

ACTS 2:42 GROUPS

LIVING THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



"THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE APOSTLES, THE COMMUNAL LIFE, THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND PRAYER." - ACTS 2:42



Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

ACTS 2:42 GROUPS

LIVING THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

A small group series to foster Eucharistic Spirituality and Renewal in the Diocese of Owensboro, KY. Led by Bishop William F. Medley.

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Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

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DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

McRaith Catholic Center | Office of the Bishop

Dear Acts 2:42 small group participants,

I am grateful to the Lord that you have chosen to participate in the National Eucharistic Revival and humbled in my role as Bishop to be a part of these small group sessions. A devotion to the Eucharist has been at the core of my spirituality throughout my life. I am excited about the opportunity to share with you some video reflections on the Eucharist and to witness to and teach about our Eucharistic theology and spirituality as Catholics as the "Chief Catechist" of the diocese.

There will be many opportunities throughout the diocese this year to celebrate and experience the revival, culminating in the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis next July. I hope many from our diocese will participate. There is information in the back of this booklet that will direct you to our diocesan website for the revival, where you can find events around the diocese, near you, and information about tickets for the Congress.

In Jesus, we have been shown the fullest revelation of God and through his life, death, and resurrection, we are invited into the communion of the Trinity. In his promise to be with us always, he shares with us his very body and blood and sends us forth to be his body in the world. There is no greater mission for the Church than to share in the mission of Jesus. My prayer is that the Eucharistic Revival will lead us to encounter Jesus more deeply and empower us to be missionary disciples of Jesus to the people of Western Kentucky.

Please pray for me and know that I pray for each of you daily. God bless you.

Sincerely,

Bishop William F. Medley

Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky

CELEBRATING THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

The Diocese of Owensboro, under the leadership of Bishop William F. Medley, is excited to participate in the National Eucharistic Revival. The revival was established to renew our understanding of the Eucharist and to embrace the call to live as missionary disciples of Jesus in every diocese of the United States.

The start of this call to action is traced to 2017 with the release of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' document titled, *Living as Missionary Disciples*. This placed a needed focus on renewal in parishes across the country. In November of 2021, the U.S. Bishops approved the document, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. There was and is a growing sense that renewal in the Church starts with a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Catholic teaching expresses that the “Source and Summit” of our spiritual lives is found in the Eucharist, in an encounter with Christ.

The National Eucharistic Revival was presented as a three-year process of renewal and growth. The first year of the National Eucharistic Revival began on Corpus Christi Sunday, June 16, 2022. On this day our diocese held a Eucharistic procession in Mayfield, KY to express our solidarity with many families who were impacted by the tornadoes in December 2021 and to kick off the Year of Diocesan Revival. This began a yearlong effort of planning, preparation, and training. A committee was formed at the diocesan level to shepherd this process and connect with our parishes.

Bishop William F. Medley presides at Mass on Oct. 22, 2022. (Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead)



In December of 2022, our diocese hosted Fr. Connor Danstrom, one of the fifty trained priests to present formation for dioceses across the country during the Year of Diocesan Revival. There are so many ways that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops could have structured these training sessions for our parish priests and staff members, and it was powerful to hear the message they chose. It boils down to this message from Fr. Connor: “Human beings are made to live in communion with the Holy Trinity and to be Christ’s presence in the world...the focus of the Eucharistic Revival is on personal and communal transformation.”

The morning session consisted of three points: Sacrifice, Communion, and Presence. The sacrifice of Jesus' life was done once for all. Through the prayer of the priest, that same sacrifice is represented and the “real presence” of Jesus is manifest in our midst. Not a new sacrifice, but the one self-giving sacrifice of Jesus is present to us in time and space. Fr. Connor then explained communion. Humans are made for love and intimacy, not work or accomplishments. He said “God is calling us to relationship! If we are not living in communion with Jesus, our preaching will not be effective.” And perhaps more to the point, “We are to become what we receive, perfect self-giving

love!” This is truly a high calling and an incredible reality that our communion with Jesus is meant to transform us and send us out into the world to become the self-giving love of Jesus to everyone - being the very presence of God to our hurting world.



Fr. Connor Danstrom speaks at the Diocese of Owensboro's Dec. 6, 2022 Eucharistic Convocation. (Photo by Riley Greif)

Fr. Connor was focused on helping each of us, as leaders in the Church, to see that our encounters with Jesus in the Eucharist and beyond are to change us and equip us to be Jesus’ presence in the world today. It starts with what Jesus has done for us and his promise to be with us always. We are to receive and reflect Jesus to the world, by allowing ourselves to be transformed into missionary disciples.

The afternoon turned the focus onto our relationship and identity in God, and our call to

mission. Fr. Connor began by saying “Our relationship with God must be a daily focus and it is rooted in the free gift of God’s love. This involves giving and receiving intimacy and trust in a real relationship with God.” He talked about the levels of intimacy in relationships and how most people stay in the first levels talking about facts and opinions, but that we need to move to deeper levels with our loved ones and with God into the area of hopes, dreams, feelings, fears, faults, and our deepest needs. God is interested in these parts of us. This makes our daily prayer life important. Fr. Connor encouraged the use of Ignatian prayer, which emphasizes the use of our imaginations, helping us feel God’s presence.

Fr. Connor then spoke about a major sin among Catholics today, the sin of self-reliance instead of reliance on God. He said, “we need to be friends with God and truly understand how much we are loved.” He went so far to say, “heaven is for real, and we can experience it here and now in our midst, we need to be open to this reality.”

The final segment of the afternoon was on our mission as a Church. He quoted Jesus saying, “apart from me you can do nothing” and urged us to see that “spiritual fruit is not doing your own thing, but rather abiding in God and doing God’s thing in the world.” He again highlighted the importance of divine

intimacy and prayer and said, “there must be a vulnerability-based trust for healthy and effective ministry to take place in our parishes.” He closed by saying, “in our Eucharistic life, Jesus always wants a deeper communion with us, he wants us to be fully alive.”

His words were an inspiration to all gathered at the Owensboro Convention Center that December 2022 day. Fr. Connor was one of 50 trained presenters, who had gone on a spiritual retreat together and learned how to offer these days of reflection to dioceses across the country. It was amazing that out of all that he could have said, that he chose these words to share with us. God is so close to us and wants us to experience a real loving relationship with the Trinity and with our fellow disciples.

The Eucharistic Revival Committee continued to meet and work with the National Committee to share resources with parishes and encourage each parish to name a Coordinator to share regular updates of resources and plans for this three-year revival process.

Year two, the Year of Parish Revival, began on June 11, 2023 and many parishes across the diocese held Eucharistic processions. That day Bishop Medley led Adoration and Benediction in the City of

Owensboro for anyone to attend. This second year is meant to be lived out at the parish level. Some parishes have mobilized to offer times for Eucharistic Adoration, parish missions and other formation and experiential opportunities for people to grow in their knowledge of the Eucharist and practice of our Catholic beliefs.

One initiative that our committee dreamed up was the idea of the Acts 2:42 small groups. The value of small group ministry in parishes is perhaps the greatest way to foster adult formation and discipleship training. Moreover, adults gathering to share faith in small groups builds bonds of fraternity and strengthens the faith of individuals and the overall experience of community in parish life. As the committee talked about the possibility of offering a small group experience, Bishop Medley expressed his desire to offer part of the teaching for these groups. As the Spirit led our conversations the idea became reality. Many parishes of the

diocese are participating in our Acts 2:42 groups and we look forward to learning how these groups have helped adults grow in their Eucharistic Spirituality as missionary disciples. We pray it becomes a powerful witness to you and that you take advantage of the other opportunities available through neighboring parishes or the wider diocese to celebrate this year of the parish revival, which ends with the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, Indiana, on July 17-24, 2024.

Further Reading:

Living as Missionary Disciples, USCCB, 2017.

The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church. USCCB, 2022.

Below: Adoration during the June 11, 2023 Corpus Christi celebration at St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green. (Photo by Riley Greif)



The Early Church -Acts 2:42

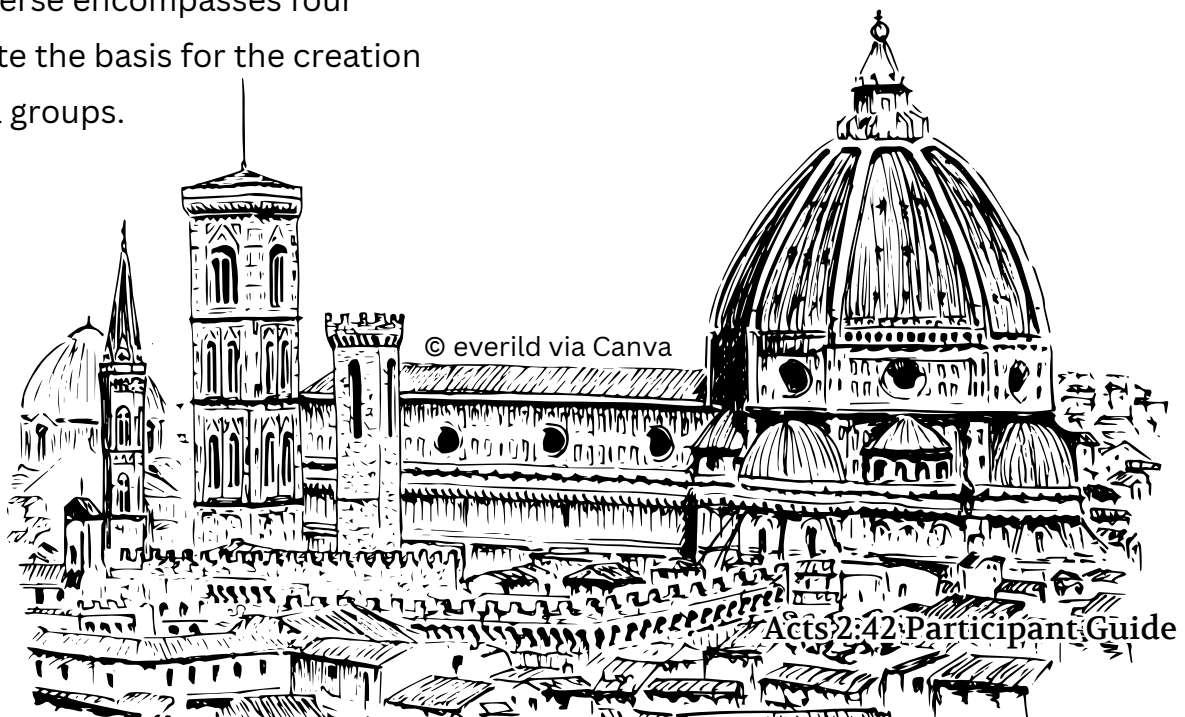
The Second Vatican Council was initiated by Pope St. John XXIII and he called the gathering to be an "aggiornamento", meaning updating. He suggested that the Church needed to update itself, not to the Middle Ages or the Council of Trent, but to the Early Church. To the first three hundred years of Christianity, before it became entwined with the Roman Empire and took on the imperialism of this age.

Our Acts 2:42 small group effort seeks to return to the basics of the Early Church. While our Catholic practices, beliefs and traditions have been rich in every age, the core principles of the Early Church were a recipe of success and the Gospel spread like wildfire to the ends of the earth. By turning to Acts 2:42 in the scripture we can see how the Early Church lived and imitate them in our lives today.

This single verse encompasses four themes that create the basis for the creation of Acts 2:42 small groups.

“They devoted themselves to the teachings of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and prayer.”

-Acts 2:42



THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

The early disciples of Jesus were eyewitnesses to his life, death, and resurrection. They walked with him and marveled at his teaching and called him Rabbi. The task of the disciple is to seek to understand the mind of the master and learn the wisdom and ways of their leader. A disciple is an apprentice, learner and student of the master and the goal was to become like the master. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church grew and leaders were needed to help make disciples of Jesus.

Along with the early letters of St. Paul and the subsequent Gospels that developed, there were other early writings that reflected on the teachings of Jesus and offered training in discipleship. One of these documents is called the Didache, or “The Teaching of the Twelve.” The short text is only 2,300 words but was a manual of Christian living. The first section, chapters 1-6, begins like this, “There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.” It then goes on to share a basic instruction about the Christian life. These teachings, as well as the life experience of the Apostles and the power of the Holy Spirit were taught, and the Church grew. People learned about the love of God, his

message of hope and abundance and they were filled with the Spirit. The early Church depended on this regular teaching, exhortation and transformation that was occurring in their lives and community.

THE COMMUNAL LIFE

It is important to remember that the Early Church did not have large Church structures to meet in. In fact, the Jewish synagogues began expelling these new followers of Jesus following his death as a way of distancing themselves from their teachings about him. Therefore, the Early Christian churches were very small house churches. The smallest parishes in our diocese have fewer than 30 families, yet even that would be a larger gathering than the Early Church experience. In fact, the communal life that we read about in Acts 2:42, is much more about people who they lived with and other intimate daily relationships. A home church looks more like a living room than a basilica.

The communal life has more to do with a network of caring relationships and a code of conduct and way of treating one another that was rooted in love and the common good of the followers of Jesus. The idea that the followers of Jesus were known by their love for one another is an example of how they cared for and supported their small

group. There was a vulnerability in these communities and a sharing of resources, so all were cared for adequately. There was a clear sense of belonging, care and affirmation that you were loved as a part of this community. These groups lived closely together and gathered for the Eucharist and prayer often.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Passover meal with his disciples, which we refer to as the Last Supper. He took the bread and wine, blessed it and said, “Take and eat, this is my body, this is my blood.” This was the first Mass and this practice in the Early Church is well-documented and quickly grew into the Mass that we celebrate today. In the materials of this participant book, we will read about this development and how it was described in the mid-second century, which sounds very much like what we do today.

These Early Church communities gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. They would share a meal, like we read in Corinthians 11:17-34, and then share in the Eucharist. There was a large focus on the importance of welcoming everyone and, ensuring everyone was well fed and cared for. And they experienced the love of God and the care of the community through these gatherings. Like some of the followers of Jesus, when he talked about giving his flesh for the life of the world,

many have left the teachings of Jesus behind for something less difficult to understand. The Catholic Church, however, has been a firm believer and adherent to the teachings of Jesus, and our Mass today is a continuation of the love and message of Jesus. Surely, his promise to be with us always is lived out beautifully in the Eucharist.

PRAYER

The earliest disciples after the Resurrection were lost and confused. Many were downcast and hopeless like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. However, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they believed. Many saw the risen Jesus and others believed because of the witness of these eyewitnesses. And following the methods and practices of their Rabbi, Jesus, they too began to pray to their heavenly Father. They too grew in relationship with the Trinity and were empowered to live lives that reflected the life and ministry of their master, Jesus.

And so too, these small groups of Christians came together to pray. To ask for God’s blessings and provision. To worship God and share their gratitude with God and one another. Individual and group prayer was a regular reality and the movement of the Spirit was evident on a regular basis.

Fast forward nearly 2,000 years and

these same staples of the Early Church produce fruit in the lives of the followers of Jesus today. As disciples of Jesus, we too must listen to and reflect on the teachings of our Savior. And although our personal faith in God is so important, our faith is not to be kept personal; it is meant to be lived and shared. We are called to be communities of disciples, to be the presence of God in the world by our love for one another and the world. As a community, we gather for Eucharist, to receive Jesus' body and blood and to be transformed into his body in the world. In our liturgy we pray many prayers together and we are learning as Catholics that prayer is also talking to God from our heart. We do not need to depend on rote prayer in every circumstance. Many times we are called to pray with or for someone and using our own words and sharing our deepest feelings and thoughts with God from our heart is needed. Our prayer is that we reflect on the Eucharist together this year and practice the above basic realities of being disciples of Jesus, that each of us will experience the love of God, and one another, and be transformed into a renewed community of disciples of our master, Jesus Christ. Welcome to the journey and thank you for stepping out in faith!



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Each session will follow the same template, which is outlined here. The general flow will be listed for each session, but you can refer to these pages for descriptions on what each stage means as needed throughout the course of the year.

1. Opening Prayer

Each session will begin with prayer. You can use the prayer provided or let the Holy Spirit lead your group. Remember to take time to pray for any intentions individuals may have on their heart. You are also welcome to use the Acts 2:42 prayer developed by Ed Calhoun of St. Pius X Parish in Owensboro, found on the back of the book.

2. God Sightings

Taking time to share life and faith is an important part of building community and being the body of Christ with and for one another. In our culture, sharing vulnerably or interpreting life through the eyes of faith, can be seen as something personal that should not be shared. But Christian community is different, and we need to create safe places to share our lives and faith with one another. It is also important to learn to say not just that “I will pray for you,” but “can we pray right now for you?” After prayer think about how God has been at work in your life over the past month. Have you had any new beginnings, breakthroughs, or struggles in your life where you can see God’s hand, or where you hope to see God’s involvement? If you have been faced with difficulties and challenges, ask if the group can pray right then for it.

3. Reading & Discussion

Each session will include a reading from our Catholic tradition and introduce a Eucharistic theme to reflect on. As you can see from the table of contents, the first five sessions deal with the gift of the Eucharist and the final four reflect on our response. The group can ask one person to read the reflection, or several people can participate by reading one paragraph. The Host Team will facilitate the discussion questions and keep on time and task.

Session Overview

4. Bishop's Video

Bishop Medley's video and discussion questions will be sent at the beginning of each month to the host team. Watch the video together as a group and discuss the questions following the viewing.

5. Closing Prayer

Just as you did in the beginning, make time to pray together at the end. Encourage each other as you go forth for the coming month while remembering any prayer requests as well.

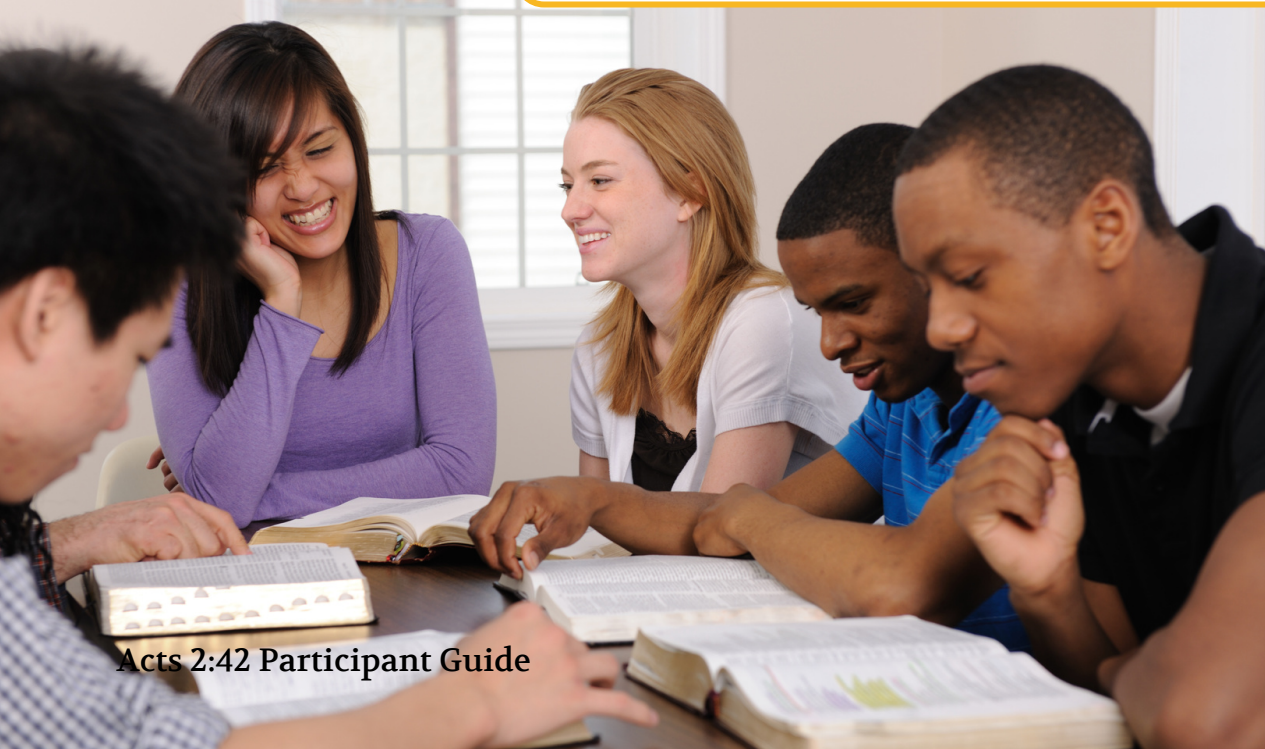
6. Announcements

There will be time to share events happening in your parish and inviting the group to join. The Host Team can also share updates for any diocesan events happening in your area and inform the group of the next meeting date and time.

7 Social Time

Make time at the end to visit and enjoy each other's company. Some may need to leave soon after the announcements but others may enjoy sharing a dessert or snack together while visiting. As a courtesy remember to watch the room and ensure you are respecting any needs your host might have for clean up and departure.

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Session 1: The Love of God

THE INSTITUTION NARRATIVE MATTHEW 26:26-30



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"The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host."

-Archbishop Fulton Sheen

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious and loving God, we gather in your name and invite the presence of your Holy Spirit to be with us. You know the deepest needs of each of our hearts and our desire to know and experience your love anew in our lives. Anoint the first gathering of this small group and draw us into communion with you and one another. We pray that each Acts 2:42 small group would be blessed in this nine-month journey and that the Eucharistic Revival would produce beautiful fruit in our diocese. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your presence with us and bless our time.

If there are any special intentions that anyone would like to add, please do so and we will all pray with you for your intention.

Response after each request: Lord, hear our prayer.

Host Concludes:

Lord, we lift these shared intentions and the intentions that are in the depths of our hearts and entrust them to you. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Ice Breaker Activity

It is possible that everyone in your group knows one another, but even still you might learn some new things. Pass the toilet paper roll around the group and each person tear off three or more sheets, as many as you would like. Your Host Team Leaders will direct you from there.

God Sightings

After finishing the Ice Breaker Activity, share some recent "God Sightings" in your life. These can be any event you have experienced that you see God working in your life. See page 12 for details and allow time for anyone who would like to share.

Introduction

The overwhelming, never-ending love of God is a wonderful place to begin our Acts 2:42 small groups to celebrate the Eucharistic Revival in our parish. Today we understand that there are billions of galaxies in the known universe. To give a comparison to the size of earth in creation, it is fair to say that earth is like a single grain of sand in the entire Sahara Desert. When God created the universe nearly 14 billion years ago, we believe that it was created out of love. This love has been revealed in all creation as we read in Romans 1:20, "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made." God is present in all creation and created human beings out of love, as the pinnacle of creation.

Beginning with the first recorded words in Sacred Scripture, we read in Genesis 1:31, "God looked at everything he had made and found it very good." Throughout the Old Testament we see humanity struggle to understand and accept God's love. In Jesus, we now have the fullest picture of who God is. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 73 we read, "God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son,

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in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; there will be no further revelation after him." In John's Gospel we read, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14a). Jesus' life, death and resurrection revealed God's immense love for humanity.

As we gather this evening, let us recognize that like the early disciples of Jesus following the resurrection, we too gather as his disciples and seek to emulate their experience. "They devoted themselves to the teachings of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and prayer" (Acts 2:42). Let us be open to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit this evening as we reflect on the institution of the Eucharist in Matthew's Gospel.

GOD looked at everything he had made and found it very GOOD

-Genesis 1:31

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St. Ignatius of Loyola encouraged his followers to read scripture in such a way that they would enter the scene in their imagination and not just read words. So let us for a moment reflect on Jesus’s love for his disciples. He had spent three years growing in relationship with each of them. He was their teacher, friend, and daily companion. This reading is situated at the end of this three-year timeframe. They were very

close and had great love for one another. Try and put yourself in the place of the disciples or even Jesus and picture the room and atmosphere of this meal. What do you see, experience, and feel?

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew



“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.” Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Matthew 26:26-30



The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus' entire life was one of loving presence, humility, gentleness, and he literally made present the reign of God by his very presence and actions. On the night of Passover, knowing that his death was imminent, he expressed his love and pledged his ongoing presence with them by offering his body and blood. This institution narrative is repeated in each of the synoptic Gospels and becomes the basis for the liturgy in the Early Church after Jesus' death until our present day. Jesus shares himself with us, that we might live in his love.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we more fully accept this gift of love and follow as his disciples?

2. What might the disciples have been experiencing at this meal?

3. What might Jesus have been feeling?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Loving God, we thank you for the many gifts you have showered upon each of us and your Church. Your love and daily provision sustain our lives and we thank you for your promise to be with us always. Help us to grow in a daily experience of your love and to be transformed into your love as we received you in the Eucharist. As we celebrate the Eucharistic Revival, we pray for a renewal in our hearts and for a great transformation in your Church. For what else should we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

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Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

A reading from the Book of Exodus



“Having set out from Elim, the whole Israelite community came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. Here in the wilderness the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron...

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Tell the whole Israelite community: Approach the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.” But while Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they turned in the direction of the wilderness, and there the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud! The LORD said to Moses: I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will have your fill of bread, and then you will know that I, the LORD, am your God. In the evening, quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all about the camp, and when the layer of dew evaporated, fine flakes were on the surface of the wilderness, fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, “What is this?” for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.”

Exodus 16:1-2, 9-15



All: Thanks be to God.

To help understand this reading, it is helpful to read the footnotes in most Catholic Bibles. In the Catholic Study Bible, third edition from Oxford Publishing, it states, "This reading references the end of the first full month after their departure from Egypt. The Bread from Heaven is seen as a gift from God, which is said to have come down from the sky. Perhaps it was similar to a natural substance that is still found in small quantities on the Sinai Peninsula - probably the honey-like resin from (two insects on) the tamarisk tree - but here it is, at least in part, clearly an extraordinary sign of God's provision. With reference to John 6:32, 49-52, the Christian tradition has regarded the manna as a type of the Eucharist." (p.102)

Further commentary from the International Bible Commentary by Liturgical Press suggests "The original tradition in this episode is God's gracious care of the people in the desert..." And another important theme to consider is "It is not hungering pangs but theological despair that commands center stage." (p. 426)

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is the Manna like the Eucharist?

2. What is a story in your life or your family's where God provided?

3. Where do you need God to show up and provide grace and provision in your life?

4. From the context of the commentary on the previous page, what might theological despair look like today?

5. How could we as Christians help others find hope in the midst of theological despair?

Bishop Medley's Reflection

Take time to watch Bishop Medley's video reflection. Your Host Team will have the discussion questions to share. Use the space below for any notes you wish to take during the video.

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit! We thank you Lord for your felt presence among us in our gathering. We thank you for your Word, for our reflection and conversation, and for Bishop Medley's witness and leadership. We lift to you those who are seemingly far from you, especially those in our families that have wandered in the deserts of our day and do not know your love. Equip us to be manna for others, to help meet the practical needs of those we encounter each day and transform us as we receive the gift of your body and blood and are sent forth to be your hands and feet in the world. For what else should we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.



Session 3: Source and Summit

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH 1323, 1345-1347

“The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20), but in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity. Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope”

-St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we pause to acknowledge the gift of your presence and power in our midst. From the busyness of this day and the busyness of our minds, let us come to this place open to you and one another. Let's take a moment in our prayer to be fully present ourselves. I invite you to close your eyes and take a deep breath. As you breathe out, let go of any anxiety or tension in your neck or shoulders. Lord, we surrender our anxious hearts and minds to you. Fill us with the fruits of your Holy Spirit and help us to rest on the solid foundation and gift of your love for each of us and for the whole world. For what else should we pray?

We offer all these prayers in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

A reading from the Catechism of the Catholic Church



I. The Eucharist - Source and Summit of Ecclesial Life

1324 The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life."¹³⁴
"The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch."¹³⁵

¹³⁴ LG 11.

¹³⁵ PO 5.





IV. The Liturgical Celebration of the Eucharist

The Mass of all ages

1345 As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place.

The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits.

When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers* for ourselves . . .and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.

He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.'

When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded,

those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.169

1346 The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays two great parts that form a fundamental unity:

- the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions;
- the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion.

The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form "one single act of worship";170 The Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord.171

1347 Is this not the same movement as the Paschal meal of the risen Jesus with his disciples? Walking with them he explained the Scriptures to them; sitting with them at table "he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."172

169 St. Justin, Apol. 1, 65-67: PG 6, 428-429; the text before the asterisk (*) is from chap. 67.

170 SC 56.

171 Cf. DV 21.

172 Cf. Lk 24:13-35.



Discussion Questions

1. What similarities strike you in our liturgies, nearly 1,868 years after this description?

2. Do you see any differences?

3. What does it mean when we say source and summit? What are some practical implications?

4. What does it mean to "form one single act of worship"?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, God, for your presence with us this evening and the absolute gift of your Eucharistic presence that feeds us with your body and blood. Thank you for our Church that you formed, equipped, and entrusted with the Holy Mass. Strengthen our understanding of the liturgy as one single act of worship and as we receive you, send us out into the world as beacons of hope and love for the world. For what else should we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.



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“In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope”

-St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 62

Session 4: Incarnation & Real Presence

THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

Opening Prayer

To celebrate this Advent season, we will begin our prayer with a guided meditation. St. Ignatius of Loyola was convinced that our imagination is a wonderful gift to be used in our prayer. I invite you to close your eyes, sit comfortably and picture this scene in your mind.

Picture yourself walking down a dimly lit dirt street. Feel the cool night air and notice the bright stars above. Breathe deeply and feel the peace of this quiet moment. As you look up the street the silence is broken by several men spilling out of a barn door talking excitedly. As they walk toward you, one of them says to you, “You must see the promised messiah, the baby Jesus, and his parents. Go in and feel God’s love.” Notice their clothes, their unshaven beards, and their motioning you to go in.

As they run off, you notice the door is cracked a little and you see the light coming out into the dark street. You pause and decide to enter. See your hand

reaching for the door and opening it to reveal a barn setting with animals and a small family. Joseph motions to you to come in and Mary looks up and smiles. Smile back. Feel the warmth of the lantern and notice the smell of the animals and hay.

As you look at the baby lying in the crib, hear Mary say to you, “Would you like to hold him?” Surprised, you kneel next to Jesus and respond, “Are you sure that would be ok?” She smiles and nods. You pick up Jesus and look at his precious face. Pause for a moment to take in the magnitude of this moment. (Pause) Is it possible that the God of the universe is incarnate in this human baby? Cradle him in your arms and treasure the gift of this moment. Take it all in and receive God’s immense love for you and for the entire human family. Realize that this baby is the fullest revelation of God’s love and that he is here to show you how to live and love.

Finally, you look at Mary and Joseph and say, “He is perfect and he is the answer to all our prayers.” They both smile and you lay him back in his bed. Thank them and exit back into the night.

As you walk down the quiet street, offer a prayer for the gift of receiving the baby Jesus in this way. Now picture yourself back in this present moment, and with your eyes still closed, feel yourself begin hugged by the adult Jesus and experience his love filling you full in this present moment. Receive this love and know the Grace of God.

Lord, we thank you for the season of Advent and long to experience the fullness of your presence in our lives. Bless our gathering this evening and give us great faith to appreciate the mysteries of our faith. For what else should we pray?

We make our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and and of the Holy Spirit, **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

Introduction

In this Advent season, we celebrate the incarnation of God into human form. As we behold the baby Jesus in our Christmas celebrations, we are reminded that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). In Jesus, we receive the fullest revelation of God’s character and in his Life, Death and Resurrection he leads us to abundant life. The Incarnation is closely linked to the Eucharist. It is the ongoing gift of his very presence for all the world until the end of time. The following excerpt is taken from a 2001 Document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and expresses our faith in the gift of the Eucharist.



“The Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the cross, shared one last meal with his disciples. During this meal our Savior instituted the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church his Spouse a memorial of his death and resurrection. As the Gospel of Matthew tells us: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:26-28; cf. Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25)

Recalling these words of Jesus, the Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven;

whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:51-55). The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine—the glorified Christ who rose from the dead after dying for our sins. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called "real" not to exclude other types of his presence as if they could not be understood as real (cf. Catechism, no. 1374). The risen Christ is present to his Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine? How does this happen? The presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist is an inexhaustible mystery that the Church can never fully explain in words. We must remember that the triune God is the creator of all that exists and has the power to do more than we can possibly imagine. As St. Ambrose said (in the fourth century): "If the word of the Lord Jesus is so powerful as to bring into existence things which were not, then a fortiori those things which already exist can be changed into something else" (De Sacramentis, IV, 5-16).

God created the world in order to share his life with persons who are not God. This great plan of salvation reveals a wisdom that surpasses our understanding. But we are not left in ignorance: for out of his love for us, God reveals his truth to us in ways that we can understand through the gift of faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. We are thus enabled to understand at least in some measure what would otherwise remain unknown to us, though we can never completely comprehend the mystery of God."

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, USCCB

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Discussion Questions

1. What do you most enjoy about the Christmas season?

2. How is the birth of Jesus both reality and mystery?

3. How does this explanation from the U.S. Bishops help me understand the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious God, as we begin a new Church year, we pray for our Church, your bride. We ask for a movement of your Holy Spirit upon the Church in the United States. As we celebrate the Eucharistic Revival, ignite in our hearts a greater awareness and love for you and help us to be light and hope for a world that desperately needs your presence. May the truth and power of your Real Presence in the Eucharist and in our lives, enliven your Church and renew us from the inside out.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

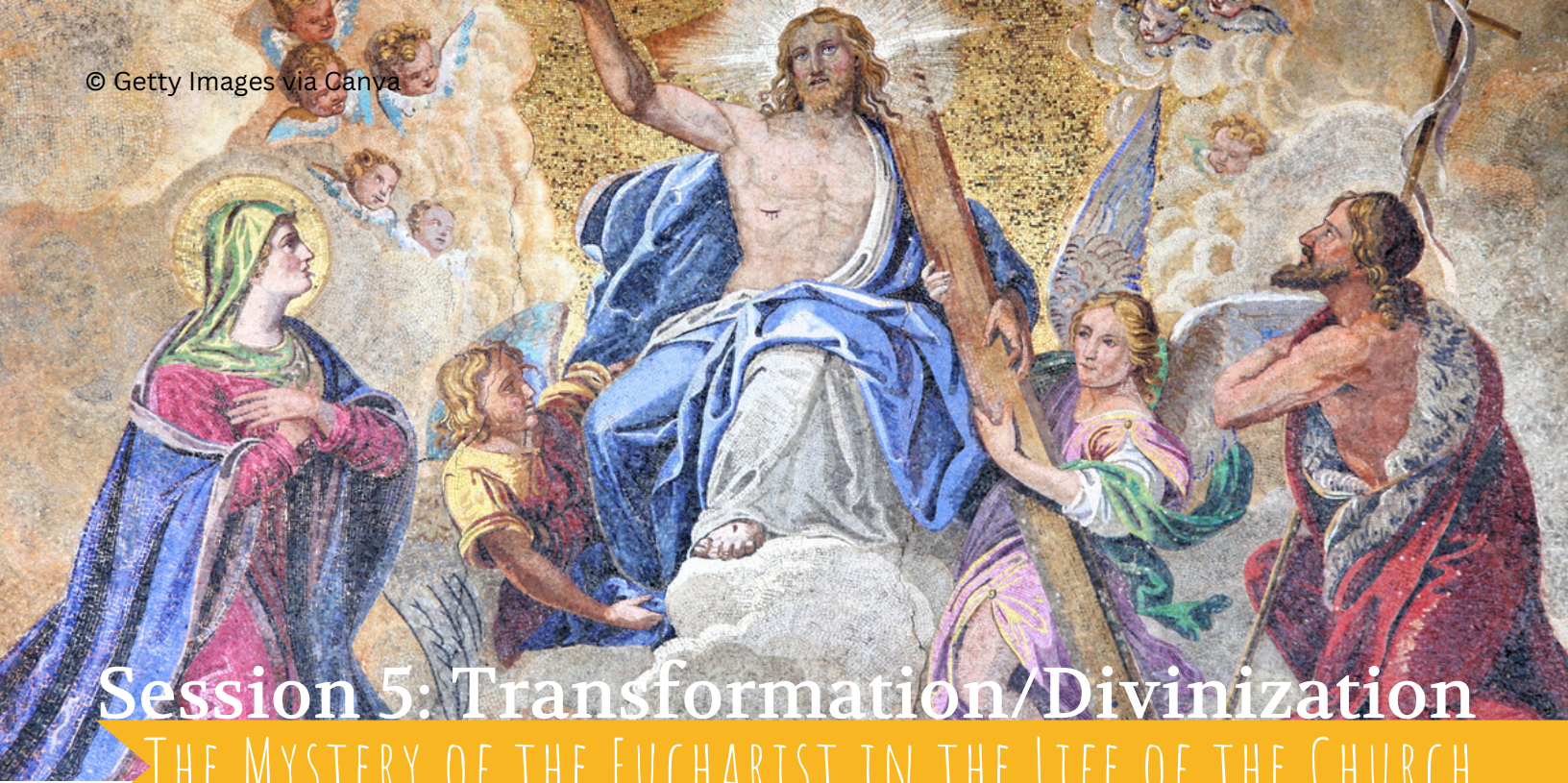
Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.

Acts 2:42 Participant Guide



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Session 5: Transformation/Divinization

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Triune God, we gather in your name and are so dependent on your grace in our lives. We thank you for the gift of your presence and power at work in the world. Help us to grow in our understanding of the Christian life and your invitation to be sharers in your divine life. Bless your Holy Catholic Church and transform us into your very presence in the world. As we gather in this space, anoint our time, and allow us to experience your grace anew. Upon our leaving, may we be strengthened to live lives that reflect your kingdom. We pray too for the National Eucharistic Revival in our country that all Catholics would come to a greater awareness and faith in the teachings of Jesus, especially in the Eucharist. For what else shall we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

Introduction

In this session we are invited to reflect on our humanity and the gift of divinity offered through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. These sacraments of initiation lead us on a life-long path of transformation. In Christian theology, divinization or theosis is the work of the Holy Spirit in one accepting God's gift of divine life and cooperating with it. We are meant to be changed in our encounters with God. We are reminded by St. Irenaeus in the second century, that "The glory of God is a human being fully alive" and this happens only through divine grace!

In baptism, we become sons and daughters of God and are invited into the communion of the Trinity. In this communion of love, we are transformed into the fullness of our humanity by coming in contact with divine love. This transformation is a process that occurs over our entire lives and in the Eucharist, we are given food for the journey, Jesus himself.

Hear these powerful words from the U.S. Bishops taken from their recent document titled, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*.



"The salvation offered in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ is nothing less than sharing in the very life of God, in the communion of love among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no greater gift that God could possibly give us. In Christ, we are sharers in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). The Church Fathers referred to this participation in the divine life as "divinization." The eternal Son of God made this possible by becoming man and uniting humanity to his divine Person. St. Augustine explained, "the maker of man was made man, so that man might be a receiver of God." In fact, Pope Francis reminds us that "in the bread of the Eucharist, creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself"

-*The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. USCCB 2021. para. 9

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It is clear, the gift of God that is offered to all humanity is union with the Trinity and participation in God’s divine life. As the source and summit, the Eucharist is the doorway into this divine life. St. Augustine challenges us, “Behold the mystery of your salvation laid out for you; behold what you are, become what you receive.” This is a lifelong process.

It is an intellectual journey into the teachings of Jesus and his Church, and it is also a heart journey. It requires of us an openness to God in our daily lives. Hear the invitation of Pope Francis, “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord” (Joy of the Gospel, 3).

Divinization seems too good to be true, but God wants to work in and through us in our daily lives in this powerful way. Are we aware, open, and ready to respond?

Discussion Questions

1. What excites you about divinization? What worries or confuses you about it?

2. How does receiving the Eucharist help us grow in a personal relationship with God?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of your presence at our gathering today. Help us to continue to grow in our knowledge of the gift we receive at Mass in our communion with you. We ask for grace to be fully the people you have called us to be and to allow us to strive for a greater transformation of our human lives into your divine life. May the good fruit of our lives be evident as we place our trust more and more in you. Thank you for the gift of each person here and bless us according to your will.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.

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Session 6: Mary As Model

ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA, ST. JOHN PAUL II

Opening Prayer

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious and loving God, we gather in awe of your divine plan and in the fullness of your revelation in the life, death and resurrection of your Son. We are humbled by our humanity and the mysteries and beauty of our Catholic faith. We ask for greater insights into the faith of our Mother Mary and into our Amen when we receive you anew at your altar. Transform our understandings and give us a glimpse of your wisdom and truth as we participate in this group. May your Church come to a fuller appreciation of the Eucharistic Mystery and may our Amen lead us into greater discipleship of your Son and the transformation of our world. For what else should we pray?

We make our prayer in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.



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“In continuity with the virgin’s faith in the Eucharistic mystery, we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.”

-St. John Paul II

A reading from Ecclesia Eucharistia



“*Mysteria fidei!* If the Eucharist is a mystery of faith which so greatly transcends our understanding as to call for sheer abandonment to the word of God, then there can be no one like Mary to act as our support and guide in acquiring this disposition. In repeating what Christ did at the Last Supper in obedience to his command: “Do this in memory of me,” we also accept Mary's invitation to obey him without hesitation: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: “Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his Passover, thus becoming the 'bread of life'”.

In a certain sense Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the Fiat which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the Amen which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the Son of God” (Lk 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine. “Blessed is she who believed” (Lk 1:45). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church's Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” – the first “tabernacle” in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?”

Ecclesia de Eucharistia. John Paul II, para. 54-55



Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind as you imagine Mary as the first tabernacle?

2. How does our Amen correlate to Mary's yes to the angel?

3. Comment on Mary's intimacy with Jesus and our invitation to do the same.

Bishop Medley's Reflection

Take time to watch Bishop Medley's video reflection. Your Host Team will have the discussion questions to share. Use the space below for any notes you wish to take during the video.



Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit. We invite you into our midst and ask for the grace to continue to grow in our awareness of what our Amen means in our relationship with you. Transform us into missionary disciples of Jesus and help us to be like Mary in saying yes to God in all things. Let us ask Mary to pray for us that we might emulate her discipleship in our lives.

Hail Mary, full of grace Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

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Session 7: Selfless Love

SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS -
POPE BENEDICT XVI

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Creator of Heaven and Earth, we turn to you as we begin our session and thank you for the beauty of our Eucharistic theology and ask for the grace to develop a deep Eucharistic spirituality that nourishes us daily and attracts others to your kingdom. May our response to your selfless love lead us to live lives of selfless service to all those we meet and especially those who we are closest to. Thank you for each person gathered here and ask you to anoint our time together and help us to experience your holy presence. For what else shall we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

Introduction

Pope Benedict XVI and the world's bishops met in October 2005 to discuss the idea of Eucharistic spirituality. In this document, Pope Benedict is presenting the need for a real and daily relationship with the person of Jesus. In this living relationship, we are invited into union with the Trinity. In the reception of the Eucharist, as we remember and receive the very gift of Jesus' body and blood, we are called to become his presence in the world. Our witness is not simply our good deeds and selfless service, but rather a participation in the sacrifice of Christ to serve the

world around us. The invitation is to a spirituality that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and affects all aspects of our lives; how we live, love and selflessly share our gifts with others.



“Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that "the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life." (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4ff.; cf. Gal 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the Letter to the Romans where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14).

We know the sacrificial nature of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Jesus gave his entire life for the human race, for each of us individually and as

a whole. His selfless love on the cross, is the same selfless love we are called to have for one another. As we are reminded in the Catechism paragraph 1368, “In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united to those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.”

Sacramentum Caritatis. Benedict XVI, par. 77



Discussion Questions

1. What is new in this understanding of Eucharistic spirituality?

2. What are some examples of Catholic spirituality that have helped you grow in your faith?

3. What might Eucharistic Spirituality look like in these instances:

a) In supporting children

b) In being patient with myself?

c) In serving the poor?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Loving Father, we thank you for revealing your nature and mission to the world in the person of your Son, Jesus. As we seek to be his disciples and continue his selfless mission to the world, give us eyes to see life from your perspective. May we be obedient and loving children who long to be in union with your Holy Trinity and reflect your goodness to all. In communion with you, may our lives reflect and make present your kingdom in all we say and do. Transform us into missionary disciples of your Son and bless our Church with new hope and energy for your mission in the world.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**



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Announcements

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Social Time

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Session 8: Unity

LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS
AND EPHESIANS - ST. PAUL

Opening Prayer

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the gift of our Catholic faith and ask for the grace to respond to your invitation to build up your Church. Through the gift of your body and blood in the Eucharist, may we be transformed into your body for the world. Teach us to be welcoming and loving to all we encounter. Help us to find common ground and to appreciate the gifts and talents of others, even when they are different than our own. May our parish community be a place of welcome, warmth and safety for all and may the values of your kingdom be always found and experienced in your Church. We offer our lives to you and ask for the grace to truly be your body in the world today. For what else shall we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

Introduction

The following readings comes from St. Paul. His first Letter to the Corinthians was written in the year 56. It is the earliest recorded scripture regarding the Eucharist in the New Testament and reveals that the Eucharist was celebrated following a meal, like at the Passover when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. St. Paul is reprimanding them for their lack of hospitality and reiterating the importance of being one body as the Church. The understanding that St. Paul is addressing here is that some of the wealthy people were arriving early for the meal and bringing choice wines to share. They would begin eating and drinking before the others arrived, as they most likely were unable to come early because they were working. So, when they arrived, the best food and wine was gone. Paul is highlighting the importance of hospitality and making all feel welcome and important. God's love and kingdom are for all equally and the Eucharist is a participation in the one body of Christ, where this love and care for one another and the world should be clearly evident. The theme of being united in one body is found throughout St. Paul's writing, as seen in the except from his letter to the Ephesians.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians



"In giving this instruction, I do not praise the fact that your meetings are doing more harm than good. First of all, I hear that when you meet as a church there are divisions among you, and to a degree I believe it; there have to be factions among you in order that (also) those who are approved among you may become known. When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk. Do you not have houses in which you can eat and drink? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you.

Tradition of the Institution.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes."

"As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary".

1 Corinthians 11: 17-26, 12:12-22

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians



"I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the

spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call"

Ephesians 4:1-6



Discussion Questions

1. What is St. Paul's main message in these readings?

2. What are practical behaviors that help to foster and protect unity?

3. How well do we as a parish welcome others, help them feel included, and foster unity?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

God, we are humbled by the work you call us to as a parish. We acknowledge that we are each various members of your body and that we need one another and that we are incomplete without you. Equip us to be like the Early Church, unafraid to welcome others and selfless in our support and care for all. May our Christian witness lead others to want to know, love and serve you. Renew our parish from the inside out and set our lives ablaze with the fire of your love for the world. Thank you for the gift of our faith and grant us the grace to live your mission in our local Church.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.



Session 9: Living the Mission

HOMILY FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY - POPE FRANCIS

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious and loving God, as we gather for this final session and marvel at the gift of the time you have given us together, we pray for a Eucharistic Revival in your Church. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and create in us an unquenchable fire to proclaim and live your mission in our world. Renew our hearts through new and fresh

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encounters with your love and give us your dream for the human family. May the holy Catholic Church, like gold refined in fire, come into a new season of hope and clarity as we seek to live your mission in the world. Anoint our time together and inspire us to renew our homes, our workplaces, and our parish community with the fire of your love. Equip and send us on mission and help us to always know your guiding presence. For what else shall we pray?

We make our prayer in Jesus' name.

Amen.

God Sightings

After opening prayer, take some time to share any God sightings you have experienced this past month with the group.

Introduction

On January 25, 2023, the Vatican released a message from Pope Francis for the upcoming World Mission Sunday. This day was celebrated in October of 2023. The theme chosen by the pope was “Hearts on fire, feet on the move”, inspired on the story from Luke's Gospel where the disciples are traveling to Emmaus.

A reading from Pope Francis



"As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out: “We cannot keep to ourselves the love we celebrate in the Sacrament [of the Eucharist]. By its very nature, it asks to be communicated to everyone. What the world needs is the love of God, to encounter Christ and believe in him. For this reason the Eucharist is not only the source and summit of the life of the Church; it is also the source and summit of her mission: ‘An authentically Eucharistic Church is a missionary Church’” (Sacramentum Caritatis, 84)...

...One cannot truly encounter the risen Jesus without being set on fire with enthusiasm to tell everyone about him. Therefore, the primary and principal resource of the mission are those persons who have come to know the risen Christ in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, who carry his fire in their heart and his light in their gaze. They can bear witness to the life that never dies, even in the most difficult of situations and in the darkest of moments...

...Today more than ever, our human family, wounded by so many situations of injustice, so many divisions and wars, is in need of the Good News of peace and salvation in Christ. I take this opportunity to reiterate that “everyone has the right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to announce it without excluding anyone, not as one who imposes a new obligation, but as one who shares a joy, signals a beautiful horizon, offers a

desirable banquet” (Evangelii Gaudium, 14)...

...The urgency of the Church’s missionary activity naturally calls for an ever closer missionary cooperation on the part of all her members and at every level. This is an essential goal of the synodal journey that the Church has undertaken, guided by the key words: communion, participation, mission. This journey is certainly not a turning of the Church in upon herself; nor is it a referendum about what we ought to believe and practice, nor a matter of human preferences. Rather, it is a process of setting out on the way and, like the disciples of Emmaus, listening to the risen Lord. For he always comes among us to explain the meaning of the Scriptures and to break bread for us, so that we can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, carry out his mission in the world...

...our proclamation will be a joyful telling of Christ the Lord, his life, his passion, his death and resurrection, and the wonders that his love has accomplished in our lives....

...Let us set out again with burning hearts, with our eyes open and our feet in motion. Let us set out to make other hearts burn with the word of God, to open the eyes of others to Jesus in the Eucharist, and to invite everyone to walk together on the path of peace and salvation that God, in Christ, has bestowed upon all humanity.

-Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2023. The Vatican, 6 January 2023



At the final dismissal from every Mass, we are told to “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” In this “Go” we realize that what we have received is meant to be shared in our daily lives. We are called to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God wherever we find ourselves. We are empowered to go forth in Christ’s name, through the power of the Holy Spirit and in communion with the Holy Trinity to live the mission of Jesus!

Discussion Questions

1. What strikes you in today's reading?

2. Have you ever considered yourself a missionary?

3. How have you "truly encountered the risen Lord"?

4. What can our parish do to better encourage our members to own our mission?

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of each person in this small group and for the many stories of faith and formation we have received through our Acts 2:42 Small Group. In thanksgiving for our Pastor, Parish Small Group Coordinator, our Host Team, and for Bishop Medley's leadership throughout this journey, may the fruit of our gatherings produce abundant fruit in our lives and in our parish. You know the deepest needs of each one of our hearts and please provide abundantly for these needs and use us to live the mission of your love each day. Thank you for the gift of your presence in the Holy Eucharist and for giving us essential food on our journey living the mission of Jesus.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen!**



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Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two hour time frame.

Appendix

Recommended Readings

Catechism of the Catholic Church, especially paragraphs 1322-1419 on the Eucharist. Available in pdf format at: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

O'Malley, Timothy P., *Real Presence: What does it Mean and Why does it Matter?* Ave Maria Press, 2021.

Recommended by Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Chairman of the National Eucharistic Revival.

Pope Francis. *Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children Around the World*. Loyola Press, 2016.

Recommended as a resource for Acts 2:42 Groups by a Host Team Member during our Summer Training sessions. It is a wonderful source of heart felt examples of the questions of young people and our Pope's wisdom.

USCCB. *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*. Available in pdf format at: <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/living-as-missionary-disciples/>

USCCB. *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. Available in pdf format at: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/mystery-eucharist-life-church>

10th National Eucharistic Congress

July 17 - 21, 2024 | Indianapolis, IN

Will You Be
There?

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE 10TH
NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

Join your Catholic brothers and sisters as we encounter the living Jesus Christ, experience profound renewal, and are sent out on mission for the life of the world.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code or
visiting www.eucharisticcongress.org/



Parish Ministry & Leadership Conference Save the Date!



August 24, 2024

The Bruce
Convention Center
Hopkinsville, KY

Photos by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead, Office of Communications

Parish Leadership & Ministry Conference is a bi-annual, bilingual conference hosted by the Diocese of Owensboro. This day is for parishioners, parish volunteers, catechists, council members, pastors, staff, and more to attend.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code or visiting
owensborodiocese.org/pml-conference/

Diocesan Initiatives

Grace Marriage is an intentional, ongoing, parish-based, small group approach to marriage ministry where couples spend intentional time every 90 days in conversation focusing on their marriage. Each series includes four sessions, held once a quarter. This ministry has expanded over the years to serving over 150 couples throughout the diocese. To learn more and find a Grace Marriage group near your scan the QR code below!



Or visit owensborodiocese.org/grace-marriage/

 Office of Marriage & Family Life
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

support ministries

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." ~ Psalm 147:3



Scan the QR Code to find resources for counseling, marriage support, pregnancy support, and more

CAP

Counseling Assistance Program

Learn more
owensborodiocese.org/counseling/





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Our bishops of the United States are calling for a three-year grassroots revival of devotion and belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They believe that God wants to see a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—and sent out in mission “for the life of the world.”

To learn more about the Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of Owensboro, visit the webpage below or scan the QR Code



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**



Or visit owensborodiocese.org/eucharistic-revival/

Young Adult Ministries

Visit owensborodiocese.org/young-adult-ministry to learn more about young adult diocesan events. To learn about young adult movement in your area visit these Facebook pages:



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Keep up-to-date with all things
Young Adult in Bowling Green!



Keep up-to-date with all things
Young Adult in the Paducah-Lakes Area!



Keep up-to-date with all things
Young Adult in Owensboro!



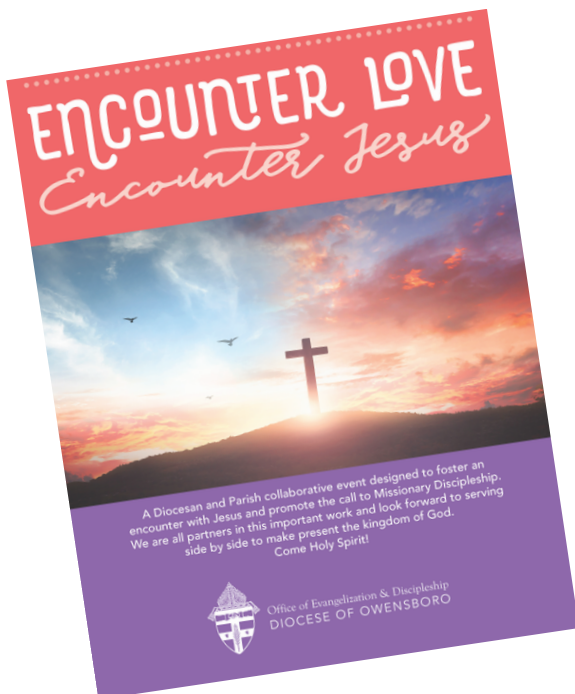
Want help starting Young Adult Ministry in your parish area?

Reach out to Charlie Hardesty, Director of
Youth and Young Adult Ministry at the Diocese!

charlie.hardesty@pastoral.org

Encounter Love *Encounter Jesus*

Highlighting the Great Commission and Pope Francis' call to live as a missionary disciple, this four-hour event uses a reflective Kerygmatic experience to bring participants into an encounter of God's love and catch a vision for lifelong discipleship. Scan the QR or follow the link below to learn how to bring this workshop to your parish.



owensborodiocese.org/encounter-love-encounter-jesus/

Tell a Better Story

The Encounter Love Retreat led many to ask the question, “How do I share my faith with others?” We need an engaging story that we know well and that reveals how much God loves us. Host this four-hour workshop in your parish to foster Adult Faith Formation and equip folks to tell their story! In this workshop we will explore the Bible as Story and learn what it means to evangelize and how to do it.



owensborodiocese.org/tell-a-better-story/





Gasper River is a summer camp and retreat center, operating within the Diocese of Owensboro, that seeks to engage young people in their faith by providing challenging activities, building faith communities, and teaching the tools of evangelization, so they can share their faith when they return home.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code or visiting www.gasperriverretreatcenter.org/

Gennesaret Retreat

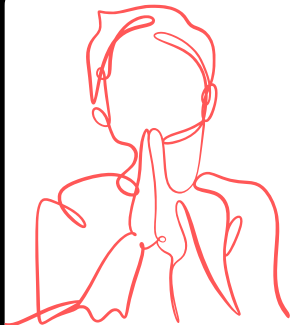
The Gennesaret Retreat is designed for persons living with chronic, serious, or terminal illness. It provides rest, prayerful reflection and daily conferences. The Eucharist is celebrated daily and the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick are offered.

The staff includes a spiritual team, a team of medical personnel and a hospitality/environmental team to provide support, accommodations, companionship and personal assistance for all guests.

The retreat is free, thanks to a grant and the generosity of many supporters. If you or a loved one are interested in taking part in the retreat as a guest or team member and would like more information, contact coordinators Amy and Tom Payne.

Phone: 270-316-0403

Email: apayneat2251@hotmail.com



30 Day Prayer Challenge

How is your Appointment with God these days? God wants a living and daily relationship with us, but we must have a plan to show up and spend time with God. If you feel stuck in your prayer, take the 30 day prayer challenge and watch your prayer life blossom!



Scan the QR Code or visit
owensborodiocese.org/evangelization/ to learn more



The Diocese of Owensboro invites all adults to prayerfully consider making a Cursillo retreat in 2024! We have two English weekends scheduled and are working on dates for Spanish Cursillo. Check our website for updates:
<http://www.cursillo-owensboro.org/>

The retreats are held at Gasper River Catholic Camp in Bowling Green. The cost is \$180, which includes a \$50 deposit when you register. Some financial help is available. The Cursillo Movement is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. It helps people develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be fully Catholic by being fully Christian in order to exercise their mission as baptized Catholics. Come and experience God's love and power and find others on the same journey.



Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

**To be missionary disciples of Jesus,
making present the kingdom of God!**

Contact the Director of the Office of Evangelization &
Discipleship with any questions:
Jeff Andrini, D.Min., 270-683-1545, Ext. 360 or
jeff.andrini@pastoral.org.

Join our Diocese of Owensboro Missionary Disciples Facebook group



facebook.com/groups/2076958885928800/

Acts 2:42 Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful example of the Early Church who continually devoted themselves to apostolic teaching, Christian fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer. We ask that You:

Give us a hunger for your word – that our lives may be conformed to your teaching.

Give us a sincere love for one another – that we may seek opportunities to serve one another.

Give us a passion for unity – that we may set aside our differences and break bread together at your table.

Give us a lifestyle of prayer – that you may constantly be on our hearts and minds, guiding what we do and say.

Heavenly Father, we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

*Prayer composed by Ed Calhoun, parishioner of St. Pius X in Owensboro



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