Christ is fully present in both these elements. This is the great mystery of faith to which we assent

The words the priest says to introduce these acclamations have changed.

### **Activity 3**

Explain the difference between proclamation and acclamation.

Discuss: When someone is elected by acclamation, what does it mean? (Answer: approval is voiced so enthusiastically, no votes need be counted).

How does that meaning transfer to the acclamations we make at this point in the Mass?

Divide the group into three sections, and assign one of the new acclamations to each section. (Refer to the chart).

You may also wish to emphasize the distinction about the popular acclamation “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” These words are about Jesus, not a prayer to him. Explain that this is why this particular response was omitted from the Roman Missal. (It might be interesting to note that “Christ has died” was an English amendment. It was never actually in the Latin text.)

## Activity 4

Consult with your music minister to see which Mass setting you will be using in the parish once the revised translation is implemented. A good way to teach is through music. Teach the new acclamations by using this same musical setting and sing them together as a group. They will not only learn the new words, they will also learn the new music and be able to participate better at Mass.

## Questions for Discussion

1. From the beginning of his life, Christ has offered himself as food to nurture us. What links do you see between Luke's infancy narrative, the meal stories, and the Eucharist?
2. How does "chalice" suggest a vessel used for a more special purpose than "cup?"
3. How does "poured out" suggest a more active quality than "shed?"
4. Does reading the scripture quotations help you better understand the change from "all" to "many"?
5. After reading and discussing the explanations for the changes to this part of the Mass, do you still have any questions or concerns about it?
6. Which of the three new options for the acclamations do you prefer? Why?
7. What do the acclamations say about our belief in God?
8. Why is it so important to add your unique voice to the acclamations?

## **Session 8**

### **The Communion and Concluding Rites**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

Begin this session by praying the Lord's Prayer together. Conclude with a prayer.

#### **Background**

This prayer is called the Lord's Prayer because it is what Jesus taught when he was asked how to pray. It is a common prayer in the sense that it is universally known and prayed among all Christians. However, it is both a simple and a very challenging prayer. In it, we acknowledge that we are citizens of both heaven and earth. We humbly ask for what we need. Our daily bread can be food, spiritual strength, moral courage, or any number of other needs that we might not even be aware of. The very serious challenge to the one who prays it is in the asking for forgiveness. Here, we say that God should not forgive us any more than we are forgiving others. Finally, we acknowledge that evil and temptation are stronger than we are, and it is God's help that will lead us away from them. The Lord's Prayer is in the Gospel according to Luke 11:2-4 as well as in Matthew 6:9-13. At Mass it is appropriate that the priest and people pray this aloud together, as we are one community trying to live out this prayer that Jesus gave us.

#### **Activity**

Depending on the size of your group, break into smaller groups. Have someone in each group read Matthew 6:9-13. Have group members spend time going through the Lord's Prayer line by line, getting their ideas about the meaning and adding your own. Ask one representative from each group to summarize the reflections for the larger group. There will be some changes with the priest's part that follows the Lord's Prayer.

Give some examples of events that cause distress. In contrast, give examples of anxiety. Does the distinction between the two help you understand the change in the priest's response after the Lord's Prayer?

Briefly describe times when you truly prayed the Mass with joy. Describe other times when you weren't joyful. Yet, at both times, you still prayed fully and actively.

Does this distinction help you understand the change from “we wait in joyful hope” to “we await the blessed hope”? How might the new translation better describe all the mixed feelings- positive and negative-in any assembly?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the scriptural source of the new wording (Titus 2:11-13): “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passion, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God Savior, Jesus Christ.” Conclude this section by discussing how different people in different circumstances might hear or read the passage from Titus or the words of the Mass. (You could ask participants to pair up with a partner, the ask A to imagine the first example, and B the second.)

A: A resident of a barrio in South America.

B: A resident of an affluent suburb in North America.

A. Someone in an abusive marriage.

B. Someone in a happy marriage.

A. A child who worries about the source of their next meal.

B. A child who worries about their next math test.

- How might the hopes of A differ from B?
- How might they be similar?

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think no changes were made to this prayer?
2. Why is it important that all say this prayer together?
3. What do you await with hope?
4. What does it mean to pray for Christ’s coming? How is this evident with the prayer that follows the Lord’s Prayer?

## The Sign of Peace

### Background

In the previous part of the Mass, Jesus established a communion of peace with us. As he said during his Last Supper, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to

you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27). So, if he has poured out his blood to ransom us, it seems logical that at this point of the mass, we should express our solidarity with one another. We may not have Jesus’ generous outpouring of a peace that outlasts the world’s peace. But we at least indicate our willingness to try. Our words and gesture symbolize a deeper intent: to be at peace in our own hearts, and to make peace with each other. There are few places in our culture where we demonstrate this willingness to people who may be complete strangers. Notice the careful placement of this gesture: before we approach the table for Holy Communion, the sacrament of our union with God and each other.

## **Activity**

Discuss: What has been your best experience of the sign of peace? How does your response and that of others in your group, to this question guide you during future signs of peace?

## **Questions for Discussion;**

1. When outside of church, have you received a sign of peace from a loved one, a friend, or even a stranger? Describe what happened. Does this experience deepen your appreciation for the liturgical sign of peace?

## **Lamb of God**

Divide the group into two sections. Have the first section read the priest’s part in the new translation. Have the second section read the assembly’s response.

## **Background**

Then explain: the theme for the forgiveness of sins is repeated but nuanced with the image of the Lamb of God. This alludes to the Old Testament sacrifice of a lamb without blemish. It echoes John the Baptist’s wonder when he first saw Jesus at the Jordan: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, NAB). John must have been thrilled to see his cousin for whom he had so long awaited. He must also have cherished that first vision later, in a dank prison cell. Amid all the ugliness and brutality, the Lamb stood beside the river: clear, pure, lovely.

The “sin of the world” here is different from the personal sin addressed in the Confiteor. Some describe this as systemic sin: racism, oppression of poor

countries, exploitation of women and children, greed, corporate fraud. Your group can probably contribute many examples, based on the evil they've witness personally or seen through the media. We probably shouldn't be surprised: the power of sin over humanity is so vicious and evil that it killed Jesus, the best of humanity/divinity who ever walked this earth.

Humans tend to focus on the "sins" of other persons, groups, nations, or world, but are blind to their own moral lapses. Yet no matter how overpowering evil may seem, we voice our hope here so that Jesus will conquer it; in the end, his grace will be victorious.

It should affect the assembly's response in the invitation to Holy Communion to understand that we're speaking in the words of the Roman centurion, whose story is told in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10.

## **Activity**

Go over the new response to the prayer that follows the Lamb of God.

Explain: The change from "I shall be healed" to "my soul shall be healed" mirrors two scriptural accounts, specifically Matthew 8:8 and Luke 7:6. Ask for two volunteers to read these full accounts out loud. Have one volunteer read Matthew 8:5-13, and the other read Luke 7:1-10. Read the accounts slowly and deliberately. Either with the larger group, or divided into small groups, ask the following questions:

- What do you think these passages mean in relation to receiving Holy Communion?
- What is similar or different between these two passages?
- In connection to these scriptural accounts, what does the word "enter" mean?
- In connection to these scriptural accounts, what does the word "roof" mean?
- Why is the phrase "my soul" significant to this response?

If the larger group has divided into smaller groups, give a significant amount of time to answer and reflect upon these questions.

## **Questions for Discussion;**

1. What are the worst "sins of the world" today?

2. From what sins of your city, county, state, nation, do you and others need deliverance? In other words, what evils still oppress the disadvantaged and the marginalized, and threaten our world?

## The Concluding Rites

The deacon or priest then dismisses the people. The original Latin for the dismissal is "*Ite missa est.*" The word *missa* is the root for Mass and thus gives the Mass its name. It has become quite common to hear people talk about the connection between *missa* and the mission. As we know, the Mass should bear fruit in our lives. It means that the Triune God sanctifies us in liturgy. Put another way, through the liturgy the Holy Spirit comes to us to make us grow in holiness. Of course, we have to be open, receptive, and embracing of God's coming to us through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are being called and sanctified by the Triune God, then we bear that mission in our families, workplaces, and in our neighborhoods. Of course, we are imperfect human persons, and so each Sunday God continues to call us to grow in holiness by participating in Sunday mass.

## Conclusion

Conclude by singing a rousing sending forth song. Be sure to thank people for coming and contributing. Encourage them to use "Points to Ponder" for further reflection at home. Ask each participant to complete the sentence: "I am most grateful for....."

## Points to Ponder:

Looking back on this study.

- What surprised you most?
- What encouraged you most?
- What did you learn?