

## **The Catholic Mass... Revealed!**

### *Study Guide*

Session Two (Corresponds to Booklet Chapters 5-8)

As participants gather, play the “Kyrie” track from the soundtrack CD.

#### **1. Opening Prayer:**

*Leader:*

Heavenly Father, we come before you in thanksgiving for the gift of your Son, and particularly for his sacrifice which won the victory over sin and merited for us eternal salvation. Open our minds and hearts, Lord, so that we may learn the treasures of the Mass, in order to live each day as a preparation for our next Mass, as a thanksgiving for our last, and longing to serve You in others until we encounter You definitively and join the Liturgy of Heaven. We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

#### **2. Gospel Reflection:** (10-15 minutes for the Gospel to be read and each participant to share a personal insight)

*Reader:* Our text this evening is Luke Chapter 15, verses 11 to 32.

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need.

So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'"

So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.

The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him.

He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.

But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

Some points for reflection/discussion: Leader acts as a guide

- When we are at Mass, do we realize that God the Father has been longing to be with us, like the Father in the parable?
- When we return to God, we "come to our senses." (The passage in the original Greek says, "Returning to himself..." When we are far from God, we are outside of our true selves.
- At Mass, do we judge others? Do we have to open our hearts like the older son?
- Have we lived in the Father's house, but without enjoying a deep relationship with Him? How can we live the Mass differently to have the type of relationship with the Father that He desires for us?

**3. Audiovisual Presentation** Play the DVD Chapters 5 and 6

*A. The Penitential Rite – 10 Minutes*

- We go to mass as sinners asking God’s forgiveness. We need to be conscious of this as we approach the altar.
- Our sin is an obstacle to our communion of life with God, as well as true unity with each other.
  
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the Eucharist is one of the ways we show penance:

**1436** *Eucharist and Penance.* Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins."

- We are encouraged by Christ himself to reconcile with each other in order to participate more worthily at the altar:

“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Mt 5:23-24)

- How has attending Mass helped you forgive someone in your life?

*B. The Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy!) - 10 Minutes*

- Do we feel awed by praying a prayer which has been around since the beginning of Christianity? Knowing that so many saints and not-so-saints prayed for and obtain God’s mercy and forgiveness? Does that give us confidence and peace, even considering our sinfulness?
  
- Pope John Paul II wrote an Encyclical letter about God the Father called “Rich in Mercy” in which he says that mercy is the “most stupendous attribute of the Creator and the Redeemer.” (The full context of the quote is below)
  
- Do I thank God for his mercy?
  
- St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun, spent her life spreading devotion to God’s mercy as an effective way for us to appreciate it and to grow in our love

for God. Does anyone in the group know how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet? (Maybe a plug for the CD *Divine Mercy: An Invitation*)?

*C. The Gloria – 10 Minutes*

- This hymn of the angels is sung or said on Sundays (except in the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent) and on solemn feast days.
- As we sing this hymn, are we conscious of renewing Christmas, Christ's coming into our lives? We are using the very words of the angels!
- Are we also aware that we need to renew our sense of unworthiness, by asking again for God's mercy? But this time, instead of imploring it, we are praising God for being merciful.
- The Gloria touches upon Christmas, but also Christ's Passion and Resurrection. His life was one uninterrupted mission. What does that tell me about my own life, about how God wants me to think about and live my own life? What is my mission, in which I share Christ's cross and thus share as well the glory of his victory?

*D. The Collect – 10 Minutes*

- First of all, pay attention to the pronunciation. (It is COLlect, not collect.) It comes from the term for the people gathered together.
- Are we awed by the sense of our history at Mass? The two thousand year tradition and continuity of our Catholic Church, throughout the years and even today throughout the world? The people gathered in Rome very much like we do, although they often had to gather in secret, at different locations, like some of our brothers and sisters do today in places where the Church is persecuted.
- This Opening Prayer unites our intentions as one people. We come together to ask our father for one thing, a virtue or attitude we need to live as God's children. Think of a group of children gathering before their Father to ask something, something that they need to please Him more. Wouldn't that melt his heart? Wouldn't He want very much to give them this gift?
- From a Missal, see some samples of what we ask for in opening prayers. They are beautiful prayers that we can even dwell on in personal prayer, in order to "be in synch" with what our Mother the Church asks us to pray for.

Allow time for participants to share any other ideas and reflections.

#### **4. Closing Prayer**

*Leader:*

Lord, we have come here to reflect together on the great memorial You left us, the most powerful means You have given us to be fed and strengthened in the struggle for your Kingdom on earth. May this time together unite us as your family, and unite us to You, in Your Eucharist, the source and summit of our Christian life. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Appendix A:

From John Paul II's Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* ("Rich in Mercy")

The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy-the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer-and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior's mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser. Of great significance in this area is constant meditation on the Word of God, and above all conscious and mature participation in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. The Eucharist brings us ever nearer to that love which is more powerful than death: "For as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup," we proclaim not only the death of the Redeemer but also His resurrection, "until he comes" in glory. The same Eucharistic rite, celebrated in memory of Him who in His messianic mission revealed the Father to us by means of His words and His cross, attests to the inexhaustible love by virtue of which He desires always to be united with us and present in our midst, coming to meet every human heart. (*Dives in Misericordia*, 13.)