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# 1

## Introduction to the Liturgy

### AT A GLANCE

### Overview

In a culture with many distractions and so much stimulation, the liturgy can seem boring to some young people. The liturgy involves young people more than they know—it involves the participation of the whole people of God and is the means of every person's salvation. Learning about the meaning of liturgy, some of the terminology surrounding the liturgy, and the Trinity's work within the liturgy can help young people recognize the deeper meaning within the public, communal, and official worship of the Church.

### Outcomes

- ◆ The learner will understand that the liturgy is the public, communal, and official worship of the Church.
- ◆ The learner will understand that in the liturgy God is at work bringing everyone to salvation.
- ◆ The learner will explore the truth that in the liturgy people experience the Holy Trinity at work, and that in the liturgy the mystery of the Holy Trinity is more deeply revealed.

### Background Reading

- ◆ This session covers pages 134–138 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*.
- ◆ For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1066–1144 of the *Catechism*.
- ◆ Scriptural connections: Matt. 26:26–29 (the Last Supper), Rom. 12:1–8 (the body of Christ)

### Study It

#### Core Session

- ◆ Is the Media Preaching to Us?  
(45 minutes)

#### Session Extensions

- ◆ The Holy Trinity in the Mass  
(30 minutes)
- ◆ One at the Table of Mission  
(20 minutes)

### Pray It

- ◆ The Cross  
(10 minutes)

### Live It

- ◆ Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Guest speaker about the liturgy
- ◆ Liturgy of the Hours
- ◆ Liturgical ministries

- ◆ *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections: “God Bless You” (Num. 6:22–27), “The New Covenant” (Matt. 26:26–29), “We Are the Body of Christ!” (Rom. 12:1–8), “The Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12–31)

## Study it.

### Core Session

#### Is the Media Preaching to Us? (45 minutes)

##### Preparation

- Make copies of handout 1, “Introduction to the Liturgy,” one for each participant, and gather least one of the other items listed here:
  - a film with clips from advertisements, TV shows, infomercials, or previews of recently released movies (as one would find prior to a feature presentation of a recent release); and a VCR or a DVD player and a television
  - several magazines that are popular among young people, as well as one or two news or home decorating periodicals that appeal to adults
  - the local newspaper
  - a recording of popular music and a tape player or a CD player
  - photographs of local billboards, if you have them in your area
- Review the summary points in step 6 of this session and the relevant material on pages 134–138 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.
- The focus of this activity is to help the young people be discerning about the messages they receive through the media, so you will want to provide them with a mix of media that both supports and contradicts Gospel values. Though you want some of the media to contain the negative messages of popular culture, be sure to preview it for its level of language, violence, and sexuality.

1. Read aloud the following passage from the *CFH* and invite the participants to react to it:

Many experts feel that one reason it is harder today to appreciate the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments is because of modern technology and modern media. Before we had movies and television, the Bible stories read at Mass and the priest’s homilies were people’s “entertainment” and education. Before we had books and magazines, the Church’s stained-glass windows and statues were the people’s source of

visual information and art. Before we had radio and newspapers, talking with your neighbors after Church was your main source of community news. (P. 135)

2. Point out that if we receive our main forms of entertainment, education, information, art, or community from the media rather than from the liturgy or the parish community, we may be unconsciously adopting the values and messages of the media in a way that competes with the readings and homilies we hear at Mass.

3. If you will be using a variety of media or examples such as magazines and newspapers, arrange the participants in small groups of three to five people. Otherwise, keep the participants together in the large group for the film presentation. Ask them to listen and look for value messages and advice about life from the various media sources you provide. For example, if a reading or a homily might help the young people learn how to relate to one another in a Christian way, how might the media be communicating information about relationships? Ask the participants if they think the media preaches to us.

4. After you have shared the media samples with the participants, ask them to come up with some main points for a "culture homily," in small groups of three to five people. They should base their homily on the material they just saw or read or on other messages they have seen or heard through the media.

5. Invite representatives from the different groups to share some of the messages of their culture homily. Read this quote from the *CFH*: "You have to look harder today at what God is offering us in the sacred liturgy (the Mass and the sacraments) to discover its true and eternal value" (p. 135).

Ask the participants these questions:

- Do certain values we hold or messages we hear make it difficult for us to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ in the liturgy?
- Do we have to look harder at what God offers us at Mass?
- What messages from our culture support or deepen our appreciation for the liturgy?

6. Conduct a presentation on the significance of the liturgy, using key phrases from steps 1, 2, and 5 of this activity and the following bullet points, which are taken from pages 135–136 of the *CFH*:

- Liturgy is the public, communal, and official worship of the Church.
- It is public, as a sign of our faith to the local community.
- It is communal, which means it isn't a prayer that you do alone.
- It is official, which means the Church governs it.

## Mediaconnections

- ◆ Continue the type of reflection you did as a group in the core session. Observe ways the media tries to “sell” products and ideas to us. Does the Gospel message get lost more easily now that it has so much competition? Could the Gospel message be conveyed by some of the means the media use?

- The Eucharist (or Mass) is the central liturgy of the Catholic Church and the basis for most other liturgical celebrations. The other six sacraments of the Church—Baptism, Confirmation, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony—have their own liturgical rituals.

Pause to ask these questions: What might happen to the liturgy if it were not public or communal or official? Would the liturgy become more vulnerable to the values of the culture?

- The word *liturgy* is taken from the Greek word *leiturgia*, which means “a public work” or “service on behalf of the people.” For Christians *liturgy* means the participation of the People of God in the work of God. So our liturgies aren’t something we do, but something God does and we participate in.
- In the liturgy, God is at work bringing us to our salvation. That is why participation in the liturgy is just as important as having faith in Jesus and avoiding sin and living a moral life. In the liturgy we learn about the great mysteries of our faith by participating in them. We learn about the mystery of the Trinity by experiencing the Trinity in the liturgy. We learn about the Incarnation of Jesus Christ by experiencing him as true God and true man. We learn about the Paschal mystery as we participate in the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ through the Eucharist.

Conclude by noting that the content of this session is drawn from the first half of chapter 14 of the *CFH*. Encourage the participants to read and review it in the next few days.

## Session Extensions

### The Holy Trinity in the Mass (30 minutes)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - several copies of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*
  - four (or eight) copies of handout 2, “The Holy Trinity”
  - printed copies of the day’s readings or of the upcoming Sunday readings
  - several copies of the *Sacramentary* so that participants can look at the order of the Mass (If the *Sacramentary* is not available, use a missal.)
- Review the summary points in step 1 of this session and the relevant material on pages 137–138 of the *CFH*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.
- Familiarize yourself with the *Sacramentary* or other resources you are using with the participants for the order of the Mass so that you can easily help them find their way through the book.

1. Conduct a presentation on the Trinity in the liturgy, using key points from the preceding activity and the following bullet points, which are taken from pages 137–138 of the *CFH*:

- The Church's sacred liturgy is completely trinitarian. In the liturgy we experience the Holy Trinity at work, and through that experience the mystery of the Holy Trinity is more deeply revealed. (*You may want to review the definition of the Trinity before moving on.*)
- We acknowledge the Father as the source of all our blessings. In the Scripture readings and the liturgical prayers, we recall important moments of salvation history in which the Father was at work. We remember and celebrate the Father's greatest gift to us, the gift of his Son, who gave himself up for us so that we might be saved.
- Jesus Christ plays a central role in the liturgy because he not only gave us the sacred liturgy, he also makes himself present to us through liturgical celebrations. Something that makes Christ's presence real is called a sacrament; thus we say that liturgy is sacramental. The Church itself is also a sacrament because it makes Christ's presence real by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ is present in the assembly, because we are the Body of Christ. He is present in the word of God, the Scriptures. The part of the liturgy in which the Scriptures are proclaimed is called the liturgy of the word, and is an essential part of every liturgical celebration. And in a special way, Christ is present during the Eucharist because his body and blood are present in the bread and the wine. Thus liturgy is the work of both Christ, the head, and the Church, his body.
- The Holy Spirit reveals Christ present in the community, the Scriptures, and the physical signs of liturgical celebrations. But the Holy Spirit is at work even before that, preparing us to receive Christ in the liturgy. And the Holy Spirit does more than just reveal Christ in the liturgy. Through the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Christ is actually made real and present in the liturgy.

Answer any questions that may arise from this presentation. Conclude with this statement, which is taken from page 135 of the *CFH*:

- It is important that you understand this last point. The liturgy and the sacraments are not just celebrations of past events. They make the saving power of Christ available to us, just as it was available to the original disciples and Apostles. Remember, Christ is alive! After his Resurrection he ascended into heaven so space and time would not limit him and he could be available to everyone everywhere. Of course he is close to us all the time, but we have his promise that his presence and power is available in a special way through the liturgy and the sacraments of the Church.

2. Explain that the participants will be doing a search for the presence of the three persons of the Trinity in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Review the

## JournalACTIVITIES

- ◆ “Perhaps the greatest source of friction that exists between teens and parents when it comes to religion is the argument about going to Sunday Mass” (*CFH*, p. 134). Is that your own experience? What is the cause of this type of friction?
- ◆ Why is it important for the liturgy to be public, communal, and official? What might happen if one of these characteristics were not part of the liturgy?
- ◆ How do you feel about the liturgy you experience at your parish? How could you contribute to the liturgical celebration in a way that emphasizes that it is alive?

different parts of the Mass with the participants, looking over the order of the Mass with them. Point the young people to “Parts of the Mass,” on pages 378–379 of the *CFH*, which provides a helpful outline of the Mass, or to pages 178–179, “An Outline for the Eucharist.” Handout 11, “The Eucharistic Rite,” in chapter 7 of this manual, provides an outline of the Eucharist based on the information from the *CFH*.

3. Divide participants into four small groups (or eight, if necessary), and assign each group the task of looking for references to the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and references to God, respectively. Distribute a copy of handout 2 to each group so the participants can look more specifically for special characteristics of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then assign half the groups the task of looking at the introductory rites and the liturgy of the word. These groups will need copies of the Sunday readings and the order of the Mass in the *Sacramentary* or missal. Ask the other groups to look at the liturgy of the Eucharist and the concluding rites. These groups will need the order of the Mass in the *Sacramentary* or a missal.

4. Give the participants a fair amount of time to work on this. You will likely need to move around and answer questions from the young people about the order of the Mass. When the groups are finished, ask a representative from each group to share what her or his group found. Suggest that the young people listen carefully for the presence of the Holy Trinity at Mass.

## One at the Table of Mission (20 minutes)

### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - a bag of pennies (enough for all but six participants) and six nickels
  - food that is well liked by the participants
- Set up a table with various foods items.
- Place the bag of pennies and nickels in a place where the participants can reach in and take a coin as they arrive.

1. As the participants enter, ask them each to take a coin from the bag and stand at a distance from the table. Welcome all the participants to the “party”; then invite only those who have nickels to come to the food table.

2. Tell those who have pennies that they cannot come to the table. Then lead the group in a discussion using the following questions:

- Why is it important for you to be able to eat at the table?
- How does it make you feel to be left standing just this far away from the food, unable to eat it?
- Are you willing to complete the necessary steps in order to come to the table?



3. With the six participants who have nickels, decide on a simple initiation rite. Invite all the remaining participants to complete the rite and join the others at the table. For example, those who need to be initiated must do a somersault or sing a verse of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

4. Invite the six participants with the nickels to share their reflections on the following questions:

- How did it feel to be fully initiated and allowed to eat at the table?
- What freedom did it bring? What responsibilities did it bring?

5. Conclude the activity with the following comments from page 136 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*:

- In the liturgy, God is at work bringing us to our salvation. That is why participation in the liturgy is just as important as having faith in Jesus and avoiding sin and living a moral life. In the liturgy we learn about the great mysteries of our faith by participating in them. We learn about the mystery of the Trinity by experiencing the Trinity in the liturgy. We learn about the Incarnation of Jesus Christ by experiencing him as true God and true man. We learn about the Paschal mystery as we participate in the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ through the Eucharist.

Ask the participants if the experience of being excluded from the table reminds them of the blessings that participating in the Eucharist brings.

## Pray It

### The Cross (10 minutes)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - a large candle (one that can be safely passed around a circle)
  - matches
  - a cross or a picture of a cross for each student to study
  - The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*
  - a recording of a song with the theme of love of God and others
  - a tape player or a CD player
- Read the article “The Cross,” on page 138 of the *CFH*.

1. Gather the participants in a circle, seating them on the floor. Place the candle on the floor in the center of the circle and light it. Distribute a cross to each participant.

### Spirit & Song connections

- ◆ “Gather Your People,” by Bob Hurd, harmony by Craig Kingsbury
- ◆ “Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/We Are the Body of Christ,” by Jaime Cortez
- ◆ “Ven al Banquete / Come to the Feast,” by Bob Hurd



## Familyconnections

- ◆ Ask parents, older siblings, or other relatives about significant liturgical experiences they have had and about liturgical experiences they may have had prior to Vatican II.
- ◆ Visit several Catholic parishes for Sunday Mass with the participants and their families. Afterward, have them discuss the liturgy as the “public, communal, and official worship of the Church” (*CFH*, p. 135). What is the value of having differences between parishes? What is the value of using the same prayers in every Catholic Mass?

2. Begin the prayer slowly with the sign of the cross.

3. Invite a volunteer to read the article “The Cross,” from page 138 in the *CFH*, to the group. Then allow some time for quiet reflection. If you do not have the *CFH* available, share this part of the article:

Some people describe liturgy as the two beams of the cross: the vertical beam representing our relationship with God, the horizontal beam representing our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. As you gather with these other Christians, you recognize them as your family members.

Provide the participants a moment of silence.

4. Play some quiet music. Continue by asking the participants to pray quietly their response to these questions:

- How does my encounter with God in the liturgy help me in my relationship with my brothers and sisters in Christ?
- How does my encounter with my brothers and sisters in Christ in the liturgy help me in my relationship with God?

5. Invite the participants to pray for their brothers and sisters in Christ. Pick up the candle and share the first name of a person you would like to pray for. Pass the candle to a participant, inviting him or her to share a name, to mention a group of people, or to pray for a special intention, and then to pass the candle to another participant. Continue this until all the participants have received the candle and said a prayer. Conclude with the Glory Be, on page 382 of the *CFH*.

# LIVE it!

## Options and Actions

- **Prayer to the Holy Spirit.** Point the young people to the Prayer to the Holy Spirit, on page 385 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*, or provide copies of this prayer for them. Invite the participants to prepare for the upcoming Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist by asking the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts for the liturgy.
- **Guest speaker about the liturgy.** Invite a priest or liturgist to come and talk about the importance of the liturgy.
- **Liturgy of the Hours.** Review the material about the Liturgy of the Hours on pages 347–349 of the *CFH*. Give the participants the opportunity to experience this type of liturgy by leading them in prayer. See the activity “Praying the liturgy of the Hours,” in chapter 8 of the Total Catechesis manual *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*.
- **Liturgical ministries.** Provide the participants with information about the liturgical ministries they might want to become involved in and the names of people to contact about doing so.

# Introduction to the Liturgy

This session covers pages 134–138 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1066–1144 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## Session Summary

### The Liturgy

Many experts feel that one reason it is harder today to appreciate the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments is because of modern technology and modern media. Before we had movies and television, the Bible stories read at Mass and the priest's homilies were people's "entertainment" and education. Before we had books and magazines, the Church's stained-glass windows and statues were the people's source of visual information and art. Before we had radio and newspapers, talking with your neighbors after Church was your main source of community news.

You have to look harder today at what God offers us in the sacred liturgy (the Mass and the sacraments) to discover its true and eternal value.

- Liturgy is the public, communal, and official worship of the Church.
- It is public, as a sign of our faith to the local community.
- It is communal, which means it isn't a prayer that you do alone.
- It is official, which means the Church governs it.
- The Eucharist (or Mass) is the central liturgy of the Catholic Church and the basis for most other liturgical celebrations. The other six sacraments of the Church—Baptism, Confirmation, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony—have their own liturgical rituals.
- The word *liturgy* is taken from the Greek word *leiturgia*, which means "a public work" or "service on behalf of the people." For Christians *liturgy* means the participation of the People of God in the work of God. So our liturgies aren't something we do, but something God does and we participate in.
- In the liturgy, God is at work bringing us to our salvation. That is why participation in the liturgy is just as important as having faith in Jesus and avoiding sin and living a moral life. In the liturgy we learn about the great mysteries of our faith by participating in them. We learn about the mystery of the Trinity by experiencing the Trinity in the liturgy. We learn about the Incarnation of Jesus Christ by experiencing him as true God and true man.

We learn about the Paschal mystery as we participate in the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ through the Eucharist.

### **Liturgy and the Holy Trinity**

- The Church's sacred liturgy is completely trinitarian. In the liturgy we experience the Holy Trinity at work, and through that experience the mystery of the Holy Trinity is more deeply revealed.
- We acknowledge the Father as the source of all our blessings. In the Scripture readings and the liturgical prayers, we recall important moments of salvation history in which the Father was at work. We remember and celebrate the Father's greatest gift to us, the gift of his Son, who gave himself up for us so that we might be saved.
- Jesus Christ plays a central role in the liturgy because he not only gave us the sacred liturgy, he also makes himself present to us through liturgical celebrations. Something that makes Christ's presence real is called a sacrament; thus we say that liturgy is sacramental. The Church itself is also a sacrament because it makes Christ's presence real by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ is present in the assembly, because we are the Body of Christ. He is present in the word of God, the Scriptures. The part of the liturgy in which the Scriptures are proclaimed is called the liturgy of the word, and is an essential part of every liturgical celebration. And in a special way, Christ is present during the Eucharist because his body and blood are present in the bread and the wine. Thus liturgy is the work of both Christ, the head, and the Church, his body.
- The Holy Spirit reveals Christ present in the community, the Scriptures, and the physical signs of liturgical celebrations. But the Holy Spirit is at work even before that, preparing us to receive Christ in the liturgy. And the Holy Spirit does more than just reveal Christ in the liturgy. Through the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Christ is actually made real and present in the liturgy.
- It is important that you understand this last point. The liturgy and the sacraments are not just celebrations of past events. They make the saving power of Christ available to us, just as it was available to the original disciples and Apostles. Remember, Christ is alive! After his Resurrection he ascended into heaven so space and time would not limit him and so that he could be available to everyone everywhere. Of course he is close to us all the time, but we have his promise that his presence and power is available in a special way through the liturgy and the sacraments of the Church.

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### Talk Points

- When you think of your week, where does the Sunday liturgy of the Eucharist or any other liturgical celebration you participate in fit?
- Where is there evidence in your life of the Body of Christ? As a member of the Body of Christ, what can you give to other members of this body?
- Talk about a liturgical celebration that has especially affected you or that has left you with a significant memory.

# The Holy Trinity

## The Father

- Acknowledgment of Father as the source of all our blessings
- Remembrance of important moments of salvation history in which the Father was at work
- Remembrance and celebration of the Father's gift to us of his Son

## The Son

- Presence of Christ through liturgical celebrations
- Presence of Christ in the people assembled
- Presence of Christ in the Scriptures
- Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

## The Holy Spirit

- Reveals Christ present in the community
- Reveals Christ present in the Scriptures
- Reveals Christ present in the physical signs of liturgical celebrations
- Prepares us for receiving Christ in the liturgy
- Makes the saving work of Christ real

(This material is adapted from the section "Liturgy and the Holy Trinity," in *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004], pages 137–138. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)