

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).