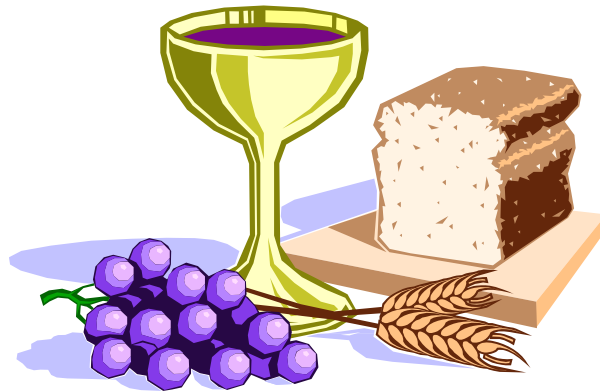


Proximate Preparation
for
Penance and Eucharist

Session Four



Jesus Invites Us to His Eucharistic Table

Office of Faith Formation
Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn
Second Edition 2012

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Environment: A small table with chalice, paten, plant, and a cross on it.

Part I:

Prayer:

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross.

Leader: Lord Jesus you want us to be very close to you. Very soon you will be coming to us in Holy Communion. Help us to prepare the best we can to welcome you into our hearts. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Orientation:

In our last session, we reflected on Jesus' unconditional love. His love for us is so deep that sometimes it is hard for us to even begin to grasp. It was Jesus' love for us that made him accept death on the cross. It was his death and resurrection that have made it possible for us to share in his life through our baptism. As Jesus was approaching his last week before dying, he wanted so much to stay with us in a very special way. That is why on Holy Thursday night at the Last Supper; Jesus gave us the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. He wanted to remain not only very close to us, but really in us. After Jesus finished eating that night, he spent some time talking to his apostles telling them how much he wanted them and all of us to be very close to him. Let us listen carefully to what Jesus said. (John 15:1-5)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.

Part II:

Catechesis

Leader: This story that Jesus told helps to teach us a lesson. If you have ever seen a picture of a vine, you know that the trunk and the branches are all intertwined one into the other. They are very connected, aren't they?

What does the vine need in order to grow? (Let the children answer).

Children: It needs water, food from the soil, and light.)

Leader: And in order to stay healthy it needs on-going care.
How do the branches get their food?

Children: They get the food through the trunk. It has roots that receive the food from the soil.

Leader: How can you tell if a branch is good, healthy? Yes, it has leaves and it may have some fruit on it. If a branch looks all dried up, what does the owner of the vine usually do? Right, he snips it off. What happens if he cuts off one of the good branches? It will dry up, won't it, and it can't bear any more fruit. Once it is separated from the vine, it will die. (Go over to the plant break a leaf off.) What is going to happen to this leaf? It will die because it is no longer connected to the plant.

In the bible story we just heard, Jesus said that we are the branches and he is the vine. We get our spiritual food and nourishment through him, by staying very close to him, interconnected with him. There are a number of ways that Jesus gives us this food, but there is one that is absolutely incredible. He gives us the gift of himself as this food in the Eucharist.

You children are preparing to receive Jesus for the first time in the Eucharist. Before long you will be coming to the table of the Eucharist to receive Jesus. Remember at the Last Supper Jesus took the bread and the wine and said, "This is my body; this is my blood."

After the priest repeats Jesus' words, our eyes will still see the round piece of bread and the wine, but they will be totally different. They become Jesus' body and blood. This is how he wants to give us himself every time we come to Mass.

Let's think about it. When you love someone very much, no matter how hard it might be, you always want to be there when someone is in need.

Think of those who care for us. They do anything for us, no matter how tired they might be. When you are sick, who takes care of you, who stays up at night to be with you? All of this is because you are loved. Jesus' love for us is even more than we can imagine. Through our baptism he becomes our very close friend. Jesus wants to fill us with joy and happiness even here on earth and then one day, he wants us to live with him forever in heaven. But in another session we have already said that following Jesus isn't always easy. But by receiving him in Holy Communion, our friendship with him becomes stronger and his presence in us gives us the strength to be faithful no matter what difficult things may come our way.

In the bible story Jesus said that whoever remains in him and he in us will bear fruit. What kind of fruit is Jesus talking about? He wants us to bear the fruit of kindness, patience, generosity, forgiveness, trust, peace, joy and love.

At the very end of the Mass, we hear the celebrant say, "Go in peace to love and serve God." These words mean: go back to your home, go to your schools, go to your place of work, go to the ball games, go to the playground, go wherever you may and there, by your words and actions toward all those you meet, show your love for God. In the Gospel of St. Matthew chapter 25, Jesus tells us that whatever we do to another person, we are doing to him. This is why the Church encourages us to bring food and good used clothes for the poor and why when there is a big disaster no matter what place in the world, the Church asks us to contribute money to help those suffering.

Throughout the year, as your children have been preparing for the Eucharist, they have and will continue to learn more about other parts of the Mass.

My dear friends, isn't our life with God wonderful? He is always with us no matter what happens. Even if we go away from him, he is still with us waiting patiently for our coming back to a close relationship with him. At every Mass he takes our lives, our blessings, our needs and concerns and brings them to his Father in heaven. Did you ever stop to think that Jesus is in heaven praying for you? And at every Mass we have the best prayer of thanksgiving of all, the celebration of the Eucharist.

Suggested Activity: If the parish usually has the families make a First Communion banner, this might be an opportune moment for this.

Attached is a template of a bookmark asking the recipient to pray for the specific child whose name is on it. Each child should be given five of these. Allow time for the children to fill in their names. They will take these with them to Mass. Immediately following the Prayer After Communion, the children will go throughout the Church distributing their five bookmarks.

(It is expected that the whole parish community has been involved in some way and are aware of these four sessions for the families and the children from both the Catholic School and the Parish Religious Education classes who are preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. It is a good opportunity to raise the consciousness of the entire parish of its role of prayer and good example. We all need the spiritual support of one another as we all try to be faithful followers of Jesus.)

As our closing prayer, let us sing one of the hymns which will be sung at our First Holy Communion Celebration.

Part III

Ritual:

Immediately following the Prayer after Communion:

With prior direction, the children go forth to distribute their prayer book marks throughout the entire congregation. The parents and the children form part of the Recessional Procession.