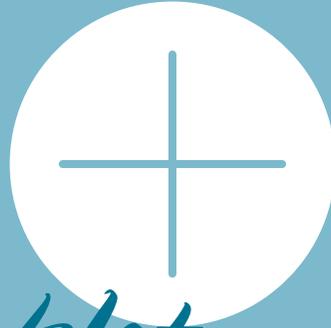


*Small Group
Participant Booklet
for Teens*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT ■ Pensaré Design Group, LTD

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Christopher Begg, S.T.D., Ph.D., Censor Deputatus. *Imprimatur*: Most Rev. Barry C. Knestaut, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, Archdiocese of Washington, February 7, 2011.

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Published by Paulist Evangelization Ministries
3031 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017
www.pemdc.org

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LOOKING BACK

During last week's meeting we discussed how a lack of the Holy Spirit's involvement in our lives is the spiritual equivalent of running

on empty. We concluded with the following Action Challenge on page 18: "Consider what you can do to experience more fully the power of the Holy Spirit during the week in order to truly 'Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.'"

In what ways were you aware of the Spirit's presence during your week? How did you perceive the Spirit's movement? In what ways did you struggle or find it difficult?



YOUR TAKE...

Our theme for this week is "Get in the Game!" Consider the following questions:

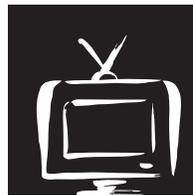
- 1 ■ The Church teaches that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324). Recall a time when this was a very real experience for you and you felt like you fully and actively participated in the Mass. What enhanced your participation? In what ways did it impact your life?
- 2 ■ Describe an experience of liturgy that was on the opposite end of the spectrum, when you struggled to participate actively. What made participation so difficult?

OPENING PRAYER

COLLECT FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death.

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.



VIDEO PRESENTATION: "GET IN THE GAME!"

THEME DISCUSSION AND INTERACTION

- 1 ■ What do you feel is the main theme or central message of the video? How might it relate to our experience of Sunday Eucharist? Please explain.
- 2 ■ What would you say are characteristics or practices of one who is more a spectator during Sunday Eucharist?
- 3 ■ The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful enter into the liturgy with full, conscious, and active participation. What does it mean to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the Mass? What does it look like on the outside? What does it look like on the inside?



VIDEO COMMENTARY: "GET IN THE GAME!"

Two people own the same jersey. One casually picked it up from a store rack; the other exhaustively racked his body to earn it. Who values the jersey more deeply?

The obvious answer is the athlete. There's nothing cosmetic about his jersey. He's not vicariously wearing it, or sporting someone else's name. His jersey is the real deal—with his own name on the back—earned through his own exhaustive effort. He's on the team.

Are you on the team? Are you training for the true prize?

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

PARTICIPATING IN THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE

St. Paul reminds us: real faith requires real effort and real glory is the reward of real faith. A Super Bowl ring is incredible, but from an eternal perspective it's a minor league achievement. What *truly* counts is a life fully lived for God and others in the here and now, and the eternally lasting award that comes later. We are invited to *participate* in this—the ultimate adventure.

Being Catholic is not a spectator sport. We're given a jersey to be a part of the team. The real excitement is to *play* the game and to be a part of the team.

WE HAVE THE SOUL TO BE A SAINT

We may not have the body to be a professional athlete, but we have the soul to become a saint. We would do well to look at the lives of saints and long to have the compassion of Mother Teresa or the courage of St. Maximilian Kolbe. Thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit, *we can*. We may never be able to bend the soccer ball like David Beckham, but by God's grace we can learn to pray like St. John of the Cross.

But it requires work. Discipline. Passion. Commitment. Adventure, peace, love, joy, and eternal glory await those who completely give themselves to Jesus Christ. So, do you want to get in the game?

PRAYING THE LITURGY

We can begin by *praying* the liturgy, not simply attending it. We can prepare our heart beforehand, be attentive to the readings, and follow along with the prayers. Finally, and most importantly, we can receive the Body and Blood of Christ with reverence and gratitude.

It's really easy to not get much out of Mass. The difference often comes down to whether we arrive as a spectator or as a participating member of the team.

"Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). If we don't put our faith into action, it means nothing. It's like a jersey we bought at a store—it doesn't actually make us a part of the team.

Get on the team and join the adventure! Jesus said, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He calls us to get into the game and onto the field, where the action is. We can transition from spectator to saint. Let's begin by praying the Mass, and then letting it flow into the rest of our lives.

Lectio Divina



A WAY TO PRAY WITH THE SCRIPTURES

Deepening communion with God is the invitation and adventure of our lives.

We want this communion, 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 (pronounced LEX-ee-oh dee-VEE-na) 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 goal other than spending time with God through the medium of God’s Word. In doing this, there will be a gentle movement between the inner, spiritual activity of, on the one hand, reading, reflecting, and praying, and on the other hand, 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 the heart of Christ.

Sunday Mass



A GUIDE FOR TEENS

Celebrating the Eucharist has been the central act of faithful Christians for centuries. The Mass is an extremely rich celebration, holding deep meaning for those who believe and lots of interest even for those who don't.

To truly “get inside” the Eucharist and understand how it works takes some doing. It is not simply a matter of program or pageantry. It is a ritual that requires something of the participants if they are to get it right. Also, it operates on several different levels all at the same time. What goes on in the Mass is not all “up front” and immediately accessible, like $2 + 2 = 4$, or the pope lives in Rome, or three strikes and you're out. If the whole thing were on the surface, we'd finish and be done with it in short order.

On the contrary, our liturgy is an ancient ritual. It deals with mystery—the kind of mystery that surprises and intrigues, and is there to be explored. The liturgy is there to lead us deeper and deeper into a right relationship with God and the world. Nobody gets it all at once.

Because God is a mystery, our dealings with him in the liturgy are a lot like diving into a pool of water. There's an initial splash, and then, once you've gotten beneath the surface, it's a whole different world.

The purpose of this section is to guide you around a bit in the “different world” to which the liturgy gives access. This guide is arranged in two parts. The first is about some aspects of the liturgy that Christians have been exploring, arguing about, and finding awesome for centuries. It is called “Three Great Mysteries of the Mass.” The second describes the structure and flow of the Mass, so you can understand how to navigate around in it. It is called “The Game Plan.” At the end, there are some conclusions.

The Eucharist is our most beautiful treasure.

— POPE BENEDICT XVI