

UNPACKING THE EMMAUS SERIES

DO THIS

IN MEMORY OF ME



*Written by John Thornhill SM
Designed and produced by Patrick Lim*

THE EMMAUS SERIES



Questions Catholics ask on their journey of Faith

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SESSION 1

Introductory reading

Mane nobiscum Domine (2004, nn. 14-16)

The Apostolic Letter of John Paul II on the Eucharist

We are constantly tempted to reduce the Eucharist to our own limited point of view, while in reality it is *we ourselves who must be open to the full dimensions of its Mystery* (emphasis in original).

There is no doubt that the most evident dimension of the Eucharist is that it is a *meal*. *Being a meal* is part of its structure. 'Take, eat ... Drink from it all of you' (Mt 26). As such it expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with us, and which we ourselves must build with one another.

Yet it must not be forgotten that the Eucharistic meal also has a profoundly and primarily *sacrificial* meaning. In the Eucharist Christ makes present for us the sacrifice offered once for all on Golgotha. And while the Eucharist makes present what occurred in the past, it also *impels us towards the future when Christ will come again* at the end of time. This ... makes the Sacrament of the Eucharist an event which draws us into itself, and fills our Christian journey with hope.

All these dimensions of the Eucharist come together in the aspect which more than any other makes a demand on our faith: *the mystery of the 'real' presence*. With the entire tradition of the Church we believe that Jesus is truly present under the Eucharist species (or 'appearances'). This presence ... is called 'real', not in an exclusive way, as if to suggest that other forms of Christ's presence are not real, but to express the unique manner of this presence, because Christ ... becomes substantially present, whole and entire, in the reality of his body and blood ... It is precisely his presence which gives the other aspects of the Eucharist – as meal, as memorial of the Paschal Mystery, as an anticipation of the final blessings of the great plan of God – a significance which goes far beyond mere symbolism. The Eucharist is a mystery of presence, the perfect fulfilment of Jesus' promise to remain with us until the end of the world. □

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ What are some positive and some negative moments you have experienced at celebrations of the Eucharist?

- ◆ Do you think that, in this time of renewal, faith in the Eucharist is in danger of being obscured?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Chapter 1:
Faith in the Real Presence

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

An alternative reading provided in pages 14-15

Instructions to the Newly Baptised,

Jerusalem 4th century

Our Lord Jesus Christ on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and handed it to his disciples saying: 'Take and eat; this is my body'. And taking the cup, and giving thanks, he said, 'Take and drink; this is my blood'. Since, then, Christ himself clearly described the bread to us in the words, 'This is my body', who will dare henceforward to dispute it? And since he has emphatically said, 'This is my blood', who will waver in the slightest and say it is not his blood?

So let us have the fullest confidence that it is the body and blood of Christ as we partake. For his body has been bestowed on you under the figure of bread, and his blood under the figure of wine, so that by partaking of Christ's body and blood you may become one ... with him. This is how we become bearers of Christ ...

Christ once said in conversation with the Jews: 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you'. They were scandalised because they did not interpret his words spiritually; they retreated from his presence, thinking he was exhorting them to cannibalism.

Do not, then, regard the bread and wine as nothing but bread and wine, for they are the body and blood of Christ, as the Master has himself proclaimed. Though your senses suggest otherwise, let faith reassure you.

You have been taught and fully instructed that what seems to be bread is not bread (though it appears to be such to the sense of taste) but the body of Christ; that what seems to be wine is not wine (though taste would have it to be) but the blood of Christ. □

Alternative reading

Instruction of St Ambrose to the newly baptised

Milan, 4th century

Thus purified and richly adorned, the newly baptised advance to the altar of Christ ... and seeing the holy altar arranged, cry out (in the words of the psalm), 'You have prepared a table in my sight ... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows.'

It is a marvellous thing that God rained down manna on the fathers and fed them with daily bread from heaven, so that it is said: 'Man has eaten the bread of angels'. But those who ate that bread in the wilderness are all dead; the food which you receive, however, that living bread which came down from heaven, gives us in truth, eternal life - whoever eats of this bread shall never die, for it is the body of Christ ...

We observe that the grace of God has greater power than nature ... to this point, however, we have been speaking of the grace of the prophet Elijah's blessing.

If the blessing of a man has such power as to change nature, what are we to say of the consecration wrought by God himself, where it is the very words of our Lord and Saviour which are at work? This sacrament which we receive is brought about by the word of Christ. If the word of Elijah had such power that it brought down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ have power to change the nature of the elements (placed on the altar)? You read concerning the works of the whole universe: 'He spoke and they were made, he commanded and they were created'. Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less difficult to give a new nature to things than to change that nature ...

The Lord himself proclaims: 'This is my body'. Before the blessing by the heavenly words it is designated by a different name, after the consecration we speak of it as the Lord's body. He speaks of his blood. Before the consecration it has another name; after the consecration it is called blood. And you say Amen, that is, 'It is true'. Let the heart within confess what the mouth utters, let the heart feel what the voice speaks. □

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

- 1. An informal Buzz Session in which each participant is able to express their response to each question – questions should be discussed separately.*
- 2. The sharing is brought to a conclusion, with each participant expressing, in a few words, what is their personal response to each question – in view of all that has been discussed in the session.*

Questions

- ♦ Vatican II called for a renewal of the Eucharistic celebration; bearing in mind what we have seen in this session - concerning the need for this renewal - how would you evaluate the outcome to this point?
- ♦ What can parish communities do to promote and consolidate this renewal?

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SESSION 2

Introductory reading

With Burning Hearts (1994, pp.93-93)

by Henri Nouwen

'A Meditation on the Eucharist'

The word 'Eucharist' means literally, 'thanksgiving'. A Eucharistic life is lived in gratitude. The story, which is also our story, of the two friends walking to Emmaus has shown that gratitude is not an obvious attitude towards life. Gratitude needs to be discovered and to be lived with greater inner attentiveness. Our losses, our experiences of rejection and abandonment, and many moments of disillusion keep pulling us into anger, bitterness, and resentment ...

Jesus gave us the Eucharist to enable us to choose gratitude. It is a choice we, ourselves, have to make. But the Eucharist prompts us to cry out to God for mercy, to listen to the words of Jesus, to invite him into our home, to enter into communion with him and proclaim good news to the world; it opens the possibility of gradually letting go of our many resentments and choosing to be grateful. The Eucharistic celebration keeps inviting us to that attitude. In our daily lives we have countless opportunities. Before we fully realised, we have already said: 'This is too much for me. I have no choice but to be angry and to let my anger show. Life isn't fair, and I can't act as if it is'. However, there is always that voice that ... calls us 'foolish', a voice that asks us to have a completely new look at our lives, a look not from closed introspection, where we count our losses, but from deep reflection, where God is.

Eucharist – thanksgiving – in the end, comes from God. It is the gift that we cannot fabricate for ourselves. It is to be received. It is freely offered and asks to be freely received. That is where the choice is! We can choose to let the stranger (on the road to Emmaus) continue his or her journey and so remain a stranger. But we can also invite him or her into our inner lives, let him or her touch every part of our being and let them transform our resentments into gratitude. We don't have to do this. In fact, most people don't. But as often as we make that choice, everything, even the most trivial things become new. Our little lives become great – part of the mysterious work of God's salvation. Once that happens, nothing is accidental, casual, or futile any more. Even the most insignificant event speaks the language of faith, hope, and above all, love. That's the Eucharistic life, the life in which everything becomes a way of saying, 'Thank you' to him who joined us on the road.

□

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ Has the Mass been fully explained to you in your faith education, or have you been left with unanswered questions?
- ◆ What are some things that help you participate in the celebration of Mass?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Chapter 2:
What did Jesus intend?
- ◆ Chapter 3:
The Interpretation of theology
- ◆ Chapter 4:
Our companion on the journey

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

An alternative reading is provided in pages 28-29

Mane nobiscum Domine (2004, nn.27-29)

Apostolic Letter of John Paul II

The Eucharist is not merely an expression of communion in the Church's life; it is also a project of solidarity for all of humanity. In the celebration of the Eucharist the Church constantly renews her awareness of being a 'sign and instrument', not only of intimate union with God but also of the unity of the whole human race ... The Christian who takes part in the Eucharist learns to become a *promoter of communion, peace and solidarity* in every situation. More than ever ... the spectre of terrorism and the tragedy of war demands that Christians learn to experience the Eucharist as a *great school of peace*, forming men and women who, at various levels of responsibility in social, cultural and political life, can become promoters of dialogue and communion.

There is one other point which I would like to emphasise, since it significantly affects the authenticity of our communal sharing in the Eucharist. It is the impulse which the Eucharist gives to the community *for a practical commitment to building a more just and fraternal society*. In the Eucharist our God has shown love in the

extreme, overturning all those criteria of power which too often govern human relations and radically affirming the criterion of service: 'If anyone would be first, they must be last of all and servant of all' (Mk 9:35). It is not by chance that the Gospel of John contains no account of the institution of the Eucharist, but instead relates the 'washing of the feet' (Jn 13): by bending down to wash the feet of his disciples, Jesus explains the meaning of the Eucharist ... Writing to the Corinthians, Saint Paul vigorously reaffirms the emptiness of a Eucharistic celebration lacking charity expressed by practical sharing with the poor (1 Cor 11). ◇

Alternative reading

The sermons of Peter Chrysologus

5th century Bishop of Ravenna

Let us listen now to the appeal Saint Paul makes to us: 'I appeal to you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice'. By this request the apostle has raised all mankind to the level of priests: 'to present your bodies as a living sacrifice'.

How unique is the duty of this Christian priesthood! For there someone is sacrifice as well as priest; there we do not look for something outside ourselves to offer to God; there we bring our very selves as a sacrifice to God ...

My brothers and sisters, this sacrifice follows the pattern of Christ, who by his life sacrificed his body for the life of the world; he truly made his body a living sacrifice – because though he is slain he lives. So ... death is rendered powerless; the sacrifice endures; the victim lives; death is punished.

Since you are a human being, be God's sacrifice and his priest. Do not throw away the privilege granted to you by divine authority. ... Set up the altar of your heart. And so without fear bring your bodily self to God as his victim.

God seeks your faith, not your death. He thirsts for your prayer, not your blood. He is appeased by your love, not your death. ◇

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15.

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Questions

- ♦ Vatican II called us all to a 'full, conscious and active participation' in the Eucharistic celebration, calling such participation 'a right and duty by reason of baptism' (*Const. on Liturgy, n 14*). Has what we have seen in this session helped you understand better what this participation involves?
- ♦ What stands out for you in what we have seen in the two sessions on the Eucharist?

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

An introductory section discusses the Church's faith in the "real presence" of the Saviour in the Eucharist. From Apostolic times, it is clear, the Church in both East and West has believed that what is placed on the altar as bread and wine becomes the real body of the Lord. History has clear lessons:

- ♦ Concerning the "reservation" of the consecrated Sacrament after Mass
- ♦ Concerning changing attitudes in the Middle Ages to Eucharistic **participation** and Eucharistic **veneration**
- ♦ Concerning Protestantism's negative attitudes to the Eucharist

The main part of the talk shows that biblical scholarship helps us to recover the essential experience of those who took part in the Last Supper.

Table Fellowship had an important place in the life of Jesus: more than once he performed at table actions of great significance. Those who shared his table had recognized that he was **the Messiah** Israel hoped for – as he led them in prayer, their faith must have been filled with anticipation.

This was the **Passover Meal**, the great memorial of Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt. Many devout Jews believed that the Messiah would be revealed on the night of the Passover.

This was almost certainly a **farewell meal**. What would Jesus do to mark the occasion?

Taking the unleavened bread of the Passover meal and the traditional cup of wine, Jesus gave God thanks and praise and gave them to his friends with such words as "This is my body, broken, given for you", "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the people".

The Church's constant faith makes it clear that Jesus is giving his real body and blood in the form of a meal, which expresses the reality of his death. Why does he do this? **That his followers may share in all that his death and resurrection were to achieve** - the **Paschal Mystery** in which he gives all that he is into the hands of his Father, as the perfect worship of the whole of Creation, and he becomes the healing of the whole world.

Analysis of the function of a **symbol** confirms the Church's traditional faith.

Theology uses various thought-forms to bring out all this unprecedented ritual implies:

- ◆ Memorial
- ◆ Sacrifice
- ◆ Covenant and Communion
- ◆ Anticipation of eternal life.

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