

Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

Discussion Guide & Prayer Prompts

For All Ascension Parishioners

These prompts for small group discussion and prayer are meant to foster wonder and devotion toward the mysterious reality of the Most Precious Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Holy Eucharist.

We hope that these prompts and questions build your faith and act as a conduit to deepen your relationship with Our Lord.

In turn, we also hope that the conversations you have with your peers, as well as the conversations you have in prayer with Jesus Himself, 1) further solidify your conviction in the truth of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar and 2) encourage you in your pursuit of proclaiming the Gospel by your lives.

It is an honor to serve you here at Church of the Ascension and may God bless you and all conversation and prayer that stems from this work (*scroll to the next page for the beginning of the document*).

Foreword & Introduction

- What do you hope to walk away with by reading this book?
 - What is your motivation for wanting to read this book?
 - How do you hope this book helps your *prayer* life?
- What is your reading plan/goal/benchmark?
- Do you plan on reading the book with a group of friends?

Discussion Questions

- In his brief foreword to the text itself, **Dr. Scott Hahn highlights the many layers of meaning** within the language and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper.
 - What is the role of the Eucharist in your life right now?
 - Has it always been that way or has it varied over the span of your life?
 - What do you want to know more about with respect to the Last Supper?
 - What is your relationship like with Scripture in general?
 - How do you read it? Do you have a preferred method or style of reading?
 - Are there certain areas of Scripture that you gravitate toward more than others? What are they and why do you think that is?
- What do you think the role of **mystery** in our Faith is?
- In the introduction, **Dr. Brant Pitre talks about a couple big turning points** in his life where the Lord knocks him off his feet with some profound truth.
 - What have been the major turning points in your faith walk, in your journey with God?

Prayer Prompts

- What about/in our Faith do you often take for granted?
- When it comes to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Our Lord, what aspect or dimension is the most mysterious to you? Ask the Lord to help you better understand and, if nothing else, to help you enter into meditating upon these great mysteries, to immerse yourself in them.

Chapter 1: The Mystery of the Last Supper

- How did your reading of this chapter go?
 - Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you?
 - What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- We often like to overlook Jesus' Jewish identity and think of Him as the first Christian, but that just isn't the case... What does it mean to you to see the words and deeds of Jesus recorded in the Gospels through ancient Jewish eyes?
 - How difficult is it for us as a parish community to see Jesus as a Jewish man, from a Jewish family, raised in a Jewish community?
 - How does it benefit us to see Jesus from a more historically accurate perspective?
 - Why does historical context matter so much when it comes to understanding the words and deeds of Christ?
- What is your relationship like with the Old Testament?
 - How familiar are you with other Jewish writings not found in the Bible?
 - Have you ever heard of the Talmud, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, the Mishnah, the Targums, or the Midrashim before seeing them listed here in this book?
- What are your 'go-to' verses/passages from Scripture for defending the Eucharist?
 - What are some main points that you would try to emphasize in a conversation about the validity and sacramental reality of the Holy Eucharist?
 - Where do you think a conversation about the Eucharist comes into play with respect to evangelizing our non-Catholic brothers and sisters?

Prayer Prompts

- Prayerfully take some time to reread John 6 and meditate upon the words of Christ.
 - Put yourself in the story...Where are you? Are you near Jesus? Standing, sitting, kneeling? On His left or right? In front or behind? Where are the other disciples? What is the weather like? What does the wind smell like? What are you wearing? What shade of gold are the wicker baskets? How many others are with you?
 - What words or phrases strike you most at this read through? Why?

Chapter 2: What Were the Jewish People Waiting For?

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Before reading this chapter, what kind of messiah did you think Jesus was?
 - Again, before reading this chapter, what kind of messiah did you think the Jewish people were hoping for and expecting?
- Why do you think the Jewish people were waiting for a “new Exodus”?
 - Why do you think the Exodus meant so much to the people of Israel?
 - What did it represent, embody, and promise? Why would they be looking for another exodus?
 - In the eyes of ancient Jews, how would the new exodus be different from the old Exodus?
 - Has the Lord ever given you an exodus? How has He liberated you from sin and death in your own life?
- Covenants transform separate parties into family...How has the Lord given you a new family through His Blood?
 - How do you experience the family of the Body of Christ the most here at Church of the Ascension?
- Just as Christ is the New Temple and has brought about the New Promised Land of the Kingdom of God, how do you see yourself as a temple for God?
 - How do you see the Kingdom of God present here in this community?

Prayer Prompts

- Even though the Israelites were freed from the slavery of Pharaoh, the shackles and chains of sinful habits were still around their wrists and ankles. We too, although we have been freed from the bondage of sin and death by the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, remain imperfect and experience temptation left and right...
 - St. Thomas Aquinas said that the four typical substitutes for God are wealth, pleasure, power, and honor...Which of these seem to dominate the majority of your temptations in life? Ask the Lord to help you persevere in your fight against these!

Chapter 3: The New Passover

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Why does it make sense for a new passover to accompany a new exodus?
 - What are those things in life that tend to cloud our expectations and hopes?
- What were the main steps of surrounding the passover lamb? How did Jesus fulfill these steps in a new Passover Lamb?
 - Why do you think God chose a lamb to be the animal of sacrifice for the Passover?
- What does it mean to you that the passover meal is not just a meal, but a celebration and a sacrifice?
 - How does Jesus' Crucifixion resemble the practice of sacrificing the passover lambs in the Jerusalem temple?
- How do you think the mystery of "memorial" and "remembrance" in the Jewish passover celebration translates to the Church as we know it today?
- What struck you the most about the fact that the pouring out of the blood of the passover lamb was the pinnacle moment of the passover feast?
 - What's the connection between the temple priests, the blood of the lambs, and the altar in the Jerusalem temple?
- What is significant about Jesus' command to take and drink His blood, and how does it differ from the long-held food laws of Israel?
 - How did ancient Israelites understand the significance and purpose of blood?

Prayer Prompts

- The Lord commands us to "do this in remembrance" of Him, a perpetual and eternal command for a perpetual and eternal reality.
 - How do you put yourself at the foot of the Cross...what do you see? What do you feel in the air? Where are you in proportion to the Cross? To Mary? The other women and St. John?
 - How do you unite the crosses of your life to the Cross of Jesus at Mass?

Chapter 4: The Manna of the Messiah

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- If Jesus is the Passover Lamb, why do you think He never mentioned the passover lamb at the Last Supper?
- Sometimes we are tempted to simply point the finger at the Israelites for complaining to God once they were in the desert...*but what kind of person do you become when you are irritable, angry, hungry, thirsty, physically and emotionally exhausted, sleep-deprived, and lonely?*
 - Let's not be so quick to throw stones!
- If you had to explain what it meant for something 'supernatural' to happen, how would you explain it?
 - Before reading this chapter, how did you understand the manna of the Exodus?
- Of all the animals in the world, why do you think God chose quail to give to the Israelites to accompany the manna?
- Do you see your heart as a type of tabernacle or ark of the new covenant? → *Read and discuss Jeremiah 31:33*
- From a Jewish perspective, why does it make sense that a new manna would accompany the messiah?
 - Contrast this idea with how the crowds seemed to focus on the natural reality of seeing and eating food at the feeding of the five thousand...why do you think they saw Jesus as 'the guy who can get me more bread' rather than the long awaited messiah?
- What do you think the significance is of the location of the word, *epiousios*, in the Sermon on the Mount discourse in Matthew 5-7?
 - What do you know about ancient Jewish literary techniques? What kinds are there and which one does Matthew use in chapters 5-7 of his Gospel?

Prayer Prompts

- What are those 'hard sayings' of Jesus or of the Church that you have trouble wrapping your head or your heart around?
 - Have you talked with the Lord about them? Ask for clarity and peace today...

Chapter 5: The Bread of the Presence

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- We could always call our good friend Webster for a definition, but what does being 'present' mean to you? What is 'presence' to you?
 - Likewise, how do you understand the term 'tabernacle'?
 - As a verb? As a noun?
- Of all things, why do you think God chose the Ark of the Covenant, the Menorah, and the golden table of the Bread of the Presence in the tabernacle?
- How was the Bread of the Presence a sign, offering, and sacrifice?
- Recap: What story does the Old Testament relate about King David and the Bread of the Presence?
 - Where do we see Jesus bring this up in His ministry and why do you think it is significant when He does?
- How does your understanding of the Bread of the Presence impact your perspective of the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist?
 - What are one or two insights about the Bread of the Presence that stick out more than the rest?
- What do you think the relationship is between the Jewish tradition of priests lifting up the Bread of the Presence on the golden altar exclaiming to the people, "Behold the Lord's love for you!", and the Last Supper?
 - Compare and contrast these two scenes...what sticks out to you? Where do we see something similar take place in the Mass?

Prayer Prompts

- *Put yourself at the Last Supper, where are you? Where are you reclining at table? What does the air smell like? How is the room lit? What do the rugs and cushions feel like that you are resting on? Where are you in proportion to everyone else who is there? What are the sounds that are filling the room? What does the table look like, and how is it set? What temperature is it? What do the cups and dishes look like? How do they feel in your hand?*
 - The Lord lifts the bread and says to you, "Behold my love for you" ...

Chapter 6: The Fourth Cup and the Death of Jesus

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Prior to reading this chapter, what was your general perception of the Jewish Passover feast? What came to mind?
 - As you read, what were you surprised to learn about the many traditions of the 'rite' itself that compose the Jewish Passover feast?
- What do you think is significant about the relationship between the Jewish Passover feast and family? What are some specifics that stick out to you?
 - What about the role of the father of the family during the celebration of the Passover feast?
 - What were his duties? Do you see any parallels between these and at the Last Supper/in our Liturgies today?
- What do you think is meant by, "*The fourth cup will be postponed until the kingdom is fully established*"? (see page 162 for the reference)
 - *Fun Fact: Did you know that the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are together used 300 times in 82 verses throughout the Gospels?*
 - *How are we to understand the Kingdom of God/the Kingdom of Heaven? How many different ways can we understand it?*
- Referring to Jesus in the Garden, what cups do you find yourself asking the Father to take from you?
 - How can we, like Jesus, learn to drink the *fourth cup*, the *hallel cup of praise* in the midst of our trials?

Prayer Prompts

- ***"Come to Me without delay because, when you give Me your sins, you give Me the joy of being your Savior. There is nothing I cannot forgive and heal; so come now, and unburden your soul. No matter how far you have strayed without a destination, no matter how often you have forgotten Me, no matter how many crosses you bear in this life; I want you to always remember, one thing that will never change. I THIRST FOR YOU – just you, as you are."*** - "I Thirst For You"
- A Letter From Mother Teresa

Chapter 7: The Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think most people haven't heard any of this before?
- What do you think gets in the way for most Catholics when it comes to sharing some of the different points raised in this book?
 - What do you think would help your fellow Catholic brothers and sisters grow in confidence and capacity to share said points?
 - A quick note from the man behind the curtain (Lee McMahon)...
 - *If you want to be able to communicate the truths shared in this book in a variety of contexts, it is essential that you make these truths your own! You don't have to be in a Bible study or be signed up in a small group to tell people about the beautiful reality of the Bread of the Presence or what the Fourth Cup is, it only takes a little faith and courage to bring it up in conversation within your spheres of influence.*
- How might it be helpful to know the root words (and root meanings of those words) behind modern-day English words, specifically in the context of reading Scripture and the Church Fathers?
- What are your thoughts on the teachings of the church fathers regarding the Eucharist?
 - Is there anything in particular that stuck out to you from the excerpts from the Church Fathers in this chapter?
- How does it build your faith to know that ancient Christians believed most, if not all, of these things about the Eucharist?

Prayer Prompts

- *Jesus so often calls us to mission when we are in prayer...*
 - *How has this book been good news to you? And seeing that we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world, how are you going to share this good news with the people in your spheres of influence? Think of two or three people in your life who really need to hear this good news...*

Chapter 8: On the Road to Emmaus

- How did your reading of this chapter go? Did anything jump off the page or really speak to you? What are a couple things you learned from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Jesus hides his identity from the disciples while walking on the road to Emmaus?
 - What benefit would there have been for him to do this?
- On a lighter note, how do you think Jesus kept the disciples from seeing His hands and feet all with holes in them?
- Why do you think the disciples lost their faith in Jesus and His promises?
 - What are those things in our lives that lead us to lose our faith and to distrust Jesus and His promises that He has spoken over our lives?
- How have the scriptures helped you come to faith in Christ?
 - Particularly the Old Testament Scriptures?
 - If they haven't really, imagine how much they could build your faith that is already strong!
- Why do you think Jesus disappears after the breaking of the bread with the disciples?
- How do you think the Road to Emmaus story is similar to the structure and content of the Mass as we know it today?
- Who are those people in your life who build your faith the most?
 - What is it about a faith-focused community that is so beautiful and beneficial to you?

Prayer Prompts

- ***Take this opportunity to consecrate yourself to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, or to rededicate yourself to His most precious Body and Blood, the Holy Eucharist!***
 - ***Speak with Him about what He means to you and praise Him for His self-gift in the Eucharist, and for His ongoing work in your life.***