

Session 6: To Whom Shall We Go?

A study for seekers and the friends who walk with them

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: The group discovers where the question left open in Session 3 lands: how a Word spoken then reaches a person now. In the Emmaus account they find the pattern, Scripture opened and bread broken, and they discover that the pattern was promised, continued from the Church's first days, and still stands as a present-tense invitation.

Catholic Touchstone: Christ is present in his Church's liturgy: in his word, since it is he who speaks when Scripture is read, and most especially, truly, really, and substantially, under the Eucharistic species (CCC 1088, 1373 to 1374).

HOSTING YOUR SEEKER FRIEND

This is the send-off. Three commitments for hosts:

- No pressure for a decision tonight. The study ends in an invitation, not an altar call; the sealed guesses were between each person and God, and they stay that way.
- Make one concrete, no-strings invitation, personally, before the week is out: come to Mass with me once, sit with me, and afterward I will answer anything or nothing, your call. Specific beats general.
- Check in one on one with your friend within the week, and if they are open to more, walk them personally to the next step: another study, a conversation with the pastor, or simply a standing Sunday seat next to you. Do not let the last session be the last contact.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Session 3 left a question deliberately open, and your seeker friend has been carrying it for three weeks: Philip got a face; I got a book. How does a Word spoken then reach me now? Tonight resolves the study's main thread by answering it, and the answer is a pattern the group will find rather than be told.

The Emmaus account is the resolution text. Two disciples walk with the risen Christ unrecognized; he opens the Scriptures to them and their hearts burn; he breaks bread and their eyes are opened; and the moment they recognize him, he vanishes from sight. Notice what the story does with hiddenness: recognition and veiling arrive together. Christ does not end his hiddenness at Emmaus; in the Church's long reading, it is carried from absence into sacrament. The shape of the encounter, Scripture opened, then bread broken, is the shape of the Mass, and the Church has long recognized her own Eucharistic gathering in it (many scholars read Luke as writing with that assembly in view). Acts 2:42 shows the first community already living that shape; St. Justin, describing Sunday worship around the year 155, shows the core pattern already clearly recognizable a century later; and it is what your parish will do next Sunday.

Two honesty notes. First, the final steelman (that this is circular, that liturgy only feels like divine speech to the already convinced) deserves its full weight; the answer is not a proof but an invitation with a structure: Revelation 3:20 describes a voice that must be heard and a door that must be opened, and the study's last move is, come and stand where the pattern happens, and listen. Taste and see is an

experiment the seeker is invited to run, not a syllogism. Second, be precise about Communion itself: a seeker attending Mass is warmly welcome at everything except receiving the Eucharist, which is communion in a faith they have not yet professed. Frame it truthfully and gently: the Church is not withholding a snack; she is refusing to let the most intimate act of union be casual. Tell your friend beforehand, never let them be surprised in the pew.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

The whole study's Old Testament arc completes tonight. The God who hides (Isaiah 45:15, Session 1) fed his people with bread from heaven they did not recognize (*manna*, from the question, what is it?, Exodus 16:15), and promised his presence in a tent at the center of the camp. Psalm 34, this week's reading, issues the experimental invitation, O taste and see that the LORD is good, in exactly the register of Emmaus: a knowing that arrives through approach. The New Testament claims all of it converges: the Son by whom God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1-2; John 1:1) remains present under the consecrated appearance of bread, hidden and given at once. The hiddenness the study began with was never the story's problem; it was the story's manner.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

The Eucharistic hymn *Adoro Te Devote*, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, adores what it calls the hidden Godhead, truly concealed beneath the appearances of bread and wine. Sight, touch, and taste, the hymn says, are deceived here; hearing alone, faith in what the Son has said, is the ground of trust. The hymn holds both movements: it adores the Christ truly hidden here, and its final stanza begs for the unveiled face. In this guide's reflection, that is the study's own arc: the Eucharistic hiding is real, bearable, and provisional, a veil with a promised lifting.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. JUSTIN MARTYR

Around the year 155, St. Justin Martyr described Christian Sunday worship for a pagan emperor in his *First Apology*: the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, the presider exhorts, prayers are offered, and bread and wine over which thanksgiving has been spoken are received, not as common food, but as the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus. Scripture opened, bread broken: the Emmaus shape, a century on, already ordinary.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

St. Augustine opens his *Confessions* (Book I, chapter 1) with the line the whole study has been circling: God has made us for himself, and our heart is restless until it rests in him. The seeking this study honored in Session 1 was never, for St. Augustine, evidence of God's absence. It was evidence of the destination.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 1088:** Christ is present in his Church's liturgy: in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of his minister, especially under the Eucharistic species, in the sacraments, in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church, and when the Church prays and sings.
- **CCC 1373 to 1374:** Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique: true, real, and substantial, the whole Christ. The Catechism's language here is the Church's most careful.
- **CCC 104:** In Sacred Scripture the Church constantly finds her nourishment and strength, for in it the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them. Present tense.

- **CCC 2567:** God tirelessly calls each person to the mysterious encounter of prayer: the bookend of Session 1's CCC 30. The call never stopped; the study has been six weeks of it.

THREAD WATCH

The main thread resolves tonight, out loud, in the scripted moment after the Acts 2:42 discovery: name the whole pattern the study has traced. God speaks through creation and conscience (Sessions 1 and 4), through prophets and witnesses (Session 2), definitively in the Son (Session 3), meeting doubt with evidence and presence (Session 5), and the Son's speech did not stop: it continues where Scripture is opened and the bread is broken, and his presence remains, hidden and real, in the Eucharistic celebration, under the consecrated species. The hiddenness of Session 1 is not solved; it is transfigured: the God who hides himself now hides in order to be approached. The sealed guesses are not collected or discussed; if anyone volunteers theirs, receive it and move on.

SESSION GOALS

1. Resolve Session 3's open question with the Emmaus pattern: Scripture opened, bread broken, presence recognized.
2. Show Christ's abiding presence promised (Matthew 28:20), the pattern practiced from the first days (Acts 2:42), and clearly recognizable in St. Justin, down to next Sunday.
3. Present the final steelman fairly and answer it with the invitation structure of Revelation 3:20 and Psalm 34.
4. End with a concrete, no-pressure invitation and a clear, kind explanation of what a seeker at Mass is and is not invited to do.

TIME NOTE

Runs 75 to 90 minutes as written. If short: cut the Matthew 28:20 discovery, folding its promise into the thread resolution, and trim Win to one question. Do not cut Emmaus, John 6, or the closing invitation.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader prays: Lord Jesus, two of your friends once walked a whole road with you and did not know you until the bread broke. If any of us have been walking that road for six weeks, or for years, open our eyes tonight the way you opened theirs. Amen.

WIN

5. Six weeks ago you sealed a sentence in an envelope. Without necessarily sharing it: has this study touched what you wrote, or missed it? Be honest; the study can take it.
6. Where in your life does presence reach you best: words, meals, silence, showing up? Why that one?

BUILD

Leader, restate the question we left open. In Session 3 someone said it, or thought it: Philip got a face; I got a book. How does a Word spoken then reach me now? We promised the study was headed at that question. Tonight it arrives.

Live discovery. Find Luke 24:13-24, the road to Emmaus, and read it aloud. Then pause.

- 3. Two disciples are walking with the risen Jesus and do not recognize him. What are they doing instead, and what does that feel like from the inside of the story?

ANSWER. SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION.

They are rehearsing the whole story of Jesus, accurately, sadly, to his face, and concluding it is over: we had hoped. It is possible, the scene says, to know the facts, stand next to the presence, and still experience absence. Half the room may live there. Luke wrote the scene for them.

Live discovery. Now read Luke 24:25-35 aloud, slowly, and watch for two moments of contact.

- 4. What are the two things Jesus does, and what does each one produce in the disciples?

ANSWER. SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION.

He opens the Scriptures, and later they say, *“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?”* (Luke 24:32). Then he breaks the bread, and *“he was known to them in the breaking of the bread”* (24:35). Word, then bread; burning, then recognition. And the instant they recognize him, he vanishes from sight: recognition and hiddenness arrive together. He has not ended his hiddenness; in the Church's long reading of this scene, he has carried it into a place his friends can return to. The Church has recognized her own shape here from early times, for Scripture opened and bread broken is what her assembly does; so do we recognize it: it is the Mass.

Live discovery. Find Acts 2:42. Read it aloud.

- 5. Days after Pentecost, what four things does the first community devote itself to? Recognize any of them?

ANSWER. SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The Emmaus shape, institutionalized within weeks: teaching (the Word), the breaking of bread, the prayers, together. The pattern was not invented by later centuries. It is

the Church's first recorded habit.

Resolve the thread, out loud. Say it plainly: here is the pattern this study has been tracing for six weeks. God speaks through creation and through conscience. He spoke through prophets and through witnesses who staked their lives on what they saw. He spoke definitively in a Son, who met doubters with evidence and presence. And the speaking did not stop in the first century: he is present where the Scriptures are opened, because it is he who speaks when they are read, and present, hidden and real, in the Eucharistic celebration, under the consecrated species. The God who hides himself, our very first verse, turns out to hide the way a presence hides: close enough to approach. And the question in its sharpest form, has he spoken to ME, is answered in the same present tense: the Scriptures read aloud next Sunday are addressed to you; conscience has been his witness in you all along; and the knock of Revelation 3:20 is singular, if any one hears my voice and opens the door. No one in this room stands outside that sentence. Session 1's complaint was never wrong about the hiddenness. It was wrong about what the hiddenness meant.

Leader, present the final objection at full strength. Read slowly: This is circular. You have answered, God does not speak, with, attend our rituals, where he speaks. But the liturgy only feels like divine speech to people already convinced. From outside, it is readings and bread. You have not answered the seeker; you have redecorated the silence.

- 6. What is genuinely strong here? And find Revelation 3:20: what is the structure of the offer it describes?

ANSWER. SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION.

Concede the real point: no one is claiming the Mass functions as a proof that compels from outside; Session 2 already established that God's evidence invites rather than compels. Then the text: *"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"* (Revelation 3:20). Present tense, singular, and it ends in a shared meal. The offer has a structure: a knock that can be heard, a door only the person inside can open, a table on the far side. Psalm 34 gives the method: taste and see. It is an experiment, honestly labeled: come stand where the pattern happens, for six Sundays, say the honest daily sentence, and see. That is not circularity; it is the only kind of test a free relationship allows.

Live discovery. Find John 6:66-69. Read it aloud.

- 7. Jesus has just said something so hard that many disciples quit. What is Peter's answer when Jesus asks the Twelve if they will leave too, and what kind of answer is it?

ANSWER. SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Notice the context: the walkout happens at the Bread of Life discourse, the Eucharistic teaching itself; the hard saying and the leaving are already about tonight's subject. And notice what Peter's answer is not: it is not, I have resolved every difficulty. It is a comparative judgment, made with difficulties in hand, Session 5's whole lesson: weighed against every alternative, this is where the words of life are. That is the decision actually available to a human being. It is the one the study now hands to each person here.

DIG DEEPER

If time allows: Matthew 28:20, the Commission's last line: *"and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."* The continuing presence is not the Church's later invention; it is the risen Christ's

parting promise. The verse names the presence, not the liturgy; the Church knows the liturgy as where that promise is kept.

SEND

7. Peter's question, made personal: to whom, currently, do you go, when the biggest questions come? Is it working?
8. What would opening the door look like for you, concretely, in the next month? Name something small and real.

The invitation. Hosts: make it now, personally, and mean the no-strings part. Come to Mass with me once. Sit with me. Watch for the shape you found tonight: Scriptures opened, bread broken. One kindness beforehand: a guest at Mass is welcome at everything except receiving Communion itself, which is the sign of a professed union the Church will not let anyone counterfeit, including her own members when unprepared. Nothing is being withheld from you that is not also guarded from us. When the time comes, the simplest thing is to remain in the pew; customs for coming forward for a blessing vary by parish, so follow your host and the parish's stated practice, and no one will think anything but that you were honest. Exceptional questions belong to the pastor.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Accept the invitation, or make it: one Mass, together, watching for the Emmaus shape.
- Keep the daily honest sentence going beyond the study. It was never an exercise; it was the door handle.
- Reread the sentence you sealed in Session 1, one last time, and ask it back: what would it take, and what, in six weeks, has it already taken?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:68

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader prays: Lord, you stand at the door and knock. For every door in this room, however open, however closed, however creaking on its hinges: keep knocking. Thank you for six weeks of honest company. Stay with us, as you stayed at Emmaus, and be known to us in the breaking of the bread. Amen.

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 6, in order of appearance. All quotations RSV2CE.

- **Luke 24:13-35** Emmaus: Scriptures opened, bread broken, known and vanished (live discovery, read in two parts; do not cut)
- **Acts 2:42** the first community's fourfold devotion (live discovery)
- **Revelation 3:20** the knock, the door, the meal (live discovery within the final steelman)
- **John 6:66-69** the walkout and Peter's answer (live discovery; memory verse from v. 68; do not cut)
- **Matthew 28:20** I am with you always (Dig Deeper; first cut, folded into thread resolution)
- **Psalms 34** O taste and see (this week's reading; cited in the steelman answer)
- **Exodus 16:15; Isaiah 45:15; Hebrews 1:1-2** leader background, OT Roots and thread resolution callbacks

Catechism: CCC 1088; 1373 to 1374; 104; 2567.

Voices: Adoro Te Devote, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas; St. Justin Martyr, First Apology; St. Augustine, Confessions I.1.