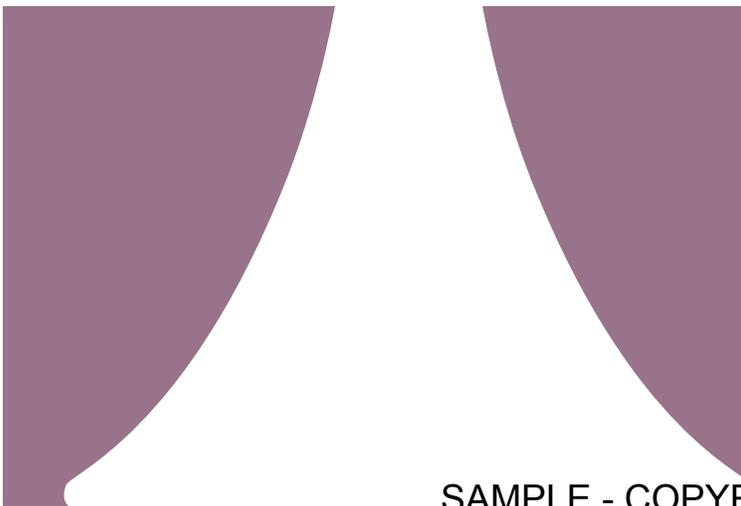
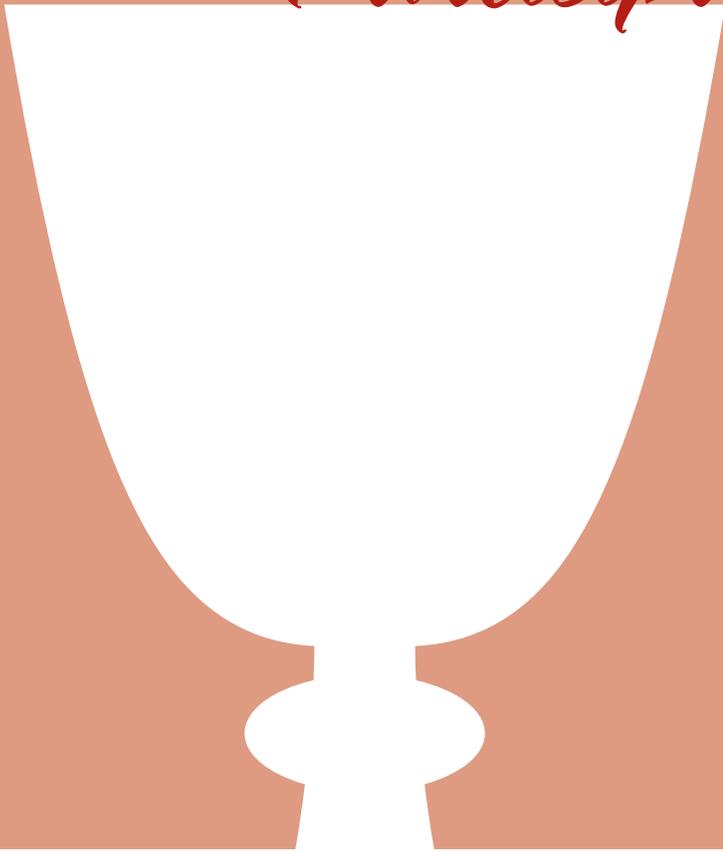


*Small Group
Participant Booklet*



*Living
the Eucharist*® 

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Welcome to Living the Eucharist

Congratulations! You have decided to join a *Living the Eucharist* small group during Lent. Your participation can enrich your life in ways both subtle and amazing. During the next six weeks you can expect to grow in your understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist, participate more fully in Sunday Mass, and leave Mass with a renewed zeal to let the light of Christ shine.

FORMAT OF THE MEETINGS

Your small group meetings will take around 90 minutes:

- 8 MIN.** Welcome and opening prayer
- 10 MIN.** Response to the Opening Questions for the topic
- 10 MIN.** Presentation of the topic
- 30 MIN.** Discussion of the topic
- 25 MIN.** Praying with the Sunday Mass readings using the *lectio divina* method
- 5 MIN.** Closing prayers
- 2 MIN.** Announcements

Refreshments and social time after the meeting

THE TOPICS FOR EACH WEEK

You will nourish your spiritual life by focusing on six topics during your meetings.

- MEETING 1: Empowered for Faithful Living**
PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
- MEETING 2: Nourishing My Prayer Life Through the Eucharist**
PREPARING FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
- MEETING 3: The Witness of Life**
PREPARING FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
- MEETING 4: The Best News in the World**
PREPARING FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
- MEETING 5: Called to Be Christ in the World**
PREPARING FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT
- MEETING 6: The Eucharist, Our Hope of Eternal Life in Christ**
PREPARING FOR PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

FROM THE CONCLUDING RITES OF THE MASS



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE

As you enter into the holy season of Lent, consider the following suggestions as ways to participate fully in your small group meetings.

Before the Meeting

Schedule some personal prayer time in order to read and reflect on the materials *before* you go to the meeting. Try the four-step sequence below and see if you find it helpful. Or find a sequence that works best for you.

First, read the Collect prayer for next Sunday's Mass, found on the first page of each session. Use this prayer to place your mind and heart in the presence of God.

Second, read the opening introductory paragraph for the session and the Opening Questions. What is your response to these questions? Next, read the presentation

and reflect on the questions at the end of the presentation. What is your response to these questions?

Third, prepare for *lectio divina*. Read the Scripture passage on the last page of each session, titled *For Lectio Divina*. This passage is taken from one of the readings for next Sunday's Mass. Next, read the section titled "*Lectio Divina: A Way to Pray with the Scriptures*," found on pages 29–33 of this booklet. Fr. Thomas Ryan, CSP, an insightful and knowledgeable teacher, will be your guide as you discover the treasure of the *lectio divina* method. Return to this section whenever you need to until you become comfortable with this method of prayer.

Treat yourself to the 16-minute video on the *Living the Eucharist* website titled "*Learn About Lectio Divina*." The video explains this prayer form, provides inspiring testimonies from those who have used *lectio divina* as part of *Living the Eucharist*, and demonstrates the use of *lectio divina* with a *Living the Eucharist* Lenten small group. The video shows you how this prayer form can enrich your personal faith and prayer life. Go to www.LivingtheEucharist.org and click on "Support for Adults."

Finally, grow in your knowledge and appreciation of the Mass by reading all or part of the section titled “Eucharist Empowers Catholics for Mission” on pages 34–43 of this booklet. Rita Ferrone, an award-winning writer with expertise in liturgy and catechesis, will open your mind to new insights about the Mass as a source of strength and power to carry on the mission of Christ and the Church. Go back to this section when needed, as you participate in the discussions week by week.

During the Meeting

Enter fully into the conversation. Contribute to the extent that you are comfortable and have something to say. You can enrich the experience of other group members by your participation; you also can benefit from listening attentively when others speak. Be yourself, participate in a way that is right for you, and enjoy the experience.

Keep the focus on faith sharing. Think of your group as a community of disciples growing in the love of Christ. Faith sharing is not an academic discussion or a test of how much each person knows about the topic. Rather, it invites each participant to consider the question: “What does this mean to me as a follower of Jesus Christ?”

Each person will express his or her faith differently, and all will be enlightened through the sharing.

After the Meeting

Be attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lent is a period of illumination and enlightenment, during which the Spirit leads us to repent and believe in the Gospel. The insights from the group meetings on the Eucharist can be a pathway to conversion, an invitation to new life in Jesus Christ. What the Spirit teaches you through the meetings will enable you to celebrate Easter with a renewed mind and heart.

Look for ways to live the Eucharist. During the dismissal rite at Mass, the priest or deacon says one of four things: “Go forth, the Mass is ended,” or “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” or “Go in peace.” As you participate in your small group and learn more about the Mass, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in bringing Christ to your family, your work place...wherever the light of Christ needs to shine. You can count on Christ’s presence in the Eucharist to give you the power, strength, and wisdom you need to live and share your faith with joy and confidence during the week.

Nourishing My Prayer Life Through the Eucharist

Prayer is ongoing communication with a God who loves us and wants to abide with us. Through prayer we develop and deepen our personal relationship with God. How does liturgical prayer in the Eucharist bring focus, richness, and renewed vigor to our prayer life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

O God, who have commanded us
to listen to your beloved Son,
be pleased, we pray,
to nourish us inwardly by your word,
that, with spiritual sight made pure,
we may rejoice to behold your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- 1 ■ Who taught you to pray?
- 2 ■ Do you feel that you are still a learner in prayer? If so, what has been your latest discovery?
- 3 ■ What in your experience of prayer do you treasure most?

PRESENTATION

Prayer, the Catechism tells us, is “a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2558). It is initiated by God, who desires a relationship with us.

When we “pray the Mass,” we enter into a specific kind of prayer: liturgical prayer, the public prayer of the Church. Liturgy is a privileged kind of prayer, but it is not the only form that prayer takes in the life of a disciple.

Catholic ways of praying are many. They include meditation, devotions such as the Rosary, spontaneous outpouring of the heart or “talking to God,” repeated mantras such as the Jesus Prayer, *lectio divina*, recitation of prayers and psalms, crying out with tears and laments, singing songs of joy, bodily postures and gestures—and more.

Woven through all these prayer expressions is the faith of the Church, which draws us into one. It is this unifying center that we discover most powerfully in the Eucharist: the anchor of all our prayer.

An Organic Whole

Because we are whole people, we cannot separate our prayer into closed compartments. Prayer within the liturgy has an organic relationship to prayer outside the liturgy. Thus, if our life of prayer outside the liturgy is poor, weak, or neglected, our liturgical prayer will probably show a “vitamin deficiency.” Likewise, if we do not pray the liturgy as we should—deeply sharing in this solemn, corporate act of the Church’s worship—our personal prayer can become self-centered and less than whole.

The good news is that by strengthening one area of prayer, we can learn how to build up the whole of our prayer life. Thus, if we truly endeavor to pray the liturgy well, our personal prayer will resound with the wonderful array of themes found in the liturgy. Praying the liturgy well means sharing rhythms of time through the liturgical cycle, the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year, with our fellow-believers all over the world. The strength of community can steady us and ground us in what is most important. We bring this strength to our experience of personal prayer.

Also, a genuine commitment to personal prayer outside the liturgy can greatly enrich our liturgical experience.

Being in the habit of praying daily means learning to listen for the voice of God, cultivating an awareness of being in God’s presence, and opening one’s heart to God’s love. What better preparation can there be for celebrating the liturgy, in which we encounter again and again the love of God poured out in Jesus Christ?

Liturgical Prayer Basics

What are the basic characteristics of liturgical prayer in the Catholic tradition? Here are several; they form us in our identity as disciples and can enrich our faith:

Trinity

Liturgical prayer in the Catholic tradition is deeply Trinitarian: our prayer is offered to God, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. The great doxology that ends the Eucharistic Prayer captures this well:

Through him, and with him, and in him
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

The Trinitarian quality of our worship reminds us that all liturgical acts essentially embody relationships. The liturgy is not a private function. It is the action of the whole Church, even when only a few people participate. We celebrate liturgy as a community. And in that communal identity we constantly are drawn to share in the life of the Trinity—which is love in action.

Structure

Many liturgical prayers follow a four-part format. Knowing this structure can help us to understand the prayers, and also to compose prayers of our own. The order is easily remembered by the handy rhyme: You-Who-Do-Through.

First, we call upon God. We might add a descriptive word or two, such as “almighty” or “loving” or “merciful.” Second, we recall what God has done in the past. This may be very brief or an extended recollection. Third, we ask for God to act again in the present, in accord with his gracious works in the past: to respond to our present need. Fourth, we pray through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. A whole theology of prayer is embodied in this structure: our dignity as children of God, our gratitude for what God has already done, our trustful presentation of today’s needs, and our reliance upon Christ’s intercession and the power of the Spirit to accomplish what is needed.

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent provides a good example:

[You] O God,

[who] who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son,

[do] be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory.

[through] Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

The structure of liturgical prayer reminds us how important it is to remember God’s wonderful deeds. We find reason to hope for the future by recalling how God has shown us love, mercy, and justice in the past. It also affirms that we must ask for what we need, day by day.

Embodied Prayer

Liturgical prayer is realized through our physical selves as well as through our spirits. There is no such thing as a disembodied liturgy, since we cannot celebrate the liturgy without physical expression. When we stand, sit, or kneel; when we make the sign of the cross or extend the sign of peace; when we breathe deeply, sing

out, speak or keep silence; when we eat and drink with others: these physical events are etched into our prayer. Inspired by the example of the liturgy, we may use some concrete actions when we pray at home, too, such as lighting a candle, making the sign of the cross, or reverencing the Scriptures.

The Word

The three-year Lectionary cycle gives us a rich and varied diet of Sacred Scripture to nourish our prayer. In the liturgy we hear the Word proclaimed and preached. During the week, we can savor that Word! The Lectionary, which contains the Scripture readings we hear at Mass each Sunday, can be a great gift to our prayer life, as it guides us through the literature of the Bible.

Ritual

Liturgy, because it is ritual, relies upon fixed words, actions, and forms. This is a great strength, but also a fact that must be carefully understood. Sometimes people criticize liturgy for being “impersonal,” yet this is not the case. What the liturgy does is to provide us with a ritual for prayer that belongs to everyone, with signs and symbols big enough to embrace a variety of human experiences.

At any given Sunday Mass, someone is mourning a loss, while someone else is rejoicing. The liturgy must be roomy enough to embrace these extremes (and everything in between) as part of the Paschal Mystery. Whether we are feeling on top of the world, or lost and miserable, the liturgy is there for us, summoning us to remember God’s mercies in the past, encounter God in the present, and trust in God’s care for us in the future.

Liturgical Year

As we keep the seasons of the liturgical year, our prayer is given a wonderful breadth and fullness, spanning the whole mystery of Christ. The Advent and Christmas

seasons celebrate the Incarnation and awaken our hearts to God's promises and their fulfillment. The Lenten season invites us to ongoing conversion. The Easter season celebrates the Resurrection and Christ's risen life, which we share through the Holy Spirit. Ordinary Time explores the teachings of Christ, and what it means to follow him, to be disciples, to be Church. The calendar of the saints inspires us through the year with examples of extraordinary virtue and holiness. Thus the rhythm of the calendar that we live in the Eucharist sets the pace, and it will color and flavor our personal prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 ■ Identify one insight you received from this presentation and share what meaning this new insight has for you.
- 2 ■ How has your experience of prayer during the Eucharist enriched your personal prayer life as a disciple of Jesus?
- 3 ■ When you pray at home, do you follow a certain pattern? Are there seasonal differences? How do these practices reflect or supplement your experience of Eucharist?
- 4 ■ Using the fourfold prayer structure described in the presentation, compose your own prayer and share it.

READINGS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19; 20, 22; 2 Timothy 1:8b-10; Matthew 17:1-9

PSALM RESPONSE: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

FOR LECTIO DIVINA

MATTHEW 17:1-3, 5-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him.... [A] bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive these glorious mysteries,
we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord,
for allowing us while still on earth
to be partakers even now
of the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Lectio Divina: A Way to Pray with the Scriptures

Deepening communion with God is the invitation and adventure of our lives. We want it, and we are looking for methods that will help us realize it. We must have an *experience of God* if we are to pursue God with our whole heart, mind, and soul. Intellectual knowledge *about* God will not be enough to feed us and hold us. *Lectio divina* is an accessible way to have such an encounter.

The method is time-tested. The ecclesiastical writer Origen of Alexandria (185–254) and the monk John Cassian (360–435) trace out the method in their writings on prayer. The twelfth-century Carthusian monk Guido gave it sharper definition as a stairway of four spiritual steps—reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation—that came to be known as *lectio divina* (literally, “divine reading”). This process is a slow, contemplative way of praying with the Scriptures that enables the Word of God to become a means of union with God. The four steps, with their classical Latin titles, are:

STEP ONE:

Lectio – Listening to God’s Word

STEP TWO:

Meditatio – Reflecting and pondering on God’s Word

STEP THREE:

Oratio – Praying from the heart in response to what God asks of me

STEP FOUR:

Contemplatio – Resting in God’s presence

Lectio divina has no other goal than spending time with God through the medium of God’s Word. In doing this, there will be a gentle oscillation between the inner, spiritual activity of, on the one hand, reading, reflecting, and praying, and on the other, of receptivity. The spiritual activity is not outward, but inward, taking us down into the depths of the soul, where the Holy Spirit is transforming our hearts to that of Christ.

And in the receptivity phase—contemplation—we cease from interior spiritual *doing* and learn simply to *be*, to rest in God’s loving presence. Just as we constantly move back and forth in our public lives between speaking and listening, questioning and reflecting, so in our spiritual lives we must learn to move back and forth gracefully between spiritual *practice* and the refreshment of simply *being* in God’s presence. *Lectio divina* teaches us to delight in the different modalities—active and receptive—of experiencing God. In the gentle back-and-forth between spiritual activity and receptivity embodied in the *lectio divina* process, we are united ever more closely to God.

Eucharist Empowers Catholics for Mission

An earnest young man, worried about whether or not he was responding adequately to God's call, went to talk to a priest. "There is so much that I would like to do to serve God," he said, "but I'm a pre-med student and I have so little free time. I'm really torn because I do want to help others, but I have so much work to do. I sometimes wonder if I am really being a disciple at all, or if my life is just selfish."

The priest was not quick to supply an answer. He sensed the sincerity of the young man's struggle in the present moment. Yet he also knew very well that the issue he was wrestling with would remain important for many years to come and is one that faces all of us. How does one balance the call outward, the call to mission, with the duties of everyday life and work, which can seem so narrowly focused on me and mine? How does one strive to build a career or raise a family or even just struggle daily to make ends meet—and not fall into the pattern of putting off to tomorrow the act of hearing and responding to the call of God? The priest had a feeling that the Master himself, who taught the meaning of service by washing his disciples' feet, seemed to have come into the room and was listening.

Finally, the priest spoke. "Your work itself can give honor to God," he said, "provided you really do want

to serve him. Don't think of discipleship as something separate from the rest of your life. Rather, *whatever* you do, do it for the glory of God."

It wasn't the most original reply (in fact, a number of saints through Christian history had said similar things), but it hit the mark. The young man went away glad, his burden lifted. "I can do that!" he thought to himself.

PART I EMBRACE YOUR MISSION

The call to serve God, and to spread the Kingdom of God, is given to all Christians in Baptism. Within the baptismal liturgy itself, this call is symbolized richly.

The Eucharist is our most beautiful treasure.
— POPE BENEDICT XVI