

## Week 4: To The Heights

Week of Nov. 8

**The Ascent:** On the Mass, Liturgy of the Word

*“Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”*

-Romans 10:17

**GOAL:** The goal of this session is to break open the first half of the Mass with an emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word and how it prepares our hearts to be nourished by the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

### MAIN IDEAS:

- When we gather for Mass we are brought together as a community and our hearts are prepared to enter into the great mystery of the liturgy. (CCC 1348)
- The Liturgy of the Word breaks open the Word of God and, through attentive listening and prayer, we are able to hear the voice of God and learn more about Him and what He calls us to do in our Christian life. (CCC 1349)

### GATHER - Mystery Game:

Gather random items from around the house (playing cards, cotton balls, yarn, paper, tin foil—be creative). Do not give any more direction on what the item will be used for. Invite your teen to choose as many of the items as s/he wants. Once they have chosen, say, “you are going to build the tallest tower possible with just your items. No additional tape, glue, etc. can be used to build the tower.” If you have more than one player, stop building after one minute – the tallest free standing tower wins.

### CONNECT (Teaching)

- With the game, you had not idea “why” you were choosing the items – and that may have led to some confusion and frustration once you learned what you had to do with the items.
- Many of us get stuck in just going through the motions at Mass because we don’t understand the “why” behind what we do. The awesome part about our faith is that no action or response is without any meaning and purpose.
- *Share a story from your life where you struggled with the Mass and felt like you “had” to go or like you were just going through the motions. (Save the half of the story of how you overcame this and how it transformed the Mass for later)*
- Mass begins with all of us **gathering together**. As we enter, we quiet our hearts and prepare to encounter Christ in the Mass. No one is just a spectator at Mass — we all have a part to play. One person who plays a very significant role in the Mass is the priest. He acts in the person of Christ (in persona Christi Capitis = in the person of Christ the Head) and prays on our behalf to Christ. He is the one who has the authority to transform the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ for us to receive.
- During the **Liturgy of the Word** for a typical Sunday Mass, there is a reading from the Old Testament, a reading from the New Testament, and one from a Gospel; a psalm or canticle is also sung.
- The **first reading** is usually taken from **Old Testament** and tell us about our history. These are stories from the time before the birth of Jesus.
- The **responsorial psalm** is generally taken from the **Book of Psalms** in the Old Testament. The Psalms express the prayers of the people of God. They help us remember the promises that God has made to us and Jesus Himself prayed the Psalms.
- The **second reading** typically comes from one of the books of the **New Testament**, aside from the Gospels. These Scripture passages are often very practical and show us how to live out the teachings of Jesus and how to follow Him in our daily lives.
- The **last reading** is the **Gospel**, and it is taken from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. The Gospels tell us stories about the life of Jesus and all His works, miracles, and teachings.
- After the Gospel, the priest or a deacon will give the **homily**. During this time the priest or deacon will

explain parts of the Scripture passages that might have been difficult to understand or show us how we can live out certain teachings in our modern world. During the homily, try to find at least one thing that you can put into practice this week that will help you follow Jesus better.

- After the homily, we profess the **Nicene Creed**. In the Nicene Creed we recite all that we believe as Catholics and remind ourselves to hold fast to these beliefs. In the **prayers of the faithful** we offer up our prayers as a Church. Prayer is powerful on its own, but there is something special about coming together in prayer as the Body of Christ.
- Next comes the **offertory** and the collection. During this time, baskets or bowls are passed around the church to collect our offerings of money to support the parish and to be given to those in need. While this is happening, the bread and wine are brought forward to the altar. The offertory isn't just the "half-time" of the Mass but an opportunity for us to prepare our hearts to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist before it begins.
- *Share the rest of your story about how you came to understand what was happening during the Mass and how this transformed your life and your participation in the Mass.*

## EXPLORE

### *Open in Prayer*

Open this time in prayer. On page 17 of the journal booklet, there is a simple formula for how to pray aloud. Encourage teens to use it!

### *The Road to Emmaus*

Open your bible to Luke 24:13-31. Read it through aloud once. Then ask the teen to close their eyes and listen to it again (this time with the leader reading aloud), picturing themselves somewhere in the story. They could be walking with them on the road, one of the two disciples, a patron of the place they ate with Jesus, etc.

Ask them to open their booklet to page 12. As the leader reads through the passage again, ask them to draw out the story in the space given and answer the question below. Discuss the following questions:

- What parts of the story did you draw?
- What stands out to you from the story?
- How does this story relate to the Mass?

## REFLECT

### *What Do I Bring?*

Sometimes as a young person in the Church, it's easy to zone out during the collection. We leave the tithing and offering to our parents and the other members of the congregation. Although giving money in the basket is important and should be a part of our lives, even as a young person, what Jesus really wants is for us to offer ourselves: our lives, our hearts, and our wills. He desires us to lay our dreams, fears, hopes, wants, needs, and even our suffering at his feet. During the offertory we bring the gifts of bread and wine and our tithe to the altar but we also have the opportunity to offer ourselves.

Using the blank squares on page 12 of the journal booklet, ask them to write down a couple of things that they can offer in their lives to Jesus. Some examples of things they can offer are: five minutes of prayer a day, doing chores without complaining, a friendship they are struggling with, the intentions of a family member or friend, their own struggles with understanding God, etc. These offerings can be anything on their heart that they need Jesus' help with or anything in their lives they can do out of love for Jesus.

### *Close in Prayer*

## LIVE IT

Do those things that you wrote down to offer Jesus. Tear/Cut the "My Offering" squares from your booklet and place them into an envelope marked "Teen Offering". Place them in the offertory bins the next time you come to Mass/the church.

\*Note: Do not put any money in these envelopes. If you would like to also offer some of your money, please use your family's weekly envelopes.