

My Catholic Worship! Study Group

Session 1 - The Sacred Liturgy

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read the Introduction and Chapter One of the *My Catholic Worship!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

This initial gathering time is simply an opportunity for everyone to arrive and meet each other. The leader should make sure, during this initial gathering, that he/she has all contact information of the participants. Name tags might be of benefit.

5 minutes - Introductions

As the host, gather everyone together and welcome them. Share a little about yourself, and then go around, asking each person to briefly introduce himself/herself.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

"Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic worship together. 'Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith.'"

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Matthew 22:37: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment..."

Ephesians 1:9-12: He has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

John 17:4-10: I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began. "I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them..."

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.***
(a minute of silence).

The leader invites everyone to pray the following prayer as the leader prays it out loud:

Lord, Jesus, may I learn to love You in all things and above all things. May I love You with my whole mind, heart, soul, and strength.

Lord, as I begin this study of worship, help me to examine my own life of prayer and worship. Help me to look honestly at my celebration of the Sacraments and to discern how I can enter into these gifts more fully.

Lord, You come to me so deeply and humbly, hidden within the Liturgy. May I have eyes of true faith so that I can discover You and love You in these moments of worship.

Lord, may worship of You consume me and fill me with a deeper love of others. May my worship of You fill my heart and soul with love of others so that I can be a more effective instrument of You in the world. Jesus, I trust in You.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in the chapter for this discussion. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. What do you consider “priceless?” What does the list look like? Start with things other than matters directly related to faith and then, after a list is formed, compare it to a list that would include priceless aspects of our life of faith, prayer, and worship.
2. How would you describe a “mystery?” Discuss “mystery” first in general terms, not yet bringing faith into the definition.
3. Now, how is it that the Liturgy is a “*Mysterium Fidei*?” A Mystery of Faith? Discuss this thoroughly, trying to gain greater insight into the many ways that our life, faith, and worship encompass countless mysteries of faith.
4. The Liturgy is both an “action of God” and “an action of the Church.” Discuss and define the ways that the Liturgy is:
 1. An action of God - What does it mean that the Liturgy is 100% an action of God? In what ways is this the case?
 2. An action of the Church - What does it mean to say that the Liturgy is 100% an action of the Church? In what ways is this the case?
5. Is the Liturgy boring? No, this is not a trick question (well, sort of). Discuss this carefully, using the following method:
 1. Is the Liturgy boring at times? Yes or no?
 2. Does that matter? Does it matter if it is or is not? Try to spend some time on this. Most likely there will be many opinions.

3. Should the goal of the Liturgy (Mass or any other liturgical worship) be to entertain us, taking into mind our short attention spans? Should we try to compete with Hollywood and other forms of modern entertainment? What's the danger in this?
4. Are there any benefits to keeping the Liturgy "boring" according to worldly standards? How might a saint benefit from more dry and solemn Liturgies?
5. What should the real focus of the Liturgy be? How best do we, as a Church, strive to attain this?
6. What does the Liturgy have to do with our faith? What's the relationship?
6. Discuss the way that the Liturgy is celebrated regarding the externals. Share thoughts on some of the following:
 1. Liturgical season
 2. Liturgical colors
 3. Incense
 4. Sanctuary structure
 5. Sacred art
 6. Sacred music (This is worth discussing. Is there an ideal form of liturgical music?)
 7. Gestures
 8. Homily
7. The last section of Chapter One speaks of the importance of Unity and Diversity. Does anyone have any comments or insights to share on that section?

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Lord, Jesus, our goal in life must be to worship You. We love you most when we worship You with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Help each one of us to discover the beauty and riches of divine worship, especially as we are invited into this worship within the various forms of the Sacred Liturgy.

Lord, we pray for those entrusted with special roles within the Liturgy. We pray for our priests. Guide them, be with them, and make them holy. May they always act as holy and humble instruments of Your love and mercy.

We pray for those who lead us through prayers, the reading of Scripture, music, and all liturgical roles. May they also be truly humble, allowing only You to shine through their service.

Lord, help us all to meet You each and every time we participate in the Holy Mass, in any Sacrament, and in any other form of divine worship. May we meet You personally and deeply so that our lives may be transformed.
Jesus, we trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.