

# **My Catholic Worship! Study Group**

## **Session 2 - The Sacraments in General and Baptism in Particular**

### **Pre-meeting Prep**

Participants should be asked to read Chapters Two and Three of the *My Catholic Worship!* book prior to this meeting.

### **5 minutes - Gather**

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

### **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 night prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

**John 3:1-15**: Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh

and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can this happen?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Matthew 28:16-20: The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

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 as the following prayer is prayed out loud by the leader:

***Lord our God, You have blessed us in innumerable ways beyond what we could ever even imagine. One way You bless us with countless graces is through the Sacraments. Thank You for these precious and sacred gifts.***

***Lord, help us to penetrate the deep meaning and value of the Sacraments. Help us to discover in these gifts Your unending and abiding presence.***

***Lord, teach us to meet You personally in our celebration of the Sacraments. Help us to discover You as our Father, our Savior, and our Strength in all things.***

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. Too often the sacraments are seen primarily as an external ritual we participate in. Why is that? Why is it hard, at times, to see the celebration of the Sacraments in a spirit of deep worship and communion with God?
2. How do you try to make your sacramental worship deeply personal? What do you do to meet God in a very real way?
3. A sacrament is an action of Christ and the Church that brings about what it signifies. This is essential to understand, even though it uses philosophical language. Who understands what this means? What does it mean? Discuss it.
4. There are “Three to get in!” In other words, there are three Sacraments of Initiation. How many of you knew this? Why do you think God chose to give us three Sacraments of Initiation rather than just one?
5. There are two Sacraments for healing. Share briefly on the following:
  1. Confession is confidential, so no one should share the content of their confession. However, sometimes there is a benefit to sharing the effects of a good and honest confession. Would anyone like to share, briefly, about this?
  2. Has anyone participated in Anointing of the Sick? Any brief thoughts?
6. There are two Sacraments of Vocation: Marriage and Holy Orders. Are there any brief comments anyone would like to share based on the initial descriptions in this chapter? An entire week is dedicated to these Sacraments, so just initial thoughts are sought here.
7. **Baptism** - This is the gateway to the life of grace and the other Sacraments! Here are some ideas to discuss in regards to this Sacrament. Share any thoughts on the following:
  1. Original Sin is washed away. Do you understand Original Sin?
  2. An indelible spiritual marking is given through this Sacrament. Any comments on this?
  3. Baptism makes us sons and daughters of the Father, and therefore, brothers and sisters in grace. This goes to the heart of our identity. So many people take their

identity in other things (accomplishments, looks, wealth, talents, etc.). How can we live out our true identity as children of God more completely so as to live this Sacrament?

4. If there is time, share any further thoughts from this chapter on Baptism that stood out. The following may be included if time allows:
  - i. Old Testament prefigurations - how do these point to Baptism?
  - ii. Why did Jesus get baptized?
  - iii. Who can baptize?
  - iv. What happens to those who are not baptized? Adults and children? (This is an important topic to spend some time on.)**
  - v. Any comments on the Rite of Baptism as outlined in the book? Is there anything that especially touched you during the celebration of Baptism for a family member or friend?

### **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:

***God and Father of all, You have chosen us and made us Your children in Christ Your Son. We are adopted as Your sons and daughters. In You, we become brothers and sisters with all of Your children. Help us every day to discover the dignity we have been given through Baptism. Help us to live up to our high calling as Your children.***

***Lord, through Baptism everyone is made sacred and holy. Each person is given a spiritual marking on their soul. Help us to see the dignity of each and every person and to value them as You value each one. May we let go, daily, of judgment and critical thinking. May our words always reflect the sacredness of every life.***

***Lord, help us to fulfill our mission in life given to us at our Baptism. We thank You for this indescribable gift. 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.