

Session 10: The Fourth Cup

John 19:28-37; Mark 15:22-23; Matthew 27:33-34; with harvests from Exodus 12

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. With their nine-week-old guesses open on the table, the group discovers that John presents the death of Jesus as the completion of his Passover: the vow kept, wine refused at the start and received at the end, hyssop, unbroken bones, and only then: it is finished.

Catholic Touchstone. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: the victim is one and the same, only the manner of offering is different (CCC 1367); the Supper anticipated what the Cross accomplished (CCC 1339, 610-611).

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the summit, and it begins with a ritual, not a lesson. The first thirty minutes belong to the sealed guesses. Follow the script in the discussion guide exactly: John 19:28-30 read aloud in silence first, then every sheet returned to its writer unopened, then opened and read around the circle, unsigned and uncommented, before one word of teaching. Nine weeks of trust are cashed in those thirty minutes. Do not rush them.

Then the texts. Hold two things in balanced hands tonight, because the session's integrity depends on the balance. The first hand holds what is certain. Mark 14:25: after the cup, Jesus vowed off the fruit of the vine until the kingdom. Mark 15:23: at Golgotha they offered him wine mingled with myrrh, and he did not take it; the vow holds. John 19:28-30: at the very end, knowing that all was now finished, he said, I thirst, and received the vinegar (sour wine), on hyssop, and said, It is finished. John 19:31-37: his legs were not broken, that the scripture might be fulfilled, not a bone of him shall be broken. Hyssop and unbroken bones are Passover law, Exodus 12:22 and 12:46, the two details your group read nine weeks ago under strict instructions to observe and never explain. Tonight they harvest both themselves, and they will remember planting them.

The second hand holds what is proposed. Many Catholic teachers, ancient instincts and modern voices alike, have drawn these data into one reading: that Jesus, having left the Passover liturgy open at the table, completed it on the Cross with that final cup, so that the Supper and Calvary are one continuous act of sacrifice, begun in the upper room (Mark 14:15) and finished on the cross, at the ninth hour of the Synoptic accounts. It is a beautiful and serious proposal, and this session presents it as a proposal: a way of seeing that the texts invite but do not compel, and that the Church has not defined. What the Church does teach, definitively, needs no cup arithmetic: the Mass and the Cross are one single sacrifice (CCC 1367). The proposal illuminates the dogma; the dogma never depended on the proposal. Keep that order straight tonight and the session will be both thrilling and honest.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 12:22, harvested. The blood of the lamb was applied with a bunch of hyssop. John alone records that the sponge of vinegar was put on hyssop and lifted to the mouth of the dying Lamb (John 19:29). The instrument of the first Passover's blood touches the lips of the last.

Exodus 12:46, harvested. You shall not break a bone of it. John records that the soldiers broke the legs of both others and, finding Jesus dead, did not break his, that the scripture might be fulfilled: not a bone of him shall be broken (John 19:33, 36). John leaves the source unnamed; the wording is the Passover lamb's law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; compare Psalm 34:20), and John has already set the scene at Passover (19:14).

Psalms 69:21. For my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink: John says Jesus spoke to fulfil the scripture without naming it, and Psalm 69:21, the psalm of the righteous sufferer, is the text commonly understood. Scripture's fulfillments layer; they do not compete.

Fulfillment. The chain, from the canonical texts alone: a Passover meal with covenant words over the cup; a vow not to drink again; wine refused at the crucifixion's start; the vinegar received at its end, with John's own note that Jesus acted knowing that all was now finished; hyssop; bones unbroken; it is finished; and blood and water from the opened side (John 19:34), which the Fathers loved to read as the sacramental life of the Church flowing from the new Adam's side. Whatever name we give the final drink, the canonical reading this session proposes binds Supper and Cross into one Passover, with John's own lamb texts bearing the weight.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of his teaching in the *City of God*: Christ is both the priest who offers and the offering itself, and he willed the Church's daily sacrifice to be the sacrament of this one offering, in which she learns to offer herself in him. That Supper, Cross, and altar are one sacrifice seen whole is the Church's teaching his words serve (CCC 1367); the compression is ours.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the *Summa Theologiae* (III, q. 83, a. 1), with his broader teaching on the Mass: the celebration of this sacrament is an image and a making present of the sacrifice of the Cross, and in it the whole mystery of our salvation is comprised. The victim is one, the priest is one; the altar does not add a second offering to Calvary but places us at the one offering. Aquinas would recognize tonight's balance: the certainty belongs to the unity of the sacrifice, not to any reconstruction of the meal.

St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

An honest attribution: in his novel *Loss and Gain*, Newman placed in the mouth of a character his own famous cry about the Mass: to me nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass; it is not a mere form of words, it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth: the evocation of the Eternal. What the group discovers tonight, that the action on the altar and the action on Golgotha are one, is why Newman could write that sentence without exaggeration.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1364: in the Eucharist, the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present; as often as the sacrifice of the Cross is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.
- CCC 1366-1367: the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it re-presents the sacrifice of the cross, is its memorial, and applies its fruit; the victim is one and the same, only the manner of offering is different.
- CCC 1339-1340: by celebrating the Supper in the course of the Passover, Jesus gave the Passover its definitive meaning: his passing over to the Father, anticipated in the Supper, accomplished in his death and resurrection.

THREAD WATCH

Sealed guesses: OPENING NIGHT. The ritual script is in the discussion guide. Non-negotiables: John 19:28-30 first, in silence after; every sheet read aloud by its own writer; no commentary between readings; teaching begins only after the last sheet.

The command to eat. Do not advance the thread tonight; the summit belongs to the cup. The full list assembles at Session 12.

Where is the lamb? Tonight John calls the fulfillments by their Passover names, and someone will likely say the word lamb. Honor it: yes, and the question from Moriah gets its full answer in two weeks. Hold the last door shut.

Session Goals

1. Conduct the sealed guess opening ritual with full solemnity.
2. Harvest the hyssop and the unbroken bones planted in Session 3.
3. Establish the canonical chain: vow, refusal, reception, it is finished.
4. Present the fourth cup reading precisely as a proposal, and the one-sacrifice teaching precisely as doctrine.
5. Answer the over-reading steelman without surrendering what John actually wrote.

A note on time. The ritual takes thirty minutes; the session runs 90. If you must cut, cut the Dig Deeper and the second Send question. Nothing else. Never compress the ritual.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

The Opening of the Guesses

Leader, follow this script. Say: nine weeks ago, before you knew where this study was going, each of you sealed an answer to one question: Jesus's final word from the cross was, It is finished. What was finished? Tonight we open them. First, the text.

Read John 19:28-30 aloud, slowly. Keep thirty seconds of silence. Then return each sealed sheet to its writer, unopened. Go around the circle: each person opens their own sheet and reads exactly what they wrote, without explaining or apologizing. No one comments between readings, including you. When the last sheet has been read, keep another moment of silence, and then say: every one of you wrote something true. Tonight we find out how much more was finished than any of us guessed. Then begin.

Win: After the Opening

1. What was it like to hear your own nine week old guess read in your own voice? Did the study change what you would write today?
2. Which of the other guesses around the circle struck you, and why?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight the group harvests seeds they planted themselves. Let them do the reaping; your job is only to put the right texts side by side.

3. First, reassemble what we carried out of Session 9. From memory if you can: what did Jesus vow after the cup (Mark 14:25), and in what state did the company leave the meal?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The vow: I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. They sang the hymn and went out into the night: on the tradition's shape, the meal left open; on the text's own terms, the host sworn off the vine and soon praying about a cup.

4. Read Mark 15:22-23 and Matthew 27:33-34. Arriving at Golgotha, what is Jesus offered, and what does he do? Given the vow, what do you make of it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Wine mingled with myrrh (Matthew: wine mingled with gall); when he tasted it, he would not drink it. The drugged wine was a mercy, a dulling of pain, and he refused it. Whatever else is true, the vow of Mark 14:25 is holding: at the start of the crucifixion, Jesus will not take the fruit of the vine, even as anesthesia. He goes to the work awake.

5. Now read John 19:28-30 again, this time with study eyes. Note the exact sequence John gives: what does Jesus know, what does he say, what does he receive, on what is it lifted, and what does he say last? Who in this scene is in control?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfil the scripture, I thirst. A bowl of vinegar stood there; they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The sequence is deliberate and Jesus drives it: the thirst is announced knowing all was finished and to fulfil the scripture; the drink is received; and only after receiving it does he declare completion and hand over his spirit. Read as the Church reads it, he remains at the end what he was at the Supper, the giver: no one takes his life from him; he lays it down (John 10:18).

Someone should catch the word hyssop; if not, ask what the wine was lifted on, and wait. This is their Session 3 seed. Let whoever remembers Exodus 12:22 say it aloud: hyssop is what applied the lamb's blood to the doorposts on Passover night.

6. Read John 19:31-37. What do the soldiers do to the two others, what do they not do to Jesus, and how does John himself explain it? Whose law is John quoting, and where did we read it?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

They break the legs of the two crucified with him; finding Jesus already dead, they do not break his, and one pierces his side, from which blood and water flow. John names the fulfillment: these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, not a bone of him shall be broken. John leaves his source unnamed, but the wording is the Passover lamb's law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; compare Psalm 34:20), the second detail the group read and filed nine weeks ago.

Say it carefully and confidently: the evangelist who stood at the cross quotes lamb law over the body of Jesus, in Passover season. Hyssop and unbroken bones are not our typology; the texts are John's own.

7. Now the whole arc, and the guesses on the table. Lay the pieces in order: the Passover meal and its covenant cup; the vow; the refusal at Golgotha's start; the reception at its end; hyssop; unbroken bones; it is finished. What was finished? Answer in layers, from what is certain outward to what is proposed.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Certain, from the texts: the scriptures were being fulfilled to the end (John 19:24, 28, 36-37), and Jesus, knowing that all was now finished (19:28), declared it (19:30); the work the Father gave him was finished (John 4:34; 17:4); and his Passover was finished: John has framed the death with the lamb's own laws, and the Supper's vow and the Cross's final drink enclose the Passion like brackets. The Supper and the Cross are one act of sacrifice, begun at the table, accomplished on Calvary, which is exactly the Church's dogma: one victim, one priest, one sacrifice (CCC 1367).

Proposed, and beloved: many Catholic teachers gather these same data into a sharper picture: that the final cup of the open Passover liturgy was that vinegar on the hyssop, so that Jesus finished the seder itself from the wood of the cross. We present that reading as what it is, a proposal the texts invite but do not compel, and the Church has not defined. Hold it as gift, not as proof. Notice what needs no proposal at all: every guess sealed nine weeks ago named something true, and the truest summary was on the table before any of us wrote: the Passover of the Lamb, complete.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: The summit gets the sharpest objection. Read it at full strength.

The over-reading objection. Tetelestai means the work of atonement is finished, and that is all it needs to mean. The fourth cup reading is too clever: we cannot know the first century seder's exact shape (your own Session 9 said so); the refused wine of Mark 15:23 was an offered painkiller, not a liturgical station; and John tells us plainly why Jesus said I thirst: to fulfil the scripture, meaning Psalm 69, not a seder rubric. A moving reconstruction is still a reconstruction, and reverence for the Cross should not depend on it.

8. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case for reading the final drink as nothing more than Psalm 69 fulfilled?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: Luke and Mark record the sour wine without any Passover framing; sour wine (posca) was simply the soldiers' ration, present by ordinary circumstance; and multiplying fulfillments risks making every detail carry more than the author intended.

9. Now answer with tonight's own discipline. What did this session actually claim as certain, and does John's text give the Passover framing, or did we? Where does the doctrine rest?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Agree with the objection's guardrails; they are ours. This session asserted the seder reconstruction only as a proposal, and no doctrine leaned on it. But the objection concedes too little in the other direction, because the Passover framing of John 19 is not our overlay: John quotes the unbroken-bone scripture whose wording is the lamb law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12), John alone names the hyssop, John sets the day as the day of Preparation of the Passover (19:14), a timestamp whose exact chronology is debated but whose Passover framing is not, and John's Baptist opened the Gospel with Behold, the Lamb of God (1:29). Psalm 69 and the Passover do not compete; John's fulfillments layer. The vow of Mark 14:25 and the refusal of Mark 15:23 are likewise canonical data, not reconstruction.

So the honest position holds both hands open: certainly, John presents the Cross as the completion of the true Passover, and the Church teaches that Supper and Cross are one sacrifice; possibly, the final cup was the seder's own last station, a reading we may love without requiring. Nothing tonight was built on the second hand. Everything tonight was built on the first.

DIG DEEPER: Blood and Water

Read John 19:34-35 once more: blood and water from the pierced side, with John's solemn eyewitness oath attached. Then read 1 John 5:6-8, the same author: this is he who came by water and blood.

The Fathers loved this wound: as Eve was drawn from the side of the sleeping Adam, the Church and her sacraments, the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist, flow from the side of the new Adam asleep in death (see CCC 766, 1225). Ask only: what does it mean that the sacraments come from precisely there?

Send: Taking It With You

10. He refused the wine that would dull the pain and received the wine that finished the work. Where in your life are you numbing what God is asking you to finish awake?

11. Nine weeks ago you could not have written tonight's answer. What else in your faith might be one honest study away from opening like these envelopes did?

Live It This Week

- Keep your opened guess sheet somewhere you will see it, as a record that patient attention to Scripture pays what it promises.
- At Mass this Sunday, at the elevation of the chalice, pray the memory verse silently, and receive Communion, if you are able, as the completion he handed you.
- Read John 19 start to finish once this week, alone, aloud, and slowly.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
John 19:30

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord Jesus, host of the feast and priest of the offering, you finished the work the Father gave you, you fulfilled the Passover of our redemption, and you did not let one drop of it fall outside his will. What you finished, apply to us. What you opened from your side, pour into us. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
John 19:28-30	Ritual text; thirst, hyssop, vinegar, it is finished; live discovery
Mark 14:25	The vow, reassembled from Session 9
Mark 15:22-23; Matthew 27:33-34	Wine refused at the start; the vow holding
John 19:31-37	Unbroken bones; Exodus 12:46 quoted by John; blood and water
Exodus 12:22, 46	Session 3 seeds harvested: hyssop and bones
Psalms 69:21	Layered fulfillment; steelman text
John 19:14; John 1:29; John 10:18; 4:34; 17:4	Leader support: Passover frame, host to the end
John 19:34-35; 1 John 5:6-8	Dig Deeper: blood and water; CCC 766, 1225
John 19:30	Memory verse