



Grades 6-8 "Home Study" Unit 4

Read through the attached teaching guides with your child(ren) and use the following discussion questions to share about what has been learned. You will notice that the teaching guides often suggest other media, such as videos, songs etc. If there is a video you are not able to locate (a resource video from Life Teen/EDGE) and you would like to view it – let me know and I will make sure it is available to you!

After the Unit 4 sessions are complete, please have your son or daughter write a few paragraphs (maybe a paragraph per session) about what they learned and about their discussion with you and email it to olpyouthministryrocks@gmail.com by February 4th.

Session 1: The Approach

In addition to praying through the attached teaching page, please watch the youtube video by Fr Josh Johnson on "Lectio Divina". Using the Lectio Divina Handout, pray through Matthew 2:1-12 then answer the following questions:

- What struck you the most? Why?
- What does this Scripture reading reveal about God?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- What in this passage has helped you to love Jesus more?
- What from this passage can you practically apply to your own life? What do you think the Spirit is guiding you to add/change/remove from your life this week?

Session 2: The Ascent

Using the Lectio Divina handout, pray through Luke 24:13-31 and answer the following questions:

- What struck you the most? Why?
- What does this Scripture reading reveal about God?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- What in this passage has helped you to love Jesus more?
- What from this passage can you practically apply to your own life? What do you think the Spirit is guiding you to add/change/remove from your life this week?

Session 3: The Apex

- Why do you think the Eucharist is so important?
- Why do you think the Eucharist is called the "summit" of our faith?
- How does the Eucharist bring us to the heights of holiness?

Session 4: Heaven and Earth

Using the Lectio Divina handout, pray through 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 and answer the following questions:

- How can you better prepare for Mass on Sunday?
- Do you pay attention during Mass? If not, what distracts you? If so, what is your favorite part?
- What does it mean to say we are required to have "full, active, conscious participation" at Mass?
- Personal challenge: What is one part of Mass you want to participate in more tonight or during this Sunday's Mass?



Lectio Divina

Reading – open the Bible and read a passage slowly twice.

While reading ask yourself “What is this passage saying? What is the story about?”

Find a word or phrase from the passage that sticks out to you.

Meditatio – meditate or think about that passage, especially the word or phrase that stuck out to you.

Ask yourself “What is this scripture saying to me right now? What is it speaking to my heart?”

Oratio – pray. Talk to God about what you read and meditated on. Ask God for the grace to live out what it is.

Contemplatio – contemplate. This is a gift. We can’t make this happen, we just spend time “looking” at God and sometimes He brings us to another level of prayer.

Action – Based on what I’ve read/meditated/prayed about – what can I do?

Unit 4: Session 1 "The Approach"

THE HOLY MASS

- As each new Sunday approaches, so does the opportunity to attend Mass. It is central to our Catholic faith and should be the high point of our weeks and have a place of importance in our weekends.
- We may go to Mass each Sunday and on holy days of obligation, but do we understand what the Mass is and are we properly prepared for who we are going to be encountering?
- In Latin, the Mass is called Missia, which refers to the sending forth or missio, which happens at the end of the Liturgy.
- During Mass we receive Christ, both through the words of Scripture and the Eucharist.
- The foundational structure of the Mass has been around since the birth of the Church. Since the beginning, the faithful have gathered together "to break bread." The structure we follow during the Mass has been around throughout the centuries.

GOING DEEPER

Saint Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, gives us an insight to what the very early Church looked like; he writes, "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers." (CCC 1342, Acts: 2:42)

Project pictures of different Catholic Churches from all around the world.

- We can walk into any Catholic church anywhere in the world and participate in the Holy Mass because every Mass is the same, no matter where we are. The Mass is the central celebration for the Catholic Church. (CCC 1343, 1388)
- Jesus gives us Himself so that even after we leave the walls of the church, He is still with us, helping us to follow the mission that God has given to each of us. (CCC 1332)
- Ask the youth to respond: What sort of mission do you think God has for you in your daily life?

PREPARING FOR MASS

- Since God has such an important mission for each of us to accomplish, and the Mass is where we go to be filled with His grace and love to live out His will for our lives, it is important that we prepare for Mass just like we would for any mission or adventure.
- Have three backpacks at the front of the room. In each backpack have a small map rolled up in it. Write "Examine Your Conscience" on the first map, "Fast" on the second map, and "Dress Properly" on the third map.
- There are three essential components of preparing for Mass.
- Call up a youth to open the first backpack and pull out the map with "Examine Your Conscience" written on it. Pin this map up on the wall behind you or on a cork board next to you.
- First, it is important that we take some time to examine our conscience. If we have committed any grave or mortal sin, we must first go and receive Christ's forgiveness and healing grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (CCC 1385)

GOING DEEPER

Discuss this point further using the following: St. Paul exhorts us, saying, "A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself." Since we are receiving Christ Himself in the Eucharist, it is important that we receive Him in a state of grace and not sin, since we should desire and want to show Christ our utmost reverence and respect. (1 Cor 11:28-29, CCC 1857-59).

- Call up a youth to open the second backpack and pull out the map with “Fast” written on it. Pin this map up on the wall behind you or on a cork board next to you.
- Second, we prepare for Mass by following what the Church calls the “Eucharistic fast,” which means that anyone “who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion” (Code of Canon Law 919).
- That means that when we know what time we will be going to Mass and what time we usually receive communion, we should not be eating an hour before (including chewing gum) or drinking anything other than water. We do this to show respect towards Christ who we will be receiving in the Eucharist.
- Call up a youth to open the third map with the words “Dress Properly” written on it. Pin this map up on the wall behind you or on a cork board next to you.
- Third, we prepare for proper reception of the Eucharist by dressing appropriately and by being attentive and participating at Mass. The way that we dress and act during Mass should reflect respect for Jesus and also the great joy and honor it is to have Jesus present with us during Mass. (CCC 1387)

GOING DEEPER

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Constitution on the Divine Liturgy, states, “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy” (14). Ask the youth what it practically means to fully, actively, and consciously participate at Mass.

THE MASS AND US

- The Mass is central to the life of the Church, and the Church desires for the Mass to take a prominent place in each of our hearts.
- While we are required to attend Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation, we should not view it as something we have to do but rather something we want to do because we understand how important it is! (CCC 1389)

GOING DEEPER

Ask the youth what the six holy days of obligation are, and then briefly describe each one and when we celebrate them.

- God does not wish for us to be present at Mass for Himself, but rather, He knows how much we are in need of the Mass because of who we receive and the grace and immense love that Jesus gives freely to us.
- The mission that God calls us to is different for each of us; none of us are going to bring God’s love to others in exactly the same way, which means that each of us has a very important role in the eyes of God.
- There are many opportunities for each of us, on a daily basis, to be missionaries (or witnesses of God’s love and goodness on earth), and it is through being present in body, mind, and spirit at Mass that we become most fully equipped to know God’s will and carry it out in our lives.
- Challenge the youth to examine their conscience each evening this week so that they can see where in their day they have glorified God or walked away from His will for them.

Unit 4: Session 2 “The Ascent”

THE GATHERING

- Connect the Gather game to the Mass by explaining to the youth the importance of knowing about something before you do it. We learned about the different mountains before we would choose to climb them, we also learn about Mass before we go so we know how to participate and enter in.
- Many of us get stuck in just going through the motions at Mass because we don't understand the “why” behind what we do.
- The awesome part about our faith is that no action or response is without any meaning and purpose. The purpose of this Edge Night is to help us understand why we do what we do so that we can truly enter in and pray through the liturgy.
- Share a story from your life where you struggled with the Mass and felt like you “had” to go or like you were just going through the motions. (Save the half of the story of how you overcame this and how it transformed the Mass for later in the talk)
- Mass begins with all of us gathering together. We all enter into the sanctuary to celebrate together. During this time, we quiet our hearts and prepare to encounter Christ in the Mass.
- Ask the youth to respond: What are some other types of celebrations in your life? How do you participate in these celebrations?
- No one is just a spectator at Mass — we all have a part to play. Some read the readings, others help distribute the Eucharistic, and others sing in the choir. But most of us sit in the pews as part of the congregation. Even we, the congregation, have a responsibility to actively participate in the Mass. (CCC 1348)

GOING DEEPER

Talk to your parish liturgy director to see what different roles the middle school youth can help with at Mass. Share with the youth the ministries they can help with and provide a place for them to sign up.

- One person who plays a very significant role in the Mass is the priest. He acts in the person of Christ (in persona Christi Capitis) and prays on our behalf to Christ. He is the one who has the authority to transform the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ for us to receive. (CCC 1348, 1548)

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

- During the Liturgy of the Word, during Sunday Mass and on solemnities during the week, we hear four different readings.
- Ask the youth to respond: Where in the Bible do the different readings that we hear at Mass come from?
- During a typical Sunday Mass, there is a reading from the Old Testament, a reading from the New Testament, and one from a Gospel; a psalm or canticle is also sung. During weekday Masses, there are usually only two readings and a responsorial psalm. (CCC 1349)
- The first reading is usually taken from Old Testament. Passages from the Old Testament tell us about our history. These are stories from the time before the birth of Jesus.
- The responsorial psalm is generally taken from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. The Psalms express the prayers of the people of God. They help us remember the promises that God has made to us. Jesus Himself prayed the Psalms, and the Psalms also reveal the promises that God kept to us through Jesus Christ. The Psalms are essential to the prayer of the Church. (CCC 2585-2589)

- The second reading typically comes from one of the books of the New Testament, aside from the Gospels. These Scripture passages are often very practical and show us how to live out the teachings of Jesus and how to follow Him in our daily lives.
- The last reading is the Gospel, and it is taken from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. The Gospels tell us stories about the life of Jesus and all His works, miracles, and teachings. If you listen carefully during the Gospel reading, you can usually hear a connection between the first reading and the Gospel.

GOING DEEPER

Challenge the youth to truly prepare well for Mass by reading the Sunday readings ahead of time and give them a few examples of places they can find the readings online or in book resources.

- After the Gospel, the priest or a deacon will give the homily. The homily helps break open the readings and apply them to our daily lives. During this time the priest or deacon will explain parts of the Scripture passages that might have been difficult to understand or show us how we can live out certain teachings in our modern world. (CCC 1349)
- During the homily, try to find at least one thing that you can put into practice this week that will help you follow Jesus better.
- After the homily, we profess the Nicene Creed. In the Nicene Creed we recite all that we believe as Catholics and remind ourselves to hold fast to these beliefs.
- In the prayers of the faithful we offer up our prayers as a Church. Prayer is powerful on its own, but there is something special about coming together in prayer as the Body of Christ.

THE OFFERTORY AND THE COLLECTION

- Next comes the offertory and the collection.
- Ask the youth to respond: Who can tell me what happens at this point in the Mass?
- During this time, baskets or bowls are passed around the church to collect our offerings of money to support the parish and to be given to those in need. (CCC 1351)

GOING DEEPER

Help give the youth perspective on how the tithe of the parishioners helps pay for the building, utilities, and all the things needed to keep the church open and running, as well as the money that is given to the poor. Then challenge them to bring their own money to give to the parish during the collection next Sunday.

- While this is happening, the bread and wine are brought forward to the altar. (CCC 1350)
- The offertory isn't just the "half-time" of the Mass but an opportunity for us to prepare our hearts to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist before it begins.
- Share the rest of your story about how you came to understand what was happening during the Mass and how this transformed your life and your participation in the Mass.

Unit 4: Session 3 "The Apex"

WHY CLIMB MOUNTAINS?

- Research and tell the story of a famous mountain climber, focusing on his or her experience summiting the tallest mountains in the world or, if someone from your community is an experienced mountain climber, invite him or her to talk about his or her experience.
- Why do people climb dangerous mountains? For many, it is the challenge; they want to prove to themselves they can do it. Maybe their goal is to have their name as the first to ever summit a particular mountain or to be the first from their country, the first of their gender, the first without an oxygen tank, etc. to do so.
- Some people climb just for the view. Have you ever stood at a really high point? Maybe you have looked out of a really tall building or been to the top mountain yourself; the view from thousands of feet above the ground can be breathtaking.

- Many people spend their whole lives, and sometimes sacrifice their lives, in pursuit of the highest summits of the world.
- The Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Christian life. Like great mountain climbers, we strive to reach the summit where we encounter Jesus Christ truly present. (CCC 1324)
- However, unlike many mountain climbers, we do not reach this summit for bragging rights or to be the first. We receive the Eucharist to be transformed by it and to receive the strength and grace of Jesus to live our lives well.

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD

- The Eucharist is the high point of our faith, just like the top of the mountain is the high point for climbers. There are many stories in the Bible where people have incredible encounters with God on the tops of mountains.
- Scripture even recounts stories of Jesus going up mountains to teach and to pray to His Father. There is one specific account of Jesus taking a few of His disciples up a mountain top to reveal something important to them.

GOING DEEPER

Recount the stories of Moses meeting God on the mountain in Exodus 24:12-18 and of Elijah on the mountain in 1 Kings 19:11-13. Both men were called to the mountain to encounter God. Compare these stories to the Transfiguration where both Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus.

- Read one of the accounts of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) and project an image of this event.
- During this event, called the Transfiguration, the apostles see Jesus not just as a man but also shining with heavenly glory. The apostles were shown, in a profound way, that Jesus truly is God.
- Just like the apostles and many men of the Bible, we, too, are called by God to ascend a mountain, not a literal mountain but rather to seek the heights of holiness when we come to Mass every single Sunday.
- We approach the summit, the apex of our faith, when we begin the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparation of the altar and the gifts. While the altar is prepared, people from the congregation bring forward bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ as well as offerings of money that will be used in service of the church and the poor.
- The priest then begins the Eucharistic Prayer. During this prayer the priest acts as the person of Christ (in persona Christi) and offers up to the Father not only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but also our very lives, our prayers, and our efforts to grow more like Christ and share His love with others. There are four different options that priests can use for the Eucharistic Prayers but the following is the general format that they all follow.
- The Eucharistic Prayer begins in an attitude of thanksgiving in what is called the preface. During this the priest joins all of our prayers with all the angels and saints in giving thanks for everything God has done. (CCC 1352)
- Next comes the acclamation during which the whole community joins with all the heavenly powers singing the Sanctus, “Holy holy holy are you Lord God...”
- As the Eucharistic Prayer continues, the priest prays for the Holy Spirit to come down on the bread and wine in order to transform them into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus — this is called the epiclesis. (CCC 1353)

GOING DEEPER

Explain what it means that the priest stands in persona Christi (that He acts as Jesus Christ Himself and that it is truly Jesus, present in the priest, who transforms the bread and wine into His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity just as He did at the Last Supper).

- After this, we hear the priest say words that may sound familiar to us if we read Scripture. During the Institution Narrative, the priest prays the same words that Jesus did the night that He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper (“On the night before He was betrayed...,” “When supper was ended He took the cup...”). (CCC 1353)
- Next during the anamnesis, the whole Church celebrates the memorial of Christ — in particular His Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven. We as a Church make a Proclamation of Faith and the priest proceeds with words similar to, “In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you Father this life-giving bread, this saving cup...”.
- Toward the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest will start asking for the intercession of different saints in our Church. This point in the Mass is a reminder that communion is celebrated by the whole Church, both in heaven and on Earth. Recalling that we are joined by the angels and saints who have gone before us allows us to more fully understand the mystery of the Eucharist and reminds us of the men and woman we can look to as examples of how to live our lives. (CCC 1354)
- The Eucharistic Prayer is concluded with a final prayer where the priest proclaims the great glory of God (“Through Him, with Him, and in Him, all glory and honor is yours...”) and the whole community responds with a resounding “Amen.”
- While there are a few other elements of the Mass that happen before we go forward to receive the Eucharist, it is important to remember that at this point Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist. The

bread and wine might look the same on the outside, but their substance has truly been changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. (CCC 1356-1390)

- It is during the Eucharistic Prayers that we are reminded of and remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that saved us from all of our sins, and through this we are reconciled with God and brought back into relationship with Him. (CCC 1354-1365)
- When we walk forward to receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, we are filled with His love and given all the grace that we need to climb to the heights of holiness. During communion, we receive the "bread of heaven" and the "cup of salvation" which is Jesus Christ Himself who offered Himself for the "life of the world." (CCC 1355)
- Share a story about how you first came to believe in the Eucharist and how it transformed your life.

ASCEND TO BE SENT

- Project an image of one of the tallest mountains in the world.
- A famous climber once said, of he and his friends' attempts to summit great mountains: "We were conquerors of the useless." What he meant by this was that all they cared about was getting to the top. They wanted to check off another mountain; they wanted to be able to say, "I conquered that mountain."
- What he realized was that it meant nothing if he wasn't changed in the process or if he didn't grow because of the adventure.
- We, too, must strive to not be "conquerors of the useless" in the faith. We need to make sure that our faith does not just become a series of checking off our duties as Catholics.
- When we receive the Eucharist, we should be transformed. St. Augustine says, "Become what you have received." Every Sunday should leave us transformed.
- Project an image of a priest holding up the Eucharist.
- We are meant to become Christ in the world. If we look back at the story of the Transfiguration, Peter wanted to simply stay on the mountain top, forever in the glory of God. But Jesus tells Him that is the wrong idea; He says that they must go back.
- In the same way, we do not come to Mass to simply stay locked up in our churches forever; we, too, must go back down the mountain, leave Mass, and tell the world about the glory of God and how He has changed our lives.
- We have learned that the very word "Mass" comes from the word "missio" which means to be sent forth. We receive Jesus in order to be strengthened to return back out to the world and share the light of Christ with all those we encounter, accomplishing His will in our lives. (CCC 1332)
- And the great news is that we are not alone. Just like no climber would attempt to climb Everest or Meru by themselves, we are not expected to keep climbing the mountains of our faith alone. Not only is Jesus always with us and mysteriously present in the Eucharist to always fill us with grace and strength, but we have our community too.
- Share a story about how a specific person or group of people have helped you to live out your faith.
- Jesus knows that we cannot do it alone and that is why He created the Church — so that His people would never be far from Him or feel like they had to journey by themselves.
- So the question is, will you be changed by your climb to the summit of holiness? Will you be changed by what Christ has done in your life and the way that He is present in every single liturgy? Will you climb "to the heights" and show others the way?

Unit 4: Session 4 “Heaven and Earth”

Heaven and Earth

The bishops and pope came together for a meeting we call Vatican II Council from 1962-65.

At this council and from other meetings about Liturgy/Mass, it was decided that Mass would be in the language of the people and you and I were called to “full, active and conscious participation.”

Prior to Vatican II, the Mass was in Latin and some people had a hard time understanding what was happening in Mass. After Vatican II, the Mass was said in the language of the people. For instance, in Mexico, the Mass would be said in Spanish, French in France, English, German, etc.

The great thing about Mass is that no matter what language it is being said it is the same Mass. The same prayers and the same readings are heard throughout the world in many languages. That is the beauty of the Catholic Mass. The Mass is holy and sacred. We did not simply make up a bunch of stuff and call it “mass.” What we say and do during Mass is based on Scripture and Traditions passed on to us from the early Church. During the first part of Mass called the Liturgy of the Word, we gather together, hear Scripture proclaimed and a homily to help us understand the readings. The second part of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. During this part of the Mass, our gifts are offered and simple bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. As all of this is going on, one of the things the Catholic Church tells us is that we are not supposed to just “sit there” during Mass and do nothing. Some of you may have grown up Catholic and see nothing exciting about going to Mass. In fact, you may even try to find ways so that you do not have to go. We sometimes come to Mass hoping to be entertained, but we forget that Mass is sacred. After Vatican II an important document was written that encouraged the faithful (that is you and me) to “full, conscious and active participation” in Mass. Here are some ways you can be prepared to fully engage in the liturgy:

- Read the Sunday readings before you come to Mass. There are resources to help you understand them as well.
- Get to church on time. When you rush in, it is hard to get focused. Show up early, take time to pray and get your heart and mind ready for worship.
- Remember that when you enter the church, you are entering sacred space. You may see people you know, but greet one another in a way that respects others who are trying to pray. Before Mass, take a moment to quiet yourself as well.
- Sing and make a joyful noise to the Lord. Join in the songs; do not just sit there. When you sing, you pray twice.
- Listen carefully to the readings. If you prepared before Mass, you will be able to listen and try to hear something new.
- Find a way to participate in the offering. If you make an allowance or have some money, place your tithe in the basket. This helps the church. Also, sing as the choir leads the congregation in song.
- Enter into the Eucharistic Prayer. Hear the words that the priest is saying and pray along with him. Ask the Lord to help you more fully understand His sacrifice and what is happening during this time.
- When you walk forward to receive Holy Communion, come reverently and with respect. Give a respectful bow before you receive and then place your hands out, right over left, to receive Communion. If you also receive the Precious Blood, give a respectful bow and reverently take a sip from the cup. Return to your seat and reflect on what it means to receive Jesus into your body, heart and soul. There are other ways you can more fully participate in Mass. Prepare with your family before you come to Mass and be ready to sing, read, pray, stand, sit and kneel. This routine helps us to know the Mass and to focus more on Jesus.