

TAKE-HOME 1

Why Did He Use Mud?

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14, RSV2CE)

What We Found

- The Church agrees with the objection's first half: being Christian is an encounter with a person (Benedict XVI). It is a relationship.
- In Matthew 8 Jesus healed with a word from a distance. In John 9 he chose spit, clay, and a pool. The mud was not necessary. It was chosen.
- Healing in the Gospels happens at the touch (Mark 1, Mark 5), and Jesus insists the touch be named.
- The Word became flesh (John 1:14). In the Incarnation God chose to meet us bodily in the Word made flesh, and Christ continues to use visible signs in the sacraments.
- "God is spirit" (John 4:24) does not mean worship must be non-physical: the same Gospel records mud, bread, and breath afterward, and Paul calls presenting your body "spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).
- Scripture's word for a relationship with God is *covenant*, and again and again, when God makes a covenant, he gives a physical sign: rainbow, circumcision, Sabbath, blood, cup.
- Water, oil, breath, and forgiveness spoken by men were commanded by Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 28:19; John 3:5; James 5:14; John 20:23). The Church did not add them. She obeyed.
- "Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). Christ will not be separated from his Body.

Voices of the Church

Pope Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas Est 1*

"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."

St. Leo the Great *Sermon 74.2*

What was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments. Christ did not leave the physical world when he left our sight. (A summary of St. Leo's sentence.)

St. Augustine *Tractates on John 80.3*

The word is joined to the element, and the result is a sacrament: a visible word. Take away the word and the water is only water. (A summary.)

Live It This Week

- At Mass, pick five physical things you notice, such as water, bread, wine, hands, a book, or a candle. For each, ask silently: why this?
- Read John 9 aloud, slowly, once, by yourself. Stop at verse 7 and stay there 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.

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)

Catechism

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

My Guess (write, fold, seal; opens next session)

What can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven? Answer in one or two honest sentences, in your own words.

Fold this sheet so the box is hidden and seal it with tape. Nobody reads it until next session, including your leader.

TAKE-HOME 2

Finished, Not Gone

I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain. (Revelation 5:6, RSV2CE)

What We Found

- The sealed question: what can you offer God to gain entrance into heaven? Protestant answer: nothing, only Jesus and his finished work. Catholic answer: nothing of our own. Only Jesus, and his one sacrifice, finished once for all.
- “It is finished” (*tetelestai*) means accomplished, completed with an abiding result. The sacrifice is finished once for all; Hebrews says so five times, and the Church teaches exactly that (CCC 1367: one single sacrifice).
- Hebrews does not portray the enthroned Christ as a retired priest: he remains High Priest and minister of the sanctuary (8:1-3), holds his priesthood permanently, and always lives to intercede (7:24-25). In heaven the Lamb stands as though slain (Revelation 5:6). Finished, not gone.
- Israel offered a lamb morning and evening, day by day continually: the *tamid* (Exodus 29:38-42). Malachi promised a pure offering in every place, among the nations, from sunrise to sunset (1:11). By AD 155 Christians read that as the Eucharist.
- “Do this in remembrance” is Passover language. A biblical memorial brings the people into the event (Exodus 12:14; 13:8; Deuteronomy 5:3).
- Paul calls the Eucharist a participation and sets it beside Israel’s altar; “the table of the Lord” is altar language (1 Corinthians 10:16-21; Hebrews 13:10).
- 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 identifies the Eucharist as the supreme expression of that participation: she offers with Christ and herself in him (CCC 1368). Not added to Calvary. Taken into it.
- The one sentence: one sacrifice, one eternal Priest, never repeated, sacramentally made present in the memorial he instituted. Shorter: finished, not gone.

The Answer

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.

Voices of the Church

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

Malachi’s prophecy of a pure offering in every place was about the bread and cup Christians offer everywhere, in remembrance of the Lord’s passion. (A summary.)

St. Cyprian of Carthage *Letter* 63.17, c. AD 253

The priest does what Christ did and offers what Christ offered. The passion of the Lord is the sacrifice we offer. (A summary.)

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

Do we not offer daily? We do, but as a remembrance of his death, and the offering is one. We do not offer another sacrifice, but always the same one. (A summary.)

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 “Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours,” name one thing in your life and offer it, in him.
- 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)

Catechism

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

My Sentence (bring it next week)

A friend says, "The Mass re-sacrifices Jesus." In one sentence, in your own words, what do you say back?

What I Offered

At "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours," I named and offered:

TAKE-HOME 3

Do This

How he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:35, RSV2CE)

What We Found

- Emmaus: Jesus opens the Scriptures, then takes bread, blesses, breaks, gives. Word, then bread. That is the shape of the Mass (Luke 24; CCC 1347). Acts 2:42 confirms it: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, the prayers.
- In AD 155 St. Justin Martyr described a Sunday gathering to the emperor: readings, homily, standing to pray, bread and wine brought, thanksgiving, Amen, distribution, a collection. The basic shape of the Mass was already clearly recognizable.
- Heaven has the stuff: an altar, incense, white robes, elders, lamps, “Holy, holy, holy,” a Lamb standing as slain, Amen, a wedding feast (Revelation 4-5, 8). The Mass participates in the worship of heaven.
- Isaiah 6: the Sanctus, a coal from the altar to the lips, guilt taken away, then sending. And “Lord, I am not worthy... only say the word” is the centurion’s line from Matthew 8:8.
- Jesus condemned a tradition used to cancel a commandment (Mark 7), not ritual; he kept the feasts. The prophets condemned ritual without justice, not ritual (Isaiah 1:16-17). Paul commands traditions (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15). The rule: God condemns empty or hypocritical ritual, not ritual simply because it is ritual.
- The wall has three layers. What Christ instituted (water, bread and wine, his words) cannot change. The constitutive parts of the Church’s received liturgical tradition (Word and Eucharist, the proclaimed Scriptures, the Eucharistic Prayer, Communion) belong to the whole Church, not to any parish. Disciplines like colors, language, bells, and the lectionary are the Church’s and can change (CCC 1205-1206). Nobody may change the rite on their own (CCC 1125).

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr *First Apology 67, 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. Cyril of Jerusalem *Mystagogical Catecheses 5, c. AD 350*

A step-by-step walk through the Mass for the newly baptized: hands washed, the kiss of peace, “Lift up your hearts,” the Sanctus with the seraphim, the Spirit called down on the gifts, prayers for the living and dead, the Our Father. The same order a Catholic follows today. (A summary.)

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

Gather often, in one faith, obedient to the bishop, breaking the one bread, which is the medicine of immortality. (A summary.)

Where Did We See It (take this to Mass and check things off)

At Mass	Where it comes from	Saw it
“The Lord be with you”	Ruth 2:4; Luke 1:28	
“Lord, have mercy”	Matthew 20:30-31; Luke 18:13	
“Glory to God in the highest”	Luke 2:14	
Standing for the Gospel; the homily	Nehemiah 8:5, 8; Luke 4:16-21	
“Lift up your hearts”	Lamentations 3:41	
“Holy, holy, holy”	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	

At Mass	Where it comes from	Saw it
The sign of peace	Romans 16:16; John 20:19	
Incense; candles; vestments	Psalms 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4; Exodus 27:20-21; 28:2	
The altar	Hebrews 13:10; Revelation 6:9	
The sign of the cross; holy water	Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 7:3; Ezekiel 36:25	
“Amen”; the collection; “Go forth”	1 Corinthians 14:16; 16:2; Isaiah 6:8	

Live It This Week

- Take this sheet to Mass. Check things off as they happen.
- 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)

Catechism

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

TAKE-HOME 4

Do Whatever He Tells You

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

What We Found

- Jesus forbids *empty* phrases, then gives a fixed prayer (Matthew 6:7-9). He prayed three times “saying the same words” (26:44). Psalm 136 repeats twenty-six times; heaven never ceases (Revelation 4:8). Empty prayer is condemned, not prayer because it is repeated.
- The Hail Mary is Luke 1:28 and 1:42 plus a request for prayer (James 5:16), made to someone whose prayers rise before the throne (Revelation 5:8; Hebrews 12:22-24). “Mother of God” is Elizabeth’s “mother of my Lord” (1:43), defended at Ephesus in 431.
- The rosary is Gospel meditation with Mary: eighteen of twenty mysteries are Gospel or Acts scenes. Mary’s only instruction: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). A rosary that stops at Mary instead of leading to Christ has gone wrong.
- God instituted wearable reminders (the tassels, Numbers 15) and uses objects tied to holy people (the fringe, Paul’s handkerchiefs, Elisha’s bones). A sacramental disposes; it does not work by itself (CCC 1670). A scapular worn as a charm is superstition (CCC 2111).
- Required: the five precepts, the Church’s indispensable minimum. Offered: every devotion; none is an additional precept. The liturgy far surpasses them (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13). No Catholic is bound to pray a rosary.
- Abiding in Jesus (John 15) is fruit, his words, his commandments, his love. Remarkably, he uses the same verb for Eucharistic communion: eat his flesh and drink his blood, and you abide in him (John 6:56). Revelation 3:20 ends at a table.

The Twenty Mysteries

Joyful: Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38); Visitation (1:39-56); Nativity (2:1-20); Presentation (2:22-38); Finding in the Temple (2:41-52).

Luminous: Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17); Cana (John 2:1-11); Proclamation of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15); Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8); Institution of the Eucharist (Luke 22:14-20).

Sorrowful: Agony (Matthew 26:36-46); Scourging (John 19:1); Crowning with Thorns (Matthew 27:27-31); Carrying the Cross (John 19:17); Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-46).

Glorious: Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10); Ascension (Acts 1:6-11); Descent of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4); Assumption (Church teaching); Coronation (read in Revelation 12:1).

Required, or Offered?

Required, the precepts of the Church (CCC 2041-2043):

- Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
- Confess your sins at least once a year.
- Receive the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
- Observe the days of fasting and abstinence.
- Provide for the needs of the Church.

Offered: 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).

The test for any devotion: does it walk you to the altar? If yes, keep it. If not, you are free to set it down.

Voices of the Church

St. John Paul II *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 1

“The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer.”

St. Augustine *Letter 130 (to Proba)*, 10.20

Much praying is not much speaking. The monks of Egypt prayed often in very short prayers, like arrows, so attention would not fade. What God forbids is words without the heart. (A summary.)

St. Teresa of Ávila *The Way of Perfection* 22-24

Vocal prayer said with attention to whom we speak and what we say has already become mental prayer. Words said without knowing to whom we speak are not prayer at all. (A summary.)

Live It This Week

- Pray the Our Father once a day, slowly, attending to each phrase. That is vocal prayer becoming mental prayer.
- Choose one devotion freely, or none. Afterward, ask whether it walked you toward the altar.
- Say your three sentences to the person who asked you the question.

- 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)

Catechism

CCC 1667-1670; 1674-1676; 2041-2043; 2111; 2676-2678; 971; 2700-2704. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13; *Lumen Gentium* 66-67.

My Answer

“Why does the Catholic Church add all this extra stuff? Why not just a relationship with Jesus?” Your answer, in three sentences:
