

*I Have
Greatly
Desired...*

Middles Lenten Prayer Guide

This Middles Resource Guide is designed for High School and Middle Schoolers. The adult book is not needed to complete this guide.

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Behold the Lamb by Emma McGill

Understanding the Study

THIS GUIDE USES THREE MODES DAILY TO DEEPEN
OUR ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS IN THE MASS.

Reflection

Each week day of the Lenten Guide will start with a reflection on a topic that will deepen your understanding of the Mass or lead you to examine a part of your own heart. Read the reflection each day and notice what moves your heart or grabs your attention.

Prayer

Each week day also offers a prayer option to pray through what you have just read. The prayer will help you build up your own practice of prayer this Lent and guide you to an awareness of Jesus and a deepening of your understanding of His love especially in the Holy Mass.

Questions

Each week day will have a list of questions you can use to journal, discuss, or reflect on the what you have just read and prayed about that day. Pick and choose which questions draw you into a deeper conversation with others or with God. Do not feel that you have to answer all of the questions.

SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS

Mass Preparation

Each Saturday offers you a chance to look back and reflect upon the week to note what stood out to you that the Holy Spirit may be inviting you to dwell on this week. It also offers you suggestions of what to pay special attention to during Mass that week.

Mass Journal

Each Sunday gives space to use as a Mass Journal. Learn how to use your Mass Journal in Appendix 4.

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INTRODUCTION WEEK

*God's Great
Desire*

Ash Wednesday:

Tell the People I Love Them

When I began to pray about what this Lenten guide needed to include in order to serve Him best, Jesus kept bringing to mind an old folksy hymn by Leonard Barlotti. The refrain says:

Tell the people I love them, tell the people I care, when they feel far away from me, tell the people I'm there.

I would sit in adoration, I would pray during Mass, I would turn to Him in my heart at home and ask again about this Lenten guide and over and over Jesus would respond, "Tell the people I love them, tell the people I care, when they feel far away from me, tell the people I'm there."

So, here I am, attempting to pass on His message to you in this guide. As you read it, and as you attempt to sanctify your Lent with this deeper dive into the Mass, let it be forefront of your heart that this is not just a neat study on the meaning of the parts of the Mass, and it is not just a deeper devotion to a Lenten Practice, instead, it is a journey to opening your heart so that you can receive a message of love that Jesus deeply desires for you to receive each time you attend His banquet at the altar. He loves you. Eagerly. Desperately. Greatly.

Prayer:

Imagine yourself in a pew at a Mass you would normally attend. As you participate in the Mass, imagine Jesus at the altar, pausing, walking off the sanctuary and coming to your pew. He takes your chin in His hands to look into His eyes. He puts His other hand on your shoulder, and He says very clearly, very tenderly, "I love you." He pauses. He lets you take it in. He says, "I care." Again, He pauses and lets you grasp what all that means. You feel the intensity of His care for all your worries, 7

desires, dreams, and bothers. Finally, He points to the altar, to the tabernacle, to the priest's hands, and He says, "I am there." He is suddenly gone and you are back, participating in the Mass from your pew. Stay in this moment for a few seconds. Soak in Jesus' message to you.

Questions:

How would you have summarized Jesus' message for you at the Mass before reading today's reflection? What do you normally hear Jesus say in the Mass to your heart? How does it feel to hear Jesus say, "I love you. I care. I am there."

Thursday: *I Have Eagerly Desired...*

In Luke 22:15, Jesus sits down with His apostles to eat His final Passover with them in the Upper Room. Imagine it. He is at table with His twelve closest friends, one of whom is about to betray Him. He knows the path ahead in the next hours is one of pain, suffering, and complete pouring out. He also knows the real deliverance He is about to bring to His people, a New Passover, a new salvation, a new freedom. He looks around the room and His heart is bursting with the significance of this moment. He looks at His beloved, you, and He says to you, "I have eagerly desired to eat this passover with you."

What can He possibly mean? To understand this moment in time, we must go back to the very Heart of God. We must understand the fiery, passionate, all consuming love that God has always had for His people, for us, for His creatures, for you. We must understand His eagerness.

Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to imagine and approach the Heart of God. Let your imagination go and freely let the Holy Spirit guide it to images, feelings, physical sensations, and words. Ask the Spirit to learn more about the Heart of God. It is an infinite heart, mysterious, amazing, and full of time for you. Spend some time with God's heart in silence. Acknowledge that in God's generous, reckless love for you, He has given you His heart to have, to love, to hold, and with which to live.

Questions:

What did you imagine about the Heart of God? What did it look like, feel like, what words came to mind?

Have you ever thought about God being eager to be with you?
How does this make you feel about yourself and about God?
Why is He eager to eat the New Passover, the Mass, with you?

Friday:
Rift Repaired=Communion

God has desired communion with us from the beginning. When humanity was created we know that God walked with man and woman in the garden. We, as humanity, were in perfect relationship with Him. We talked with God. We walked with God. We loved and trusted and ate with God.

Until...the rift.

The hiding.

The separation.

In a moment of doubt in God's goodness, drama, and control, broken trust and human hearts chose their own way over God's gifts.

We chose separation and self-dependence, and it deeply wounded our God. It pained the very heart of our Creator.

But, from the desire to be with you and of unity with you, His plan arose.

He set about Salvation History, promising a Savior, a repair, a path back to His arms, His heart, and perfect communion once again.

This moment, at this Last Supper, Jesus is beginning the sacrament that allows intimate unity with God once again. A chance for our hearts to beat again with His. A chance to walk, and talk, and heal, and be with God in perfect unity. He has

been looking forward to this moment for longer than we can ever comprehend.

Everything God does is for this communion with us.

He's spoken through prophets, slain armies, worked miracles, sent His own Son to join Heaven with Earth. He gives sacraments to stay with us once He ascends.

He convicts Himself to become a prisoner of love in a tabernacle just in order to desperately wait for a glance of your eye, a moment of your concentration, to hear a small word from you so that He can respond and pour all of His love into your life. It is a love that so many don't seem to want. Yet, He never runs out of love and His mercy never runs dry. Receive Him.

That's what you going to Mass is all about. It's not just a part of your class schedule or a requirement you are obliged to fulfill on Sundays. It's not just a holy practice you can say you did this Lent. It's a participation in thousands of years of God eagerly searching for unity with you and your heart.

Prayer:

Relentless means never stopping, trying everything, being unstoppable, never tiring. Reflect on the word "relentless" in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the "Relentlessness of God" and what that means in your relationship with Him. Seek to understand ways that God has been relentless in your own life in His love and mercy and affection for you. Make a list or journal entry now of ways the Spirit has revealed God's relentless love for you.

Questions:

After reading about How God has been relentless throughout the ages in seeking communion with us, which way has God

acted that has surprised or moved you the most? Have you experienced the relentlessness of God in your own life or seen Him be relentless in others' lives? How does it make you feel that God will be relentless in His quest for unity with you? What experiences have led you to believe God is not relentlessly in love with you? How can you see it in a new way? In what ways have you or could you be relentless back to God in your own life?

Saturday: *Mass Preparation*

Seek to hear Jesus say at Mass this week one of the following:

I love you, I care, I am there.

I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with You.

Questions:

As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week.

- What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think?
- How has your understanding of the Mass changed?
- Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 1

*The Desire
for Mass*

Sunday:
Mass Journal

Use this page as your Mass Journal each week. Look in the Appendix for how to journal your Mass.

Monday:

The Feast is Ready...

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus tells of a king who is having a wedding feast for his son. The banquet has been prepared, the fattened calf has been killed, the feast is lavishly ready for those invited. It is a great honor and delight to be invited to such a once in a lifetime meal that offers food no one else can procure! The king sends his servants out to invite the lucky guests, and...no one comes. Some go about their own business and ignore the invitation. Others mistreat and kill the servants who had invited them. What? Why? This seems like nonsense, foolishness, even stupidity.

And yet, can't we all relate, just a little bit? How many times have we heard the alarm go off for another Sunday morning Mass or heard the class bell ring that signals we will go to Mass next and had that little feeling of hesitancy, dread, or boredom? How many times have we skipped Mass for our own busyness, pleasures, or convenience? How many times have we sat in the pews dead-hearted and unresponsive, annoyed at what we are doing? We have been invited, the feast is ready, day after day, and we woefully refuse to accept the invitation wholeheartedly, if at all.

Prayer:

Pray with Matthew 22:1-14. Use the Lectio Guide in the Appendix to help you pray through the passage.

Questions:

What type of person did you most relate to in the passage as you prayed? What causes you to ignore invitations you may have received before from the Holy Spirit to come closer to Jesus?

Tuesday: *Do Not Be Discouraged*

Lest, we fall into unholy scruples or guilt about yesterday's reading, let's dig in.

We are fallen humans living in the modern age. Our hunger and thirst is so used to being satisfied and quenched quickly, yet shallowly, by instant gratification and pleasures. We are fed small tic tacs and rejoice in their tiny sustenance, while ignoring a huge feast that is waiting for us. We eat out of the dumpsters and celebrate, while avoiding the meal set on the table that was lovingly prepared for us. We have become numb to the offering and blind to the sight of our God Himself awaiting us at the head of the table.

We should not become too discouraged in this blind, dumb, deaf, and nonsensical behavior.

Instead, we can approach the God who says, "I just want to feed you, love you, and sustain you," and show Him our spiritual muscles that are so pathetic and weak. We can talk to Him about the lack of excitement for His food. Tell Him about the garbage food that seems so scrumptious. Let Him see us in our poverty and need for Him. Show Him our deprivation of desire for what will truly nourish us.

We cannot lie that we do not crave Him like we should. We must ask for this healing of our emaciated hearts today and ask for the grace to hunger and thirst again. He will speak patience and hope to our hearts over and over and over again.

Prayer:

Spend some time showing Jesus where your heart fails to desire Him. Be very honest with Him. Know that as you present these failings to Him He is full of mercy, compassion, and hope. He desires to fill you with life and He will. Continue to come back to Him when your heart struggles. Know that He never tires of this moment with you and will continue to heal you and fill you with life. Have patience with yourself as you will need His help the rest of your life. He desires to give it to you.

Questions:

What areas of this reflection did you relate with the most? Do you go to Jesus in your weakness with the Mass or are you more likely to feel guilty or condemn yourself and hide? How can you continue to grow in your hunger and thirst for the Mass?

Wednesday: *Open Wide the Doors to Christ*

Following our prayer yesterday and after time with Jesus revealing our weakness and struggle in desiring the Mass, we need to acknowledge that only Jesus can give us the gift of zeal and passion for the Mass. In order to receive this gift, we must ask for it and practice opening our hearts to be able to receive it.

In Revelation 3:20, we hear Jesus say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me."

Jesus is constantly at the door of our hearts desiring to enter and lavish us with His love and gifts, including the gift of desire for the Mass. However, it is common human experience to have things that crowd around the door of our heart making it hard to open or to have things in our hearts that push back when Jesus tries to enter to deliver His gifts.

Do you sense these things in your own heart?

They can be distractions that have become cluttered up around your heart door. These can be morally neutral things like technology, or a preoccupation with popularity, or perfectionism, or an obsession with a sport or activity, etc. While none of these things are morally wrong, they can become disordered in our lives and crowd out the door of our hearts so that it is hard for it to swing open wide when we try to open to Jesus. There can also be temptations and sinful habits in our hearts that we need to bring to Jesus in prayer and confession to be forgiven and removed from blocking the doors of our hearts.

Prayer:

Pray with Revelation 3:20 above. Use the Lectio Guide in the Appendix to help you pray through the passage.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine your own heart. Imagine the door, the entry point into your own heart. Jesus stands there eagerly knocking with His hand and heart full of gifts to give you that you have long awaited. Imagine trying to open the door to Him. What clutters your entry way and makes it hard to swing the door wide open? What makes it take a while for you to answer? What do you trip on when trying to run to the door? Tell Jesus about these things and note His merciful reactions.

Read the I Thirst Meditation by Mother Teresa in the Appendix.

Questions:

Answer the questions from the prayer above. What action can you take today to begin to clear the clutter in your heart? How can you ask Jesus to help you in this effort?

Thursday: *Eyes of Faith*

Another way our desire for Mass can grow is to learn more about the Miracle of Miracles that we encounter when we participate in Mass.

So much of the Mass is only seen through the eyes of faith and so many of us have very weak, almost blind vision when it comes to faith. Praised be God, this is not a permanent condition for us. We can work on our faith vision and begin to see what is really going on during the Mass as we learn more about it and continue to ask God for the gift of faith.

Today, read about a moment of the Mass to see what is really happening vs what you think you see. This passage come from the revelations of a holy lay woman, Catalina, to whom Mary appeared and showed her the mystical realities of Mass. We join Catalina at the moment of the Offertory in this passage:

Suddenly some characters, whom I had not seen before, began to stand up. It was as if from the side of each person present in the Cathedral, another person emerged, and soon the Cathedral became full of young, beautiful people. They were dressed in very white robes, and they started to move into the central aisle and, then, went towards the Altar.

Our Mother said: "Observe. They are the Guardian Angels of each one of the persons who are here. This is the moment in which your guardian angel carries your offerings and petitions before the Altar of the Lord."

At that moment, I was completely astonished, because these beings had such beautiful faces, so radiant as one is unable to imagine.

Their countenance was very beautiful with almost feminine faces; however, the structure of their body, their hands, their height were masculine. Their naked feet did not touch the floor, but rather they went as if gliding. That procession was very beautiful.

*Some of them were carrying something like a golden bowl with something that shone a great deal with a golden-white light. The Virgin Mary said: **"They are the Guardian Angels of the people who are offering this Holy Mass for many intentions, those who are conscious of what this celebration means. They have something to offer the Lord."***

"Offer yourselves at this moment; offer your sorrows, your pains, your hopes, your sadness, your joys, your petitions. Remember that the Mass has infinite value. Therefore, be generous in offering and in asking."

*Behind the first Angels came others who had nothing in their hands; they were coming empty handed. The Virgin Mary said: **"Those are the angels of the people who are here but never offer anything. They have no interest in living each liturgical moment of the Mass, and they have no gifts to carry before the Altar of the Lord."***

*At the end of the procession came other angels who were rather sad, with their hands joined in prayer but with their eyes downcast. **"These are the Guardian Angels of the people who are here, but do not want to be, that is to say, of the people who have been forced to come here, who have come out of obligation, but without any desire to participate in the Holy Mass. The angels go forth sadly because they have nothing to carry to the Altar, except for their own prayers."***

“Do not sadden your Guardian Angel. Ask for much, ask for the conversion of sinners, for peace in the world, for your families, your neighbors, for those who ask for your prayers. Ask, ask for much, but not only for yourselves, but for everyone else.

“Remember that the offering which most pleases the Lord is when you offer yourselves as a holocaust so that Jesus, upon His descent, may transform you by His own merits. What do you have to offer the Father by yourselves? Nothingness and sin. But the offering of oneself united to the merits of Jesus, that offering is pleasing to the Father.”

That sight, that procession was so beautiful that it would be difficult to compare it to another. All those celestial creatures bowing before the Altar, some leaving their offerings on the floor, others prostrating themselves on their knees with their foreheads almost touching the floor. And as soon as they arrived at the Altar, they would disappear from my sight.

Prayer:

Ask Jesus to increase your gift of faith during this study. Say, “Jesus, please give me the gift of faith so that as I continue to learn about the banquet that you greatly desire to eat with me, I can more clearly see the miracles you have prepared for me with the eyes of faith.”

Questions:

How do you normally see the Offertory? Did it surprise you to read what Mary showed Catalina is happening at the Offertory? How does this make you feel about other parts of the Mass?

Friday: *Until Then...*

As you finish this first full week of Lent, hopefully you have grown in your understanding of God's deep desire for communion with you and have begun to want a desire for the Mass. As with all good things, our study will take time and your own transformation will not be instant.

We don't like having to wait. We are used to instantaneous results these days. We like to be able to take something in and then scroll right on to the next thing. We don't want to be stopped. We like to order something and have it delivered as soon as it can be put right on our door step. We want to communicate with someone and hear back from them immediately. We don't like, or rather, we are not used to waiting, dwelling, lingering, and allowing hidden growth. But that is what we will be doing this Lent. That is what your heart is invited to with Jesus. Your ability to see miracles, your ability to hear His voice, your stoking of a fire in your soul for Mass, all of it will take time...so in the meantime, what shall we do?

Our bodies and actions can be previews of where our hearts are going. We may not understand or see the miracles yet, we may not feel the fire to be moved to Mass yet, but we can believe and act like we see it all now.

Start today by doing something that you can imagine a person that is in love with the Mass would do. What would that be?

Act like a person that is witnessing a miracle while you are in your own pew. Begin to show the reverence of a person who knows that he or she is deeply desired by the God who is at the altar. Make your genuflections a real moment of encounter between you and a God Who you truly believe is good and generous.

When we let our bodies lead our hearts by acting out something we don't quite understand yet we find it easier to wait while our souls make the longer journey of faith.

Prayer:

Imagine you are on a path with Jesus. You know where you are going. You know why you are going. But you are frustrated at the length and the twists and turns of the path. Talk to Jesus about your restlessness and your frustration. Talk to Him about your impatience to have just arrived. Feel the feelings that come up with this impatience and let Him see and love your heart during this time.

Questions:

What is one way you can act more reverently at Mass this week? What actions in Mass are hardest for you to do reverently? Why? Which ones are easier for you? Why?

Saturday:
Mass Preparation

Seek to hear Jesus say at Mass this week one of the following:

The feast is ready!

Do not be discouraged!

Behold I stand at the door of your heart and knock.

Questions:

As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week. What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think? How has your understanding of the Mass changed? Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 2

Reclaiming Rituals

Sunday:
Mass Journal

Use this page as your Mass Journal each week. Look in the Appendix for how to journal your Mass.

Monday: *Rituals*

It is important to understand that Mass is a ritual. A ritual follows a specific order of actions and words. Rituals express what people believe and value. Not only does a ritual tell others what we believe, it allows us to live it out together.

A basic ritual in Nebraska is the beginning of Husker football games. This (non-religious) ritual follows the same order of actions and words: standing up, cheering for the line-up, chanting “Husker Power”, clapping along with the Tunnel Walk song, etc. The order makes it predictable to the fans and players and allows more than 85,000 to participate. If it was random or different every time, it would be hard for that many people to be on the same page. The ritual expresses the people’s excitement and love for Husker football. It shows the world that we believe in the team and want them to succeed. And, it invites the fans to join in the playing of the game.

Think about different rituals in our society: weddings, gender reveals, graduation ceremonies, retirements, funerals, etc. Some rituals are personal and only include a small group (your family, your friends, your teammates). Others are formal and include a large number of people.

The Mass is a ritual and includes any baptized person. It has been prescribed (made) by God and it allows all of God’s children to express their belief in Him and to live out those beliefs.

Prayer:

One ritual, as Catholics, we participate in is the saying of the Our Father at Mass. Say the Our Father today, but as you say it, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what beliefs you are communicating in this prayer about God as your Father.

Questions:

What rituals do you participate in often? What rituals does your family have? What beliefs or what story do these rituals communicate or let you participate in?

Tuesday: *Walk the Walk*

Have you ever heard the saying “Don’t just talk the talk, walk the walk.” Rituals help us to do this.

We can say we believe in something but our beliefs can be completely betrayed by our habitual actions. You can say you love your parents, write them a letter saying so, say it before you go to bed, or tell them so as you leave the house but you can also have a ritual of lying to them everytime they ask you where you are going or a ritual of making fun of them whenever you are out with your friends. Your words and actions do not match and slowly your heart will begin to match your actions.

Rituals impact us because they communicate truth through our actions, transforming our souls over time. The more we actively participate in rituals which reflect the deepest truths about our identity and destiny, the more we can understand and reflect that truth in our daily lives. It is one thing to have an idea that Jesus is present in the Eucharist; it is another to genuflect - to physically bend your knee in reverence - to the tabernacle, along with everybody else who enters the Church.

Participating in rituals that are based on lies, false identities and destinies also change a person; they degrade and confuse the souls who embody falsehoods. It leads to distorted identities, a grave misunderstanding of who God is, and what a person is truly destined for. The question is not whether or not people participate in rituals; rituals are a part of being human. Rather, the question is whether the rituals we embody are true.

If, instead of genuflecting and pointing our attention to the tabernacle as we enter a church, we picked up a ritual of greeting others first, we would slowly be changing our hearts

to reveal a truth that we believed church was more a gathering social hall than a house of God. We would be revealing a truth we had come to believe of the lack of importance of the Eucharist.

Prayer:

Tomorrow we will dive into the ritual of the Sign of the Cross. Today, say the Sign of the Cross and try to notice what you are saying and doing. Ponder what it all means.

Questions:

Do you have any rituals that betray what you really believe that you may need to change or discontinue?

Wednesday: *The Sign of the Cross*

One ritual we use a lot during Mass is the Sign of the Cross. We can become a little numb to the power of this ritual, so let's dive into the great meaning behind it.

Everytime, you make the Sign of the Cross, you mark yourself with many things. Consider these:

- You mark yourself as claimed by Christ and His victory over death. You make a visible sign to the enemy, Satan, and all his demons, that you are safe and protected by your Victor. Think of it as a glare or a "in your face" action to the enemy that you will always be on the winning side.
- You show you are scooped up into the love between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, that you are a part of God's family in baptism. Think of it as a reminder that you always belong, are never alone, and are always and continuously loved.
- You mark yourself with a sign of God's team, claiming a part in His work and owning Him as your coach. Think of it as putting on the jersey of a team you've always wanted to be a part of and are now representing. You have the power of all of God's team with you where ever you go, the angels, saints, Sacraments, God's own self goes with you! You are marking yourself as willing to participate in the work of the team in its joys and sufferings.

Prayer:

Like yesterday, practice saying the Sign of the Cross, but this time in a new way. Say the Sign of the Cross three times and each time meditate on one of the three things you read about today to focus on as you say and do this ritual. Notice any movement of your heart as you do this.

Questions:

Which item excited you the most about the meaning of the Sign of the Cross that you read about today?

Thursday:

The Sign of the Cross and the Saints

Read the following stories from three Saints with powerful stories and explanations of the Sign of the Cross:

“Never leave your house without making the sign of the cross. It will be to you a staff, a weapon, an impregnable fortress. Neither man nor demon will dare to attack you, seeing you covered with such powerful armor. Let this sign teach you that you are a soldier, ready to combat against the demons, and ready to fight for the crown of justice. Are you ignorant of what the cross has done? It has vanquished death, destroyed sin, emptied hell, dethroned Satan, and restored the universe. Would you then doubt its power?” - St. John Chrysostom

“With our right hand, we use either three fingers to represent the Trinity or five fingers to represent Jesus’ five wounds. We begin the prayer by placing our right hand on our forehead to acknowledge that God the Father is the one from whom all things originate. Next, we move our hand down to our stomach as a sign that Jesus proceeded from the Father. Lastly, we cross ourselves from left shoulder to right shoulder to show that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son and that He is the bond of love between Father and Son. (Summary from St. Francis de Sales, *The Sign of the Cross*)

The devil did everything to dissuade him [St. Vincent Ferrer] from the path of perfection he had embraced. On one occasion, he appeared to the saint under the guise of a venerable hermit, appealing to him to curb his radicality in the practice of virtue. “Be assured”—he told him—“that no one can avoid falling into some or other indiscretion, sooner or later. It is better for this to happen in the flower of youth than in old age.” Friar Vincent confronted him with the Sign of the Cross, invoked the name of

God and Our Lady, and courageously proclaimed: "Go to where you belong, wicked one! I know who you are. Do you not know that God is with His servants and leads them by the hand so that they will not stumble? I have consecrated to Him not only my old age, but also my youth." At these words the devil disappeared with a howl. (St. Vincent Ferrer performed thousands of miracles through his faith in the Sign of the Cross.)

Prayer:

Look at the image of the Crucifix from the procession at Mass below. Spend some time taking in the sacrifice of the Cross and what it means to mark ourselves with it. Talk with Jesus about His sacrifice and what it means to you.

Questions:

Which excerpt from today's reading stuck with you? What was your prayer like looking at the crucifix? Do you often notice the crucifix when it is processed in at Mass? Why do you think we start Mass with this Sign each time?



Friday: *Genuflecting*

Another ritual we are very familiar with from Mass is genuflecting. Genuflecting can become very routine and almost automatic when we do it enough. (Have you ever accidentally genuflected in a movie theatre or an auditorium? This shows our muscle memory and force of habit!) Today, let's renew our understanding of this ritual and infuse it with more love the next time we genuflect.

Genuflection is a powerful ritual we engage our bodies in to help remind our souls who lives in the tabernacle. In medieval customs, those approaching a king would bend their knee to show honor, adoration, and respect. As believers that our King and God is present, we bend our right knee to show our supreme honor, adoration, and respect.

This action truly shows what we believe. If we fail to genuflect as we approach the tabernacle, it can communicate a lack of belief, a laziness, or an indifference to the presence of God in our midst. Many people have converted to Catholicism simply for the fact that they discovered we have God truly present in our own church, they have awaited the day they could come and genuflect before God present on earth!

Consider this story about a tour guide and a king.

There once was a tour guide who had the honor of showing people around a beautiful, historic Catholic cathedral every day. He would show pilgrims who had traveled far to see its majesty, he would tour around art lovers and help them to marvel at the beauty of its frescoes and sculptures, he would explain every nook and cranny of this beautiful structure to those who came and they would leave satisfied with their experience of such a palace of prayer.

However, one day, he was met with a conundrum. He was to show a mighty king from another country around this church. This king was not a Catholic, let alone a Christian, and the tour guide began to dread the moment they were to pass the place where Jesus resided in the tabernacle. He was instructed on all the ways to greet this royal entity, what titles to use, how to behave, but was given no instruction on how to act when he presented this king with a King who outranked him.

So, when the time came to bring the royal guest to the place of the tabernacle, he explained the architecture and did a slight and hasty bow toward the tabernacle. The king questioned, "now tell me, what is in that beautiful golden vessel that seems central to this building?" The tour guide answered, "well, we call that a tabernacle, it is where we believe God Himself dwells, body, blood, soul, and divinity." Proud of his answer, the tour guide took a deep breath and waited for the king's response.

Slowly the king began to smile and gently said, "I don't believe it." The tour guide, ready to assure the king that he knew he didn't believe, began to make his response when the king continued, "I don't believe that you believe it either."

Flummoxed, the tour guide defensively retorted, "Oh but I do! I am a Catholic!" "I see," said the king, "But I only mean to say that if I believed that my God was here, truly here, I would not have made a pathetic little bow, I would be on my knees worshipping, I wouldn't be able to help myself! It would be a wonder of wonder for me!"

Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to do an examination of your heart as you genuflect. Put yourself in the moment of when you genuflect when you come into church. Examine how you genuflect and what your mind is doing at this moment? Is it a moment of worship or hurry for you? Are you able to say a

word or two to Jesus as you do it? Do not become worried that you aren't doing it well enough, just ask the Holy Spirit to help you notice anyway you are distracted or sheepish as you genuflect. Imagine Jesus' reaction as you genuflect. How does He receive this moment of worship from you?

Questions:

How often are we like the tour guide? Self conscious of our own ability to worship God when He is present? How can we make our genuflections more accurately reflect what we believe?

Saturday:
Mass Preparation

Focus on these rituals this week at Mass:

The Sign of the Cross

The Procession of the Crucifix

Genuflection

Questions:

As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week. What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think? How has your understanding of the Mass changed? Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 3

Liturgy- God's Gift

Sunday:
Mass Journal

Use this page as your Mass Journal each week. Look in the Appendix for how to journal your Mass.

Monday: *Receiving the Mass*

Last week, we learned about rituals. The Mass is the most special ritual there is. It is given to us by God and is actually God at work. It might feel like humans are doing everything at Mass. You might even get tired of all the things you have to do at Mass sometimes- sitting, standing, kneeling, responding, singing, genuflecting, bowing, giving the Sign of Peace, and on and on. But, if that's what we are doing each Mass, consider what God is doing, for in fact, Mass is God's work, not ours. It is all happening because of what God is doing, not because of how perfectly we are singing or how straight we are sitting. If this week is all about what God is doing for us in Mass, let's reverse our hearts from always thinking that we must do, and give, and work, and instead, we are going to work on receiving, letting God work, and knowing that He is the one who loves us and chose us and is pursuing us.

Prayer:

Pray with the following verses. Use the Lectio Guide in the Appendix.

- We love because he first loved us: 1 John 4:19
- It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you: John 15:16

Questions:

Do you often feel like your faith is your own effort or God's effort? Why? Do you try to evaluate your faith or your progress in holiness based on how perfect you are or on how good God is? Why?

Tuesday:

The Goodness of God

The goodness of God is something we all need to spend more time praying with and thinking about. Much of the sadness, frustration, or even anger in our lives comes from us not understanding the goodness of God. Perhaps even your own boredom with the Mass comes from forgetting that it is a gift of amazing love and graces given to you freely. Maybe you doubt that this gift is really even what you need or that God is out of touch with what a good gift for you is.

Prayer:

Pray with the following quotes from Blessed Solanus Casey. Read them and invite the Holy Spirit to help you examine your own confidence in God's goodness:

"Confidence in God is the very soul of prayer. It is based on the belief that God is good and therefore can be trusted."

"Have confidence in our dear Lord's infinite love."

Pray with the words from Chris Tomlin's song "Good Good Father." Scan the QR to listen.



Questions:

Do you believe that God is good? Do you believe that He works tirelessly for you and your heart? Do you believe that He is unable to do wrong to you?

Wednesday: *Gift of the Priest*

One way, we experience the goodness of God, and His continuous concern for our welfare is in the person of the priest. When Jesus ascended to the Father, it was not good enough to leave us with His words and teachings. He desires our hearts and our happiness more than that. He left us with men who could literally be His hands of mercy, so that his hands could continue to bless us, forgive us, bring us Himself, and love us. The hands of our priests do all of this and more especially at Mass.

In the Mass, a priest is not just acting like Jesus, instead, he is acting in the person of Christ. When He prays, Jesus prays. When He blesses, Jesus blesses. He is the voice, hands, and feet of Jesus. He wears vestments to help us to understand that He is putting on Christ before Mass even starts.

Prayer:

Spend some time thanking God for the way that the priesthood has blessed your life or the lives of others. Imagine the hands of the priest as Jesus' hands when they anointed a dying relative of yours or gave you absolution from a sin that was hurting you.

Questions:

Have you ever thought of the priesthood as a personal gift that God gave you so He could love you in person the rest of your life? How does this make you feel about God? How does this change your feeling toward the priesthood?

Thursday: *The Priest at the Mass*

Today, read about a moment of the Mass to see what is really happening versus what you think you see. This passage, again comes from the revelations of a holy lay woman, Catalina, to whom Mary appeared and showed her the mystical realities of Mass. We join Catalina at the moment of the Consecration in this passage:

The celebrant said the words of the Consecration. He was a person of normal height, but suddenly, he began to grow, becoming filled with light, a supernatural light between white and gold that enveloped him and grew very strong around the face. And because of it, I could not see his features. When he raised the Host, I saw his hands, and on the back of his hands, he had some marks from which emanated a great deal of light. It was Jesus! It was Him Who was wrapping His Body around the celebrant, as if He were lovingly surrounding the hands of the Archbishop. At that moment, the Host began to grow and became enormous, and upon it the marvelous face of Jesus appeared looking at His people.

By instinct, I wanted to bow my head, and Our Lady said: "Do not look down. Look up to view and contemplate Him. Exchange your gaze with His, and repeat the prayer of Fatima: Lord, I believe, I adore, I trust, and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not trust, and do not love You. Forgiveness and Mercy... Now tell Him how much you love Him, and pay your homage to the King of Kings."

I told it to Him, and it seemed as if I was the only one He was looking at from the enormous Host. But I learned that this was the way He gazed at each person, with love to the fullest. Then I lowered my head until I had my forehead on the floor, as did all the Angels and the Blessed from Heaven. Perhaps for a

fraction of a second, I wondered how Jesus was taking on the body of the celebrant and, at the same time, He was inside the Host. And as he lowered the Host, it returned to its normal size. Tears ran down my cheeks; I was unable to let go of my astonishment.

Prayer:

Spend time reading through Catalina's description of the Consecration and talk with Jesus about your reaction to what she saw.

Questions:

What does this description of the Consecration teach you about the priest's role at Mass? How does it make you think of Mass differently?

Friday: *The Doxology*

A 'doxology' is a prayer of glory and praise. In a doxology, we gather up all our excitement and worship and praise God. This is the part of the Mass where we hear the priest say:

"Through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever."

This reminds us that all of the Mass is done through the mighty power of God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At Mass, we get to participate in the work of God. So, we respond with all our hearts and excitement with something we call the Great Amen: AMEN!

Amen means "I believe"! But even more, it means that I trust God in this way and would stake my life on this belief. So, at Mass, say it with all your heart so God can hear you say that you believe He is there present on the altar and working through the priest!

Prayer:

Imagine you are at Mass. Picture the priest and what he does during Mass. Now, let the image change and the priest becomes Jesus! What is Jesus doing? Saying? What is Jesus doing for you and saying to you?

God gave us priests, so He could work through them. We can see Jesus' hands, hear His voice, and receive His gift through the priest.

Imagine Jesus giving you the priest at your church or another priest you know. How has he brought Jesus to you and your family? Thank Jesus for this gift. Ask Jesus to protect and strengthen His priests.

Questions:

How has your understanding of the Mass as work you do vs a gift of God and work of God changed this week? What is a part of the Mass that you have learned about that now feels more like a gift than before? How can you pray for your priests or thank them this week?

Saturday:
Mass Preparation

Focus these truths this week at Mass :

God is good and loves you more than you can comprehend.

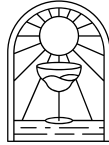
This Mass is a gift from a God that loves you.

The priest is "in persona christi" at Mass.

Questions:

As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week. What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think? How has your understanding of the Mass changed? Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 4

*Sacraments:
Visible and
Invisible*

Monday: *Visible and Invisible*

As we know, Mass can sometimes be a struggle because we don't fully understand it. So far, we have renewed our understanding of the desire of God to be with us, His constant goodness He is showing to us in the Mass, and we have reclaimed some of the rituals we use at Mass. This week, we will explore how Sacraments always have both a visible and invisible reality. We are going to focus especially on what invisible realities are happening so that we can continue to be amazed by the miracle of miracles that is the Sacrament of the Mass.

"We recognize that the Sacraments have a visible and invisible reality, a reality open to all the human senses but grasped in its God-given depths with the eyes of faith. When parents hug their children, for example, the visible reality we see is the hug. The invisible reality the hug conveys is love. We cannot "see" the love the hug expresses, though sometimes we can see its nurturing effect in the child." - USCCB, Prayer and Worship

This week we will read about moments of the Mass to see the invisible realities of the Mass. These passages, again come from the revelations of a holy lay woman, Catalina, to whom Mary appeared and showed her the mystical realities of Mass.

Prayer:

Simply ask God for the gift of faith this week. Remember it is a gift, and you can ask Him for as much of it as you want.

Questions:

Do you desire to see more of the invisible reality of the Mass?
How can this help your experience at Mass?

Tuesday: *Angels Arrive*

The final moment of the Preface arrived, and when the assembly said, "Holy, Holy, Holy", suddenly everything that was behind the celebrants disappeared. Behind the left side of the Archbishop, thousands of Angels appeared in a diagonal line, small angels, big angels, angels with immense wings, angels with small wings, angels without wings. As the previous ones, all were dressed with tunics like the white robes of the priests or altar boys. Everyone knelt with their hands united in prayer, and bowed their heads in reverence. Beautiful music was heard as if there were many choirs with different voices, all singing in unison together with the people: Holy, Holy, Holy...

Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer using your imagination to see the scene that Catalina is describing above. Again, ask God for the gift of faith for this week.

Questions:

How does Catalina's description enhance your understanding of the moment we proclaim Holy, Holy, Holy at Mass?

Wednesday: *The Saints Come*

Excerpt from Catalina:

The moment of the Consecration, the moment of the most marvelous of Miracles had arrived. Behind the right side of the Archbishop appeared a multitude of people also in a diagonal line. They were dressed in the same tunic, but in pastel colors of: rose, green, light blue, lilac, yellow, in short, in different and very soft colors. Their faces were also brilliant, full of joy. They all seemed to be the same age. You could note (I can't say why) that they were people of different ages, but their faces looked the same, without wrinkles, happy. They all knelt down as well at the singing of "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord..."

Our Lady said: "These are all the Saints and the Blessed of Heaven, and among them are the souls of your relatives who already enjoy the Presence of God." Then I saw Her, exactly to the right of the Archbishop, a step behind the celebrant. She was suspended a little off the floor, kneeling on some very fine, transparent but, at the same time, luminous fabric, as crystalline water. The Holy Virgin, with hands joined, was looking attentively and respectfully at the celebrant....

...Before the Altar, there appeared some shadows of people in a gray color with their hands raised. The Holy Virgin said: "These are the blessed souls of Purgatory, who await your prayers to be refreshed. Do not stop praying for them. They pray for you, but they cannot pray for themselves. It is you who have to pray for them, in order to help them depart so that they can be with God and enjoy Him eternally.

Prayer:

Spend some moments in prayer using your imagination to see the Saints, the souls of your loved ones who are already in H

even, and to see the Holy Souls at the moment of the Consecration. Try to imagine them all together. Allow your imagination to run free imagining various Saints and family members. End with a prayer for the souls in purgatory who join you at each Mass, though unseen and often forgotten.

Questions:

What is your soul drawn to as you imagine this scene? Who do you see?

Thursday: *Visio Divina*

Images can help us pray through the invisible realities we encounter in our faith. Use the image on the following page to pray today.

Prayer:

Today, spend some time in prayer looking at the image on the following page. Give yourself enough time to notice details, lines, shapes, and people in the image. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your viewing of this image. Bring this image with you to Mass next time you go to help your heart to remember the invisible realities you are about to enter into.

Questions:

What do you notice? What stands out to you in the image? Do you have any emotions, thoughts or memories that are touched as you look at the image? Does this image inspire you in anyway to action or change of heart?



Image Source Unknown

Friday:

Communion Time: Two Flames

Jesus comes to us in the Eucharist at this moment of the Mass so that He can be so close to us and feed us with Himself because He loves us SO much He can't stand not being close to us. St. Padre Pio tells us when you receive Jesus in Communion it is like two flames joining together. Imagine two candles leaning together and joining flames. They become one flame. There is no longer any way to separate that flame. This is what happens in Communion with you and Jesus. You become one you are that close to Him!

Prayer:

Now, turn to the "HEART prayer" in the appendix. Spend time working through each letter of the prayer. Imagine your heart joining with Jesus's Sacred Heart, just like the candles and flames becoming one flame. Bring this prayer to Mass with you as often as you like to use after Communion.

Questions:

How do you normally spend your time after receiving Jesus in Communion? What do you normally talk with Him about? What part of the HEART prayer did you most enjoy talking with Jesus about?

Saturday: *Mass Preparation*

Focus on these moments this week at Mass :

The Holy, Holy, Holy as the angels arrive.

The Saints and Souls in Purgatory with you at Mass.

Communion Time: Your Heart and God's Heart Joined

Questions:

As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week. What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think? How has your understanding of the Mass changed? Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 5

Mystery
&
Wonder

Sunday:
Mass Journal

Use this page as your Mass Journal each week. Look in the Appendix for how to journal your Mass.

Monday: *Wonder*

In order to understand the Mass as a mystery, we have to get familiar with the practice of wondering. What is it to wonder? What is wonder? Wonder could be described as a curiosity, admiration, and awe, a feeling of surprise caused by something new, unexpected, or inexplicable.

Prayer: Spend some time talking with God the Father about one thing you are curious about in life. This could be a question you have always had about God, the world, why He made something a certain way, or it could be about you, your future, your past, etc. Talk with God about the parts you don't know, what you are curious about and trust Him with the questions you have. Notice how He seems as you talk with Him and wonder about His creation.

Questions: When is the last time you wondered about anything? What was it about? What keeps you from wondering? How does it feel to wonder now?

Tuesday: *Wondering Today*

“A man who has lost his sense of wonder is a man dead.” -
William of Saint Thierry

“The world will never starve for want of wonders, but for want of wonder.” – G. K. Chesterton

Little kids are really good at wondering. They wonder about why God made trees, and they wonder why some animals can fly and others can't. Just today, I caught my four year old wondering why God made it so that kids have to grow into adults. They are surprised by and fascinated by everything. But, then, they grow, and lose a little of that wonder. It is especially hard to wonder today. We don't have to wonder long about things or think hard to find answers on our own. Instead, we have Google, and Reddit, and Tik Tok, and all sorts of ways to find answers fast that interrupt our own wondering and working through things on our own.

Prayer: Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of wonder right now. Repeat your prayer from yesterday.

Questions: When is the last time you allowed yourself to be carried away in wonder? What was it about? How was that experience for you personally? Do you make space for wonder in your life? In your faith?

Wednesday: *Mass is a Mystery*

Mass is a mystery. It requires wonder. What we mean by the word 'mystery' is that the Mass is so spectacular and so miraculous that we will actually never be able to stop wondering, learning, and understanding it. It is beyond our human understanding in its wonder!

Mysteries are like if we tried to swallow a wall. Can you swallow a wall? Why not? Of course, it's too big for our mouths and we can't quite bite it either, can we? But that doesn't mean walls don't exist just because we can't fit them all in our mouths. Or have you ever looked at a wall so big that you couldn't see it all at once, you could only see sections of the wall at each glance? Trying to see the whole wall in one look would have required you to back up so far you still couldn't properly see it. Mysteries are like this. We can understand parts. We can know they exist but they remind us that we are creatures surrounded by infinite and Heavenly realities that we can't fully "fit" into our human understanding, therefore we can wonder and marvel at them but not quite fully explain or understand them.

As you continue to study the Mass, allow yourself to wonder at it all. You don't need to fully understand, have the answers, nor feel in control when you wonder. As you learn more and more about the Mass let yourself get carried away, in spite of yourself in awe, surprise, beauty, love, questions, and truth.

Prayer: Say a prayer of Thanksgiving thanking God for creating you and giving you the gifts that are infinitely more amazing than you can imagine. Thank Him for letting you be a part of His infinite love in all its mystery.

Questions:

How does this explanation of a mystery make you feel? Does it inspire you to marvel and to amazement or is there an insecurity in not knowing it all?

Thursday: *Mystery Inspires Adoration*

Because we are used to knowing everything through our access to all the answers all the time, (thanks, Google!) it can be hard to sit in a place of uncertainty. It can also be hard to remember how little we are and how big God is.

When we spend time thinking about God and His greatness it leads us to adoration.

Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is the homage of the spirit to the King of Glory, respectful silence in the presence of the ever greater God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives us assurance to our supplications. -Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2628

Prayer:

Spend a few minutes thinking about who God is and what it means that He is God. Think about Who He is and what He has done. Allow yourself to get lost in thoughts about His power, might, mercy, love, and greatness. End with a Glory Be praising Him for being God.

Questions:

In prayer, we often ask God for things, ask for forgiveness, and thank Him, we sometimes forget to spend time in praise or adoration praising God for being God. Is this type of prayer easy for you? Why or why not? What about God excites you the most and makes you want to praise Him?

Friday: *Mass as Adoration*

This week we have read about Mass being a mystery that we can and should wonder and marvel about. We learned yesterday that mysteries and wonder lead to adoration of God, or praising Him for being God. This all leads us right back to the beginning of this study, the understanding that God wants us to know that the Mass is a message of His extreme and desperate love for His people and if the Mass is a message of love for us, the exciting thing is that it is also a message of love back from us to God. In fact, it is a perfect act of adoration and praise. In the Mass, mysteriously, we are able to offer the perfect gift and sacrifice back to God in praise and adoration and thanksgiving for God just being awesome!

Prayer:

Revisit your prayer from yesterday. Spend some time practicing adoration and praise again.

Use the lyrics from Sarah Hart's song "You Alone" to practice praise today. Scan the QR code to listen and see the lyrics.



Questions:

What are you inspired to praise God about today? What qualities of God amaze you?

Saturday: *Prep for Mass*

Prayer:

Focus on moments of Mystery and Adoration at Mass this weekend:

When the priest elevates the host and chalice after the consecration.

When you bow before the host at Communion time.

Question:

Questions: As you prepare for Sunday Mass tomorrow, review and pray through this past week. What most stirred your heart, blew your mind, or made you think? How has your understanding of the Mass changed? Is there any change you feel called to make in your daily life or your devotion to the Mass?

Notes



WEEK 6

Holy Week
Memorial & Sacrifice

Sunday:
Mass Journal

Use this page as your Mass Journal each week. Look in the Appendix for how to journal your Mass.

Monday: *The Triduum*

This week is a very special week: Holy Week. In fact, it is THE most special week of the whole year for us as Catholics. Every day is sacred and helps us to celebrate something very special about Jesus' passion, death, and Resurrection. The three most special days this week are called the Triduum. They are Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil. There is a special Liturgy that spans these three days that you can go to at our church.

Here is what we remember on each of these days:

Holy Thursday is the Last Supper and the day that Jesus gave us the Mass (and priests).

Good Friday is the day that Jesus suffered and died on the Cross for us.

Easter Vigil is when Jesus rose from the dead, conquered death, and saved us all!

But, did you know that each Mass we actually make all of these events present again? Every time we go to Mass His passion, death, and Resurrection happens on the altar. It doesn't actually happen again, instead it is like these moments are taken from time and put in front of us on the altar and we get to be there for Jesus in these moments.

Prayer: As you enter into this most sacred week of the year, ask for courage and humility to be present with Jesus during these moments. Pick one of the moments we commemorate in the Triduum, listed above. Imagine Jesus turning to you and looking for you in this moment.

Questions:

Do you believe that Jesus looks for you in these moments of His passion, death and resurrection? Why or why not? How does it feel to see Him seeking your face?

Fig Tuesday: *Do This in Memory of Me*

The part of the Mass we can focus on this Holy Week is Jesus' special command: Do this in memory of me. Jesus is asking us to remember Him. He knows He is about to suffer and die. He knows He will rise and ascend to the Father's arms in Heaven. So, He asks us to continuously go to Mass and remember Him! But, when Jesus says this, He doesn't mean just to think about Him or look at pictures of Him, like we might do to remember someone else that is far away or in Heaven. He actually means to have a Memorial, which means to make Him present along with His passion, death and resurrection. The only way we can do that is to go to Mass. When you hear this part at Mass this week, answer Him, "Jesus, I remember you."

Prayer:

Close your eyes and settle your body. Imagine Jesus and you sitting at a table with all your friends. He is eating with you. He tells you He is going to suffer and die tomorrow. How does this make you feel? What do you say to Him? How does He seem? Does He seem scared? Brave?

Jesus begins to say the first Mass and offers His Body and Blood for you by saying, "Take and eat, this is my body, given up for you. Take and drink, this is my blood, poured out for you." He says these words with such love. You feel that He is giving you the best gift you have ever received.

Then, he looks you in the eyes. How do you feel? What are you thinking? He tells you, "Do this in memory of me." He says your name and then asks you again to remember Him. How does He seem? How do you respond? What do you feel?

Spy Wednesday:

Visio Divina

Next time you go to Mass, look for Him so happy that you are remembering Him and following His command.

In preparation for the first day of the Triduum, tomorrow, Holy Thursday, let's spend today, using our imagination to think about what it means that these three events become present to us again on the altar at Mass. Use the image on the following page to help you to imagine these moments at the Mass becoming present to us today.

Prayer: Today, spend some time in prayer looking at the image on the following page. Give yourself enough time to notice details, lines, shapes, and people in the image. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your viewing of this image. Bring this image with you to Mass next time you go to help your heart to remember Jesus in the memorial being made present to you.

Questions: What do you notice? What stands out to you in the image? Do you have any emotions, thoughts or memories that are touched as you look at the image? Does this image inspire you in anyway to action or change of heart?



The Mass of St. Gregory the Great, by Adriaen Ysenbrandt

Holy Thursday: *The Moment of Great Desire*

Today is the day: the day Jesus instituted the Mass, gave it to us and to the Father as a sacrifice, a pure gift of love, mystery, adoration to the Father, and more.

Remember from the first weeks of this study, the way Jesus began the Last Supper on this most holy of nights. He began reminding you and I of His great desire to eat this meal with us. He reminds us of how important this moment has been in His heart and in the heart of His Father for centuries.

As you celebrate the moment Christ sat down with His apostles tonight and shared this Eucharist with them for the first time, remember His desire for you to share it too, and remember that He made it possible for you to be in this moment every time you come to Him at Mass.

Prayer:

Spend time again imagining being at table with Jesus the night before He will die, listening to Jesus say to you, "I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you" (Luke 22:15), He looks into your eyes, He delights that you are there. Recline as Saint John the Beloved did, knowing you are also His beloved, lean with your head against His chest and listen to the Heart of God beating furiously for you in this sacred moment.

Questions:

How can you respond to God's great desire for your heart tonight?

Good Friday: *Remember Me*

Today is the day that your powerful, mighty, awesome God allows His most beloved Son to die a scornful, violent, bloody, and ghastly death on a cross.

We have all thought of the deep suffering and pain of Jesus on this day. We often have never given a thought to the heart of God the Father on this day and at this moment. The tremendous pain of watching your own, precious, beloved Son suffer for sinners who can barely remember Him, how could the Father go through with this? Only for the same amount of love for us that we know Jesus must have had to endure His sufferings too. Only for a deep desire for unity with us again forever.

On this day, we know that the heart of the Father aches for you too. He sends His Son, God, as the ultimate gift to die today in order to save you and bring you back to Him. You must mean an awful lot to His heart. At the Mass, this moment of ultimate sacrifice of God, in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is made present.

May we enter the Heart of God today. In the ultimate sacrifice of the Son, by the Father, through the Holy Spirit, may we truly believe how much He loves our hearts. May we see this love, and believe it on the altar at every Mass.

Prayer:

Listen to God the Father saying, "this is my beloved Son" in Scripture at both the Baptism of Jesus and the Transfiguration. Imagine the love, pride, and affection of God the Father in these moments. Imagine a dad with their only child, their son. Imagine the sacrifice it would be for a dad to give up their only beloved son. Ponder this today as you try to understand the sacrifice of the Father for you

Questions:

Have you ever thought about the heart of God the Father on Good Friday? What have you learned about God the Father's love for you today? How does the Mass connect you to this sacrifice of the Father?

Saturday: *Easter Vigil*

Tonight is the night we celebrate the Easter Vigil, the last of the Triduum services that ends the one Liturgy. This is the night when we hear the story of the centuries of God pursuing His people to save them, feed them, unify them, and glorify them. During this Mass, the paschal candle is lit and the Exultet is proclaimed. Read the words from the exultet below. It is absolutely full of beautiful reminders of God's love and desire for us and the power of the Mass. What this night commemorates is made present at every Mass as we hear in the exultet, at Mass: *heaven is wedded to earth and man is reconciled with God!*

Prayer:

Read the exultet slowly and prayerfully. Allow God to show you His deep desire for you in all of His works and the drama of His passion, death, and resurrection.

Questions: Which lines stood out to you? How can they inspire you throughout this Easter Season?

The Exultet

*Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!*

*Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!*

*Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Savior shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God's people!*

*[My dearest friends, standing with me in this holy light,
join me in asking God for mercy,
that he may give his unworthy minister
grace to sing his Easter praises.]*

[V. The Lord be with you.

R. And also with you.]

V. Lift up your hearts.

R. We lift them up to the Lord.

V. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

R. It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*It is truly right
that with full hearts and minds and voices
we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father,
and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*For Christ has ransomed us with his blood,
and paid for us the price of Adam's sin
to our eternal Father!*

*This is our passover feast,
when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.*

*This is the night when first you saved our fathers:
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery
and led them dry-shod through the sea.
This is the night when the pillar of fire
destroyed the darkness of sin!*

*This is the night when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin
and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.*

*This is the night when Jesus Christ
broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave.
What good would life have been to us,
had Christ not come as our Redeemer?*

*Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave
you gave away your Son.*

*O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!
Most blessed of all nights, chosen by God
to see Christ rising from the dead!*

*Of this night scripture says:
"The night will be as clear as day:
it will become my light, my joy."*

*The power of this holy night
dispels all evil, washes guilt away,
restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy;*

it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride.

*Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth
and man is reconciled with God!*

*Therefore, heavenly Father, in the joy of this night,
receive our evening sacrifice of praise,
your Church's solemn offering.*

*Accept this Easter candle,
a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.*

*Let it mingle with the lights of heaven
and continue bravely burning
to dispel the darkness of this night!*

*May the morning Star which never sets find this flame
still burning:
Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all mankind,
your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever.*

R. Amen.

Notes



EASTER SUNDAY

Go Forth!

Easter Sunday: *Mass Journal*

Spend some time this week reviewing your journey this Lent of studying the Catholic Mass. Use what you have learned and been inspired to do during Lent to continue your devotion to God through the Mass this Easter Season.

Go back to the Exultet from Easter Vigil and continue to reflect on what Easter and the Easter season means by reading through it and pausing on lines that strike you as powerful or that inspire you.

Easter Sunday: *Go Forth!*

The word Mass actually means to go forth and be sent out as if on a mission. As you leave Mass you carry Christ and all His graces into the world. Saint Teresa of Avila has a beautiful quote to help inspire us with this mission to Go Forth!

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people."

Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother for strength and inspiration to Go Forth into this Easter Season to be Christ in the world. Call to mind St. Teresa of Avila's quote in moments you find hard to be in or when you are with people, recalling you are bringing Christ to each moment and situation.

Questions:

How can you remember this call to 'Go Forth' after each Mass? In what ways has Christ asked you to be His hands, feet, eyes, and heart in this world and to whom does He ask you to carry Him each day? Do you find this to be an easy or difficult mission?

Further Inspiration for Continuing Your Appreciation of the Mass:

The following are quotes about Mass that can remind us of its power and beauty. Consider reading a quote a day or a quote a week and pondering it as you continue on in the Easter Season and continue your devotion to the Mass:

"When Mass is being celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the Divine Victim immolated on the altar." – Saint John Chrysostom

"If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy." – Saint Jean Vianney

"The angels surround and help the priest when he is celebrating Mass." – Saint Augustine

"It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass." – Saint Padre Pio

“Put all the good works in the world against one Holy Mass; they will be as a grain of sand beside a mountain.” – Saint John Vianney

“Let the entire man be seized with fear; let the whole world tremble; let heaven exult when Christ, the Son of the Living God, is on the altar in the hands of the priest. O admirable height and stupendous condescension! O humble sublimity! O sublime humility! that the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under a morsel of bread.”

– Saint Francis of Assisi

“No human tongue can enumerate the favors that trace back to the Sacrifice of the Mass. The sinner is reconciled with God; the just man becomes more upright; sins are wiped away; vices are uprooted; virtue and merit increase; and the devil’s schemes are frustrated.” – Saint Lawrence Justinian

“Know, O Christian, that the Mass is the holiest act of religion. You cannot do anything to glorify God more, nor profit your soul more, than by devoutly assisting at it, and assisting as often as possible.” – Saint Peter Julian Eymard

“The heavens open and multitudes of angels come to assist in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.” – Saint Gregory the Great

“How happy is that guardian angel who accompanies a soul to Holy Mass!” – Saint John Vianney

“When we receive Holy Communion, we experience something extraordinary – a joy, a fragrance, a well-being that thrills the whole body and causes it to exalt.” – Saint John Vianney

“I believe that were it not for the Holy Mass, as of this moment the world would be in the abyss.” Saint Leonard of Port Maurice

“The Holy Mass would be of greater profit if people had it offered in their lifetime, rather than having it celebrated for the relief of their souls after death.” – Pope Benedict XV

Notes

