

Session Two

The Sacrifice

Abide

The Eucharist, Grace, and Staying in Christ

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that a Passover was not finished at the killing of the lamb but at the eating of it, and that this is why the Church has an altar as well as a pulpit.

Catholic Touchstone. Calvary happened once, it cannot be repeated, and the Church teaches exactly that. The Mass does not add a sacrifice. It makes the one sacrifice present.

Last week ended with the Passover flagged and left. Tonight it opens. This is the session where a Catholic most often gets accused of insulting the cross, so the leader's task is to state the Church's actual teaching so clearly that the accusation has nowhere to land.

What You Need to Know

In Exodus 12 the lamb is chosen, kept, and killed, and its blood is put on the doorposts. If the rite ended there, the argument would end there too. It does not. The same chapter commands that the lamb be roasted and eaten that night, by the household, entirely, with nothing left until morning. An Israelite who killed a lamb, marked his door, and then declined to eat had not kept the Passover.

St. John builds his Passion narrative on this. He notes that it was the day of Preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour, when Pilate hands Jesus over. He records that the soldiers did not break his legs, and says explicitly that this happened so the Scripture would be fulfilled that not a bone of him shall be broken, which is the rule for the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:46. St. Paul says it flatly: Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed.

So if Christ is the lamb, and the lamb must be eaten, the question is not whether Christians eat but how.

What the Church actually teaches, stated precisely

CCC 1367 is the paragraph to have open, and it is worth reading aloud twice. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. The victim is the same and the offering is made through the ministry of priests by the same one who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering differs. The Mass is not another sacrifice, not a repetition, and not a re-crucifixion. Any Catholic who says otherwise is misstating the faith, and you should correct that in your own group before an outsider does it for you.

The word the Church uses is memorial, in the biblical sense rather than the modern one. In Exodus 12:14 the Passover is called a memorial, and no Jew keeping it understood himself to be merely recollecting. The rite made the participant a sharer in the event. That is the category the Mass belongs to.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

“They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.” **Exodus 12:8**

And the promise that the sacrifice would one day be offered everywhere rather than in one temple:

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering.” **Malachi 1:11**

Malachi speaks of a pure offering made among the nations, in every place, at a time when Israel’s sacrifice was confined to one temple in one city. The earliest Christian writers outside the New Testament read that verse as fulfilled in the Eucharist, which tells you how they understood what they were doing on Sunday.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

The Didache

ch. 14 (summary)

This very early Christian manual instructs believers to gather on the Lord’s day, break bread, and give thanks, having first confessed their sins so that their sacrifice may be pure, and it applies the words of Malachi about a pure offering among the nations directly to what they are doing.

Note that this is a practical handbook rather than a theological argument. The sacrificial vocabulary is assumed, not defended.

Summary of the chapter; the Malachi application is securely present in the text.

Voice of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage

Letter 63 (summary)

Writing about the proper celebration of the Eucharist, Cyprian argues that the priest acts in the place of Christ and offers what Christ offered, so that the sacrifice the Church offers is a true and full one.

His concern in the letter is practical to the point of being fussy, which is what makes it useful evidence: he is regulating something whose sacrificial character he takes as settled.

Summary of the letter; no section number printed.

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

City of God, Book X (summary)

Augustine argues that the whole redeemed community is itself the sacrifice offered to God, and that this is what the Church celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, where she learns that in what she offers, she herself is offered.

This is the deep answer to the charge that the Mass is something done to Christ again. What is being offered is the one offering of Christ, and ourselves inside it.

Summary of his argument in Book X; no chapter number printed.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1362-1367 on the Eucharist as memorial and sacrifice, with 1367 as the decisive paragraph: one single sacrifice, the same victim, only the manner of offering differing.

- CCC 1330 gives the names of the sacrament, including Holy Sacrifice.
- CCC 1366 quotes Trent on the Mass making present the sacrifice of the cross and applying its fruits.
- CCC 1371 on the offering for the dead, which is where Module Three later picks up.

Thread Watch

Leader only.

- THREAD A, the Abiding Question. Tonight it deepens quietly: the lamb had to be eaten, which means staying in the covenant was never only a matter of assent. Do not name it.
- THREAD B, the Sealed Guess. Envelopes stay sealed. Three sessions to go.
- THREAD C, Received and Delivered. Point at 1 Corinthians 11:23 again if it comes up naturally; Paul introduces the institution with the vocabulary of handing on.

Session Goals

- 1. Every participant can explain why the Passover was not complete at the killing.
- 2. Every participant can state, in one sentence, that the Mass does not repeat Calvary.
- 3. The group discovers John's deliberate paschal framing of the crucifixion.
- 4. Every participant can define memorial in the biblical sense.
- 5. Nobody leaves able to be accused fairly of thinking the cross was insufficient.

Timed Plan

- Opening prayer and Win: 10 minutes.
- The Exodus 12 discovery, questions 3 and 4: 25 minutes.
- John's paschal framing, question 5: 15 minutes.
- The steelman and question 6: 28 minutes. Protect this.
- Send, Live It, closing prayer: 12 minutes.

If you are running short: cut the Malachi material and the Dig Deeper. Never cut the steelman; Hebrews is the objection your people will meet.

THE OBJECTION BENCH

Leader only. Deploy what the room needs, skip the rest. Do not hand this page out. The matching Take-Home carries a shorter version in the participant's own words.

"Hebrews says once for all. The Mass is a re-crucifixion."

This is the main event and the steelman handles it. If it arrives early, agree loudly with the once for all and say you are coming back to it.

"Jesus said it is finished."

Agree without qualification. The work of redemption is finished and the Church teaches that.

Then ask what happens next in the same Gospel. He rises, he breathes on the apostles, he sends them. Finished does not mean nothing follows; it means nothing needs to be added.

"You have no priesthood, so you have no sacrifice."

Hebrews 13:10 says we have an altar, and 1 Corinthians 10:18-21 sets the Christian table against pagan altars using explicitly sacrificial categories.

Do not try to build the full case for the ministerial priesthood tonight; it belongs with Module Five on

confession and with Book One's Session Four. Give the two verses and move on.

"Malachi is about prayer, not about the Mass."

Concede that the verse does not name the Eucharist and that a prayer reading is possible.

Then note that the earliest Christians who cite it apply it to what they do on the Lord's day, and that they were closer to the question than we are. This is evidence, not proof, and saying so protects you.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the Lamb, and you gave yourself once and completely. Teach us tonight what it means that you also told us to take and eat. Amen.

Win

1. What is a meal your family repeats every year? What would be missing if you only talked about it?
2. Has anyone ever suggested to you that the Mass insults the cross? What did you say?

Build

Live discovery. Give the group Exodus 12:1-14 and one instruction: list everything the household is commanded to do with the lamb, in order. Ten minutes.

3. What is on your list, and where does the rite end?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Choose it, keep it, kill it, put the blood on the doorposts, roast it, eat it that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, eat it in haste, leave nothing until morning.

The rite does not end at the blood. Ask directly: could an Israelite have marked the door and skipped dinner? The text does not permit it.

4. Read Exodus 12:14. What word does God use for this, and what does it mean here?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

A memorial, a feast to be kept forever. And in Israel's practice that never meant recollection at a distance. The one keeping the feast reckons himself among those brought out.

This is the single most useful definition in the session. When Catholics call the Mass a memorial, this is the sense meant.

5. Now read John 19:14, 31-36. What is John doing with his timing and his details?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He puts the sentencing on the day of Preparation of the Passover, and he records that the soldiers broke the legs of the others but not of Jesus, and says this fulfilled the Scripture that not a bone shall be broken, which is the Passover rule in Exodus 12:46.

John is telling you what he thinks is happening. The lamb is being slain.

Then hand them 1 Corinthians 5:7 and let Paul say it in a single line.

DIG DEEPER: The offering among the nations

Malachi 1:11 promises a pure offering made in every place among the nations, written when Israel's sacrifice was confined to one temple.

The earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament apply that verse to the Sunday assembly. Evidence of how they understood themselves, not a proof text.

The Steelman

THE DEPTH Read in full. Do not soften the once for all; it is the strongest thing in the objection and it is true.

The strongest form of the objection.

Hebrews will not stop saying it. He entered once for all into the Holy Place. He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the conclusion the author draws himself: where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The contrast the whole letter is built on is between priests who stand daily offering repeatedly, which can never take away sins, and one priest who sat down. A church that has priests standing at altars every morning has reconstructed exactly the thing Hebrews says was superseded.

And from the cross he said it was finished. Not begun, not made available for periodic reapplication. Finished.

6. How much of that does a Catholic agree with? And what does the Church actually claim?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

A Catholic agrees with all of it, and should say so before anything else. The sacrifice is one, unrepeatable, and completely sufficient. Nothing is added to it and nothing needs to be.

Read CCC 1367 aloud. One single sacrifice, the same victim, the same one offering through the ministry of priests, only the manner of offering differing. If the Church taught that the Mass was a second sacrifice, Hebrews would refute her. She teaches the opposite.

Then the positive case, from the same letter and its neighbours. Hebrews 7:25 says he always lives to make intercession, present tense and continuous. Revelation 5:6 shows a Lamb standing in heaven, alive and yet appearing as one who has been slain. John does not call the wounds permanent; what he shows is the sacrifice still visible before the throne rather than left behind in the past. The one finished offering is not in the past tense in heaven; it is eternally before the Father. The Mass does not repeat it and does not reach back for it. It joins us to it.

On it is finished: agree entirely, and then ask what the objection would prove. If finished meant nothing may follow, then preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper in any form are all equally superfluous. Everyone believes something continues; the question is what.

End with the paschal point rather than the argument. The lamb was slain once. It was still eaten.

Send

7. Does it change anything to think of Mass as being joined to one event rather than repeating it?
8. What is one thing you could do to arrive at Mass differently this week?

Live It This Week

- Read Exodus 12 and John 19 back to back in one sitting.

- At Mass, listen for the words that name it as an offering. They are there every time.
- Learn CCC 1367 well enough to say the substance of it in your own words.
- Keep praying for your person by name.

Closing Prayer

Lamb of God, you were slain once and you live for ever. Thank you for not leaving us to remember you from a distance. Draw us into what you have already done. Amen.

Memory Verse

| *“For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.”* **1 Corinthians 5:7**

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

- Exodus 12:1-14, the lamb slain and eaten (live discovery)
- Exodus 12:14, memorial
- Exodus 12:46, not a bone broken
- John 19:14, 31-36, the paschal framing of the crucifixion
- 1 Corinthians 5:7, Christ our paschal lamb (memory verse)
- Malachi 1:11, a pure offering among the nations
- Hebrews 9:24-28, 10:11-18, once for all (steelman)
- Hebrews 7:25, he always lives to make intercession
- Revelation 5:6, a Lamb standing as though slain
- Hebrews 13:10, we have an altar
- 1 Corinthians 10:18-21, partners in the altar

Catechism: CCC 1330, 1362-1367, 1371.

Patristic: Didache ch. 14. St. Cyprian, Letter 63. St. Augustine, City of God Book X.