

PARTICIPANT
GUIDE



SYMBOLON[®]

THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

PART 1

KNOWING THE FAITH

USER AGREEMENT

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What does *Symbolon* mean?

In the early Church, Christians described their Creed, their summary statement of faith, as the *symbolon*, the “seal” or “symbol of the faith.”

In the ancient world, the Greek word *symbolon* typically described an object like a piece of parchment, a seal, or a coin that was cut in half and given to two parties. It served as a means of recognition and confirmed a relationship between the two. When the halves of the *symbolon* were reassembled, the owner’s identity was verified and the relationship confirmed.

In like manner, the Creed served as a means of Christian recognition. Someone who confessed the Creed could be identified as a true Christian. Moreover, they were assured that what they professed in the Creed brought them in unity with the faith the Apostles originally proclaimed.

This series is called *Symbolon* because it intends to help bring people deeper into that communion of apostolic faith that has existed for 2,000 years in the Church that Christ founded.



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 1

The Journey of Faith



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

—Hebrews 11:1



OPENING PRAYER

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

—Psalm 139:1–4, 13–14 (NRSV)

 **CONNECT**

Today's session title is "The Journey." Share with the group the details of the longest journey you have ever been on.

- Where did you go?
- What was your mode of transportation?
- What were some highlights from the trip?
- What were some challenges?
- And, if you were to go on this journey again, would you do anything differently?

 **DISCUSS**

» Why do you think two of Jesus' disciples didn't recognize Him on the road to Emmaus?

» Why would this study we are beginning be foolish if Jesus had not risen from the dead?

» Can you describe an experience like these two disciples where your heart was on fire for God?

» Can you think of some examples of how Gnosticism exists today?

» Why do you think God wants you to know that He is not solitary?

» How does the love between a husband and wife reflect the inner life of God?

» James 2:19 reads: “**You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.**” James is saying that demons believe in God and yet do not have faith. How is faith more than believing?

» What do you think that looks like?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- God, who is infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, did not create us to increase his own happiness. He freely chose to create us out of his own love and goodness, so that we could share in his blessed life (CCC 1, 293).
- We were created by the God who is love and we are made for his love. As St. Augustine says, “**Our hearts are restless until they rest in him**” (CCC 27–30).

- At every moment of our lives, God draws near to us, calling us to seek him, to know him and to love him (CCC 1).
- There is only one God (CCC 200–202), but this one God has revealed himself as a communion of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (CCC 221).
- By sending the Son and the Holy Spirit to us, God has revealed his “inmost secret”—that his very being is a communion of love. As the *Catechism* teaches, **“God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange”** (CCC 221).
- God expresses the one divine nature in three personal ways. As the *Catechism* teaches, **“We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son’s is another and the Holy Spirit’s another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal”** (CCC 266).
- Faith is our response to God who has made himself known to us. Faith has two key aspects—on one hand, it is an assent of our minds to all that he has revealed. On the other hand, it is a personal adherence to God in which we entrust our lives to him (CCC 150).

COMMIT

This week’s commitment is to choose a time each day to reflect on the quote below from the *Catechism*.

Sit quietly asking for the grace to receive God’s loving gaze and speak to Him as a friend, sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires. Afterward, share what you experienced in this prayer time with someone close to you.



“God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.”

—CCC 221

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments asking Jesus to help you accept God’s invitation of love. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Jesus says in the Bible, “Come, follow me.” Envision Jesus saying that to you right now. How would you respond? What fears or hesitations might you have about following Jesus in your life? Remember that Jesus repeatedly said, “Do not be afraid.”

2. As in any relationship, a relationship with God involves conversation. What can you do this week to make more time for prayer—for talking to God—in your life? Choose a time of day that you will reserve for getting to know God better. You may want to put it as an appointment in your calendar so that you don’t forget.

3. Reflect on the following quote about prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits.

“We must speak to God as a friend speaks to his friend, servant to his master; now asking some favor, now acknowledging our faults, and communicating to Him all that concerns us, our thoughts, our fears, our projects, our desires, and in all things seeking His counsel.”

What is your experience with prayer? Have you ever spoken to God as a friend? Do you feel comfortable sharing all of your thoughts, even your fears and desires, with God? Write down one fear and one desire that you could share with God this week.

4. Jesus called those who came to him to believe in him, that they might have life abundant. Not everyone, however, answered the call to follow him. How will you respond?



CLOSING PRAYER

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

—Psalm 23:1–6



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 2

Divine Revelation



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

—John 3:16



OPENING PRAYER

*Father in heaven, give us the power of Your grace that we might always walk in the way You have revealed through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Free us from the darkness of our own desires and bring us into the light of Your truth. Form our lives according to Your will, and mold our hearts by Your love. Grant that we might always be open and receptive to the guidance of Your Church. We ask this in the name of the One who has promised to be with us always, now and forever.
Amen.*



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: AROUND THE WORLD



DISCUSS

» There are many people who say they believe in God and that God is love. However, they are hesitant to say that we can know with confidence who God is and what His will is for our lives. Why do you think this is so?

» What is inconsistent with this line of reasoning: “There is a God, God is love, but we can’t know with confidence who God is and what His will is for us”?

» Simply stated, Divine Revelation means “God has spoken truth to us for our salvation,” and the Church understands her mission to safeguard and communicate this revealed truth. How do the “keys of the kingdom” given from Jesus to Peter demonstrate this mission?

» Why do you think the Church from earliest times chose to use the word revelation, or unveiling, to describe how God has communicated to us?

» What does it mean that Jesus is the fullness of God’s Revelation of Himself to us?

» Jesus was recognized as a great teacher. It has been said, “Jesus was no greater teacher than when He was hanging on the cross.” What do you think that means?

» Catholics believe there is a difference between Sacred Tradition and the tradition of men. What do you think is the difference?

» What are some examples that demonstrate that the Bible alone is not enough?

» Jesus is calling you and inviting you to experience life to the full. What do you think that looks like?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- God has chosen to reveal himself and make known to us his loving plan of salvation so that we can know him and love him (CCC 50-52).
- God gradually communicated himself and his will through deeds and words in salvation history culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who is the fullness of Divine Revelation (CCC 53-65).
- The revelation of Jesus Christ was handed on in the Church orally through Sacred Tradition, and in writing through Sacred Scripture (CCC 75-79).
- This “deposit of faith” contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition was entrusted by the apostles to the teaching office of the Church, called the Magisterium, for its authentic interpretation (CCC 84-85).
- To know and understand God’s revelation, a Christian needs Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium. Each are so connected in the transmission of Divine Revelation that one cannot stand without the others (CCC 95).

COMMIT

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* brings divine Revelation to our finger tips. This week’s commitment is to pick up the *Catechism* (or read it online) and scan the subject index in the back. Find a topic that you would like to understand more deeply. Read about that topic in the *Catechism* and the Scripture references that are the foundation of that teaching. Be prepared to report back to the group what you have learned.



“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”

—Philippians 2:5–8

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments in prayer asking Jesus to help you to be more receptive to his revelation as handed on through the Catholic Church. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”** (John 14:6). Do I really accept Jesus’ revelation as the standard of truth for my life, or do I tend to make up my own moral and religious truth? Do I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ measures my life, or do I view myself as measuring him, picking and choosing what I want to accept from Christ’s teachings and setting aside what I don’t want to follow?

2. What can I do this week to allow God’s revelation to guide me more in my life—in my moral decisions, in my prayer, in my relationships and in what I consider most important in life? How can I entrust my life more to Jesus and follow God’s ways more?



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we ask You to reveal who You are to us a little more each day so that we can continue to grow in our relationship with You by knowing more about You. We ask that as we know more about You, we would be courageous in living out the truth of the Gospel.

Amen.

HOLY BIBLE

CONTAINING THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Translated into

SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS SESSION 3

The Bible



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

—Psalm 119:105



OPENING PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart, that I may hear Your Word and understand and do Your will, for I am a sojourner upon the earth. Hide not Your commandments from me, but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your law.



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: MY HISTORY



Childhood



School Days



High School



College or Early Working Days

 **DISCUSS**

» Why do you think Catholics do not read and know the Bible as much as Protestant Christians?

» St. Paul referred to the Word of God as “the Sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). In what ways is the Bible a weapon?

» A friend of yours says, “It was like God was speaking directly to me—directly into a situation in my life—when I read the passage.” How is this possible?

» How would you respond to the following statements?

- “The Bible is not reliable. It is full of contradictions.”
- “The Bible is not ‘God’s Word’ because it was written by human authors.”
- “The Church suppressed a fifth ‘lost gospel’—the Gospel of Thomas—because it contradicted Church teaching.
- “The Church added books to the Bible in order to support false teachings like purgatory and praying for the deceased.”

» Why is it true that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- Sacred Scripture contains the Word of God in the words of man (CCC 101).
- God is the author of the Sacred Scriptures. He inspired human writers who wrote as true authors, using their own language, style and powers. But God worked in them and by them so that they consigned to writing “whatever he wanted written, and no more” (CCC 105-106).
- Because God is the divine author and everything affirmed by the human writers is affirmed by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures always teach the truth (CCC 107).
- The Bible is not to be read in a literalistic way, but literarily, with attention to what the human writers intend to affirm and to what God wants to reveal through them (CCC 108-114).
- All Scripture tells a single story—the story of salvation that culminates in Jesus. The Old Testament prepares for the New, and the New Testament fulfills the Old (CCC 101-102, 122, 128-129).
- The Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Spirit, has discerned which books are included in the list (or canon) of authentic Scriptures (CCC 120).
- The Church has always seen the Scriptures as essential to nourish and govern Christian lives (CCC 131).

 **COMMIT**

This week’s commitment is to look up the Scripture readings for Sunday Mass. You can find the readings at usccb.org/bible/readings. Spend some time reflecting on how God, through the Scripture readings, is speaking to your head, heart, and hands. What is it telling you intellectually? What is it conveying to you personally? What action is prompting you toward?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments in prayer asking Jesus to help you learn to love Sacred Scripture and use it on your journey of faith. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Psalm 119:105 says, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”** What does this passage mean to me? Am I willing to read Scripture with an open heart and mind, expecting that God will give me insights for my life?

2. Reflect on the following quote from Pope Saint Gregory found in your Guide about the role of Scripture as we grow in faith:

"The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection."

3. How might thinking of the Bible as a mirror and as a way to learn about my spiritual progress make a difference in how I listen to the readings at Mass? What can I do to be better prepared for the Scripture readings each week?



CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, we thank you for this time together to help us understand how your Word is alive and active. Help us to grow in appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the Bible. Give us the desire to grow closer to you and to be in conversation with you throughout each day.
Amen.*



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS SESSION 4 *The Story of Salvation*



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

—Genesis 3:15



OPENING PRAYER

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

—Ephesians 1:3–10

Lord, as we listen to the story of salvation, we ask that You keep our hearts and minds open to what it is that You would like us to understand from this session. We ask that You grant us the grace to fulfill our role in this story.

 **CONNECT****ACTIVITY: FAMILY LORE**

Share a story that has been passed down through our families. Some examples of what that story might entail: someone famous in your family, someone who had a great accomplishment, a story of heroism, a tradition that has been in your family for generations, or a hilarious anecdote that has been passed on in your family.

 **DISCUSS**

» What does it mean that “our modern world has lost its story,” and why does that matter?

» There is a saying: “God writes straight with crooked lines.” What do you think that means?

» Genesis 3:15 is called the *Protoevangelium*, which is Latin for “the First Gospel.” Why do you think this verse is called the First Gospel?

» How would you respond to someone who says “I have difficulty believing in a loving God when I see so much needless suffering in the world!”

One Couple → One Family → One Tribe → One Nation → One Kingdom → One Church
(Adam & Eve) → (Noah) → (Abraham) → (Moses) → (David) → (Jesus and the Apostles)

» **Consistent throughout salvation history are covenants. How does entering into a covenant “define the relationship” between God and His people?**

» **A bumper sticker reads: “Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once!” What do you think the owner of this vehicle is trying to tell the world?**

» **What are some examples of the City of Man (born in self love) in these times in which we live?**

» **If only God can save, what does it mean that you have a role in salvation history?**

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the videos:

- God, who is infinitely perfect and happy in himself, freely created man to make him share his own goodness and love (CCC 1).
- Originally, we were united with God (on the vertical level) and experienced harmony within the human family (on the horizontal level). Humanity was the united family of God reflecting the unity of God himself (CCC 376).
- Man and woman sinned, disobeying God and refusing to give themselves in love (CCC 397–398).
- This sin broke our relationship with God and broke the harmony between man and woman (CCC 396).
- This original sin also brought death into the world and wounded our human nature, leaving us with an inclination toward sin, called concupiscence (CCC 400, 404–405).

- God sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, offering on our behalf the perfect gift of love that restores us to the Father, and to send the Holy Spirit to fill us with his very life (CCC 457–460).
- Jesus established the universal “Catholic” Church to gather the broken family of man into the united family of God (CCC 830).
- The Catholic Church passes on the teachings of Christ and, through the sacraments, dispenses the graces he won for us on the cross to enable us to live like Christ on earth and with him forever in heaven (CCC 774–776, 849).

 **COMMIT**

This week’s commitment is to do the “Meditation of Two Standards” by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/the-two-standards>

St. Ignatius challenges us to see the real struggle between good and evil in the world today. Following the spirit of his meditation, prayerfully imagine a battlefield with Jesus, the Commander-in-Chief of Good, on one side calling all people under His standard (His flag). He calls men and women to follow Him with humility, patience, generosity, purity, poverty, and sacrificial love. Next, imagine on the other side of the field Satan, the chief enemy of all that is good, inviting people under his flag. He entices people away from Jesus through the lure of riches, the pursuit of worldly honor and success, pride, and lust, and he distracts them from the true meaning of life with constant busyness and amusements. Finally, put yourself on that field and honestly consider: Which side attracts you the most? In what ways are you pursuing the standard of Christ? In what ways do you find yourself lured by the standard of the devil? How can you live more for Christ’s kingdom and not Satan’s?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Now is your time to enter the story of salvation. What might you be putting off with regard to your faith? Is God asking you to do something right now? If you have been reluctant or afraid to commit your life to Jesus, spend some time writing about the reasons why. Are you afraid of what your friends or members of your family might say? Pray with the father who asked Jesus to cure his son: “Lord, I believe. Help my disbelief!”

2. Read the following quote from Pope Benedict XVI: *“Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed. Each of us is loved. Each of us is necessary.”*

3. List two or three roles that you play in your life, such as parent, worker, or friend. Now consider what would happen if you don't live those relationships well. Who would suffer? What wouldn't be accomplished? Say a prayer of gratitude that you have been, in the words of Psalm 139:14, “fearfully and wonderfully made” and ask God for the grace to help you fulfill your responsibilities with the people and missions he has entrusted to you.



CLOSING PRAYER

We give you praise, Father most holy, for you are great and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and in love. You formed man in your own image and entrusted the whole world to his care, so that in serving you alone, the Creator, he might have dominion over all creatures. And when through disobedience he had lost your friendship, you did not abandon him to the domain of death.... And you so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior....To accomplish your plan, he gave himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and rose again for us, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as the first fruits for those who believe, so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world, he might sanctify creation to the full.

—A prayer from the Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer IV



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'"

—John 6:68–69



OPENING PRAYER

"O my Divine Savior, Transform me into Yourself. May my hands be the hands of Jesus. Grant that every faculty of my body may serve only to glorify You. Above all, transform my soul and all its powers so that my memory, will and affection may be the memory, will and affections of Jesus. I pray You to destroy in me all that is not of You. Grant that I may live but in You, by You and for You, so that I may truly say, with St. Paul, 'I live—now not I—but Christ lives in me.'"

—St. John Perboyre



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. What story are you telling yourself about your life?
2. What messages have you internalized?
3. Who are you becoming?



DISCUSS

» Why did the Jews want to stone Jesus?

» Dr. Sri explained to us the meaning of the painting of Jesus in the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome. How does that painting confront us with a decision we all have to make?

» Are there any compelling arguments that you have heard that would suggest Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic?

» If Jesus was in fact God, what kinds of things would you expect Him to do?

» Name three people in the Gospels who made statements about knowing that Jesus was God.

Read CCC 464–469.

» Which of these heresies do we still see in our world today?

» In light of this understanding of Bridegroom and Bride, why is it that the Church is so protective of the definition of marriage as a union of one man and one woman?

» What story are you telling yourself about your life?

» What messages have you internalized?

» Who are you becoming?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- God spoke to his people through the prophets during the Old Testament times, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1–2; CCC 65).

- In the fullness of time, the divine Son of God became incarnate, meaning that he took on human flesh. In doing so, he assumed human nature without losing his divine nature (CCC 479).
- Jesus Christ is not part God, part man. He is truly God and truly man, in the unity of his divine person (CCC 464).
- Because Jesus is both God and man, he is the one and only mediator between God and man (CCC 480).
- The Son of God became man in order to save us by reconciling us with God, so that we might know God's love, to be our model of holiness, and to make us partakers of the divine nature (CCC 457–460).
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is one divine person who possesses two natures. He has a divine nature and a human nature, which are united in the one divine person. This mystery of Christ is the profound union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Son (CCC 483).
- "After the Council of Chalcedon [451 AD], some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople in 553 confessed that 'there is but one hypostasis [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity.' Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: He who was crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity" (CCC 468).

 **COMMIT**
REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Take a few minutes to consider how we can more fully welcome Jesus and his Lordship in our lives. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Prayerfully read the following quote from C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, which was mentioned in the video and is found in your Guide.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as

a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (C.S. Lewis was an Oxford professor and a famous 20th century defender of the Christian faith. He is also the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.)

Now, prayerfully imagine Jesus standing before you and asking you the question he asked his Apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” How would you answer him?

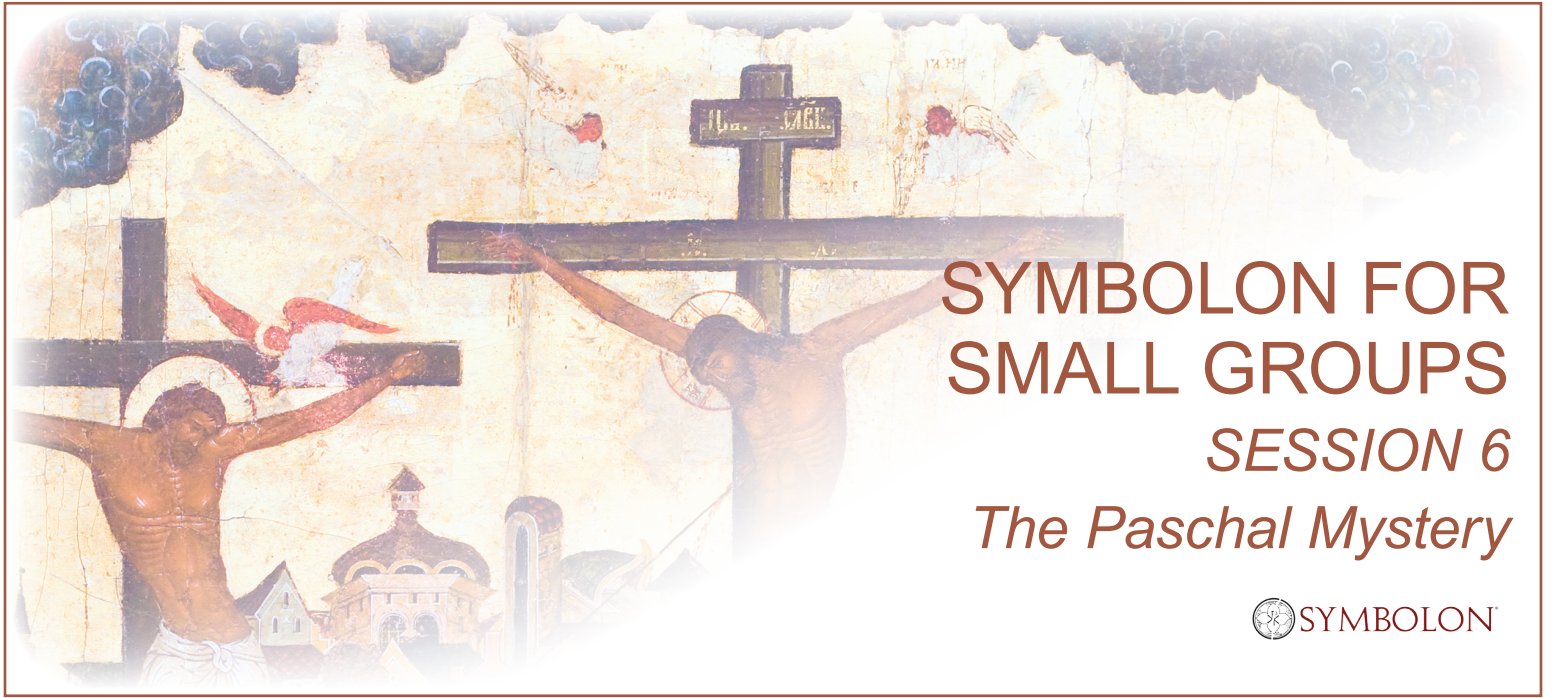
2. Jesus tells us to “**seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**” (Matthew 6:33). What do you seek first in your life? Do you truly put Jesus first in your life? Or do you seek other things to fulfill you, and have God as just a part of your life?

3. Allowing Jesus to reign over our lives as Lord requires submitting our will to his. It means following his teachings, living the way he wants us to live, and trusting that he knows and desires what is best for us. Write down one or two areas in your life where the way you are living now could be more in line with Jesus’ teachings. What can you do this week to begin living more with Jesus as Lord of your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.
Amen.



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS SESSION 6 *The Paschal Mystery*



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

—Philippians 2:5–8



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for dying on the cross for our sins, paying the price for our salvation. We ask You to open our hearts and minds to the Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. Amen.



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: LOWS AND HIGHS

LOWS	HIGHS



DISCUSS

» What similarities do you see between the crucifixion of Christ and Psalm 22?

» How do the final verses of Psalm 22 demonstrate how Christ was prophesying what was to come?

» How would you respond to a friend who asks you: "How do you know the resurrection of Jesus happened and that it's not just a myth?"

» How is it that the death and resurrection of Christ allows for God to be both just and merciful with humanity?

» There was a lot of talk about sacrificial love. Give me one example of someone who has demonstrated sacrificial love in your life.

» Here's another way of saying that: "Every death presents an opportunity for a resurrection. Every suffering can be a tremendous gift." How can suffering or carrying a cross be a great gift?

» Why is more joy and fulfillment found on the way of the Cross?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video:

- No mere human being, even the holiest, would ever be able to take on the sins of all humanity and offer himself as a sacrifice for all (CCC 616).
- Jesus Christ is both God and man (CCC 240-242, 455).
- Fully human, Jesus can represent the human family and offer a gift of love on behalf of all humanity. Since he is also fully divine, his gift of love takes on infinite value--offering the perfect, redemptive sacrifice for all (CCC 616).
- When we say Jesus "descended into hell" in the Creed, this does not refer to the place of damnation, but the realm of the dead...Jesus in his human soul united to his divine person went to the realm of the dead and opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him (CCC 637).
- Jesus truly rose from the dead (CCC 693).

- By his death, Jesus liberates us from sin. By his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to new life in him that we may become sons and daughters of God and have eternal life (CCC 654).
- By his Ascension into heaven, Jesus precedes us into his Father’s glorious kingdom in heaven (CCC 666).
- Jesus invites us to participate in the mystery of his death and Resurrection by uniting our entire lives—our daily works, joys, and sufferings—with the cross of Christ (CCC 618).

 **COMMIT**

Your commitment for this week is to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters into your life, and think of someone who you know is suffering and offer a prayer for that person to unite his or her suffering to that of Christ on the cross.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend some time reflecting on what the death and Resurrection of Jesus means to you. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Have you ever considered what it means that Jesus died for you and paid the price for your sins? Take a few minutes now to thank him for the great gift that he gave you. You may want to silently pray the following prayer called the Act of Contrition, which expresses heartfelt sorrow for our sins:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

2. In the video, we heard that because we live in a broken world, we should never ask, “Will I suffer?” but rather “What will I do when I suffer?” As Peter says, **“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you”** (2 Peter 4:12). In fact, Jesus himself entered our humanity and has shared in our suffering. And he wants to be with us to help us in the midst of our trials. What do you do when you encounter suffering in your life? Do you turn to God or do you turn away from God? Make a commitment now to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters your life.

3. Reflect on the following quote:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

—Luke 9:23

Consider some ways you can imitate Christ’s sacrificial love more in your life. For example, how can you be more generous in your relationship with God? What are some ways you can deny yourself—your time, comfort, or desires—and make sacrifices to serve better the people God has placed in your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

*“O Jesus, You have called me to suffer
because You on Your part suffered for me,
leaving me an example that I might follow.
When You were insulted,
You did not return the insult.
When You were mistreated,
You did not counter with threats
but entrusted Yourself to the One who judges justly.
By Your wounds we are healed.
Help me to imitate You in suffering.
Let me break with sin by means of my sufferings,
so that I may no longer live according to the lusts of sinners
but according to the will of the Father.
Since You Yourself have suffered and been tempted,
I know that You are able to bring aid to all
who suffer and are tempted.
I entrust myself to You and to the Father, my Creator,
knowing that You will never fail me.
Amen.”*

—Prayer to Imitate the Suffering Christ



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 7

The Holy Spirit and the Life of Grace



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

—Ephesians 1:13–14



OPENING PRAYER

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of Your love.
Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth. O God,
who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations.
Through Christ our Lord, amen.*



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: HOLY SPIRIT PHRASE

The gifts of the Spirit are wisdom, understanding, right judgment/counsel, courage/fortitude, knowledge, reverence/piety, and wonder/awe/fear of the Lord.

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.



DISCUSS

» Why do you think the architect of the Basilica wanted the dove to shine light over the Chair of St. Peter?

» What are some of the characteristics that wind and fire have in common with the Holy Spirit?

» It would seem that St. Paul and St. James contradict each other. How is it that we are to understand these statements?

» Looking at the circumstances in your life right now, how could faith help? How could hope help? How could charity help?

» What do you think is the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom? Why do you think “the fear of the Lord” is necessary for wisdom?

» There is an effort currently in mass media and politics to equate the Civil Rights Movement with the Gay Rights Movement. How do the gifts of the Holy Spirit help you evaluate this issue?

» The Holy Spirit makes sanctification possible. We know that we cannot get to heaven on our own—we need help to get there. Justification is a very important concept to understand. What did justification, through an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, do for us?

» Let's say your friend says to you, "All you need to do is accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior to be saved. He did all the work for us." How would you respond?

» Have you ever prayed to the Holy Spirit and heard or seen Him respond in your life?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- The Holy Spirit is the Third Divine Person of the Holy Trinity, the bond of love between the Father and the Son (CCC 684–685).
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to build, animate, and sanctify the church and bring souls into communion with God so that they bear fruit and give witness to Christ (CCC 737ff).
- The Holy Spirit does this through the Church's proclamation of the Gospel, through the sacraments, and through working in the moral and spiritual life of the Christian (CCC 738).
- God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; CCC 735). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are permanent dispositions in the soul, making it more docile to God's promptings.
- Through the power of the Spirit, Christians can bear much fruit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control (CCC 736).
- These fruits are seen when we live less for self and walk more in the Spirit (CCC 736).
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, makes us holy, through grace, which is a participation in the life of God. God's divine life is infused into the soul by the Spirit to heal it of sin and to sanctify it (CCC 1996–2000).
- Faith and works are interrelated in God's plan of salvation. Being liberated from sin and becoming a son or a daughter of God is a free gift given to us through faith, but we remain in God's family and mature as His spiritual children through love and good works. Thus faith and love together lead us on toward eternal life (CCC 1987-1995).



COMMIT

This week's commitment is to focus on someone in your life who needs to experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Who is someone that God can love through you this week? What is the opportunity this week might bring for you to connect with this person?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments reflecting on what the Holy Spirit means to you and your life. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. At the end of the video, we were asked two essential questions: Will you develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit? Will you take time to ask the Spirit to guide and shape your daily life? Reflect now on your response.

2. The fruits of the Spirit include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and self-control. If you could choose one of these to be made manifest more in your life now, which one would you chose? Which one seems the easiest? Which one seems the hardest? Pray now that the Spirit will enter into your life and transform you with his fruits.



CLOSING PRAYER

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
 Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
 Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
 Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
 Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.
 Amen.



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS SESSION 8 *Why do I Need the Church?*



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

—Ephesians 2:19–22



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we ask that You open our minds and hearts to what You are revealing to us today about Your Church. We ask that You help us to understand the mystery of the Church and what it means in our lives.

CONNECT

ACTIVITY: THE ALPHABET OF THE CHURCH

A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____
F _____
G _____
H _____
I _____
J _____
K _____
L _____
M _____

N _____
O _____
P _____
Q _____
R _____
S _____
T _____
U _____
V _____
W _____
Y _____
Z _____

DISCUSS

» How does the mosaic in the Basilica of San Clemente demonstrate that the Catholic Church is a universal church?

» Dr. Sri speaks about the first-century writings of St. Clement of Rome. Why is it so important to know the historical context of the Christian Church in the first century?

» In what ways is the Church like a family?

» Dr. Sri spoke at length about the elements of the visible Church. What are some of the things that you see in the invisible Church?

» Dr. Sri spoke about the Protestant Reformation. How would you respond to a friend who states, “The pope and bishops are not in the Bible”?

» Let’s say that your friend says to you that he (or she) is “spiritual” but not a “religious” person. What is the problem with that statement?

» How does embracing the Church’s authority challenge us to deeper conversion?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- The Church is the supernatural family of God; the communion of all believers united in him (CCC 771–772).
- The Church is both human and divine, earthly and heavenly (CCC 773, 779).
- God has used human people, rituals, and institutions to gather his people and accomplish his plan of salvation (CCC 781 ff).

- God’s people are united in his Church through the bonds of Christian love as well as three visible bonds of community: the bond of apostolic succession through the bishops who maintain the fraternal harmony of God’s family; the bond of a common celebration of worship particularly in the sacraments; and finally, the bond of professing the one faith received from the apostles (see CCC 815).
- There are four chief characteristics of the Church, known as the marks of the Church (CCC 811–812, 881).
- The Church is “one” because that is what Jesus intended. He prayed that we would all be one even as he is one with the Father (CCC 813).
- The Church is “holy” in the sense it is united with Christ, sanctified by him, and endowed by him with the fullness of the means of salvation (CCC 823–824).
- The Church is “Catholic,” meaning “universal” in the sense Christ is present in her throughout the world, and because the Church has been sent by Christ to bring all humanity into communion with him (CCC 830–831).
- The church is “apostolic” because it is founded on the apostles and faithfully hands on the teachings of the apostles. The Church continues to be guided by the successors of the apostles, the bishops (CCC 857).

 **COMMIT**

This session’s commitment is to take some time to formulate a response, using what you have learned in this session, to someone who says to you, “I’m not into the whole Church thing; I can just have a personal relationship with Christ.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments reflecting on what the Holy Spirit means to you and your life. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. In the video, we heard that Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with us in his Church, but not a private, individualistic relationship. What are the differences between a personal relationship with God in his Church and an individualistic relationship with God?

2. Reflect on the following quote:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." —John 15:5–7

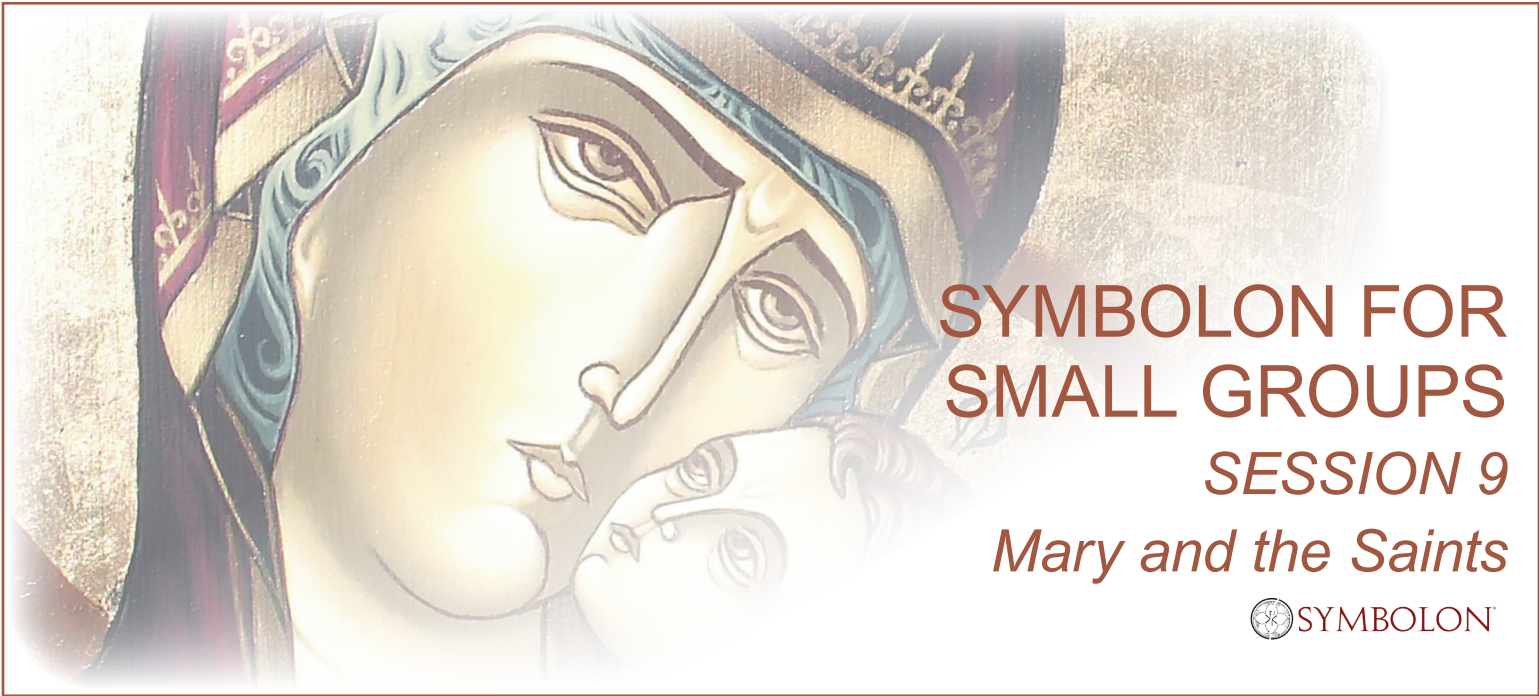
Jesus describes himself as the vine and we, united to him in the Church, are the branches. In what ways can you "remain" in Jesus? What comes to mind when you read Jesus' promise that if we remain in him, we will bear much fruit? What kind of fruit would you like to bear in this life?

3. Even though most Americans claim to believe in God, more and more embrace the idea of being "spiritual" but not belonging to an organized religion or church. One of the fundamental reasons for this attitude, according to the presenters in the video, is that we don't like the idea that there is something outside of ourselves with an objective standard that has the right to guide, inform, and correct our beliefs and behavior. Some people might want the benefits of being "spiritual," but they don't want the challenges that come with real growth and transformation. Are there ways that you keep the Church and her teachings at a distance because you don't want to be challenged or have to change your life? What would you have to change or give up to fully embrace all the teachings of the Church? How might your life be different if you gave yourself over completely to Christ and His Church?



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, at Your Last Supper You prayed to the Father that all should be one.
Send Your Holy Spirit upon all who bear Your name and seek to serve You.
Strengthen our faith in You, and lead us to love one another in humility.
May we who have been reborn in one baptism be united in one faith under one Shepherd.
Amen.



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS SESSION 9 *Mary and the Saints*



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.'

—Luke 1:39–45



OPENING PRAYER

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.



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: TRUST WALK



DISCUSS

» With the ancient understanding of the Queen Mother, what does Mary inherit as the Mother of Jesus?

» How does the Catholic practice of venerating Mary disprove both of these viewpoints?

» How would you respond to someone who says you should only pray to God and not to Mary and the saints?

» Why do you think the Church considers Mary to be the new Ark of the Covenant?

» How would you respond to someone who says: "Mary cannot be without sin because the Bible says 'all have sinned'" (Romans 3:23).

» If Jesus came to save us from our sin and Mary is without sin, how does Jesus save Mary?

» Dr. Sri says it is fitting that Mary would be first to be assumed into heaven, body and soul, after Christ's resurrection. What did Dr. Sri mean by this?

» How is Jesus' command to St. John to "Behold your mother" a challenge to us in our own prayer life and journey with Jesus?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- The Church teaches four important dogmas about Mary. First, Mary is the mother of God.... This tells us that her child who took on her flesh was the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity. Hence, Mary is truly the Mother of God (CCC 984–986).
- Second, Mary was Immaculately Conceived, meaning that she was conceived full of grace, without original sin. To become the mother of the Savior, Mary was endowed with this unique gift so that she might be a pure vessel for the Son of God (CCC 490). By the grace of God, Mary remained free from sin for her whole life (CCC 493).
- Third, the perpetual virginity of Mary. Mary conceived of Jesus as a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit—and this points to Jesus' divine origins as the Son of God who truly entered our humanity (CCC 496). Her remaining a virgin throughout her life serves as a sign of her exemplary faith, her "undivided gift of herself to God's will" (CCC 506).
- Fourth, Mary's assumption. At the end of her earthly life, she was given the unique privilege of being assumed body and soul into heaven, anticipating the resurrection of all Christ's faithful at the end of time (CCC 966).
- Mary is the spiritual mother for all Christians. Because of her complete cooperation with Jesus' redemptive work, she continually intercedes on our behalf before her Son (CCC 968, 969).

- Catholics don't worship Mary and the saints like we worship God, but we honor them as models we can imitate, and we recognize the great work God has accomplished in their lives (CCC 971).
- Catholics don't pray to Mary and the saints like we pray to God, but we seek their intercession, asking them to pray for our needs just like we might ask a friend to pray for us (CCC 969).
- The attention we give to Mary and the saints does not distract us from our relationship with God, but draws us closer to him—for just as Christian communion draws us closer to Christ, so does our communion with the saints join us closer to Jesus (CCC 957, 961, 962, 972).

 **COMMIT**

This week's commitment is to pray the Prayer of Mary called the Magnificat each day and ask Mary to take you by the hand and lead you closer to her son, Jesus.

The Magnificat

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.*

*And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever."*

—Luke 1:46–55

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments reflecting on who Mary is and how you can grow in your relationship with her. Write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Reflect on the following words from St. Louis Marie de Montfort:

"We never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor his Mother, and we honor her simply and solely to honor him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek—Jesus, her Son."

Consider the four dogmas you learned about Mary in this week's lesson. How can accepting those teachings bring you to a deeper understanding of Jesus and his love for you?

2. At the end of the video, the presenter talked about who Mary is and what it means to develop a relationship with her. Take a few minutes to ask yourself what your relationship with Mary is like, and what you would like it to be. Ask God in prayer what keeps you from developing a closer relationship with Mary.

3. There are many prayers and devotions in the Church dedicated to Mary, with the most prominent one being the rosary. Take some time this week either to pray a rosary if you are familiar with the prayer, or to learn more about how to pray a rosary. As you do, reflect on how each mystery of the rosary points us to Christ through Mary.



CLOSING PRAYER

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, we fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins our Mother; to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer us. Amen.



SYMBOLON FOR SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 10 *The Last Things*



SCRIPTURE QUOTE FOR THE WEEK



"All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

—John 10:8–10



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, today we ask You to help us to better understand what happens to us when we die. In seeking this understanding we ask that You fill us with hope, that we will have peace about death—for we know that our purpose is knowing, loving, and serving You in this life so we can live happily with You in the next.



CONNECT

ACTIVITY: MY OWN OBITUARY

Have a piece of paper, look and add this text:

_____ died last night in his/her home. _____ will be remembered as a person who _____ and was dedicated to _____.

At the time of death, _____ was engaged in _____

The funeral will be held at _____.

_____ has requested this song to be sung at his/her funeral: _____.

In lieu of flowers, _____ has requested that a fund be set up for _____



DISCUSS

» If you are an atheist, you believe that when you die...

» If you are an agnostic, you believe that when you die...

» If you are a Hindu or a Buddhist, you believe that when you die...

» If you are a Muslim, you believe that when you die...

» If you are a witch (wiccan), you believe that when you die...

» The Creed tells us that after Jesus died and before His resurrection, He descended to the dead. What do you think is meant by this?

» Why is it accurate to state, "God doesn't send people to hell"?

» Why is it necessary for purgatory to exist?

» If everyone is judged immediately after death, why do you think there needs to be a general judgment as well?

» If this is true, what happens to those who die having never heard the Gospel?

Following is a summary of the main points presented in the video.

- **The Particular Judgment:** At the moment of death, every person receives his eternal reward or retribution in his soul. If he dies in the state of grace, in friendship with Christ, he receives entrance into heaven (either immediately or through purification). If he dies out of friendship with Christ, never accepting Christ's loving mercy, he remains separated from Jesus in eternal damnation (CCC 1051).
- **Hell:** We cannot be united with God unless we chose to love him. If we gravely sin against God, against our neighbor, or against ourselves and fail to repent and accept God's mercy, we will remain separated from him forever by our own free choice. This definitive self-exclusion from unity with God is called hell (CCC 1033).
- **Heaven:** Those who die in friendship with God and are perfectly purified will see God as he is, face-to-face in heaven. Heaven is the perfect communion of life and love with the Trinity and all the angels and saints. This perfect communion with God is the fulfillment of every human desire and the state of complete happiness (CCC 1023-1029).
- **Purgatory:** There are some who die in friendship with God, and their souls are assured of heaven, but they first must undergo a purification before entering full communion with God in heaven (CCC 1030-1032).
- **Prayers for the Dead:** Catholics pray for the dead so that their loving intercession might contribute to the souls' purification and hasten their union with God in heaven (CCC 1032).
- **The Last Judgment.** At the end of time, Christ will come again in glory, our bodies will be resurrected, and all humanity will face the Last Judgment, in which the truth of each man's relationship with God will be made known and the consequences of each person's actions will be revealed (CCC 1038-39).


REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER THIS WEEK

Spend a few moments reflecting on what the Catholic Church teaches about the Last Things. Write down your thoughts and reflections for the following questions:

1. In the words of a traditional *Catechism*, "God made us to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in heaven." As we go through our lives, the single most important question we need to ask in light of eternity is "How can we know, love, and serve God?" If we want our lives on earth to have meaning, we need to explore this question in depth. What do you think it means to know God? What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to serve God?

What is one way this week that you can get to know God better? To love him more deeply? To serve him more completely? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance—and courage—to follow through on your commitment.

2. Reflect on the following quote from the Ash Wednesday liturgy: “Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” How does this quote make you feel? Why do you think that the Church asks us to reflect on this statement at the beginning of Lent? How might this prayer help you focus more on what is truly important in this life?

3. The week’s commitment is to take some time to look over your life, your priorities, the way you spend your days. Is your life moving toward Jesus or away from Him? How would your life be different if you were truly making all your decisions in the light of your eternal destiny?



CLOSING PRAYER

St. Alphonsus Liguori’s Night Prayer

Jesus Christ, my God, I adore You and thank You for all the graces You have given me this day. I offer You my sleep and all the moments of this night, and I beg of You to keep me without sin. Therefore, I put myself within Your sacred side and under the mantle of our lady, my Mother. Let Your holy angels stand about me and keep me in peace; and let Your blessing be upon me. Amen.

