

## Leading Session 1 – God, the Holy Trinity



Starting with a session on God the Holy Trinity presents a few challenges, but is indispensable to the coherence of the Faith.

The subtitle, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' is taken from the liturgy of the Mass: the first words we say at Mass as we mark the Sign of the Cross on our body. It comes originally from Scripture (Matthew 28:19).

The opening prayer and the closing prayer are inspired by the liturgy of the Mass on Trinity Sunday.

- *Professing the Faith* uncovers in simple words the **Mystery of love which is the Holy Trinity**;
- *Celebrating the Mass* looks at the meaning of the **Sign of the Cross** made at the very beginning of Mass;
- *Living the Faith* stirs a reflection on our own vocation to love and to enter into communion with Father, Son and Holy Spirit and with each other, expressed through the unique Commandment to love God and neighbour;
- *Praying with the Church* sums up all these aspects in prayer using Ephesians 1:3-5.

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

*This activity aims at showing the centrality of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.*

Look closely at the picture as someone reads the Scripture text aloud.

#### Who does God show himself to be?

Let the participants answer, and if need be, add to their answers. Begin to answer the question by finding each of the three persons of the Trinity.

- **Jesus** is the most easily identified, praying and being baptised by John who pours water over his head from a gold dish. Help people to notice the red arms in Christ's halo: the two arms of a cross. You can remind people that Christ often has a red cross in his halo to indicate his death on the cross and the outpouring of his blood for our sake.
- **The Spirit of God** 'descending like a dove' is easily found close to the centre of the cloud.
- **God the Father** who is only heard but not seen is shown in the painting as rays of light shining down on Jesus from an opening in a great cloud that fills much of the sky.
- **The cloud** is an ancient way of depicting the presence of God, following the Old Testament text where the Israelites were being led by God through the desert to the Promised Land by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day (Ex 13:21). Since Jesus is the real Promised Land it is often used in pictures of Christ.
- The **barren hills** can also be pointed out, depicting the barrenness of the world and the hardness of human hearts until the river of life, water of baptism, water of the Spirit

begins to flow through it. Notice the paleness of Christ's flesh compared to that of John the Baptist. This was done to remind the onlooker of the white host at Mass, which is also the flesh of Christ. This is also why people are portrayed kneeling, a gesture of adoration.

- The **people on the right** are St Dominic and a woman Dominican saint, contemplating Jesus in their minds and hearts (they obviously weren't present at the time of Jesus' actual baptism).
- The **people on the left**, carrying the garments of the baptised person (in this case Jesus himself), reflects the baptism ceremony of adults in the Church assisted by godparents. In fact these are depicted as angels with haloes and little circlets on their heads. Sometimes the angels are depicted as altar servers to show the unity between the historical event and the liturgy in the Church.
- **White and dark cloths** are held by the two angels. The white cloth indicates the new, pure life we 'put on' at baptism, the life of Christ. The dark cloth carried by the other angel is a visual reminder of the old, soiled life removed from us at baptism.

God reveals Himself through the Holy Spirit represented by a dove, through the voice of the Father, through Jesus Himself: God shows Himself to be a communion of Persons: the Holy Trinity. There is a vertical line from the light in the cloud through the dove of the Spirit to Jesus: God is one.

Once the Scripture and the Art have been carefully explained, the participants can start reading through the **Professing the Faith** section on page 2.

If necessary, point out that 'blessed' in 'Blessed Trinity' should be pronounced as 'bles-sed'.

## Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*This activity leads the participants to refresh their memory of the unfolding of the Mass.*

**Name the different times we make the Sign of the Cross when we go to Mass.**

The Sign of the Cross is made during Mass:

- At the beginning, once the priest has entered the sanctuary and kissed the Altar, before anything else is said: this is the formal beginning of Mass
- Right at the end, during the final blessing: 'May Almighty God bless you: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit', before being solemnly sent away on mission

These are the two official occurrences of the Sign of the Cross during Mass. Some people choose to do it at other times (on entering the Church, using holy water, after receiving Holy Communion...).

The Sign of the Cross is made using our right hand, starting from the forehead to the middle of our body, back up to the left shoulder and finishing on the right shoulder. Since it is an expression of our Faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in the power of the Cross of Christ, it should be made reverently and meaningfully.

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*Here the participants become aware of their own dignity and of their vocation to love, since they are made in the image of God who is Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

**Read the Scripture passage**

**What do we learn about God from this passage?**

God talks about himself in the first person plural: 'Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness...'

God is talked about in the third person singular: 'So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God *he* created him; male and female *he* created them.'

From here the Church understands God to be both singular and plural; Unity and Trinity; One and Three; a unity of Persons.

**What do we learn about the human person?**

Created in the image and likeness of God who is a communion of Persons, the human person is made for communion of Persons, for unity in love.

Reading through the **Living the Faith** paragraph, you may wish to point out how the great commandment of love (Mark 12:28-31) is the perfect definition of the human vocation: 'you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength (...). You must love your neighbour as

yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'

You may also wish to emphasize the unconditional love that God has for each one of us, and the dignity of the human person created 'by God and for God' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27).

## Anchoring your Family in the Faith

From the session, the participants should be able to explain to their children **how** and **when** to make the Sign of the Cross (using holy water as they enter the church, before and after prayer, during Mass, during grace before meals, receiving a blessing...). They should also be able to explain its **meaning**.

You may wish to inform the participants of the different ways of acquiring a missal, should they not possess one, either through the parish repository, a local supplier or online. You can also promote publications such as the MAGNIFICAT ([www.magnificat.com](http://www.magnificat.com))

## Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this leader's guide, you will find the prayers of the *Our Father* and the *Glory be* to be photocopied and distributed to the participants.

You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).



Reading ahead for preparing this session

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:**  
paragraphs 232-240; 261-267; 356-358

## Leading Session 2 – Sin and Forgiveness



It is vital for us to know that we can face the reality of our own sin to the extent to which we can embrace God’s offer of forgiveness. Consider making the opportunity for confession available to the participants.

The subtitle, ‘Lord, have mercy’ is taken from the liturgy of the Mass, from the penitential rite where we express sorrow for our sins and ask God’s forgiveness.

The opening prayer is inspired by the liturgy of the Mass of the Presentation of the Lord (Opening Prayer), and the closing prayer by the 27th Sunday through the Year (Opening Prayer).

- *Professing the Faith* explains the nature and origin of sin in a relevant way;
- *Celebrating the Mass* gives an account of the Penitential Rite, followed by the Gloria;
- *Living the Faith* focuses on the mercy of God and how we can receive it in our life through the sacrament of reconciliation;
- *Praying with the Church* sums up all this aspects in prayer using Psalm 50.

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

Here the purpose is to show the nature of sin expressed in the passion of Christ by all those involved in the arrest of Jesus: they all turn against Christ in one way or another.

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read out loud and identify the people being mentioned.

Notice and describe:

- a) the different types of people present
- b) the different reactions as Judas kisses Jesus

The People	How you can identify them	The reaction when Judas kisses Jesus
Jesus	Haloed and wearing a blood red tunic covered in a black cloak. He is the only one in bare feet, unprotected against the hardened earth	He stands and receives the kiss of Judas as his other friends disperse and the crowd seizes him
The Apostles	Those with gold haloes around their heads and sandals on their feet	They have turned away from Christ, though one looks back, and creep rapidly away
The man with the knife (Peter, who has no halo here)	He is in blue and is also turned away from Christ to the left and brandishing a knife	Resorts to violence
The crowd of men including some soldiers	They are carrying lanterns, torches and weapons. One can see spears and a sword. And all have boots instead of sandals	Crowd around and take hold of Jesus

Notice also the barren and broken earth in the background and foreground – a sign of the hardness or barrenness of hearts when the kiss, a sign of love, was used as a sign of betrayal of love, reversing its proper meaning. Instead of harmony, such a reversal and betrayal causes the people to be scattered in different directions, to resort to fear, to violence or to the anonymity of huddling in a crowd. The four dark trees indicate that this was a garden. The garden is a reminder of creation, fertile and alive, as the gift of God. The garden here has become the place of man’s betrayal of God and his gifts, like the garden of Eden.

In John’s gospel (John 18:1-11) St John’s gospel identifies Peter as the man cutting of the ear off the high priests servant, Malchus.

## Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*The participants are lead to reflect concretely on the different aspects of sin in human life, as a basis for a first examination of conscience.*

Look up in a missal the prayer: 'I confess to almighty God', which we say at the beginning of Mass.

- Look at the kinds of sins listed there
- Think of concrete examples of sins that may fit the different categories given in the 'I confess'
- The sins listed in the 'I confess to almighty God' are sins committed 'in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do'
- Examples of sins committed by thought: uncharitable judgment of others; prideful, vain, angry, lustful thoughts; evil intentions, even though they may not be carried out...
- Examples of sins committed by word: swearing, calumny, gossip, words of anger, lies, lack of honesty...
- Examples of sins committed in what I have done: bodily harm of another, theft, unchaste sexual action whether alone or with another, pornography, greed, gluttony...
- Examples of sins committed in what I have failed to do: failings in our practice of the faith (Sunday Mass, at least yearly confession and communion) and failings in our relationship with God (prayer). Failings in our duty and responsibilities towards our family and towards society (failing to spend time with our children, not paying taxes, wasting time at work, failure to attend to our loved ones' needs, failure to attend to the demands of justice in society where I could have made a difference...)

These are only examples – the group may well find others or more examples of sins.

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*This aims to show unambiguously that our sins cannot even begin to exhaust the infinite mercy of God.*

Read the Scripture slowly

- Look at how Peter's denial is different from Judas' betrayal
- Compare the way Judas and Peter act after having sinned, what each one does

Whereas Judas betrayed Christ according to a carefully planned action, Peter's betrayal of Christ through his denial happened out of *fear*, all of a sudden, as Peter was more afraid about losing his own life than about losing the friendship of Christ. Yet in the end they both betrayed Christ.

The real difference is that Judas, who tried to give the money back and have Jesus released, apparently failed to believe that he could receive the forgiveness of Christ and went on to hang himself. Peter wept bitterly, and was able to receive Christ's forgiveness. We shut ourselves from God's infinite mercy when we think that we are beyond his reach, that he can no longer do anything for us.

Peter, forgiven and healed by Christ, went on to be the Chief Apostle of the Church, endowed with the courage to fearlessly proclaim the Good News and eventually to die for Christ.

During this activity be very aware of people in the group who may have been close to a victim of suicide. The Church entrusts all who have taken their lives to God, because we usually do not know their inner torment.

## Anchoring your Family in the Faith

From the sessions, the participants should know or be able to find out where and how they can receive the sacrament of reconciliation (parish, penitential services...). Encourage them to accompany their children to receive this sacrament.

### Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this leader's guide, you will find the *Guardian Angel* prayer and an Act of Contrition. These prayers are to be photocopied and distributed to the participants. You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).

### Reading ahead for preparing this session

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:**  
paragraphs 311; 328-330; 386; 396-401; 403;  
1440-1442; 1448-1449



## Leading Session 3 – History of Salvation



The whole of history has a meaning because of God's plan of salvation. The readings at Mass generally relate to the three great stages of this history: preparation for Christ (Old Testament), fulfilment in Christ (Gospel), mission of the Church (New Testament).

The subtitle, 'The Word of the Lord' is taken from the liturgy of the Word at Mass. It is proclaimed at the end of the first and second reading by the reader to emphasize that through the written word, God is speaking to his people, the Church.

The prayer at the beginning is inspired by the Mass for the memorial of St Jerome (Opening Prayer). The closing prayer is from the Easter Vigil.

- *Professing the Faith* explains what is meant by 'salvation', particularly in the lives of Abraham, Moses, and the People of Israel;
- *Celebrating the Mass* examines the Liturgy of the Word up to the Gospel (which is the focus of session 4);
- *Living the Faith* presents the 10 commandments as the way to happiness;
- *Praying with the Church* sums up all this aspects in prayer using Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel".

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

*Focussing on the similarities and contrasts of Scripture and artwork the participants will discover for themselves that the New Testament is foreshadowed in the Old and that the Old Testament is hidden in the New. In the New, in the unfolding of the history of salvation.*

- Identify the parts of the incident being mentioned.
- Identify the four people in the picture and describe what they are each doing and the relationship between them.
- The angel, who is the messenger of God, represents the voice of God speaking to Moses. The angel is leaning forward in a posture of speaking.
- Moses is sitting on a rock listening and obeying the voice, taking off his shoes and looking towards the bush although covering his face with his hand with fear at the same time.
- Mary and Jesus are portrayed in the midst of the burning bush as a vision of the future.

Moses is looking at Jesus and Mary while the Scripture passage describes him as afraid to look at God. The painter, then, has portrayed Jesus as God sitting in the lap of Mary his mother. The Word of God spoken to Moses from the burning bush will take flesh 1600 years later in Jesus Christ. The burning bush is an ancient symbol for Mary, bearing the Word of God. She is a mother yet remains a virgin, just as the bush is burning and yet is not consumed.

Jesus is holding a mirror with the image of himself and his Mother reflected in it. This mirror balances the roundel of the brooch of the Angel's cloak. On this brooch Adam and Eve are depicted either side of a tree with the serpent wound around the tree trunk. Jesus and Mary reflected in the mirror are the new Adam and Eve, Christ and his Church, the fulfilment of all God's promises and of the history of salvation.

The scene is taking place as the first lights of sunrise appear in the dark background, reminding us of the Saviour expected by Israel, who comes to "visit us like the dawn from on high" (in the Benedictus, Luke 1:178), dispelling the darkness of sin.

### Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*This activity aims at fostering the participants familiarity with both Scripture and Missal.*

- In a Missal find the First Reading, Psalm and Second Reading for next Sunday.
- Then try to find them in a Bible or prayerfully discover how they could relate to each other.
- Help people find their way through the Missal, taking time over it, particularly if they are unfamiliar with it. Make sure you know beforehand which is the coming Sunday. You will find a link on the Anchor website ([www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com)) to help you find out the readings for the Sunday following the session.

- Depending on how much time you spent on the first task, and how familiar people are with the Missal and/or the Bible, you may want to leave the second task as something to do at home.
- If you have time for the second task, and depending on the participants' familiarity with the Bible, you can either concentrate on one, two or three readings. Leave time for the participants to find the Scripture passages by themselves, once they are provided with the necessary guidance.
- Be aware that whereas some people may be familiar with the Old Testament's references, others may be completely ignorant about them.

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*This activity will demonstrate the objective goodness and value of the Ten Commandments.*

### Read the Ten Commandments

- Take each commandment and reverse it. For example: you *shall* kill.
- Think of the consequences for life and happiness. What do you find?

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that the commandments make life together possible and are the conditions to personal, family and social happiness. This exercise allows for the participants to discover this truth by themselves in an objective and fairly impersonal way. For the second task, you may wish to limit the discussion to the conclusion that life and happiness are impossible or highly difficult should the commandments be reversed, point to their necessity and universality, and then move on to the next item.

## Anchoring your Family in the Faith

You may wish to inform the participants of the different ways of acquiring a children's bible, should they not possess one, either through the parish repository, a local supplier or online.

### Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this leader's guide, you will find Psalm 23 (*The Lord is my Shepherd*) and the *Hear, O Israel* (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). It is important to anchor the family in these traditional prayers from the Old Testament. These prayers are to be photocopied and distributed to the participants. You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).

- The Prophet Isaiah is holding the words 'Ogni carne vedrà la salvezza' which means 'All flesh shall see salvation' (Isaiah 40:5). These words are used by St John the Baptist in announcing the coming of Christ (Luke 3:6)



Reading ahead for preparing this session

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:**  
paragraphs 59-64; 131; 2056-2062; 2070-2074

## Leading Session 4 – Incarnation



This session is crucial in leading the participants to understand that God became man in Jesus Christ: this is the main objective of the session. The word “Incarnation” comes from the Latin ‘in’ (in) ‘carne’ (the flesh). God in Jesus comes to us ‘in the flesh’.

The subtitle, ‘For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven’ is taken from the Creed, which we proclaim at Mass after the homily, and which is the profession of our Faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The opening prayer is from the Mass of the Annunciation (Opening Prayer), and the last prayer is inspired by the Christmas Dawn Mass (Opening Prayer).

- **Professing the Faith** focuses on the person of Jesus Christ and the meaning of the Incarnation: the Word becoming flesh;
- **Celebrating the Mass** presents the Gospel which is the Good News of Jesus Christ, and moves on to explain the homily, the Creed and the Intercessions;
- **Living the Faith** reflects on the extraordinary gift of the Incarnation: its meaning for us and the reality of grace;
- **Praying with the Church** sums up all these aspects in prayer using extracts from the prologue of the Gospel of St John (John 1:1-5;14)

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

*This activity helps the participant understand that the Incarnation is happening at the initiative of God, the Holy Trinity and yet depends on the obedient response of Mary.*

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read aloud.

- **Identify the different events of the Scripture text in the picture.**
- **Find the Trinity in the picture.**

The text begins with the angel Gabriel who is at the centre of the painting - where one looks first. This painting is about the angel Gabriel and his message. The angel’s words prompt Mary’s response on the right hand side of the painting, as the two bow with great awe and respect towards each other.

God’s action begins on the left-hand-side crossing right over to the right-hand side of the painting in a beam of light. The Father’s hand can be seen sending forth the Spirit, the little dove depicted just in front of the Angel’s head in the ray of light. God sends his Son to be conceived in Mary’s womb by the action of the Spirit.

Gabriel’s wings point backwards through the white pillars to the two people wandering dejectedly in the wilderness behind. These are Adam and Eve turning away from God’s word, with the angel behind them. The Old Testament and the New are now joined at this moment of the annunciation of the incarnation of Christ in Mary’s womb. The New ‘obedient’ Eve replaces the first ‘lead-astroy’ Eve.

The palm tree next to the angel has a triple significance. As a tree it symbolises the Cross of Christ, as a living tree it symbolises the eternal life gained for us through the cross and as a palm tree it symbolises Christ’s entry into Jerusalem celebrated on Palm Sunday, when Christ is acclaimed king.

In the roundel above the column is the prophet Isaiah looking down on the scriptures on the Virgin’s lap: ‘behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel a name which means God is with us’ (Is 7:14).

Notice that Mary is dressed in a red tunic covered in a blue cloak. The red tunic emphasises her humanity and the blue cloak, colour of royalty, reminds us that she is Queen of Heaven, chosen to be the Mother of God. She is full of God’s grace. She is ‘by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus, the saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin’ (*Ineffabilis Deus, 1854*).

The Father’s hand is seen in the left-hand top corner, sending the Holy Spirit under the form of a dove, as the Son is being conceived in Mary’s womb.

## Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*Here the participants are lead to reflect on the meaningfulness and importance of our bodily actions during Mass.*

Before the Gospel is proclaimed, the Gospel reader (bishop, priest or deacon) traces the sign of the cross on his forehead, lips and breast. Traditionally, the people do the same. Think and discuss what this could mean.

Before proclaiming and hearing the Gospel, the priest and the assembly trace a cross with their thumb on their forehead, mouth and breast:

This is a form of silent prayer, preparing us to receive the Gospel in our life as we are about to hear it proclaimed: 'May the Lord purify my understanding, my speech, and my heart, so that I may receive the words of the Gospel.'

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*This activity focuses on the humility and closeness of God in Christ, which the participants are lead to discover for themselves.*

- Why is the Church asking us to bow at that moment of the Creed?
- How would you answer people who say that God does not care for us, that God is absent or far away from us, or that God does not know what it is to be human?

We bow our head at the mention of the Incarnation in the Creed to express our reverence and worship for God's amazing act of humility in becoming man to save us.

Since God became man to save us, lived a fully human life, suffered and died for us and because of us, it is impossible to claim that God is distant from us and ignorant of what we go through in life.

### Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this leader's guide, you will find the Apostles' Creed, said at the beginning of the Rosary, and the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester. These prayers are to be photocopied and distributed to the participants. You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).



Reading ahead for preparing this session

### Catechism of the Catholic Church:

paragraphs 124-127; 422-424; 456-463; 469; 479-483; 494; 2021-2023



## Leading Session 5 – The Cross and the Resurrection



This session covers the climax of the Mass: the Eucharistic prayer where the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is made present for us. It is important that the participants understand the Mass and the Cross as one sacrifice.

The subtitle, 'This is my Body which will be given up for you' is taken from the liturgy of the Eucharistic at the moment of the consecration, where, by the action of the Holy Spirit and through the ministry of the priest, the bread becomes the Body of Christ.

The opening prayer is inspired by the Mass of the 1st Sunday of Lent (Opening Prayer), and the closing prayer by the Mass of the 5th Sunday of Lent (Opening Prayer).

- *Professing the Faith* clearly explains how God saves us through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus;
- *Celebrating the Mass* examines the meaning of the Presentation of the Gifts and the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass;
- *Living the Faith* reflects on how we receive this salvation, which is the source of our faith, hope and love;
- *Praying with the Church* sums up all this in prayer using Philippians 2:5-11.

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

*Here the participants are gradually lead to establish the connection between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass.*

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read out loud.

- Identify what the different people in the picture are exactly looking at.
- Describe how the picture can help us to think about the Mass.

In a painting, people's looks are often messages. Let us start with Jesus. He has his eyes closed in death.

Now look at some of the others.

- The two kneeling figures are St Jerome and St. Mary Magdalene. They turn our attention to Jesus' **body** on the cross.
- The angel in green turns our attention to Jesus' **blood**.
- The angel in gold is looking at **St John** the gospel writer who is looking straight at **us**.
- The two standing figures are Our Lady and St John. When someone looks out at you from a painting he or she is trying to draw or invite you into the scene. Our Lady and St John are painted in a way that suggests that they are quietly hoping that we too will kneel or stand and beg forgiveness like St. Jerome or adore or give thanks like St Mary Magdalene.
- All look or invite us to 'look on the one whom we have pierced'

- Almost everything in this painting is about the Mass: We gather together at Mass. We kneel and worship at Mass like Mary Magdalene kneeling at the foot of the cross. We pray at Mass in different ways, such as asking for forgiveness like St Jerome, adoring or thanking God, like Our Lady we behold the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass. We receive the blood of Christ in a chalice at Mass like the cups carried by the angels. Angels are present at Mass. Mass brings us salvation through the cross.

### Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*Continuing the link the between the Cross and the Mass, the participants are now lead to understand that this one sacrifice is offered by Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit.*

In a Missal, look up Eucharistic Prayer 2 starting with the preface:

- Who is the Eucharistic prayer addressed to?
- Find all the references to the sacrifice of the Cross and to the Resurrection of Christ
- Who is the 'him' of the final prayer, the doxology? (Through him, with him, in him...)

If you wish to shorten this activity in order to spend more time on the rest of the session, you may look at Eucharistic Prayer 2 up to the end of the Consecration only (stopping after the Memorial Acclamation)

- The Eucharistic prayer is addressed to the Father
- The Consecration is the moment where the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ is made present, and the memorial acclamation proclaims this reality.
- 'Him' is Jesus Christ, through whom, with whom and in whom all glory and honour is given to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*Here the connection between the Cross and the Mass is fully explicit, and is discovered in relation to our own life: in the Eucharist we receive our Salvation, won for us on the Cross.*

In the handout of the hymn “Soul of my Saviour”

- Find the words and phrases that relate to Christ and his Passion
- Then find the words and phrases that indicate the effects in us of the Passion of Christ which we receive through the Eucharist.

The Hymn refers to the **Passion** of Christ, source of the gift of the Eucharist.

The Hymn refers to the **Eucharist**: the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.

The Hymn refers to the effect of the Passion of Christ in us, which we receive through the Eucharist: redemption.

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast ; Body of Christ be thou my saving Guest ; Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide ; wash me with water flowing from thy side.

Strength and protection may thy **Passion** be ; O Blessed Jesus, hear and answer me; deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me ; so that I never, never part from Thee.

Guard and defend me from the foe malign ; in death's dread moment, make me only thine ; call me and bid me, come to Thee on high; where I may praise Thee, with Thy saints for aye.

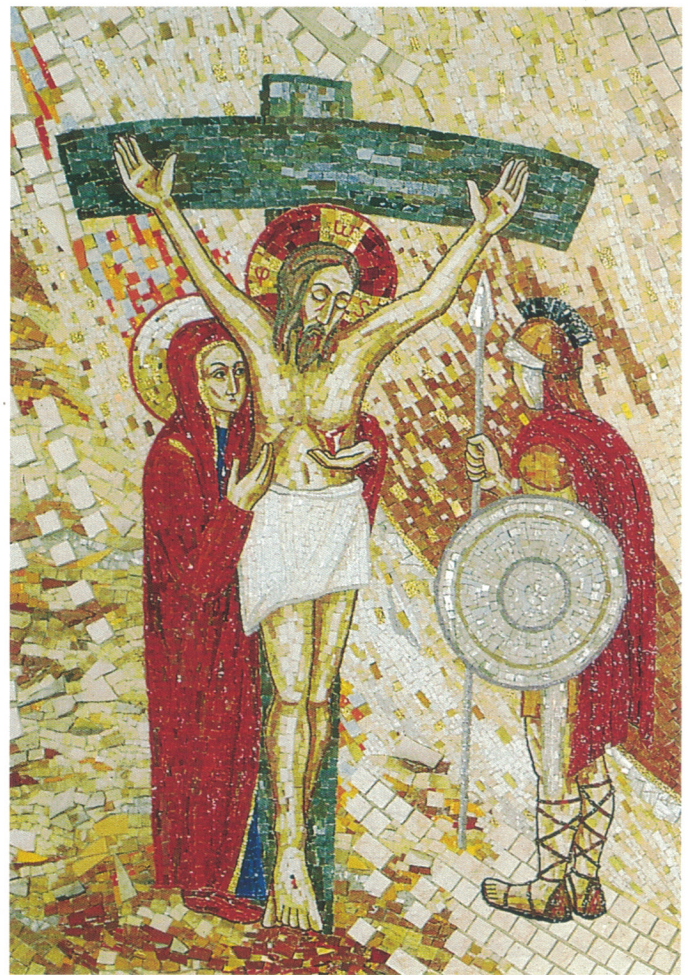
Encourage the participants to underline the text in order to fulfil the task. They may complete this task slightly differently from the coloured version here – the purpose of the exercise is not to analyse each word of the text, but to lead the participants to understand by themselves how the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and their own growth in the Christian life are related.

## Anchoring your Family in the Faith

You may wish to inform the participants of the different ways of acquiring a crucifix, should they not possess one – either through the parish repository, a local supplier or online.

### Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this Leader's Guide, you will find Soul of my Saviour, which is a popular version of the medieval prayer *Anima Christi (Soul of Christ)*, also found on the handout. This beautiful prayer is particularly fitting after receiving Holy Communion. These prayers are to be photocopied and distributed to the participants. You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).



Reading ahead for preparing the session

#### **Catechism of the Catholic Church:**

paragraphs 598-605; 610-611; 638-640; 654-655; 1356-1358; 1814-1829

## Leading Session 6 – The Communion of the Church



This session introduces the participants into the mystery of the Church. The source and summit of our life in the Church is the Eucharist.

The subtitle, 'Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb' is taken from the Communion Rite.

The prayers take their inspiration from the feast of Corpus Christi.

- *Professing the Faith* explains the nature of the Church, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of Eternal life;
- *Celebrating the Mass* gives a detailed account of the Communion Rite at Mass, from the Our Father onward;
- *Living the Faith* presents the Beatitudes as the best description of our life in Christ, which we receive in the Church and are called to live;
- *Praying with the Church* sums up all these aspects in prayer using John 6:53-57.

### Professing the Faith – Activity 1

*This activity is designed to instil a sense of the Church as the communion of those invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb and to foster an awareness of Mary as the Mother and model of the Church.*

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read out loud.

- Identify all the people mentioned in the Scripture passage
- Identify what Jesus and the bridegroom on one hand and Mary and the bride on the other have in common. What could it mean?

In the picture we can identify:

- The bride and bridegroom of the wedding: the bridegroom in the centre, looking straight at us, and the bride on his right, looking at him.
- the Mother of Jesus on the right with a halo
- Jesus on the far left of the table, blessing the cup
- Two disciples of Jesus next to Jesus: a young one, and an older one with a halo and a beard, presumably John, who is narrating the event to us and who is looking at Jesus.
- Four servants: one listening to Jesus' order, one attending to the table, one filling the jars, and one trying to tell the president where the wine comes from, by tugging at his sleeve
- The president of the feast, tasting the wine.

Jesus and the bridegroom are clothed in the same colour: red, and Mary and the bride are clothed in the same colour: blue.

Jesus is the true Bridegroom, and Mary represents the Church, his bride. Through his Incarnation and his Passion, Christ has united himself to us and us to himself. We now become one body, the Body of Christ, the Church.

### Celebrating the Mass – Activity 2

*Here the participants become aware of Christ's gift of peace to us, reconciling us to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and of his presence amongst us in the Blessed Sacrament.*

In a Missal, read the Communion Rite (from the Our Father up to and including the Prayer after Communion)

- Find all the references to peace in this part of the Mass
- Describe bodily gestures and attitudes that you think would be appropriate for receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in the Sacred Host.
- Peace is mentioned:
  - After the Our Father: 'Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant **peace** in our days'
  - At the prayer for peace: 'Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, **Peace I leave you**, my **peace I give you**, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her **peace**..'
  - At the **Sign of Peace**
  - At the end of the 'Lamb of God': '**Grant us peace**'
  - In the Dismissal, after the Communion rite: '**Go in peace**, glorifying the Lord by your life. *Or: Go in peace.*'

- We may show our adoration and worship of Christ who gives himself to us in his Body and Blood, by our reverence during the procession, by the way we stand, by kneeling or bowing, and generally by holding ourselves with reverence. Someone watching us receiving communion should know by looking at our bodily attitude that we are coming to receive the greatest possible treasure: we are beholding Christ in Holy Communion and receiving him. We also show our reverence for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as we enter and leave the church building: we **genuflect** in front of the Tabernacle, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept.

## Living the Faith – Activity 3

*This activity stirs a personal reflection on the meaning of suffering for what is right, which finds a promise and a hope in the Beatitudes. This activity is not designed to lead to set answers, but to prepare and draw the participants into the time of prayer.*

Read ‘the Beatitudes’ carefully

- Take some time to think of specific occasions when you have been poor in spirit, meek, a peacemaker and so on
- Consider the fact that you were blessed by God at this time and a promise was made to you.

The Beatitudes lie at the very heart of Jesus’ teaching.

Read through the Beatitudes slowly and prayerfully together. Explain that the phrase ‘poor in spirit’ is one that the Jewish audience would immediately have recognised – it means those who know their need of God, who know how dependent they are upon him, and who can turn to him in their need. ‘Pure in heart’ can have a reference to sexuality, but it also means, more widely, being single-minded about seeking what is good, and pure and virtuous, making a decision for these things.

This activity is a particularly prayerful one and you will want to ask participants to spend a few minutes in silence, thinking about each of the Beatitudes and when they found themselves in the position of one or other of them – for example, when something evil was spoken against them falsely on account of their faith. It is important to explain that you are not asking them if they *experienced* a blessing from this state. Rather, having identified when they were *living* the Beatitudes, it is for them now to think about the fact that God has, in fact, blessed them and made them the promise associated with that Beatitude.

After a few minutes, invite anyone to share anything from this exercise – which Beatitude did they identify? How are they thinking about that occasion, in the light of this exercise?

## Anchoring your Family in the Faith

You may wish to inform the participants of the different ways of acquiring an image or statue of Our Lady and a rosary, should they not possess one, either through the parish repository, a local supplier or online.

You may also wish to find or help the participants find leaflets and booklets explaining how to pray the Rosary, through the Catholic Truth Society or another organisation.

Praying the Rosary, with an explanation of the different Mysteries, now understood in the light of the Anchor sessions, may be the object of an extra session or mini-retreat with the participants, should they desire it.

If praying a whole rosary as a family seems too much, you may suggest starting by praying a decade.

### Praying at Home

In the handout placed at the end of this leader’s guide, you will find the *Hail Mary* and the *Hail, Holy Queen*. These prayers to Our Lady, Mother of the Church and our Mother, can be taught to the children. They can be photocopied and distributed to the participants. You may also find these prayers online at [www.anchoryourfaith.com](http://www.anchoryourfaith.com).



Reading ahead for preparing this session

### Catechism of the Catholic Church:

paragraphs 508-511; 772-773; 787-789; 796; 1370; 1384-1387; 1716-1729