

## Session 6: THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH

*Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb*

God has provided for us a way into the relationship of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The communion of the Church is the way. In the Church, we are invited to receive the Body and Blood of Christ and so to enter into God's own life.

### Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
You give us your body and blood in the Eucharist  
As a sign that even now we share your life.  
May we come to possess it completely in the kingdom  
Where you live for ever and ever, Amen.*

Holy Communion is a marriage feast with God

Giotto di Bondone, Marriage at Cana, 1304-1306. Cappella Scrovegni, Padua © 2012. Photo SCALA, Florence.



### Scripture

*On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there... Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine.*

(John 2:1-9)





## 1. Professing the Faith

### Activity 1

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?

**The Church** is the Body of Christ. Christ is the Head of his living Body, which is made of all the members of the Church:

- those on earth who, through faith and baptism, follow his life;
- those who have died and are united with him in heaven: Mary and the Saints
- those in purgatory who are being purified – made ready and capable of seeing God face to face.

As the Body of Christ, we are the adopted children of the Father who looks on us in love and sees in us the image of his Son. The **Holy Spirit** filling the Church with power at **Pentecost** is like the soul of this Body: He gives life to the whole Body and enables each one of us, through Grace, to follow Christ throughout our life. The purpose of the Church, is to receive and share with everyone the life of God offered to us in Jesus Christ. This life is eternal – it is God’s own life of love. **Eternal Life** is what Christ offers us in His Body, the Church. It is a life that endures beyond death and suffering: an eternity of love in Heaven. This is not endless time with nothing to do, but a life where time and space as we know them are no more. It is the perfection of all the good we have known here on earth. It is a life of love, peace and joy where sin, suffering and death will be impossible. This eternal communion of love with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the perfect fulfilment of all that we are made for.



## 3. Living the Faith

**The Church: the way into the heart of the Holy Trinity**

### Activity 3

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.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.*

Matthew 5:1-12







## 2. Celebrating the Mass

**The Our Father:** the whole Church, filled with the Holy Spirit, prays to the Father with the words that the Son taught us. We come empty handed to our Father, who is giving us his Son through the action of the Holy Spirit.

**The Peace of Christ:** through his Passion and Resurrection, Christ has brought us back to God. He gives us his peace, and we share that peace with each other, a peace that the world cannot give. **The Breaking of the Bread:** we look up and we recognize Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, as the priest lifts up the Host and the Chalice. During Old Testament times, men offered animals to God as sacrifice. Here God offers his own Son – the Lamb who takes away our sins – to be a sacrifice for us. We acknowledge that we are not worthy to receive him, but we trust in his mercy and love. **Communion:** we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Now, all we have heard and seen during Mass comes to completion:

- we receive the Word of God, Jesus Christ, in our lives
- we are united with the Lamb who was slain on the Cross
- we become what we receive: the living Body of Christ, the Church

Just as God in Jesus became one with us in the Incarnation, so now he comes to us and invites us to become one with him. He freely gives himself to us, and we freely approach him, knowing that in receiving him we are committing ourselves to him not only during Mass but throughout our whole life and, with him, we turn towards our heavenly Father.

### Activity 2

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.

The **Beatitudes** describe Jesus himself. As we receive Christ's own life through the Church, we are transformed, like water into wine, into his likeness. As we live and grow in the Church, the Holy Spirit leads us and shapes us into the likeness of Christ. We are called to live eternally with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are made ready to join in the eternal wedding feast of Heaven: the union of Christ and his bride, the Church. All God asks of us is to listen to his Son and to obey his commandment of love. Jesus has established his Church so that we could receive his crucified and risen life, handed on through the Apostles and their successors:

- through the Church we receive the living Word of God
- through the Church we receive the Sacraments, which have their source and summit in the Eucharist.







## 4. Praying with the Church

### Think and Pray

- Jesus, I adore you. May I appreciate ever more deeply the wonder of Holy Communion.
- How are the beatitudes present in your life?
- Pray to the Holy Spirit, that he may fill every part of your life with his presence.
- Place your loved ones under the protection of Our Blessed Lady, our Queen and Mother.

### Read and Pray

*Jesus said to them: In truth I tell you,*

*Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,*

*And I shall raise that person up on the last day.*

*For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink.*

*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person.*

*As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father,*

*So whoever eats me will also draw life from me.*

(John 6:54-57)

### Prayer

Pray the Our Father, paying special attention to 'give us this day our daily bread', giving thanks to our heavenly Father for the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Loving Lord,*

*You give us Christ, the King of all creation, as food for everlasting life.*

*Help us to live by his gospel, and bring us to the joy of his kingdom,*

*Where he lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen*

### Anchoring your Family in the Faith

Place an image or statue of Mary in a prominent place in the house.

Pray the *Hail Mary* as a family in front of the image of Mary.

Make sure that each family member has a rosary. Teach your children to pray the rosary.

Together as a family, choose a good cause towards which all members can contribute.

### For further reading and prayer

**Bible:** Luke 22:14-23; John 20:19-23; Acts of the Apostles: 2:1-12; 2:37-43; Revelation 21:1-14

**Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 136-137; 144-150; 156-159; 196-199; 290-292; 359-362; 562-565.