

CATHOLIC ARMORY

It Is Finished

Why a Relationship with Jesus Has a Body

Sacraments, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Devotions That Point to Christ

A four-session inductive Bible study for the person who asks, “Why not just a relationship with Jesus?”

“When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

John 19:30, RSV2CE

Complete Leader Guide

Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition (Ignatius Press).

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Each session runs three parts: Leader Preparation Guide, Discussion Guide, Leader Reference Card. The four Take-Home sheets are a separate print run.

Using This Guide

This study answers one question, put to Catholics by people who love Jesus: why does the Catholic Church add all this extra stuff? Sacraments, a sacrifice at every Mass, standing and kneeling and incense, rosaries, scapulars, the same prayers over and over. Why not just a relationship with Jesus? The study takes the question seriously, agrees with the half of it that is true, and answers the rest from Scripture in four sessions.

It is written for Catholic young adults who need the answer for themselves and for the friends who ask them. It can be led by anyone willing to prepare. It assumes no background beyond a Bible and a willingness to read it. Groups with a non-Catholic friend at the table will find a short coaching note in every Leader Preparation Guide.

The four sessions

1. **Why Did He Use Mud?** Jesus chose physical means when a word would do. Again and again in Scripture, covenant comes with a God-given sign. The sacraments are the shape he gave the relationship.
2. **Finished, Not Gone.** The one sacrifice of the cross, finished once for all, and why it is offered at every Mass without being repeated. This is the hinge of the study.
3. **Do This.** Where the shape of the Mass came from, where the things done at Mass came from, and the three layers of the rite: what Christ instituted, the Church's received liturgical tradition, and what the Church arranges.
4. **Do Whatever He Tells You.** Repeated prayer, the Hail Mary, the rosary, the scapular and other sacramentals, and exactly what a Catholic is required to do and what is merely offered.

How each session is built

Every session has three parts. The **Leader Preparation Guide** is for you alone. It holds an overview, what you need to know, Old Testament roots, three Voices of the Church, and Catechism connections. It also holds a Thread Watch, an Objection Bench, a note for when a friend is at the table, session goals, and a timed plan with pre-chosen cuts. The **Discussion Guide** is the night itself, scripted in the win, build, send pattern. The **Leader Reference Card** lists every passage and what you need in the room.

The Discussion Guide uses four marks. **READ ALOUD** is Scripture or a text read to the group. **SAY** is your own voice. Say it in your own words if you prefer. **ASK** is a question to the room. **LEADER** is a cue only you see. Every Build question carries a one-line *Leader*: cue and a depth tag: **[Floor]** questions are for everyone, **[Ground]** questions are the core of the night, and **[Depth]** questions are for groups who want to go further. A group can run only the Floor and Ground questions and still complete the study.

Each Build question is followed by a shaded **ANSWER** box marked "share after the discussion." Let the group find the answer first. The box is there so you can confirm, fill gaps, and keep the night honest, not so you can read it to them.

The steelmen

Every session builds the strongest Protestant reading of the key text before answering it, and the answer comes from the text, not from authority. Do not soften the steelman. If a friend is at the table, let them build it. The study is only useful if the objection it answers is the real one.

Voices of the Church and the Catechism

Each session carries three Voices from the Fathers, the Doctors, the saints, or the popes, in colored boxes. Each is marked **Tier 1** or **Tier 2**. Tier 1 means the words in quotation marks are the author's own, in a standard English translation named in the note. Tier 2 means a faithful summary in our words; nothing in a Tier 2 box should be quoted as if the saint said it that way. The fidelity note under each Voice says which parts are theirs and which are ours. Catechism numbers have been checked, and where the Church has not defined something the text says so.

The sealed guess

At the end of Session 1 each person writes a short answer to one question on their Take-Home and seals it: what can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven? It opens at the start of Session 2. Do not discuss the question in between, and do not hint at the answer. The point is what people discover about their own assumptions when the sheets open.

Take-Homes

There is no participant journal. After each session, hand out that session's two-page Take-Home: what we found, the three Voices, the full Live It This Week, the memory verse, the reading for next time, and the Catechism references. Take-Home 1 carries the sealed guess box. Take-Home 3 carries the Where Did We See It sheet to bring to Mass. Take-Home 4 carries the twenty mysteries, the Required and Offered sort, and a box for the participant's own three-sentence answer to the study's question.

Time and tone

Ninety minutes per session, with a clock table and pre-chosen cuts for seventy-five. Keep the tone of a mentor, not a debater. The person who asked the question deserves an honest answer, including honesty about what is optional, what is undefined, and where the Church's own documents rank things differently than parish culture does.

Scripture and style

All Scripture is from the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition. Where a Greek or Hebrew word carries the argument it is given in italics with a plain-English gloss. Canonized saints carry the title St.

Session 1: Why Did He Use Mud?

Part 1 of 3: Leader Preparation Guide. Read this before the night. Nothing in Part 1 is read aloud.

Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. (Hebrews 10:5, RSV2CE)

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers from Scripture that Jesus chose to give grace through physical things when a word alone would have worked, and that the Bible's own word for a relationship with God is *covenant*, which again and again comes with a physical sign. By the end of the night they should be able to say: the sacraments are not the Church's additions to a relationship with Jesus. They are the shape Jesus gave it.

Catholic Touchstone

CCC 1131 defines the sacraments as efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. CCC 1115 says the mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would later give in the sacraments. Tonight is about that word *instituted*. The Church did not invent the water, the oil, the bread. She was handed them.

What You Need to Know

This study exists to answer one sentence: "Why does the Catholic Church add all this extra stuff? Why not just a relationship with Jesus?" Most of your group has heard it. Some have asked it. A few may still be asking it quietly. The study answers in four moves: tonight the sacraments, next week the sacrifice of the Mass, then the things done at Mass, then devotions and what is actually required. Session 1 has to win the room's trust, so lead it as an inquiry, not a defense.

The objection is usually sincere and often comes from someone who loves Jesus. Take it seriously. The person asking believes two things: that faith is about a personal relationship with Christ, and that physical rituals are at best optional decoration and at worst a substitute for that relationship. The first belief is completely true, and the Church says so as loudly as anyone. The second is where the conversation happens.

The night turns on a contrast the group will find for themselves. In Matthew 8 a Roman centurion tells Jesus that a word is enough, and Jesus heals his servant from a distance. In John 9 Jesus heals a blind man by spitting on the ground, making mud, smearing it on the man's eyes, and sending him to wash in a pool. Jesus did not need the mud. He had just shown he did not need it. So the mud is a choice. The whole study rests on taking that choice seriously.

Two cautions. First, do not let the night become "Catholics have sacraments, Protestants do not." Nearly every Christian baptizes with water and eats bread and drinks wine in some form. The disagreement is about what those things do, not whether they exist. Second, do not say or imply that Christians outside the Catholic Church have no relationship with Jesus. The Church affirms real grace and real holiness in other Christians (CCC 819). The claim tonight is narrower and stronger: Jesus gave his relationship with us a body, and that body includes his Church.

A word on the Greek. In John 4:24 Jesus says God is *pneuma* (spirit) and that worshipers must worship in *pneuma* and truth. Your group will meet the Protestant reading of that verse in the steelman. The key is that Scripture never equates "spiritual" with "non-physical." In Romans 12:1 Paul calls presenting your body a *logikē latreia*, which the RSV2CE renders "spiritual worship." A bodily act is spiritual worship. Hold onto that.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Dust and breath (Genesis 2:7). God forms the man from the dust of the ground and breathes into his nostrils. Creation begins with God's hands in the mud. When Jesus makes clay and puts it on a man born without sight, the earliest readers heard Genesis. St. Irenaeus reads John 9 this way, as the Word finishing in one man what he had begun in Adam (*Against Heresies* 5.15.2, a summary rather than a quotation). You do not need to press the typology, but let the group notice the echo if they find it.

Naaman and the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14). A Syrian general with leprosy is told by Elisha to wash seven times in the Jordan. He is furious. He expected a dramatic word and a wave of the hand, and he says the rivers of Damascus are better than any water in Israel. His servants ask him why he will not do the small thing. He washes and is healed. Naaman is the "why this?" objection in the Old Testament, and the answer is the same: because God said this.

The bronze serpent (Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15). The people are dying of snakebite. God commands Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it on a pole, and whoever looks at it lives. Jesus applies this directly to himself. A physical object, commanded by God, becomes the instrument of a healing that is entirely God's.

The covenant signs. Again and again, when God establishes a covenant in Scripture, he gives his people a physical sign: the rainbow (Genesis 9), circumcision (Genesis 17), the Sabbath (Exodus 31), the sprinkled blood at Sinai (Exodus 24), and finally the cup Jesus calls "the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). The group will find these in pairs during B5. The fulfillment is not that signs end. It is that the sign becomes the Lord himself.

Voices of the Church

Pope Benedict XVI *Encyclical Deus Caritas Est, 1 (2005)*

"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."

Tier 1. Quoted verbatim from the Vatican's official English text. Lead with this. It tells the group the Church agrees with the "relationship" half of the objection before anything else is said.

St. Leo the Great *Sermon 74 (On the Ascension II), 2, mid-fifth century*

St. Leo, preaching on the Ascension, tells his people that what was visible in our Redeemer has now passed over into the sacraments. Christ did not leave the physical world when he left their sight. He kept touching it through the rites he left behind.

Tier 2. A faithful summary of a single famous sentence. English renderings of the Latin vary in wording, so it is given here in substance rather than as a quotation.

St. Augustine of Hippo *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 80.3, on John 15:3*

Commenting on Jesus's words "you are already made clean by the word," St. Augustine asks why baptism needs water at all, if the word cleanses. His answer: the word is joined to the element, and the result is a sacrament. Take away the word and the water is only water. Add the word and it becomes a visible word.

Tier 2. Summary of the passage. The phrase "visible word" and the formula about the word and the element are Augustine's; the surrounding explanation is ours.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1131:** the sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. Every word of that definition matters tonight, especially *instituted by Christ*.

- **CCC 1115-1116:** the mysteries of Christ's life are the foundation of what he gives in the sacraments; the sacraments are powers that come forth from the Body of Christ. Use this alongside Mark 5:30, where power goes out from him at a touch.
- **CCC 515:** everything in Jesus's earthly life, his words, his gestures, his healings, was a sign of the mystery within him. His humanity is the sacrament of his divinity.
- **CCC 774-776:** the Church herself is a sacrament, the visible sign and instrument of union with God. This is the doctrinal home of Acts 9:4 (B7).
- **CCC 1084:** Christ is now acting through the sacraments he instituted. They are his actions, not merely the Church's.
- **CCC 1127-1128:** the sacraments act *ex opere operato*, by the fact of the action being performed, because it is Christ who acts. This is the answer to "sacraments are works" on the Objection Bench. Add the nuance the Catechism adds in the same breath: *ex opere operato* does not mean mechanically. Christ truly acts in the sacrament, while its fruit in us depends on our disposition. Sessions 3 and 4 will need that sentence.
- **CCC 819:** many elements of sanctification and truth exist outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church. Read this before the night so you can say it without hesitation if a friend needs to hear it.

Thread Watch (leader only)

Threads planted tonight

- **The matter thread.** Every session finds God using a physical thing: tonight mud, water, oil, bread, cup. Next session an altar and a Lamb. Session 3 the furniture of heaven. Session 4 cloth and beads. Do not name the thread. Let them notice by Session 3 that it never stops.
- **The empty-versus-commanded thread.** In Session 3 the group will read Isaiah 1:11-15, where God says he is sick of sacrifices he himself commanded. It resolves in Session 4 at Matthew 6:7. Tonight, plant nothing except one line in your own notes: God condemns empty or hypocritical ritual, not ritual simply because it is ritual. If someone raises Isaiah 1 or Amos 5 tonight, say “write that down, Session 3 is built for it.”
- **The centurion.** Matthew 8:8 (“only say the word”) returns in Session 3 as the line every Catholic says before Communion. Do not point this out tonight. It lands harder when they find it.
- **The sealed guess.** Tonight ends with each person writing and sealing an answer to “What can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven?” on Take-Home 1. It opens next session. Give no hints about the answer, and do not discuss it after they write.

Objection Bench (leader only)

Likely objections and where the text answers them

“Sacraments are works. Salvation is by faith alone.” The sacraments are God’s works, not ours (CCC 1127-1128). Baptism is something done to you, not by you. The blind man did not make the mud. Faith is how we receive the gift; it is not a rival to the gift. And the sacraments do not work mechanically: Christ truly acts, while the fruit in us depends on our disposition (CCC 1128).

“Jesus used mud once. That is not a pattern.” Matthew 8 shows the alternative was available to him. Mark 7:33 (fingers in the ears, spittle on the tongue), Mark 8:23 (spittle on the eyes), and John 20:22 (breathing on the apostles) show the pattern. And the sacraments themselves are the pattern: water (Matthew 28:19; John 3:5), oil (James 5:14), bread and cup (Luke 22:19-20), hands (Acts 8:17; 2 Timothy 1:6).

“There is one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). The Church puts things between me and Jesus.” The sacraments are Christ’s own actions (CCC 1084). A mediator uses instruments without ceasing to be the one mediator. Jesus told his disciples, “He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16), and Paul calls himself an ambassador through whom God makes his appeal (2 Corinthians 5:20).

“The word sacrament is not in the Bible.” Neither is the word Trinity. The Greek *mystērion* in Ephesians 5:32 was rendered *sacramentum* in the Latin Bible, and the realities (water, oil, bread, laying on of hands, forgiveness of sins) are all in the text.

“God is spirit, so worship is spiritual, not physical.” This is the steelman in B4. The short answer is Romans 12:1: a bodily offering is called spiritual worship by Paul himself.

If a Friend Is at the Table

If a non-Catholic Christian is joining you, say so at the start and thank them. Let them answer W1 first; they will describe the relationship better than the room, and that description is the starting point, not the target.

Do not try to win the B4 steelman. Your friend may state the “spirit and truth” reading better than the study does. Give them the press questions as real questions and let the text do the work. Do not require assent to move on.

Remember what your friend already believes: that God became flesh, that he was baptized with real water, that he ate real bread with his disciples. Session 1 asks nothing a Baptist does not already hold. It only asks what those things mean.

Session Goals

1. The group affirms, in their own words, that the Christian life is a relationship with a person (Benedict XVI; John 17:3).

2. The group discovers that Jesus healed with a word in Matthew 8 and chose mud in John 9, and names the mud as a choice.
3. The group finds that several major biblical covenants carry God-given physical signs and that the sign is part of the relationship, not an addition to it.
4. The group sees that the sacraments are commanded by Jesus and the apostles in the text (Matthew 28:19; John 3:5; James 5:14; John 20:23).
5. The group meets Acts 9:4 and can say why “just me and Jesus” leaves out something Jesus refuses to leave out: his Body.
6. Each participant writes and seals a guess on Take-Home 1.

Time Note

Ninety minutes as written. The clock below is generous on Build because B4 and B5 are where the night is won. If you must run 75 minutes, make these cuts in this order: (1) in B3, read only Mark 5:25-34 and skip the second passage; (2) skip the Dig Deeper; (3) ask only Send question S2. Do not cut the sealed guess.

Segment	Minutes	Running total
Opening prayer and welcome	5	0:05
Win (W1, W2)	12	0:17
Build B1-B2 (word versus mud)	10	0:27
Build B3 (touch discovery)	8	0:35
Build B4 (Incarnation and the steelman)	14	0:49
Build B5 (covenant signs, pairs)	12	1:01
Build B6-B7 (commanded sacraments; the Body)	12	1:13
Send (S1, S2)	8	1:21
Live It, memory verse, sealed guess, closing	9	1:30

Discussion Guide

Part 2 of 3. Marks: READ ALOUD is Scripture or a text read to the group; SAY is your voice; ASK is a question to the room; LEADER is a cue only you see. Depth tags: [Floor] everyone answers, [Ground] the core of the night, [Depth] for groups that want more.

Opening Prayer

SAY Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you touched a leper, you put your fingers in a deaf man's ears, you made mud for a blind man's eyes. You did not have to. Tonight we want to understand why you did. Open our eyes as you opened his. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Win

LEADER *Open questions. No answer boxes. Let people talk. Do not correct anything in Win.*

W1 When someone says they have “a personal relationship with Jesus,” what do you picture them actually doing on a Tuesday?

Leader: *Push for concrete pictures: reading, praying, talking to him in the car, worship music. Write the list on a board if you have one. You will come back to it in Session 4.*

W2 Has anyone ever asked you why Catholics do all this stuff? What did you say, and how did it go?

Leader: *Let the room admit where they had no answer. That admission is why they are here.*

Build

SAY Here is the sentence this whole study is built to answer: “Why does the Catholic Church add all this extra stuff? Why not just a relationship with Jesus?” We are going to start by agreeing with half of it. Listen to this.

READ ALOUD Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

SAY That is the Catholic Church speaking. It is a relationship with a person. Nobody in this room will ever argue with that. Our question is a different one: what shape did Jesus give that relationship? So let us watch him work.

B1 Read Matthew 8:5-13. What does the centurion ask Jesus *not* to do? Does it work? [Floor]

Leader: *Get the exact words of verse 8 out loud. You will need them again in two sessions.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The centurion asks Jesus not to come to his house. “Only say the word, and my servant will be healed.” It works: the servant is healed at that very moment (v. 13), at a distance, with no touch and no object. Jesus praises the man's faith. So the group has established something important before we go any further: for Jesus, a word is enough.

B2 Now read John 9:1-7. Make a list of everything Jesus does with his mouth and his hands before the man can see. [Floor]

Leader: Count the steps on your fingers with the group. Then ask the question that matters: did he need any of it?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He spits on the ground. He makes clay from the spittle. He anoints the man's eyes with the clay. He sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam. Four physical actions and a walk across town, for a man who could have been healed by a sentence. John even translates the pool's name for us: "Sent."

Put B1 and B2 side by side. The same Jesus who healed at a distance with a word chose spit, mud, and water for this man. The mud was not necessary. It was chosen. That choice is the question of the night and, in a sense, of the whole study.

B3 Read Mark 5:25-34 and Mark 1:40-42. In each passage, find the exact moment healing happens. What is the person in contact with at that moment? [Ground]

Leader: This is a discovery. Let them hunt. Read Mark 5:30 slowly if they miss it.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

In Mark 5 the woman is healed the instant she touches his garment (v. 29). Jesus feels "that power had gone forth from him" (v. 30) and refuses to let the touch stay anonymous: "Who touched my garments?" In Mark 1 Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the leper, a man nobody touched, and the leprosy leaves him at the touch (vv. 41-42).

Physical contact is the point of transfer, and Jesus wants it named. Notice that in Mark 5 the power passes through cloth. That will matter in Session 4.

SAY Let us ask why. Not "why did God allow physical things," but why he deliberately chose physical means. Look at the one verse that explains it.

B4 Read John 1:14. What did the Word become? What would you expect a purely spiritual God to become, if he came at all? [Ground]

Leader: One-word answer first: flesh. Then let the discussion open. Read the Hebrews 10:5 line to the group if it helps.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The Word became flesh. *Sarx*, in Greek: meat, skin, a body that gets hungry and can be spat on. A purely spiritual God might be expected to send a message, a vision, an idea. He sent a body. Hebrews 10:5 puts the words in Christ's own mouth: "a body have you prepared for me."

This is the answer to "why mud." In the Incarnation, God chose to meet us bodily, in the Word made flesh. The sacraments are not a step down from that choice. Christ continues to use visible signs, and they are the same choice, continued.

Steelman: "God is spirit"

LEADER Build the other side at full strength before you press. Do not skip this or soften it. If a friend is present, let them build it.

SAY Now let me give you the best case against everything we just said, because a thoughtful Protestant has one, and it comes from the same Gospel.

READ ALOUD John 4:21-24. Then say: Here is the argument. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the hour is coming when worship will not be tied to any mountain or temple. God is spirit, so real worship is in spirit and truth: interior, invisible, a matter of the heart. Sacred places, sacred objects, sacred rituals belonged to the old covenant. Later in this same Gospel Jesus says, "it is the spirit that

gives life, the flesh is of no avail” (John 6:63). On this reading, a sacrament can at most symbolize what faith has already received. The water does not do anything. The bread does not do anything. Jesus does, directly, in the heart. Adding physical requirements is a step backwards toward the temple.

ASK Is that a fair statement of the objection? What is strongest about it?

LEADER *Let them affirm what is true in it. God is spirit. Worship must be interior. Then press with these three questions, in order.*

B4a Press 1. Read John 4:22. Does Jesus say the physical worship of Israel was wrong? [Ground]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

No. “Salvation is from the Jews.” He says the Samaritans worship what they do not know, and the Jews worship what they do know. The coming change is not from physical to non-physical. It is from a place to a person. He says this to a woman beside a well, about living water. He is on his way to giving bread, and he has just told Nicodemus that a person must be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

B4b Press 2. In this same Gospel, list the physical things Jesus uses or commands after chapter 4. [Ground]

Leader: *They have most of these already. Mud (9:6). Bread (6:53). Breath (20:22). Water (3:5). Feet washed with water (13:5).*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

If “spirit and truth” meant “no physical means,” John contradicts himself within five chapters. He does not. The Evangelist who recorded “God is spirit” also recorded the mud.

B4c Press 3. Read Romans 12:1. What does Paul tell us to present, and what does he call that act? [Ground]

Leader: *Read it twice. The word “spiritual” is the whole point.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice... which is your spiritual worship.” Paul calls a bodily act spiritual worship. God himself is pure spirit (CCC 370); that is not in question. But when Scripture calls an act “spiritual,” it means belonging to the Spirit, done in the Spirit, not “without a body.” A sacrament received in faith is worship in spirit and truth. The steelman’s hidden step, that spiritual equals immaterial, is the one step the Bible never takes.

SAY Now the word “relationship.” It is a good word, but it is not a Bible word. The Bible has a better one, and it comes with something attached.

- B5** Live discovery in pairs. Each pair takes one passage: Genesis 9:12-13; Genesis 17:10-11; Exodus 31:16-17; Exodus 24:6-8; Luke 22:19-20. Find (a) the relationship God is making and (b) the physical sign he attaches to it. Report back. [Ground]

Leader: Five pairs, five passages. Write the signs on a board as they report: rainbow, circumcision, Sabbath, blood, cup. Then ask: is any of these signs optional?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Genesis 9: the covenant with every living creature; the sign is the rainbow. Genesis 17: the covenant with Abraham and his descendants; the sign is circumcision, and God says the uncircumcised man has broken the covenant (v. 14). Exodus 31: the Sabbath is “a sign for ever” between God and Israel. Exodus 24: the blood thrown on the people is “the blood of the covenant.” Luke 22: the cup is “the new covenant in my blood.”

Scripture’s word for a relationship with God is *covenant*. Again and again the covenant comes with a sign, the sign is given by God, and the sign is not decoration. It is how the relationship is entered and kept. When Jesus wanted to make the new covenant, he did not describe it. He handed his friends a cup.

- B6** Read Matthew 28:19, John 3:5, James 5:14-15, and John 20:22-23. In each, who is commanding the physical action, and what is it? [Ground]

Leader: The point is the source. Ask after each one: whose idea was this?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Jesus commands baptism with water in the name of the Trinity. Jesus says a person must be born of water and the Spirit. James, an apostle, commands the elders to anoint the sick with oil and promises forgiveness of sins. Jesus breathes on the apostles and gives them authority to forgive and retain sins. Water, oil, breath, hands, forgiveness spoken by men: none of it is the Church’s idea. She was told to do it.

This is the sentence to say plainly: the Catholic Church did not add the sacraments to a relationship with Jesus. Jesus added them, and the Church obeyed.

- B7** Read Acts 9:1-5. Saul is arresting Christians. Whom does Jesus say Saul is persecuting? [Depth]

Leader: Let the answer sit for a second: “me.” Then read 1 Corinthians 12:27 and ask what Paul learned from it.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Jesus does not say “my followers.” He identifies himself with the people Saul is hunting. Paul will spend his life teaching what he learned on that road: “you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

So “just me and Jesus” is not what Jesus offers. He offers himself, and he comes with a Body. You cannot have a relationship with the Head and refuse the Body, because he refuses to be separated from it. This is not a claim that other Christians have no relationship with Christ; the Church affirms real grace and holiness outside her visible bounds (CCC 819). It is a claim about the shape of what Jesus gives. It has a body, and the body has hands, and the hands hold water, oil, and bread.

Dig Deeper: where the word “sacrament” comes from

Ephesians 5:31-32 says of marriage, “This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” The Greek word is *mystērion*. When the Bible was translated into Latin, that word became *sacramentum*, a word Romans used for a soldier’s binding oath. So a sacrament is a mystery of Christ, sworn into a physical sign. The Church did not coin a new idea; she named one Paul had already written down.

CCC 515 goes one step further back: Christ’s own humanity is the sacrament of his divinity. Every touch in the Gospels was already a sacrament in that sense. The seven sacraments are those touches continued.

Send

- S1** Which is harder for you personally: believing that God works through physical things, or explaining it to someone who does not? Why?
- S2** If the mud was not necessary but was chosen, what does that tell you about how Jesus wants to be met?

Live It This Week

- At Mass this week, pick five physical things you notice, such as water, bread, wine, hands, a book, or a candle. For each one, ask silently: why this?
- Read John 9 aloud, slowly, once, by yourself. Stop at verse 7 and stay there for a minute.
- Before next session read Hebrews 7:23-28; 9:11-14, 23-28; and 10:1-18. Do not try to resolve anything. Just read.
- Fill in and seal your Take-Home 1 guess tonight before you leave.

The Sealed Guess

LEADER *Hand out Take-Home 1 now. Read the instruction below, give three minutes of silence, collect the sealed sheets or have people keep them. They open next week. Do not discuss the question.*

SAY On your Take-Home there is a box with one question: What can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven? Write your honest answer, one or two sentences, in your own words. Then fold it and seal it. We will open it next time. Nobody sees it until then, including me.

Memory Verse

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:14, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus, Word made flesh, you chose to meet us in water and oil and bread because you first chose to meet us in a body. Teach us to expect you where you promised to be. Keep us close to your Body, the Church, and make us honest with the friends who ask us why. Amen.

Answers at a Glance

Q	The one-line answer
B1	A word is enough; the servant is healed at a distance.
B2	Spit, clay, anointing, a pool. Four physical acts, none necessary, all chosen.
B3	Healing happens at the touch; Jesus insists the touch be named.
B4	The Word became flesh. In the Incarnation God chose to meet us bodily, and the sacraments continue that choice.
B4a-c	Salvation is from the Jews; John records mud and bread after “spirit”; Paul calls a bodily offering spiritual worship.
B5	The major covenants each come with a God-given physical sign; the last one is a cup.
B6	Water, oil, breath, forgiveness: commanded by Jesus and the apostles, not invented by the Church.
B7	“Why do you persecute me?” Christ will not be separated from his Body.

Leader Reference Card

Part 3 of 3. Every passage used tonight, in order, plus what you need in the room.

Materials: Bibles (RSV2CE preferred), Take-Home 1 for each person, pens, envelopes or tape for the sealed guess, a board or large paper for the covenant-sign list.

Where	Passage	Use
Epigraph	Hebrews 10:5	A body prepared
Win	John 17:3 (optional)	Eternal life is knowing a person
B1	Matthew 8:5-13	Only say the word
B2	John 9:1-7	Spit, clay, Siloam
B3	Mark 5:25-34; Mark 1:40-42	Healing at the touch
B4	John 1:14; Hebrews 10:5	The Word became flesh
Steelman	John 4:21-24; John 6:63	God is spirit
B4a	John 4:22	Salvation is from the Jews
B4b	John 3:5; 6:53; 9:6; 13:5; 20:22	Physical means after chapter 4
B4c	Romans 12:1	Bodies as spiritual worship
B5	Genesis 9:12-13; 17:10-14; Exodus 31:16-17; 24:6-8; Luke 22:19-20	Covenant signs
B6	Matthew 28:19; John 3:5; James 5:14-15; John 20:22-23	Sacraments commanded
B7	Acts 9:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:27	Christ and his Body
Dig Deeper	Ephesians 5:31-32	Mysterion, sacramentum
Prep only	Genesis 2:7; 2 Kings 5:1-14; Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15; Mark 7:33; 8:23; Luke 10:16; 2 Corinthians 5:20	Roots and Objection Bench
Memory	John 1:14	
Next week	Hebrews 7:23-28; 9:11-14, 23-28; 10:1-18	Pre-reading

Catechism: 1131; 1115-1116; 515; 774-776; 1084; 1127-1128; 819.

Voices: Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 1 (Tier 1); St. Leo the Great, Sermon 74.2 (Tier 2); St. Augustine, Tractates on John 80.3 (Tier 2).

Session 2: Finished, Not Gone

Part 1 of 3: Leader Preparation Guide. Read this before the night. Nothing in Part 1 is read aloud. This is the hinge session of the study; prepare it more carefully than the others.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain. (Revelation 5:6, RSV2CE)

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers from Hebrews and Revelation that Christ's one sacrifice is finished and yet never absent, because the Priest who offered it lives forever and the memorial he instituted makes it present. They then find in Paul and Peter that the members of Christ's Body really do offer through him, and see that the Church names the Eucharist as the supreme expression of that participation. By the end they should be able to say what the Mass is in one sentence and why "once for all" and "at every Mass" are not in conflict.

Catholic Touchstone

CCC 1367: the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice; the victim is the same, and the manner of offering alone is different. CCC 1085: the Paschal mystery cannot remain only in the past, because it participates in divine eternity and so is made present in every liturgy. CCC 1368: the Church, the Body of Christ, participates in the offering of her Head, and with him she offers herself.

What You Need to Know

The sealed guess opens tonight. Last week each person wrote an answer to "What can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven?" Expect three kinds of answers: "nothing," "be good and go to church," and "Jesus." The reveal is that the Catholic answer begins with the same word the Protestant answer does: nothing. Nothing of our own. Only Jesus and his one sacrifice. If you say that clearly and early, everything else in the night can be heard. One guardrail for you, not for the room: "nothing of our own" does not deny Christian merit or cooperation with grace. The Church teaches that the justified can merit growth in grace and eternal life, but only because Christ's grace acts first in us, which is why the Catechism can call our merits God's gifts (CCC 2008-2011). The sealed answer is about what we bring to the door: nothing of our own.

Here is the answer in the form the group should leave with. Nothing of our own. Only Jesus, and his one sacrifice on the cross, finished once for all. He is a priest forever, so he presents that sacrifice to the Father without end. At every Mass the Church, his Body, is given to offer that same sacrifice with him, and its saving power is applied to our sins. And in him, we offer ourselves.

Notice what that answer does not say. It does not say the Mass adds anything to Calvary. It does not say the Mass repeats Calvary. It does not say the Mass adds anything to Christ's merit or earns salvation independently of Calvary. The Council of Trent said the same: in the Mass the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the cross is offered in an unbloody manner, and the fruits of that one offering are received through this one (Session XXII, chapters 1-2). The word is *applied*, not *added*. Keep that distinction in your mouth all night.

The whole disagreement turns on one word: *finished*. Both sides confess John 19:30 and Hebrews 10:14. The Protestant hears "finished" as "done and in the past." The Catholic hears it as "complete, and therefore never absent." The group will find the difference in the text. Hebrews does not portray the enthroned Christ as a retired priest: he is minister of the sanctuary and, as high priest, has something to

offer (8:1-3), holds his priesthood permanently, and always lives to make intercession (7:24-25). Revelation 5:6 shows a Lamb standing as though slain, not a Lamb who was once slain and has recovered. The wounds are still there in John 20:27. Finished is not the same as gone.

The second disagreement is narrower than most Catholics think, and the steelman must reflect it. A serious Reformed Christian agrees that Christ presents his finished work before the Father in heaven right now. What he denies is that the Church on earth has any part in that offering; he calls that claim presumption. The Catholic claim is exactly that participation. The Body offers with its Head. Do not let the group caricature the other side as “they think Jesus is done and sitting around.” They do not. They think we cannot join him. Scripture says the members of Christ’s Body really do offer through him (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15). The Church then identifies the Eucharist as the supreme sacramental expression of that participation (CCC 1368). Keep those two steps distinct in the room: the first is exegesis, the second is Catholic doctrine drawing on it.

The Greek and Hebrew you need. *Tetelestai* (John 19:30) is a perfect tense: a completed action whose result continues into the present. *Tamid* (Exodus 29:42) means “continual” and names the daily lamb offered morning and evening in the temple. *Anamnēsis* (Luke 22:19) means memorial, and Jesus uses it in the Passover setting of the Last Supper, and in biblical liturgical memorial God’s saving acts are not merely recalled; they become in a certain way present and real to the worshiping community (CCC 1363). *Koinōnia* (1 Corinthians 10:16) is participation, a real sharing in.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The continual offering (Exodus 29:38-42; Numbers 28:3-8). Two lambs a day, morning and evening, every day, forever: the *tamid*. Israel’s worship was not occasional. A lamb was always burning before the LORD. The group will read Exodus 29 in B4 and notice the words “day by day continually” and “throughout your generations.”

The pure offering among the nations (Malachi 1:6-14). Malachi condemns the priests for offering blind and lame animals, and God says he will not accept an offering from their hand (v. 10). Then he promises something that did not yet exist: from the rising of the sun to its setting, in every place, among the Gentiles, a pure offering (v. 11). When Malachi wrote, sacrifice was legal in one place, Jerusalem, for one people. From the second century on, Christians read verse 11 as the Eucharist: everywhere, all day, among the nations, pure. Notice for the empty-versus-commanded thread that the same chapter rejects a polluted offering and promises a pure one. God’s answer to empty ritual is not no ritual. It is a pure offering.

Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4). A priest-king of Salem brings out bread and wine and blesses Abram. Psalm 110 promises a priest “for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” and Hebrews applies it to Christ at length. The Fathers noticed that Melchizedek’s offering was bread and wine (St. Cyprian, Letter 63). The Church has not defined that typology, but it is very old. Keep it in the Dig Deeper.

The Passover memorial (Exodus 12:14; 13:8; Deuteronomy 5:3; 16:3). “This day shall be for you a memorial day.” Every Israelite is to say “what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt,” and Deuteronomy insists the covenant was made “with us, who are all of us here alive this day,” not only with the fathers. A biblical memorial collapses the distance between the event and the people keeping it. Jesus chose that night, and that word, for “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho*, 41, c. AD 155-160

Arguing with a Jewish scholar, St. Justin says the prophecy of Malachi 1:10-12 was spoken about the sacrifices Christians offer in every place: the bread and the cup of the Eucharist, offered in remembrance of the suffering Christ endured. The old offerings of flour, he says, were a figure of this bread.

Tier 2. A faithful summary of the chapter; the pairing of Malachi 1:11 with the Eucharist is Justin's own. Wording of English translations varies, so it is given in substance.

St. Cyprian of Carthage *Letter 63 (to Caecilius)*, 17, c. AD 253 (Epistle 62 in the ANF numbering)

Writing to correct communities that were using water alone in the cup, St. Cyprian insists the priest does what Christ did and offers what Christ offered. The passion of the Lord, he says, is the sacrifice we offer. The Mass is not the Church's invention laid over the Lord's Supper; it is the Lord's Supper obeyed.

Tier 2. Summary. The sentence that the Lord's passion is the sacrifice we offer is Cyprian's; the framing around it is ours.

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Hebrews*, 17, on Hebrews 9:24-26, late fourth century

Preaching on the very verses the steelman uses, St. John asks the objection out loud: do we not offer every day? We do, he answers, but as a remembrance of his death, and the offering is one, not many. We do not offer another sacrifice as the old high priest did, but always the same one. Or rather, he says, we perform the remembrance of the one sacrifice.

Tier 2. Summary of the passage, following its argument closely. St. John's answer to Hebrews 10 is the Church's answer, given sixteen centuries before Trent.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1085:** the Paschal mystery cannot remain only in the past; because Christ's death destroyed death, all that he is and did participates in divine eternity and so transcends all times, and is made present in them.
- **CCC 1362-1367:** the Eucharist as memorial (*anamnēsis*) in the biblical sense, and as sacrifice because it re-presents the sacrifice of the cross. CCC 1367 quotes Trent: one single sacrifice, the same victim, the manner of offering alone differing.
- **CCC 1368-1369:** the Church offers with Christ and offers herself; the whole Church, in heaven and on earth, is united in this offering.
- **CCC 1544-1545:** Christ's priesthood is unique and eternal; the ministerial priesthood makes his one priesthood present without adding to it.
- **CCC 662:** Christ's entry into the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest is permanent; the liturgy of the Church shares in it.
- **CCC 2100:** the only perfect sacrifice is the one Christ offered on the cross; our sacrifices are acceptable when united to it.
- **Council of Trent, Session XXII, chapters 1-2 (1562):** the Mass is a true sacrifice, instituted at the Supper, in which the same Christ is offered in an unbloody manner and the fruits of the bloody offering are received. Chapter 2 says explicitly that this sacrifice in no way detracts from the sacrifice of the cross.

Thread Watch (leader only)

Threads tonight

- **The sealed guess resolves.** Open it at the top of Build, before any Scripture. Sort the answers into three piles on a board: Nothing / Something I do / Jesus. Do not comment on any pile until the end of the night.
- **The matter thread continues:** bread, cup, altar, a Lamb with wounds. Still do not name it.
- **The continual thread is planted:** the *tamid* (B4) leads to the Lamb standing as though slain and lands next session at the altar in Revelation and the altar in your parish.
- **Empty versus commanded develops** through Malachi 1: God rejects the polluted offering (v. 10) and promises the pure one (v. 11). Point at both verses in B4 but do not connect them yet to Isaiah 1 or Matthew 6; that is Sessions 3 and 4.
- **The centurion** stays hidden until Session 3.

Objection Bench (leader only)

Likely objections and where the text answers them

“Hebrews 10:18 says there is no longer any offering for sin.” Read the sentence before it. Verse 11 says the Levitical priests stand daily offering sacrifices “which can never take away sins.” Verse 18 ends that kind of offering. It does not retire the Priest: Hebrews 8:1-3 still calls him minister of the sanctuary with something to offer, and 7:24-25 says he holds his priesthood permanently. The Mass is not another offering for sin. It is the one offering, made present in the memorial he instituted.

“Christ sat down (Hebrews 10:12). Catholic priests stand.” Sitting is the posture of a king enthroned, not of a priest retired. Hebrews 8:2 calls the seated Christ “a minister in the sanctuary” in the present tense (*leitourgos*, the word behind “liturgy”), and Revelation 5:6 shows him standing. The priest at Mass stands in the person of the Priest who is still ministering.

“Remembrance just means remembering.” In Torah a memorial is sacrificial language: Leviticus 24:7 (the memorial portion of the bread), Numbers 10:10 (“over your sacrifices... a reminder before your God”), Exodus 12:14. Passover is not a history lesson; every generation must regard itself as having come out of Egypt (Mishnah *Pesahim* 10:5, a rabbinic tradition, not Scripture). Jesus chose that word on that night.

“The Mass is a work we do to earn heaven.” The Mass is Christ’s work into which we are drawn. Nothing we do earns first grace (CCC 2006-2011). This is why the night begins with the word “nothing.”

“If it is the same sacrifice, why call it propitiatory and offer it for sins? That is adding.” Trent’s own words: the fruits of the bloody offering are received most abundantly through the unbloody one. Applied, not added. A doctor applying a cure already discovered is not discovering it again.

“Revelation 5:6 is symbolic.” Granted; it is a vision. But the symbol is chosen: a slain Lamb standing. Ask what the symbol would have to mean for a reader who held that the slaying was simply over.

If a Friend Is at the Table

This is the session your friend came for, and they may know Hebrews better than the room. Let them build the steelman. They will do it well. Do not counter-punch. The press questions are real questions. Concede everything that is true: once for all, no repetition, finished. Say out loud that Trent teaches those things. The only disagreement is whether the Church joins the offering, and you should name it as the only disagreement.

If your friend wrote “nothing” on the sealed sheet, honor it. Say that the Catholic answer begins with the same word. If they wrote “Jesus,” say that is the Catholic answer too. The sealed guess is not a trap; it is a mirror.

Your friend may say, “You are Catholic, you cannot really believe once for all.” Answer from CCC 1367 and Trent chapter 2, and hand them the Take-Home so they can see it printed.

Session Goals

1. The sealed guess is opened and sorted, and the group hears the Catholic answer begin with “nothing of our own.”
2. The group finds in Hebrews that the sacrifice is once for all, and affirms that the Church teaches exactly that.
3. The group builds and presses the strongest Protestant reading of Hebrews 10 and finds Hebrews 8:3, 7:25, and Revelation 5:6 for themselves.
4. The group discovers the *tamid* in Exodus 29 and the pure offering among the nations in Malachi 1, and sees the early Church read Malachi as the Eucharist.
5. The group learns what a Passover memorial is and why Jesus chose that word.
6. The group finds that Paul and Peter command the Church to offer, through Christ, and connects this to the words of the Mass.
7. Each person can say the one-sentence answer: one sacrifice, one eternal Priest, never repeated, sacramentally made present in the memorial he instituted.

Time Note

Ninety minutes, and it is full. Do not add anything. If you must run 75 minutes, cut in this order: (1) skip B6 (1 Corinthians 10) and mention only Hebrews 13:10 in passing; (2) skip the Dig Deeper; (3) ask only Send question S2. Never cut the sealed guess opening or the steelman press.

Segment	Minutes	Running total
Opening prayer and welcome	4	0:04
Win (W1, W2)	8	0:12
Sealed guess opens and is sorted	8	0:20
Build B1-B2 (finished; once for all)	10	0:30
Steelman and press (B2a-c)	16	0:46
Build B3 (where is Jesus now)	6	0:52
Build B4-B5 (the continual offering; the memorial)	14	1:06
Build B6-B7 (participation; offered with)	12	1:18
The answer; Send (S1, S2)	7	1:25
Live It, memory verse, closing	5	1:30

Discussion Guide

Part 2 of 3. Marks: READ ALOUD, SAY, ASK, LEADER. Depth tags: [Floor], [Ground], [Depth].

Opening Prayer

SAY Let us pray. Father, your Son said “It is finished,” and we believe him. Tonight we want to understand what he finished, and where he is now, and what he is doing. Give us honest minds and open hands. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

W1 Think of the moment at Mass when the priest lifts the host. What have you been told is happening? What do you actually think is happening?

Leader: *Let the honest gap show. Many will admit they were told “the sacrifice” and never understood what that meant.*

W2 Have you ever heard someone say Catholics “re-sacrifice Jesus” at every Mass? What did you feel, and did you have anything to say back?

The Sealed Guess Opens

LEADER *Have everyone unseal their Take-Home 1 guess. Go around the table. Each person reads theirs aloud. Sort every answer onto the board under three headings: Nothing / Something I do / Jesus. Do not comment. When all are sorted, say the following.*

SAY Here is what a thoughtful Protestant would write: nothing. Only Jesus and his finished work on the cross. Here is the Catholic answer: nothing of our own. Only Jesus, and his one sacrifice, finished once for all. We are going to spend tonight on why those two answers start with the same word and where they part. Hold your pile in your head. We will come back to it.

Build

B1 Read John 19:28-30. What does Jesus say, and what does “finished” mean in this sentence? [Floor]

Leader: *Draw out that he says “it is finished,” not “I am finished.” Something was completed.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“It is finished.” The Greek is *tetelestai*: brought to completion, accomplished, the goal reached. Jesus is announcing that the work he came to do is done. The Catholic Church says amen to that with no reservation. Whatever the Mass is, it is not Jesus finishing something he left unfinished.

One grammar note worth giving the group, with its limits. *Tetelestai* means accomplished, completed. Its perfect tense presents the work as completed with an abiding result. That is all the Greek says, and it is enough: the sacrifice is finished once for all. Whether the finished sacrifice is also present now is a question the Greek tense cannot answer. Hebrews can, and that is where we go next.

B2 Read Hebrews 9:24-28 and 10:10-14. Count how many times the text says “once” or “once for all.” What is Hebrews denying? [Floor]

Leader: Have them count out loud. Then ask: does the Catholic Church agree with this?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

At least five times across the two passages: once for all at the end of the age (9:26), once to bear sins (9:28), once for all through the offering of his body (10:10), a single sacrifice for sins (10:12), a single offering (10:14). Hebrews is denying repetition. The old priests offered daily and could never take away sins; Christ offered once and did.

The Catholic Church teaches exactly this. CCC 1367 calls the cross and the Eucharist “one single sacrifice.” The Council of Trent said the Mass in no way detracts from the cross. If anyone tells you the Mass sacrifices Jesus again, they are describing something the Church condemns.

Steelman: “It is finished”

LEADER Full strength. This is the best case against the Mass that Protestant theology has, and it is a serious one. If a friend is present, let them build it. Do not press until the room agrees it has been stated fairly.

SAY Here is the objection at its strongest, in the words of the people who made it.

READ ALOUD Hebrews 10:11-14 and 10:18. Then read this from the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles (Article 31, 1571): “the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.”

SAY The argument runs like this. Hebrews draws one contrast: the old priests stood, every day, offering the same sacrifices over and over, and it never worked. Christ offered once, and sat down. Sitting means finished. Verse 18 closes the door: where sins are forgiven, there is no longer any offering for sin. Now look at a Catholic parish. A priest stands at an altar, every day, offering what he calls a sacrifice for sins, over and over. That is the exact picture Hebrews contrasts with Christ. And a Passover memorial is a meal that remembers; nobody in Egypt thought the Passover lamb was slain again each year. So the Mass either does nothing, in which case why call it a sacrifice, or it adds something to a finished work, in which case it insults the cross. Either way, “It is finished” should end the discussion.

ASK Is that fair? Is there anything in it that is simply true?

LEADER Let them say yes. Once for all is true. No repetition is true. Finished is true. Then press.

B2a Press 1. Read Hebrews 8:1-3. Where is the High Priest, what posture is he in, and what does verse 3 say is necessary for him? [Ground]

Leader: Verse 3 is the whole press. Read it slowly, twice.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He is seated at the right hand of the throne in heaven (v. 1), and he is a minister, *leitourgos*, in the sanctuary (v. 2), present tense. And verse 3: “it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.” Hebrews does not portray the enthroned Christ as a retired priest. He remains the heavenly High Priest and minister of the sanctuary, and the logic of verse 3 is that a high priest has something to offer; what Christ offered, once, was himself (7:27; 9:14). The sitting is the posture of a king enthroned, not a priest who has clocked out. Do not make this verse carry more than that; the next two presses finish the argument.

B2b Press 2. Read Hebrews 7:23-25. What is the difference between the old priests and Christ, and what is he doing right now? [Ground]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The old priests were many because death kept ending their service. Christ holds his priesthood permanently, “because he continues for ever,” and “always lives to make intercession.” A priest is someone who offers. A priest who has stopped offering is a former priest. Hebrews says he is a priest forever. So the offering is not repeated; it is never over.

B2c Press 3. Read Revelation 5:6 and John 20:27. In heaven, right now, what does the Lamb look like? [Ground]

Leader: *Let them notice the tense. Standing. As though slain. Now.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain. Not a Lamb who was slain once and has since healed. In John 20 the risen Jesus still has the wounds and invites Thomas to touch them. The slaying is finished, and it is permanently present. That is what “finished” means for a sacrifice offered by an eternal Priest: complete, and never absent.

Now the group can say where the steelman went wrong. It read “finished” as “gone.” Hebrews and Revelation read it as “complete and standing.” The Mass does not repeat the sacrifice. It is where the sacrifice that never went anywhere is made present to people who were not standing at the cross.

B3 Live discovery. In one minute, find as many verses as you can that answer: where is Jesus right now, and what is he doing? Start in Hebrews 7-9 and Romans 8. [Ground]

Leader: *Expect Hebrews 7:25, 8:1-2, 9:24 (“now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf”), Romans 8:34, Revelation 5:6.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He is in the heavenly sanctuary, appearing before the Father on our behalf, interceding, standing as a Lamb slain. He is not idle, and he is not finished being a priest. Everything the Mass claims to be starts from this: the Priest is still at work, and his work is the one sacrifice.

SAY Now go back a long way, to the tent in the desert, and watch what Israel’s worship was always supposed to look like.

B4 Read Exodus 29:38-42. How often was this lamb offered, and for how long? Then read Malachi 1:10-11. What is different about the offering Malachi describes? [Ground]

Leader: *Get the words “day by day continually” and “throughout your generations” out loud. Then for Malachi, ask: where, when, and among whom?*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Two lambs a day, morning and evening, “day by day continually,” “throughout your generations,” a “continual burnt offering.” The Hebrew word is *tamid*. Israel never had an hour without a lamb before the LORD. Then Malachi: God rejects the priests’ polluted offerings (v. 10) and promises something that did not exist when he wrote. A pure offering, in every place, from sunrise to sunset, among the nations. Sacrifice was only legal in Jerusalem, only for Israel. Malachi describes a continual, worldwide, Gentile, pure offering.

By AD 155 St. Justin Martyr was telling a Jewish scholar that Malachi 1:11 was about the bread and cup Christians offered everywhere. The Didache, a Christian manual from around AD 100, quotes the same verse about the Sunday Eucharist. The *tamid* was not abolished. It was fulfilled: one Lamb, offered once, made present continually, from the rising of the sun to its setting.

- B5** Read Luke 22:19-20, then Exodus 12:14, Exodus 13:8, and Deuteronomy 5:2-3. What kind of “remembering” is Passover? [Ground]

Leader: *The Deuteronomy verse is the surprise. The people Moses is addressing were mostly not alive at Sinai.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Jesus says “Do this in remembrance of me” on Passover night, using Passover language. And a Passover memorial is not nostalgia. Exodus 12 calls the day itself a memorial to be kept for ever. Exodus 13 has every father say “what the LORD did for me,” not for my ancestors. Deuteronomy 5 has Moses tell a generation born in the desert that the covenant was made “with us, who are all of us here alive this day.” A biblical memorial brings the people into the event.

So when Jesus, a Jew, on Passover, says “do this in remembrance,” he is instituting a memorial in that sense. Not “think about me.” Make the memorial, and be present to what I am doing. CCC 1363-1364 says exactly this.

- B6** Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-21. What does Paul compare the Eucharist to, and what does he call the Eucharistic table? [Depth]

Leader: *Note the three tables: Israel’s altar (v. 18), the table of demons (v. 21), the table of the Lord (v. 21).*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Paul calls the cup and the bread a participation, *koinōnia*, in the blood and body of Christ. Then he sets the Eucharist beside two other things: Israel eating the sacrifices from the altar, and pagans eating at the table of demons. The Eucharist is in the category of sacrificial meals. And “the table of the Lord” is Malachi’s phrase for the altar (Malachi 1:7, 12). Hebrews 13:10 says it flatly: “We have an altar.” Sacrifice language for the Eucharist is Paul’s, not Trent’s.

- SAY** One more step, and it is the one that answers our sealed question. We agree the sacrifice is Christ’s alone. So what are we doing there?

- B7** Read Romans 12:1, 1 Peter 2:5, and Hebrews 13:15-16. In each verse, who is told to offer, what do they offer, and how is it made acceptable? [Depth]

Leader: *Three verses, three commands to offer, three times “through him.” Write the pattern on the board.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Paul: present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Peter: be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Hebrews: through him let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise. Scripture says the members of Christ’s Body really do offer, and it names the only way the offering is accepted: through him. That is the first step, and it is exegesis. The second step is the Church’s: she identifies the Eucharist as the supreme sacramental expression of that participation (CCC 1368).

Now listen to the Mass. “Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God.” And the Eucharistic Prayer: we offer you this holy and living sacrifice. The Church does not add her sacrifice to Christ’s. She is taken into his. St. Augustine said the Church learns to offer herself through him (*City of God* 10.6, quoted at CCC 1368). This is the whole difference between the two piles on the board. The Protestant says: I receive, and offer nothing. Scripture says: offer, through him. The Catholic says: only Jesus, and in him, myself.

Dig Deeper: bread and wine, and a continual offering taken away

Melchizedek. Genesis 14:18 has the priest-king of Salem bring out bread and wine. Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 5-7 make him the pattern of Christ's priesthood. Many Fathers, St. Cyprian among them, read Melchizedek's bread and wine as a figure of the Eucharist. The Church honors this reading (CCC 1333) without defining it.

Daniel. Daniel 8:11-13, 11:31, and 12:11 speak of the "continual burnt offering" (the *tamid*) being taken away in a time of persecution. Historically this refers to Antiochus IV stopping temple sacrifice in 167 BC (1 Maccabees 1:45-54). Some Catholic writers read it also as a figure of the Mass being suppressed in the last days. The Church has not taught that; treat it as a possibility, not a doctrine. What the text certainly shows is that Israel understood the loss of the continual offering as the worst thing that could happen. The Church understands the Mass the same way.

The Answer

SAY Back to the board. Here is the answer we can now say together, and every clause of it came out of the text tonight. Nothing of our own. Only Jesus, and his one sacrifice on the cross, finished once for all. He is a priest forever, so he presents that sacrifice to the Father without end. At every Mass the Church, his Body, is given to offer that same sacrifice with him, and its saving power is applied to our sins. And in him, we offer ourselves.

B8 If a friend says "the Mass re-sacrifices Jesus," what one sentence from tonight would you say back?
[Floor]

Leader: *Let several people try. Then give them the short form.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

One sacrifice, one eternal Priest, never repeated, sacramentally made present in the memorial he instituted. Or shorter still: finished, not gone.

Send

S1 Which pile was your sealed guess in? What would you write now?

S2 Romans 12:1 tells you to offer your body. What is one thing in your life this week that you could put on the altar at Mass, on purpose, in him?

Live It This Week

- Go to one weekday Mass if you can. At the elevation, say silently: "It is finished," and then: "He always lives."
- At the words "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours," name the thing from S2 and offer it.
- Write one sentence you would say to a friend who thinks the Mass re-sacrifices Jesus. Bring it next week.
- Before next session read Luke 24:13-35, Acts 2:42-47, Isaiah 6:1-8, and Revelation 4-5.

Memory Verse

Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus, Lamb standing as though slain, you finished the work and you have never left it. Priest forever, take our small offerings into your one offering. Let us never stand at your altar carelessly again. Amen.

Answers at a Glance

Q	The one-line answer
B1	Tetelestai: complete, and standing. Not “over.”
B2	Once for all, five times. The Church teaches exactly this (CCC 1367).
B2a	The seated Priest is a minister now and still has something to offer (Heb 8:3).
B2b	He holds his priesthood permanently and always lives to intercede.
B2c	A Lamb standing as though slain; wounds still there. Finished, not gone.
B3	In the sanctuary, appearing for us, interceding, standing as slain.
B4	The tamid: day by day continually. Malachi: a pure offering everywhere, among the nations.
B5	A Passover memorial makes the people present to the event.
B6	Participation; the table of the Lord is altar language; “we have an altar.”
B7	Offer your bodies, spiritual sacrifices, praise: through him. The Church offers with Christ and herself in him.
B8	One sacrifice, one eternal Priest, never repeated, sacramentally made present in the memorial he instituted.

Leader Reference Card

Part 3 of 3. Every passage used tonight, in order, plus what you need in the room.

Materials: Bibles, the sealed Take-Home 1 sheets from last week, a board with three headings (Nothing / Something I do / Jesus), Take-Home 2 for each person.

Where	Passage	Use
Epigraph	Revelation 5:6	A Lamb standing as though slain
B1	John 19:28-30	It is finished
B2	Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:10-14	Once for all
Steelman	Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Thirty-Nine Articles, Art. 31	The strongest case
B2a	Hebrews 8:1-3	Something to offer
B2b	Hebrews 7:23-25	Priest for ever
B2c	Revelation 5:6; John 20:27	Standing as slain; the wounds
B3	Hebrews 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:24; Romans 8:34	Where is Jesus now
B4	Exodus 29:38-42; Malachi 1:10-11	The continual offering; the pure offering
B5	Luke 22:19-20; Exodus 12:14; 13:8; Deuteronomy 5:2-3	Memorial
B6	1 Corinthians 10:16-21; Malachi 1:7, 12; Hebrews 13:10	Participation; altar
B7	Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15-16	Offer, through him
Dig Deeper	Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Daniel 8:11-13; 12:11; 1 Maccabees 1:45-54	Melchizedek; the tamid taken away
Prep only	Numbers 28:3-8; Malachi 1:6-14; Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 24:7; Numbers 10:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:14	Roots and Objection Bench
Memory	Hebrews 7:25	
Next week	Luke 24:13-35; Acts 2:42-47; Isaiah 6:1-8; Revelation 4-5	Pre-reading

Catechism: 1085; 1362-1367; 1368-1369; 1544-1545; 662; 2100; 2006-2011. Trent, Session XXII, chapters 1-2.

Voices: St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 41 (Tier 2); St. Cyprian, Letter 63.17 (Tier 2); St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews 17 (Tier 2). Non-saint sources read aloud: Thirty-Nine Articles, Art. 31 (Tier 1); Didache 14 (summary).

Session 3: Do This

Part 1 of 3: Leader Preparation Guide. Read this before the night. Nothing in Part 1 is read aloud.

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:35, RSV2CE)

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers the two-part shape of the Mass in the Emmaus story and in Acts, sees that same shape described by a Christian writing in AD 155, and then finds the furniture of the Mass in the throne room of heaven. Along the way they meet the strongest form of the “traditions of men” objection and learn to sort what Jesus instituted, what belongs to the Church’s received liturgical tradition, and what the Church arranges. By the end they should be able to walk into Mass and say where nearly everything came from.

Catholic Touchstone

CCC 1346-1347: the Mass has kept the same fundamental structure through the centuries, two great parts forming one act of worship, the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, the very pattern of the Emmaus meal. CCC 1090: in the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy. CCC 1125: no sacramental rite may be modified at the will of the minister or the community; the liturgy belongs to the whole Church.

What You Need to Know

Session 1 answered “why sacraments.” Session 2 answered “why a sacrifice.” Tonight answers the more ordinary version of the objection: why all the *stuff* at Mass. Standing, kneeling, incense, vestments, candles, the same words every week, bells. The objector is not usually angry about it. He is puzzled, and a little suspicious that it is empty.

The night has three discoveries. First, the shape of the Mass is in Luke 24: Jesus opens the Scriptures, then takes bread, blesses, breaks, and gives. Word, then bread. Acts 2:42 confirms the same shape. Second, the basic shape of the Mass is already clearly recognizable by AD 155, when St. Justin Martyr described a Sunday gathering to the Roman emperor; the Catechism says the basic lines he attests have remained to this day (CCC 1345), and much else (prayers, ceremonial, calendar) kept developing. Third, the things at Mass that look most “added” have striking biblical parallels in Israel’s worship and in the heavenly worship of Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4-5: the altar, the incense, the white robes, the elders, the Lamb, “Holy, holy, holy.” The Church teaches something stronger than resemblance: the earthly liturgy participates in the heavenly liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8). The Mass did not come from Catholics reading Revelation and duplicating its furniture. Christian worship grew up inside the biblical world of Israel’s worship, and it shares sacramentally in the worship Revelation unveils.

The steelman tonight is the “traditions of men” argument from Mark 7, reinforced by Isaiah 1 and Amos 5, where God says he hates the very sacrifices he commanded. Build it at full strength. Then let the group find that Jesus condemned a tradition that was used to break a commandment (the *corban* vow), not ritual as such; that the prophets attacked ritual without justice, not ritual; and that Paul commands traditions in 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15. The objection, pressed, proves too much: if commanded ritual were dead formalism, Leviticus would be dead formalism and Jesus, who kept the feasts, would have been a formalist.

The most important honesty of the night is the wall in B7, and it has three layers, not two. First, what Christ instituted as the sacramental sign itself: water for baptism, bread and wine and his own words

for the Eucharist. No one can change these. Second, the constitutive elements of the Church's received liturgical tradition, which are not the sacramental matter but without which it is not the Mass: the basic structure of Word and Eucharist (CCC 1346), the proclamation of Scripture, the Eucharistic Prayer, Communion. These belong to the whole Church, and no parish may drop them. Do not claim each item was dictated by the apostles; claim what CCC 1345 claims, that the basic lines Justin attests have remained until today. Third, disciplines and ceremonial forms the Church arranged and can change: vestment colors, the language, bells, which day gets which readings, whether there is incense. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 says the liturgy has a divine element that cannot be changed and elements subject to change, and CCC 1205 says the same. Say this plainly. The lesson inside the lesson is that "the Church cannot change this on a whim" does not mean "Jesus personally specified every detail." The person who asked "why all this stuff" deserves to know which stuff is which, and Session 4 depends on the wall being clear.

A small planted payoff arrives in B5. The centurion's words from Session 1, "only say the word," are the words every Catholic says before Communion. Let the group find it. Do not announce it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The pattern shown on the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5). Moses is told to make the tabernacle "after the pattern" he was shown on Sinai. Hebrews says the earthly sanctuary is a copy and shadow of the heavenly one. Israel's worship was never Israel's idea. It was a copy of something God showed. The Mass makes a related claim: not that it was copied from Revelation 4-5, but that it participates in the worship Revelation shows.

Vestments, incense, lamps, bread (Exodus 28:2; 30:7-8; 27:20-21; 25:30). God commanded holy garments "for glory and for beauty," perpetual incense morning and evening, a lamp kept burning always, and the bread of the Presence set before him continually. Every one of these is in a Catholic church. None of them is a pagan import. Israel had them first, by command.

The seraphim and the coal (Isaiah 6:1-8). Isaiah sees the LORD enthroned, hears "Holy, holy, holy," confesses that he is a man of unclean lips, and has a burning coal from the altar touched to his mouth: "your guilt is taken away." Then he is sent. Isaiah's vision contains a remarkable pattern Catholics meet at Mass: acknowledgment of sin, the Sanctus, an altar, something from the altar touching the lips, and finally a sending. The Mass is not built in that order (the Liturgy of the Word sits between the penitential rite and the Sanctus), so present this as a pattern echoed, not a blueprint.

Ezra's liturgy (Nehemiah 8:1-8). Ezra opens the book, and all the people stand. He blesses the LORD, the people answer "Amen, Amen" with hands lifted, they bow with faces to the ground, and the Levites give the sense of the reading. Standing for the Word, Amen, bowing, and a homily are all older than the Church.

The prophets against empty worship (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Hosea 6:6). These are the steelman's texts, so read them carefully in prep. God says he is fed up with sacrifices, new moons, and solemn assemblies, every one of which he had commanded in Leviticus. Then he tells them what he wants: cease to do evil, seek justice, defend the fatherless. And the same prophets end with worship restored (Isaiah 2:2-3; Amos 9:11; Malachi 1:11). The problem was never the ritual. It was the ritual without the heart.

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr *First Apology, 67, addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, c. AD 155*

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.” St. Justin goes on: when the reader has finished, the presider instructs and exhorts; all rise and pray; bread and wine and water are brought; the presider offers prayers and thanksgivings, and the people say Amen; the gifts are distributed, and the deacons carry them to those who are absent; the wealthy give what they choose for the orphans and widows.

Tier 1. The opening sentence is quoted verbatim from the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation (Roberts and Donaldson). The rest of the paragraph is our summary of chapters 65-67. Other translations word the opening sentence slightly differently.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem *Mystagogical Catecheses, 5, on the liturgy, c. AD 350*

Explaining the Mass to the newly baptized, St. Cyril walks through the rite step by step: the washing of the priest's hands, the kiss of peace, “Lift up your hearts,” the thanksgiving, the singing of “Holy, holy, holy” with the seraphim, the calling down of the Holy Spirit on the gifts, the prayers for the living and the dead, the Our Father, and “Holy things for the holy.” A fourth-century catechumen was taught the same order a Catholic follows today.

Tier 2. Summary of the catechesis. The Mystagogical Catecheses are attributed either to St. Cyril or to his successor John of Jerusalem. Either way they describe the Jerusalem liturgy of the fourth century.

St. Ignatius of Antioch *Letter to the Ephesians, 20, c. AD 107*

On his way to martyrdom in Rome, St. Ignatius urges the Ephesians to gather often in one faith and in Jesus Christ, obedient to the bishop, breaking the one bread, which he calls the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death. For the first generation after the apostles, the gathered Eucharist was not one option among many. It was the medicine.

Tier 2. Summary. The phrase “medicine of immortality” is Ignatius's and is rendered the same way in nearly every translation. The surrounding sentence is ours.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1345:** quotes St. Justin's First Apology 65-67 in full as the earliest description of the Mass.
- **CCC 1346-1347:** the two-part structure of the Mass, unchanged in its fundamentals, and its origin in the Emmaus meal.
- **CCC 1348-1355:** the movement of the celebration, part by part.
- **CCC 1090 and 1137-1139:** the earthly liturgy shares in the heavenly liturgy of Revelation 4-5; the Church joins the angels and saints in the one worship.
- **CCC 1125:** no one may change the liturgy on his own authority; it is not private property.
- **CCC 1205-1206:** in the liturgy there is an immutable part, divinely instituted, and parts that can and sometimes must change.
- **CCC 2177-2178:** the Sunday Eucharist as the heart of the Church's life; the obligation to attend.
- **_Sacrosanctum Concilium_ 7, 8, 21:** Christ is present in the liturgy in several ways; the earthly liturgy is a foretaste of the heavenly; the divine element cannot be changed and the human elements may be.

Thread Watch (leader only)

Threads tonight

- **The centurion lands.** In B5 the group reads Isaiah 6 and then hears “Lord, I am not worthy.” Ask where they have heard the second half of that line before. Let someone find Matthew 8:8 from Session 1. Say nothing until they do.
- **The continual thread lands.** The *tamid* from last week meets the altar in Revelation 6:9 and 8:3 and the altar in your parish. Name it now for the first time: the Lamb offered once is before the Father continually, and the Mass is where the earth joins that.
- **Empty versus commanded develops.** Isaiah 1 and Amos 5 enter tonight in the steelman. The group should leave with the rule: God condemns empty or hypocritical ritual, not ritual simply because it is ritual. It resolves next week at Matthew 6:7 with repeated prayer.
- **The matter thread** may get named by the group tonight without help. If someone says “it is always something physical,” agree, and ask them to keep count next week.
- **The wall (B7)** is the setup for Session 4. The third layer, what the Church arranges and can change, is the doorway to devotions, which sit even further out: not part of the rite at all.

Objection Bench (leader only)

Likely objections and where the text answers them

“The early Christians met in homes with no ritual.” Acts 2:42 has them devoted to “the prayers,” with the definite article: fixed prayers. 1 Corinthians 11 describes an ordered supper with rules. St. Justin in AD 155 describes a fixed order. Meeting in a house is not the same as having no rite; the Passover was celebrated in a house.

“Vestments and incense are pagan borrowings.” Exodus 28 (vestments), Exodus 30:7-8 (incense), Psalm 141:2 (“let my prayer be counted as incense”), Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4. Israel had every one of these by God’s command before the Church existed.

“We are all priests (1 Peter 2:9); there should be no separate priesthood.” True, and Israel was also “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6) while having Levitical priests. The common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood coexist (CCC 1546-1547). Paul describes his own work as “priestly service of the gospel” (Romans 15:16), and the apostles appoint elders in every church (Acts 14:23).

“Jesus said the traditions of men are worthless.” He condemned a tradition used to void a commandment (Mark 7:9-13). Paul commands traditions (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15). The word is not the problem; the content is.

“God said he hates our feasts.” He said it about feasts he commanded, to people who were also oppressing the poor. Read Isaiah 1:16-17 right after 1:11-15. He did not tell them to stop the feasts. He told them to stop the evil.

“Why does it have to be the same every week?” Because it is not ours. CCC 1125. A liturgy that changed with the presider’s mood would be his, not the Church’s. Also: Revelation 4:8, “day and night they never cease.”

If a Friend Is at the Table

This is the least combative session and often the most surprising for a Protestant friend. Most evangelical services have more of Revelation 4 in them than they realize: a hymn called “Holy, Holy, Holy,” readings, a collection, a blessing, standing for the Word. Invite your friend to do the Where Did We See It exercise with their own church’s service in mind. Do not use Revelation 4-5 to claim the Mass is the only worship God accepts.

Let your friend build the Mark 7 steelman. They will do it well and will likely add Isaiah 1 themselves. Make sure the group concedes the true part: ritual can go dead, and has.

Session Goals

1. The group finds the Word-then-bread shape of the Mass in Luke 24 and Acts 2:42.
2. The group hears St. Justin’s AD 155 description and lists the parallels to their own parish.

3. The group finds the furniture of the Mass in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4-5 and 8.
4. The group discovers the centurion's words before Communion.
5. The group builds and presses the "traditions of men" steelman and states the rule: God condemns empty ritual, not commanded ritual.
6. The group sorts the Mass into three layers (Christ instituted; the Church's received liturgical tradition; the Church arranges) and can say which is which.
7. The group completes Where Did We See It and takes it to Mass.

Time Note

Ninety minutes as written. The Where Did We See It exercise (B8) is the most fun part of the night and is also on the Take-Home, so it is the first cut. For 75 minutes: (1) do B8 as a two-minute skim and send them home with the sheet; (2) in B4 hunt for only five items; (3) ask only Send question S1.

Segment	Minutes	Running total
Opening prayer and welcome	4	0:04
Win (W1, W2)	10	0:14
Build B1-B2 (Emmaus; Acts 2:42)	12	0:26
Build B3 (St. Justin, AD 155)	8	0:34
Build B4-B5 (the furniture of heaven; Isaiah 6)	14	0:48
Steelman and press (B6, B6a-c)	16	1:04
Build B7 (the wall)	8	1:12
Build B8 (Where Did We See It)	8	1:20
Send, Live It, memory verse, closing	10	1:30

Discussion Guide

Part 2 of 3. Marks: READ ALOUD, SAY, ASK, LEADER. Depth tags: [Floor], [Ground], [Depth].

Opening Prayer

SAY Let us pray. Lord Jesus, on the road to Emmaus you opened the Scriptures and then you broke the bread, and they knew you. Open the Scriptures for us tonight, and let us know you where you promised to be. Amen.

Win

W1 Read your sentence from last week, the one for the friend who thinks the Mass re-sacrifices Jesus. Does anyone want to trade?

Leader: *Two minutes. This is review and it builds confidence.*

W2 What is one thing done at Mass that you have never understood and always assumed was just “Church stuff”?

Leader: *Write the list on the board. You will cross things off it during the night.*

Build

SAY Last week we found out what the Mass is. Tonight we find out where its shape came from, and where all the stuff came from. Start on the afternoon of the Resurrection, on a road.

B1 Read Luke 24:13-35. Two disciples are walking to Emmaus. List, in order, everything Jesus does from the moment he joins them to the moment he vanishes. [Floor]

Leader: *Keep them in order. The order is the discovery. Note that Luke names only Cleopas. The second disciple is unnamed.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He walks with them. He asks what they are discussing. He listens to their grief. He rebukes them gently and then, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets,” interprets the Scriptures about himself. At table he takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. Their eyes are opened. He vanishes. They say their hearts burned while he opened the Scriptures, and they tell the apostles “how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

Two movements. First the Scriptures are opened. Then bread is taken, blessed, broken, given. Word, then bread. That is the Mass: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Luke tells this story on Easter Sunday afternoon, and the four verbs at the table (took, blessed, broke, gave) are the four verbs of the Last Supper. CCC 1347 says this is the very pattern of the Eucharist.

B2 Read Acts 2:42. What four things did the first Christians devote themselves to? Which two match Emmaus? [Floor]

Leader: *Draw attention to the little word “the” before “prayers.”*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Teaching is the Word; breaking of bread is the Eucharist. Fellowship (*koinōnia*) and “the prayers,” with the definite article, meaning fixed prayers at set times. Acts 20:7 adds the day: “on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread.” Sunday, Word, bread, fixed prayers. Within weeks of Pentecost the shape is set.

SAY Now jump about 120 years, to a Christian philosopher in Rome writing an open letter to the emperor to explain what Christians do on Sunday, because rumors were spreading. Listen for your parish.

B3 Listen to St. Justin Martyr, writing around AD 155. As you listen, write down every element you recognize from Mass. [Ground]

Leader: Read the Voice 1 box aloud, slowly. Then collect the list.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Sunday. Everyone gathers in one place. Readings from the apostles (the Gospels and letters) and the prophets. A homily from the presider. Standing to pray. Bread, wine, and water brought forward. Prayers and thanksgiving by the presider (the Eucharistic Prayer). The people answer "Amen." Distribution of the gifts. Deacons carry Communion to the absent. A collection for the orphans and widows. Justin also says in chapter 66 that this food is called Eucharist and is not received as common bread.

That is the Mass, described by a man who was born about the time the last apostle died. The Church did not slowly pile things on. The order was there at the start and has stayed. CCC 1345 quotes this whole passage.

SAY So the basic Word-and-Eucharist shape reaches back into the Church's earliest life. What about the stuff? Altars, incense, robes, candles, kneeling, the same words every week. Let us look at the worship Scripture shows us in heaven and see why Catholic worship can feel surprisingly familiar.

B4 Live discovery. Read Revelation 4:1-11, 5:6-14, and 8:3-4. Hunt for everything that is also in a Catholic church or a Catholic Mass. Shout them out. [Ground]

Leader: Expect: a throne, twenty-four elders in white robes (*presbyteroi*, "elders," the term from which the English word "priest" historically developed; do not present them as proof of ministerial priests), lamps, "Holy, holy, holy," falling down to worship, a Lamb standing as though slain, incense that is the prayers of the saints, a scroll opened, "Amen," an altar (8:3; also 6:9), a new song. Add 19:9 (the marriage supper of the Lamb) and 19:1 ("Hallelujah") if they are quick.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Heaven has all the stuff. Elders in white robes. Lamps burning. "Holy, holy, holy" sung day and night without ceasing. Worshipers falling down. A Lamb, slain, standing at the center. Incense rising with the prayers of the saints. A book opened and read. An altar. Amen. Hallelujah. A wedding feast of the Lamb.

The Mass did not add these things to Christian worship. The Mass participates in the worship of heaven, which is why Revelation's imagery feels so familiar; the worship going on right now before the throne is the worship the Church joins. Hebrews 8:5 says the earthly sanctuary was built "according to the pattern" shown on the mountain. Hebrews 12:22-24 says that when we worship, we have come to Mount Zion, to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to Jesus and his sprinkled blood. The altar in your parish is where last week's Lamb, standing as slain, is joined by the earth. CCC 1090 and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8 call the Mass a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy.

B5 Read Isaiah 6:1-8. What do the seraphim say? What happens to Isaiah's mouth, and what does the angel say it does? Now: what does every Catholic say just before Communion, and where have you heard the second half of that line? [Ground]

Leader: Give them the first two answers, then ask the third and wait. Someone will remember the centurion.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts": the Sanctus, sung at every Mass. Isaiah cries that he is a man of unclean lips. A seraph takes a burning coal from the altar, touches it to his mouth, and says, "your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven." Something from the altar, touched to the lips, taking away sin. Then, "Here am I! Send me."

And before Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." Those are the centurion's words from Matthew 8:8, the man from our first session who said a word was enough. The Church put his sentence in the mouth of every Catholic at the moment the Word made flesh comes to their roof. The one who trusted the word receives the Body.

Steelman: "Traditions of men"

LEADER Full strength. If a friend is present, let them build it, and let them add Isaiah 1 and Amos 5 themselves.

SAY Here is the objection at its strongest, and it comes from Jesus's own mouth.

READ ALOUD Mark 7:1-13. Then Isaiah 1:11-15 and Amos 5:21-24.

SAY The argument goes like this. The Pharisees had a mountain of ritual: washings, rules, traditions handed down, all of it sincere. Jesus called it the tradition of men and said they had left the commandment of God. Isaiah and Amos say God hates the feasts, the offerings, the assemblies; he will not listen to their prayers. Why? Because ritual crowds out the heart. It becomes a substitute for justice and for a real relationship. The Reformers looked at medieval Catholic worship and saw exactly this: an elaborate system of gestures and objects that had become the religion itself. So they stripped the altars and kept the Word. Every layer of ritual is one more place for the heart to hide. Simpler is safer.

ASK Is that fair? What is true in it?

LEADER Let them concede that ritual can go dead and often has, including in Catholic parishes. Then press.

B6a Press 1. Read Mark 7:9-13 again. What exactly is the tradition Jesus condemns, and what did it do? [Ground]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The *corban* vow: a man could declare his property dedicated to God and thereby refuse to support his parents, breaking the commandment to honor father and mother. Jesus condemns a tradition that was being used to cancel a commandment of God. He does not condemn ritual. He kept the feasts (John 7:10) and went to synagogue "as his custom was" (Luke 4:16). He sang the Passover hymn (Mark 14:26) and wore the tassels the law required (Matthew 9:20, "the fringe of his garment"). He told a healed leper to go make the offering Moses commanded (Mark 1:44).

B6b Press 2. Read Isaiah 1:16-17 and Amos 5:24, the verses right after the ones we read. What does God tell them to do instead? Does he tell them to stop the sacrifices? [Ground]

Leader: Also ask: who commanded those sacrifices in the first place?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression.” “Let justice roll down like waters.” He does not say stop the feasts. He says stop the evil you bring to them. And the sacrifices he says he hates are the ones he commanded in Leviticus. So the prophets cannot be attacking ritual as such, or they would be attacking God. They attack ritual with an empty heart. The same books end with worship restored: Isaiah 2:2-3, Amos 9:11, and last week’s Malachi 1:11, a pure offering. God’s answer to empty ritual was never no ritual. It was a full one.

B6c Press 3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15. What does Paul say about traditions? [Ground]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.” “Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.” Paul commands traditions, including unwritten ones, and 1 Corinthians 11:23 shows what one of them is: the Eucharist, which he “received” and “delivered.” Tradition is not the enemy. Traditions that cancel God’s commands are.

Here is the rule the group can now state: God condemns empty or hypocritical ritual, not ritual simply because it is ritual. The objection, pushed to the end, proves too much. If commanded ritual were dead formalism, then Leviticus was dead formalism, the seraphim are formalists, and Jesus was one too.

SAY Now the honest part. Not everything at Mass is the same kind of thing, and a person who asks “why all this stuff” deserves to know which stuff is which.

B7 Sort these into three columns: “Christ instituted as the sign itself,” “constitutive parts of the Church’s received liturgical tradition,” and “the Church arranged and can change.” Bread and wine. The words “This is my body.” Reading Scripture aloud. The Eucharistic Prayer. Communion. The color of the vestments. Latin or English. Bells at the consecration. Incense. Kneeling for the consecration. Which readings fall on which Sunday. Baptism with water. The collection. [Depth]

Leader: Let them argue. The middle column is the one they will not expect. Then give the principle from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 and CCC 1205.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Christ instituted as the sign itself: water for baptism, bread and wine, and the words “This is my body.” These are the sacraments’ own matter and form, and nobody can change them. **Constitutive elements of the Church’s received liturgical tradition:** the basic shape of Word and Eucharist (Luke 24; Acts 2:42; CCC 1346), the proclamation of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13), the Eucharistic Prayer, and Communion. Christ did not dictate a lectionary or the wording of a Eucharistic Prayer, but the basic lines Justin describes in AD 155 have remained to this day (CCC 1345), and no parish may drop them. **The Church arranged and can change:** vestment color, language, bells, incense, posture rules, which readings fall where, how the collection is taken. Paul told the Corinthians to set money aside on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2), so even the collection has an apostolic root, but its form is the Church’s.

The Second Vatican Council said the liturgy has a divine element that cannot be changed and human elements that can and sometimes must (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21; CCC 1205-1206). And CCC 1125: no priest, no parish, no committee may change the rite on their own authority, because it belongs to the whole Church. That is why it is the same every week. It is not ours. Keep this wall in mind. Notice that “the Church cannot change it” does not always mean “Jesus specified it.” Next week we go past the third column altogether, to things that are not part of the rite and are optional.

B8 Where Did We See It. Match each thing done at Mass to its Scripture. Work in pairs. The sheet is on your Take-Home. [Floor]

Leader: Answers are in the key below. Do as many as time allows. The rest are homework.

ANSWER KEY FOR B8 (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

At Mass	Where it comes from
"The Lord be with you"	Ruth 2:4; Luke 1:28
"Lord, have mercy" (Kyrie)	Matthew 20:30-31; Luke 18:13
"Glory to God in the highest" (Gloria)	Luke 2:14
Standing for the Gospel	Nehemiah 8:5
The homily	Nehemiah 8:8; Luke 4:16-21
"Lift up your hearts"	Lamentations 3:41
"Holy, holy, holy" (Sanctus)	Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8
Kneeling	Luke 22:41; Philippians 2:10
"This is my body"	Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24
"Behold the Lamb of God"	John 1:29; Revelation 19:9
"Lord, I am not worthy"	Matthew 8:8
The sign of peace	Romans 16:16; John 20:19
Incense	Psalms 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4
Candles and lamps	Exodus 27:20-21; Revelation 4:5
Vestments	Exodus 28:2; Revelation 4:4
The altar	Hebrews 13:10; Revelation 6:9
The sign of the cross	Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 7:3
Holy water	Numbers 8:7; Ezekiel 36:25
"Amen"	1 Corinthians 14:16; Revelation 5:14
The collection	1 Corinthians 16:2
"Go forth" (the dismissal)	Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 28:19

Dig Deeper: why he vanished

Many readers of Luke 24 have noticed that Jesus disappears at the exact moment the bread is broken and their eyes are opened. One old reading says he vanished because he was now present to them another way, in the bread in their hands. The Church has not defined this reading, and Luke does not say it. But it is worth sitting with: the two disciples, who had walked with him for miles, tell the apostles that they knew him "in the breaking of the bread," not in the walk.

Send

S1 Look at the board from W2. Which "Church stuff" turned out to be Scripture? How will you stand there differently on Sunday?

S2 What is the difference between a ritual done with the heart and one done without it? What makes the difference in you, on a Sunday when you do not feel like being there?

Live It This Week

- Take the Where Did We See It sheet to Mass. Check things off as they happen. Finish the ones we did not get to.
- Genuflect on purpose once this week, slowly, thinking of Revelation 5:14.
- Say the centurion's line before Communion knowing whose line it is.
- Before next session read Matthew 6:5-15, Luke 1:26-45, and Numbers 15:37-41.

Memory Verse

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:35, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Thank you for letting the earth join in. Make our worship full, not empty. Send us out as you sent Isaiah. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Answers at a Glance

Q	The one-line answer
B1	Scriptures opened, then bread taken, blessed, broken, given. Word, then bread.
B2	Teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, the prayers. Sunday (Acts 20:7).
B3	AD 155: Sunday, readings, homily, standing, bread and wine, thanksgiving, Amen, distribution, collection.
B4	Heaven has the altar, incense, white robes, elders, lamps, Sanctus, the Lamb, Amen. The Mass participates in the worship of heaven.
B5	Sanctus; coal from the altar to the lips; the centurion's words before Communion.
B6a-c	Corban, not ritual; stop the evil, not the feasts; Paul commands traditions. Empty or hypocritical ritual condemned, not ritual as such.
B7	Three layers: water, bread, wine, the words (Christ); Word and Eucharist, Scripture, Eucharistic Prayer, Communion (received liturgical tradition); colors, language, bells, lectionary (arranged, changeable).
B8	See the table.

Leader Reference Card

Part 3 of 3. Every passage used tonight, in order, plus what you need in the room.

Materials: Bibles, a board for the W2 list and the B7 columns, Take-Home 3 for each person (it carries the Where Did We See It sheet), the Voice 1 box to read aloud in B3.

Where	Passage	Use
Epigraph	Luke 24:35	Known in the breaking of the bread
B1	Luke 24:13-35	Emmaus: Word then bread
B2	Acts 2:42; 20:7	Four devotions; Sunday
B3	St. Justin, First Apology 65-67	The Mass in AD 155
B4	Revelation 4:1-11; 5:6-14; 8:3-4; 6:9; 19:1, 9; Hebrews 8:5; 12:22-24	The furniture of heaven
B5	Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 8:8	Sanctus, coal, the centurion
Steelman	Mark 7:1-13; Isaiah 1:11-15; Amos 5:21-24	Traditions of men; hated feasts
B6a	Mark 7:9-13; John 7:10; Luke 4:16; Mark 14:26; Matthew 9:20; Mark 1:44	Corban; Jesus kept the rites
B6b	Isaiah 1:16-17; Amos 5:24; Isaiah 2:2-3; Amos 9:11; Malachi 1:11	Stop the evil; worship restored
B6c	1 Corinthians 11:2, 23; 2 Thessalonians 2:15	Paul commands traditions
B7	Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Corinthians 16:2	The wall, three layers
B8	See the Where Did We See It table	Matching
Prep only	Exodus 25:9, 30, 40; 27:20-21; 28:2; 30:7-8; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Hosea 6:6; Exodus 19:6; Romans 15:16; Acts 14:23; Psalm 141:2	Roots and Objection Bench
Memory	Luke 24:35	
Next week	Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 1:26-45; Numbers 15:37-41	Pre-reading

Catechism: 1345; 1346-1347; 1348-1355; 1090; 1137-1139; 1125; 1205-1206; 2177-2178; 1546-1547. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, 8, 21.

Voices: St. Justin Martyr, First Apology 67 (Tier 1, opening sentence; remainder summary); St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogical Catecheses 5 (Tier 2, authorship note); St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ephesians 20 (Tier 2).

Session 4: Do Whatever He Tells You

Part 1 of 3: Leader Preparation Guide. Read this before the night. Nothing in Part 1 is read aloud.

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” (John 2:5, RSV2CE)

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers that Jesus condemns empty prayer, not repeated prayer; builds the Hail Mary out of Luke 1 with their own hands; finds sacramentals (cloth, tassels, bones, handkerchiefs) in Scripture; and then learns, from the Church’s own documents, exactly what a Catholic is required to do and what is merely offered. They end by answering the study’s question in their own words: a relationship with Jesus, on his terms, has a body.

Catholic Touchstone

CCC 1674-1676: popular piety (rosaries, medals, scapulars, pilgrimages, novenas) extends the liturgical life of the Church but does not replace it; it must be in harmony with the liturgy and lead to it. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13: devotions should harmonize with the liturgy, be derived from it, and lead people to it, since the liturgy by its nature far surpasses any of them. CCC 2041-2043: the five precepts of the Church, the indispensable minimum of ecclesial practice. CCC 2111: superstition, including attributing power to the mere external performance of prayers or the wearing of objects, is a sin against the first commandment.

What You Need to Know

This is the session where the objector’s suspicion is strongest and where the Catholic answer is most disarming, because much of what he objects to is optional. Say so early and without embarrassment. No Catholic is required to pray a rosary, wear a scapular, make a novena, or go to adoration. A Catholic is not a lesser Catholic for never praying a rosary, wearing a scapular, or making a novena. These are helps the Church offers, not obligations laid on everyone. Most of your group has never heard this said plainly, and some will be relieved.

The wall from Session 3 is the structure of the night. Inside the wall: the rite, in its three layers, which the Church requires of everyone at Sunday Mass. Outside it: what the Church offers. Devotions are all outside the wall, on the offered side. The Church herself insists on this: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13 says the liturgy “by its very nature far surpasses” devotions, and CCC 1675 says devotions extend the liturgy but do not replace it. A rosary that keeps a person from Mass has failed as a rosary.

Begin with the steelman, because it is a good one. Matthew 6:7 is Jesus telling his disciples not to “heap up empty phrases” and not to think they will be heard “for their many words.” A rosary is fifty-three Hail Marys. The objector sees the exact thing Jesus forbade. The Greek word is *battalogēsēte*, “babble,” and the operative word in the RSV2CE is *empty*. The group will find that Jesus answers his own warning by giving a fixed prayer (v. 9), that he prayed three times “saying the same words” in Gethsemane, that Psalm 136 repeats one line twenty-six times, and that the living creatures in Revelation 4:8 never cease saying the same thing. Empty is the problem. Repeated is not.

The Hail Mary is built, not explained. Give the group Luke 1:28 and 1:42 and ask them to write the prayer. Its first half is Scripture nearly word for word. The second half is a request for prayer, which is what James 5:16 tells Christians to ask of one another; Revelation 5:8 and Hebrews 12:22-24 supply the part James does not, that the saints in heaven are in the assembly and their prayers rise before the throne. Mary’s only recorded instruction, at Cana, is “Do whatever he tells you.” Any Marian devotion

that stops at Mary instead of leading to Christ has gone wrong. *Lumen Gentium* 67 warns against exaggeration, and St. John Paul II calls the rosary a Christ-centered prayer. Say both.

On the scapular, be exact. It is a sacramental: a garment worn as a sign of consecration to Christ through Mary in the Carmelite tradition. The famous promise associated with it (that one who dies wearing it will not suffer eternal fire) comes from a tradition about a vision to St. Simon Stock in 1251. The Church has approved the devotion and has never defined the vision as historical. The Church reads the promise as applying to those who live the consecration the scapular signifies, not to anyone who happens to have cloth on. Worn as a charm, a scapular is superstition, and CCC 2111 calls superstition a sin. The study says this out loud. Honesty here is what earns the right to commend the devotion at all.

The last discovery (B6) goes back to “relationship.” In John 15 Jesus says “abide in me” and describes what abiding looks like: keeping his commandments, his words remaining in you, bearing fruit. Remarkably, Jesus uses the same verb for Eucharistic communion in John 6:56: “he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” Revelation 3:20, the verse most beloved by the person who asks our question, ends with a meal. On Jesus’s own terms, the relationship has a Eucharistic shape.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The tassels (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 22:12). God commands Israel to wear tassels on the corners of their garments “to look upon and remember all the commandments of the LORD,” and to bind his words on their hands and foreheads and doorposts. God himself instituted wearable reminders. Jesus wore them; the “fringe of his garment” in Matthew 9:20 is the tassel, and the woman in Mark 5 was healed touching it. The tassels are a biblical precedent for something very Catholic: God using a physical, wearable sign to remind his people of the covenant and call them to faithful living. A scapular works in an analogous way.

Elisha’s bones (2 Kings 13:20-21). A dead man thrown into Elisha’s tomb touches the prophet’s bones and revives. God uses the physical remains of a holy man as an instrument. This is the root of relics, and the New Testament continues it with Peter’s shadow (Acts 5:15) and Paul’s handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12).

Repetition in Israel’s prayer (Psalm 136; Daniel 3; Psalm 119). Psalm 136 answers every line with “for his steadfast love endures for ever.” The song of the three young men (Daniel 3:57-88, in the longer Catholic text of Daniel) answers every line with “sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever”. Psalm 119 circles the same theme through 176 verses. Inspired prayer repeats.

The nine days (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1). Between the Ascension and Pentecost the apostles, with Mary, devoted themselves to prayer in the upper room. Tradition counts the days as nine and calls this the first novena. Scripture does not use the word, and the count is a tradition, but the shape is there: a group praying together for a set span, with the Mother of Jesus, waiting for the Spirit.

Mary at Cana (John 2:1-11). She notices the need, brings it to her Son, and tells the servants to do whatever he says. Every sound Marian devotion has this shape and no other.

Voices of the Church

St. John Paul II *Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae, 1 (2002)*

“The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer.” In the same paragraph he takes up Paul VI’s description of the rosary as a compendium of the Gospel, and says that in the sobriety of its elements it holds the depth of the whole Gospel message.

Tier 1. The first sentence is quoted verbatim from the Vatican’s English text. The rest is our summary of the paragraph. “Compendium of the Gospel” is Paul VI’s phrase (*Marialis Cultus* 42), which John Paul quotes.

St. Augustine of Hippo *Letter 130 (to Proba), 10.20, AD 412*

Writing to a widow who asked how to pray, St. Augustine distinguishes much praying from much speaking. The monks of Egypt, he says, pray often but with very short prayers, shot out quickly like arrows, so that attention does not fade. Long prayer is fine, he says, as long as it is not long-winded. What God forbids is words without the heart behind them, not prayer that goes on.

Tier 2. Summary of the passage, following its argument. The “arrows” image for the Egyptian monks’ prayers is Augustine’s; the rest of the wording is ours.

St. Teresa of Ávila *The Way of Perfection, chapters 22-24, c. 1566*

Teaching her sisters to pray, St. Teresa insists that vocal prayer, prayer in fixed words, is not a lower form. If a person saying the Our Father attends to who is being addressed and what is being said, that vocal prayer has already become mental prayer. What she will not tolerate is words said without knowing to whom we speak; that, she says, is not prayer at all, however many words it has.

Tier 2. Summary drawn from three chapters. Teresa’s point that attentive vocal prayer is mental prayer is hers. The phrasing is ours.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1667-1670:** sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church that dispose us to receive grace; they do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit as the sacraments do, but by the Church’s prayer they prepare us for it.
- **CCC 1674-1676:** popular piety (veneration of relics, pilgrimages, processions, the rosary, medals) extends the liturgical life but does not replace it, and needs pastoral guidance.
- **CCC 2041-2043:** the precepts of the Church, the indispensable minimum of prayer and moral effort: Sunday and holy day Mass, confession of sins at least once a year, Easter Communion, the days of fasting and abstinence, support for the Church’s needs.
- **CCC 2111:** superstition, including attributing efficacy to the mere external performance of prayers or sacramental signs, apart from the interior dispositions they demand.
- **CCC 2676-2678:** the Hail Mary explained phrase by phrase; the rosary as a form of that prayer.
- **CCC 971:** Marian devotion is intrinsic to Christian worship but differs essentially from the adoration given to God; the rosary is called an epitome of the whole Gospel.
- **CCC 2700-2704:** vocal prayer as a genuine and necessary form of prayer, the prayer Jesus himself taught.
- **_Sacrosanctum Concilium_ 13; _Lumen Gentium_ 66-67:** devotions ordered to the liturgy; Marian devotion commended, exaggeration and empty credulity warned against.

Thread Watch (leader only)

Threads resolving tonight

- **Empty versus commanded resolves** at Matthew 6:7 in B1. The rule the group stated last week (empty or hypocritical ritual condemned, not ritual as such) is applied to prayer: empty prayer condemned, not prayer because it is repeated. Ask them to state the rule before you do.
- **The matter thread resolves:** cloth (the tassel, the scapular), beads, bones, handkerchiefs. If nobody has named the thread yet, name it in B4: four sessions, and God never stopped using something you can touch.
- **The centurion** gets a last mention if it fits: his line is now the group's line.
- **The W1 list from Session 1** (what a person does on a Tuesday to keep a relationship with Jesus) comes back in B6. Bring it or reconstruct it. The point is that the Catholic list contains everything on it and adds what Jesus added.

Objection Bench (leader only)

Likely objections and where the text answers them

"Praying to Mary is idolatry, and 1 Timothy 2:5 says there is one mediator." Asking someone to pray for you is what James 5:16 commands. In the same chapter as the "one mediator" verse, Paul asks that intercessions be made for all men (1 Timothy 2:1). One mediator does not exclude intercessors; it is what makes their intercession work. Revelation 5:8 shows the prayers of the saints carried before the throne. The Church distinguishes the honor given to Mary from the adoration given to God alone (CCC 971).

"The rosary is not in the Bible." Its words are: Luke 1:28, 1:42, the Our Father, the Gloria Patri built from Matthew 28:19. Its mysteries are Gospel scenes. The method is a method, like a hymnal or a Bible reading plan, neither of which is in the Bible.

"The scapular promise is superstition." Concede the abuse fully. Then give the Church's reading: the promise attaches to living the consecration, not to the cloth, and wearing it as a charm is condemned (CCC 2111). A sacramental disposes; it does not work by itself (CCC 1670).

"Novenas are repetition-magic: nine days and God has to answer." God does not have to do anything. A novena is persistence in asking, which Luke 18:1-8 and Luke 11:5-13 command, over a span with an apostolic shape (Acts 1:14). If someone treats it as a formula, that is the superstition the Church condemns.

"Catholics have to do all this." No. Read CCC 2041-2043 to them and hand them the Take-Home table. Then be honest that parish and family culture often make optional things feel mandatory, and that the Church's own documents are the standard, not the culture.

"If these things are optional, why do them at all?" Because they help some people love Jesus more, and the Church has watched them do it for centuries. The test is always *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13: does it lead to the Mass and to Christ? If yes, keep it. If no, drop it.

If a Friend Is at the Table

Your friend's suspicion is strongest tonight and your answer is most freeing: much of this is optional. Concede that freely and early. Do not ask your friend to pray the Hail Mary. Build it from Luke with them and let them see what it is. If they push on the second half, agree that it is a request for prayer and ask whether they have ever asked a friend to pray for them. Then go to Revelation 5:8 and Hebrews 12:22-24, which is where the question of asking someone in heaven is actually answered.

On the Coronation of Mary in the Glorious Mysteries, be honest that Revelation 12:1 is read that way by the Church without being defined as only that. On the scapular promise, be more honest than your friend expects. The credibility you spend on the hard cases buys the rest.

Let your friend answer B7, the study's question, in their own words too. They may say the relationship still does not need a body. That is fine. They have now heard, from the text, why the Church thinks it has one.

Session Goals

1. The group builds and presses the Matthew 6:7 steelman and states the rule: empty prayer is condemned, repeated prayer is not.
2. The group writes the Hail Mary from Luke 1 and can say where each phrase comes from.
3. The group sees the rosary as Gospel meditation and states Mary's only instruction: do whatever he tells you.
4. The group finds sacramentals in Scripture (tassels, cloth, bones, handkerchiefs) and hears the Church's honest teaching on the scapular and on superstition.
5. The group sorts required from offered using the precepts of the Church and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13.
6. The group finds in John 6:56 and Revelation 3:20 that abiding in Jesus, on his own terms, has a Eucharistic shape.
7. Each person answers the study's question in three sentences.

Time Note

Ninety minutes. B5 (the wall) and B7 (the answer) are the last things to cut. For 75 minutes: (1) in B3 read only three mysteries instead of hunting the whole list; (2) skip the Dig Deeper; (3) ask only Send question S2.

Segment	Minutes	Running total
Opening prayer and welcome	4	0:04
Win (W1, W2)	10	0:14
Steelman and press (B1, B1a-d)	16	0:30
Build B2 (building the Hail Mary)	10	0:40
Build B3 (the rosary as Gospel)	8	0:48
Build B4 (sacramentals; the scapular)	10	0:58
Build B5 (the wall: required and offered)	10	1:08
Build B6-B7 (abide; the answer)	12	1:20
Send, Live It, memory verse, closing	10	1:30

Discussion Guide

Part 2 of 3. Marks: READ ALOUD, SAY, ASK, LEADER. Depth tags: [Floor], [Ground], [Depth].

Opening Prayer

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

LEADER *That prayer was a fixed form, repeated word for word, given by Jesus. Do not point that out yet.*

Win

W1 How did the Where Did We See It sheet go at Mass? What surprised you?

W2 Which Catholic devotion have you done because you felt you were supposed to, and which one, if any, has actually brought you closer to Jesus?

Leader: *Honesty here sets up the whole night. Do not defend anything yet.*

Build

Steelman first: “Empty phrases”

LEADER *Tonight the steelman opens the Build, because it is the objection everyone in the room has heard. Full strength.*

SAY Here is the objection, and it comes from Jesus.

READ ALOUD Matthew 6:5-8. Then 1 Kings 18:26-29.

SAY The argument: Jesus warns against heaping up empty phrases and being heard for many words, and he says that is what the Gentiles do. Elijah watches the prophets of Baal chant “O Baal, answer us” from morning until noon. Now look at a rosary: fifty-three Hail Marys, six Our Fathers, the same words over and over, beads to count them. A novena: nine days of the same prayer. Litanies: fifty titles with the same response. The objector is not being unfair when he says this looks exactly like what Jesus described. Prayer should be a conversation with a Father who already knows what you need. Formulas are for people who think God is a machine.

ASK Is that fair? What is true in it?

LEADER *Let them concede that rosaries can be rattled off mindlessly and that many have done it. Then press, in order. The first press is the prayer you just prayed.*

B1a Press 1. Read Matthew 6:9. What does Jesus do immediately after warning against empty phrases? [Floor]

Leader: *They just prayed it. Let them notice.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Pray then like this: Our Father...” He gives them a fixed prayer, in set words, which Christians have repeated verbatim every day for two thousand years. The Didache, written around AD 100, tells Christians to pray it three times a day. If Jesus meant “never repeat a set prayer,” he broke his own rule in the next sentence.

B1b Press 2. Read Matthew 26:39-44. How many times does Jesus pray in Gethsemane, and what does verse 44 say about the words? [Floor]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Three times, and the third time “saying the same words.” Jesus, in the most urgent prayer of his life, repeated himself. Repetition is not the problem.

B1c Press 3. Skim Psalm 136 and read Revelation 4:8. What do you notice? [Ground]

Leader: Count the refrain in Psalm 136 if you have time.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Psalm 136 repeats “for his steadfast love endures for ever” twenty-six times, once per verse, and it is inspired Scripture, sung in the temple. In Revelation 4:8 the four living creatures “day and night never cease” to say the same sentence. Heaven repeats. Then Luke 18:1-8: Jesus tells a parable so that his disciples “ought always to pray and not lose heart,” and the hero is a widow who keeps saying the same thing to a judge until he acts.

B1d Press 4. Look again at Matthew 6:7. What is the adjective, and what do the Gentiles think their many words will do? [Ground]

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Empty phrases. And they think they will be heard *for* their many words, as if the words were a lever that moves God. The Greek verb means to babble. The problem is prayer as a machine: words without a heart behind them, aimed at forcing a result. Not repetition. Repeated prayer with attention is what the Psalms are. Empty prayer with any number of words is what Jesus forbids.

Now state the rule from last week and apply it. God condemns empty or hypocritical ritual, not ritual simply because it is ritual. God condemns empty or hypocritical prayer, not prayer simply because it is repeated.

SAY So let us look at the most repeated Catholic prayer there is and find out what it actually says. You are going to write it, not recite it.

B2 Live discovery. Read Luke 1:28 and 1:42, then 1:43. Using only those verses, write the first half of the Hail Mary. Then read James 5:16, Revelation 5:8, and Hebrews 12:22-24 and write the second half. [Floor]

Leader: Have someone read the finished prayer aloud from their own handwriting.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” is Gabriel, verse 28. “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” is Elizabeth, verse 42. Elizabeth then calls her “the mother of my Lord” (v. 43), which is why the prayer says Mother of God: the Council of Ephesus in 431 defended that title because the child in her womb is the Lord. The second half, “pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death,” is a request for prayer, exactly what James tells Christians to ask of one another. James alone does not settle whether we may ask someone in heaven. Revelation 5:8 shows the prayers of the saints carried before the throne. Hebrews 12:22-24 says that in worship we have come to the spirits of the just made perfect. The saints are not out of reach. They are in the assembly.

The Hail Mary is two verses of Luke and a prayer request. When a Catholic says it fifty times, he says the Annunciation and the Visitation fifty times.

B3 Look at the twenty mysteries of the rosary on your Take-Home. Working around the table, find each one in the Gospels. Then read John 2:5. What is the only instruction Mary ever gives? [Ground]

Leader: *Most mysteries are easy. The Assumption and Coronation are not narrated in Scripture; say so, and point to Revelation 12:1 as the text the Church reads for the Coronation without defining that reading.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries walk through the Gospel from the Annunciation to Pentecost. Eighteen of the twenty are Gospel or Acts scenes; the Assumption and Coronation are Church teaching and tradition, with Revelation 12:1 read for the last. Praying the rosary is meditating on the life of Christ with his Mother. St. John Paul II called it a Christ-centered prayer and, following Paul VI, a compendium of the Gospel.

And Mary's only instruction, at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you." She points. Every sound Marian devotion points the same way. A rosary that stops at Mary instead of leading to Christ has gone wrong. *Lumen Gentium* 67 warns Catholics against both errors: vain credulity on one side, exaggeration on the other.

SAY Now the objects. Medals, scapulars, holy water, relics. Where did the idea come from that a thing could carry anything?

B4 Read Numbers 15:37-40, Matthew 9:20-22, Acts 19:11-12, and 2 Kings 13:20-21. In each, what is the object, and what does God do with it? [Ground]

Leader: *Four passages, four objects: tassels, the fringe of Jesus's garment, handkerchiefs, bones.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Tassels on the corners of garments, commanded by God, "to look upon and remember" his commandments. The fringe of Jesus's garment, which is that tassel, touched by a woman who is healed. Handkerchiefs and aprons carried from Paul's body to the sick, and diseases leave. A corpse touching Elisha's bones and coming back to life. These passages establish the biblical principle behind sacramentals: God can use material things as signs and instruments that dispose his people toward faith. A Christian sacramental is more specific than any of them. It is a sacred sign instituted by the Church, on the model of the sacraments, that applies that incarnational principle and works through the Church's intercession (CCC 1667). Paul's handkerchiefs were not sacramentals; they are the precedent for them.

Now the honest part about the brown scapular. It is a small garment worn as a sign of consecration to Christ through Mary, in the Carmelite tradition. It works the way the tassels worked: a wearable reminder that calls you to live what it stands for. The famous promise attached to it comes from a tradition about a vision in 1251. The Church has approved the devotion and has never defined the vision as historical. And the Church reads the promise as belonging to people who live the consecration it stands for, not to anyone with cloth around their neck. CCC 1670: a sacramental disposes you for grace; it does not work by itself. CCC 2111: treating an object or a prayer as if it worked by the mere performance is superstition, and superstition is a sin. A scapular worn as a lucky charm is not Catholic. A scapular worn as a reminder of a consecration you are living is.

SAY Here is the thing almost nobody tells you. Most of tonight is optional. Let us find out exactly what is not.

- B5** The wall. On your Take-Home is a list of Catholic practices. Sort them into two columns: Required, and Offered. Then read CCC 2041-2043 (on the Take-Home) and check your work. [Ground]

Leader: *Let them guess first. Then read the precepts. Nearly everyone puts at least one devotion in the wrong column.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Required (the precepts of the Church): Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation; confession of your sins at least once a year; receiving the Eucharist at least during the Easter season; observing the days of fasting and abstinence; providing for the needs of the Church. Those are the Church's basic precepts, what CCC 2041 calls the indispensable minimum. They are not everything a Catholic is bound to (the commandments and the duties of your state in life still bind), but they are the minimum the Church herself lays down. Everything else on the sheet is offered, and none of it is an additional precept: the rosary, the scapular, novenas, Eucharistic adoration, First Fridays, the Divine Mercy chaplet, medals, pilgrimages, holy water at home, the Liturgy of the Hours (required of clergy and religious, offered to everyone else).

No Catholic is bound to pray a rosary. A Catholic who never wears a scapular is not a lesser Catholic. The Church herself ranks these things. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13 says devotions must harmonize with the liturgy, be derived from it, and lead people to it. Its reason: "the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them." A devotion is good exactly to the extent that it walks you to the altar. If it does, keep it. If it does not, you are free to set it down.

- SAY** Last thing. We started this study with a question about a relationship with Jesus. Let us end by letting Jesus describe it.

- B6** Read John 15:1-11. What does Jesus say abiding in him looks like? Then read John 6:56. Same verb. What is the one concrete act Jesus names as abiding in him? [Depth]

Leader: *Bring back the Session 1 W1 list (what a person does on a Tuesday). Compare.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

In John 15 abiding looks like bearing fruit, having his words abide in you, keeping his commandments, and remaining in his love. Every item on the Session 1 list belongs here: prayer, Scripture, obedience, love. The Catholic life contains all of it. And in John 6:56 Jesus uses the same verb, *menō*, and names one concrete act: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." Of all the ways Jesus describes abiding, this is the one he ties to a single physical act, and he uses the same word for it.

Then read Revelation 3:20, the verse the person who asks our question loves most. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." The relationship Jesus describes ends at a table.

The Answer

- B7** Here is the question this study exists to answer: "Why does the Catholic Church add all this extra stuff? Why not just a relationship with Jesus?" Answer it in three sentences, in your own words, on your Take-Home. Then read it to the table. [Floor]

Leader: *Give five minutes of silence. Then go around. Do not correct anyone's wording. After everyone has read, offer the study's version.*

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The study's version. It is a relationship with Jesus, and nothing else was ever the point. But Jesus gave that relationship a shape. He used mud when a word would do. He handed his friends bread and a cup and told them to do this. And he refuses to be separated from his Body. The sacraments and the Mass are not extra to the relationship; they are the way he chose to have it. Everything else, rosaries and scapulars and novenas, is offered to help, is optional, and is good exactly as far as it leads back to him.

Dig Deeper: the first novena

Acts 1:12-14 has the apostles, with Mary and the women, devoting themselves to prayer in the upper room between the Ascension and Pentecost. The Church has traditionally counted those days as nine and called this the first novena. Scripture gives neither the word nor the count; the tradition does. But the shape is there: a community praying together with the Mother of Jesus for a set span, waiting on the Spirit. Every novena since has copied it, well or badly.

Send

- S1** Which devotion, if any, actually leads you to the Mass and to Jesus? Is there one you should set down, and one you might pick up freely?
- S2** Who in your life asked the question this study answers? What will you say to them this week, in your own three sentences?

Live It This Week

- Pray the Our Father once a day, slowly, attending to each phrase, as St. Teresa taught. That is vocal prayer becoming mental prayer.
- Choose one devotion freely, or none. Whatever you choose, ask afterward whether it walked you toward the altar.
- Say your three sentences to the person from S2.
- Go deeper: *Abide* (the Eucharist, grace, and staying in Christ), *The True Bread* (the Jewish roots of the Eucharist), and *This Is My Body* are the next Catholic Armory studies on this path.

Memory Verse

Abide in me, and I in you. (John 15:4, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus, you are the vine and we are the branches. Thank you for the water, the oil, the bread, the cup, and for your Body the Church. Thank you for every small thing you have given us to hold on the way to you, and keep us from ever holding it instead of you. Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, and teach us to do whatever he tells us. Amen.

Answers at a Glance

Q	The one-line answer
B1a	Immediately after the warning, Jesus gives a fixed prayer.
B1b	Three times, saying the same words.
B1c	Psalm 136 repeats twenty-six times; heaven never ceases; the widow keeps asking.
B1d	Empty, and heard for many words. Empty prayer condemned, not prayer because it is repeated.
B2	Luke 1:28 and 1:42, plus a prayer request (James 5:16) to one whose prayers reach the throne (Revelation 5:8; Hebrews 12:22-24).
B3	Gospel meditation with Mary; her only instruction points to Jesus.
B4	Tassels, the fringe, handkerchiefs, bones. A sacramental disposes; a charm is superstition.
B5	Five precepts required; every devotion offered. The liturgy far surpasses them.

Q	The one-line answer
B6	Abiding is fruit, words, commandments, love; the one concrete act named is eating his flesh. Rev 3:20 ends at a table.
B7	A relationship with Jesus, in the shape he gave it, which has a body.

Leader Reference Card

Part 3 of 3. Every passage used tonight, in order, plus what you need in the room.

Materials: Bibles, the Session 1 W1 list if you kept it, Take-Home 4 for each person (it carries the twenty mysteries, the Required/Offered sort, the precepts, and the three-sentence box), pens.

Where	Passage	Use
Epigraph	John 2:5	Do whatever he tells you
Opening	Matthew 6:9-13	The Our Father (a fixed prayer)
Steelman	Matthew 6:5-8; 1 Kings 18:26-29	Empty phrases; the prophets of Baal
B1a	Matthew 6:9	Pray then like this
B1b	Matthew 26:39-44	Saying the same words
B1c	Psalms 136; Revelation 4:8; Luke 18:1-8	Inspired repetition; persistence
B1d	Matthew 6:7	Empty, and heard for many words
B2	Luke 1:28, 42, 43; James 5:16; Revelation 5:8; Hebrews 12:22-24	Building the Hail Mary
B3	The twenty mysteries (Take-Home); John 2:5; Revelation 12:1	Rosary as Gospel; Mary points
B4	Numbers 15:37-40; Matthew 9:20-22; Acts 19:11-12; 2 Kings 13:20-21	Sacramentals in Scripture
B5	CCC 2041-2043; Sacrosanctum Concilium 13	Required and offered
B6	John 15:1-11; John 6:56; Revelation 3:20	Abide; eat; the door and the table
Dig Deeper	Acts 1:12-14; 2:1	The first novena
Prep only	Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 22:12; Mark 5:27-29; Acts 5:15; Daniel 3:57-88; Psalm 119; Luke 11:5-13; 1 Timothy 2:1, 5; Revelation 5:8; John 2:1-11	Roots and Objection Bench
Memory	John 15:4	

Catechism: 1667-1670; 1674-1676; 2041-2043; 2111; 2676-2678; 971; 2700-2704. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13; *Lumen Gentium* 66-67; *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 1.

Voices: St. John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 1 (Tier 1, one sentence); St. Augustine, Letter 130.10.20 (Tier 2); St. Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 22-24 (Tier 2).