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### Session Time Frame

The sessions in this guide have been designed to work in periods of 60 to 75 minutes. The sessions' core activities—listed at the beginning of the sessions, under the "Are a Glance" heading—will fit into shorter sessions. If you have more time, consider using the optional *Thematic session extensions*. The session outlines include additional discussion questions and media suggestions that can be incorporated to create sessions that go beyond 75 minutes.

# 2 THE EUCHARIST

## Session Overview

In this session the participants will participate in a role-play in which they will quickly prepare to travel to a new land and take only a few possessions. They will then join in a meal blessing and a farewell feast intended to echo the Israelites' last meal before fleeing Egypt. The session continues by exploring how the Exodus and first Passover shed light on the meaning and significance of the Last Supper and celebrations of the Eucharist today. In the optional session extension, the participants will explore how the Eucharist sends us out to live as Christ in the world.

## Objectives

Enable the participants to do the following:

- recognize that the Eucharist has a connection to Passover and the Last Supper
- understand that the Eucharist is a celebration of Christ's presence now

## At a Glance

A. Quick-Start Activity	(5 minutes)
B. Welcome and Opening Prayer	(5 minutes)
C. Passover: The First "Fast-Food" Feast	(15 minutes)
D. The Last Supper and the Eucharist	(15 minutes)
E. Celebrating the Eucharist Today	(15 minutes)
F. Closing Prayer	(5 minutes)
Optional Session Extension: Mass: Doing What Jesus Did	(15 minutes)

## Materials and Preparation

### Materials Needed

Gather the following items, one for each participant:

- copies of handout 2-A, "Berakah"
- cups, plates, and napkins
- Bibles
- sheets of lined paper

- session 2 “Mirror Meditation” cards from resource 1–A, “Mirror Meditation’ Cards”
- copies of handout 1–B, “Personal Journal Sheet” (optional)

Gather the following additional items:

- a snack for the group, such as a large, thin-crust pizza or a giant chocolate chip cookie, cut into enough slices for each participant to have one
- a beverage, enough for one small cup for each participant

### Preparation Tasks

- Write on the board the following instructions for the quick-start activity:

Congratulations! Your family just won a new home and a country of your very own. The only rule is that you must leave right away and each of you can bring only five items (pets count as family). What will you take? Jot down the items and compare your list with one or two other people.

### Catechist Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation! Through your goodness you have given us the gift of the Eucharist. May the Body and Blood of Christ that I receive each Sunday help me to become Christ for others, especially for the young people whom you have entrusted to my care. Amen.

### Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapters 24 and 26
- CCC, numbers 1322–1419 (the Eucharist)
- Exodus, chapter 12; Luke 22:7–9; Luke 22:14–20

## Session Steps

### A. Quick-Start Activity (5 minutes)

**Greet** the participants as they enter the meeting space, and invite them to begin the quick-start activity. Point out the following instructions on the board, but also share them verbally if any participants need help referencing the board:



Congratulations! Your family just won a new home and a country of your very own. The only rule is that you must leave right away and each of you can bring only five items (pets count as family). What will you take? Jot down the items and compare your list with one or two other people.

## B. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** everyone and make any announcements.
2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."
3. **Prepare** for prayer by saying the following:
  - ▶ Our opening prayer today will be a meal blessing. I have brought food for a farewell celebration to give you energy for your journey to the new home you won in the quick-start activity.
  - ▶ We are going to use a blessing prayer style that comes from the Jewish tradition. It is called a *Berakah*, which means "blessing." It is a prayer that praises and thanks God.
4. **Distribute** a copy of handout 2-A to each participant. Invite everyone to join in saying the prayer. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

## C. Passover: The First "Fast-Food" Feast (15 minutes)

1. **Distribute** the snack, beverage, and napkins to the participants.
2. While the participants are eating, **ask**:
  - ▶ Did any of the words in the thanksgiving prayer sound familiar? [*The "Blessed are you, Lord . . ." is similar to words said at Mass to offer praise and thanks to God.*]
  - ▶ Can anyone guess which sacrament we will be examining today? [*the Eucharist*]
  - ▶ The Eucharist is our greatest sacrament, a sacred meal of thanksgiving and sacrifice that unites us with Jesus and with one another.
3. **Distribute** a Bible to each participant. **Describe** the First Passover using these or similar words drawn from Exodus, chapter 12 (consider using selected scenes from the movie *The Prince of Egypt* to enhance your summary of Exodus, chapter 12; see the "Media Connections" section):
  - ▶ Fifteen hundred years before Jesus was born, the Jewish people did something a little bit similar to what we just did! They had to prepare to leave in a hurry and held a farewell meal on the run. It might have been the very first "fast-food" feast!


- ▶ The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt at the time. God sent Moses to free them and lead them to a new home. Moses went to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and demanded that the Jewish people be set free. Pharaoh refused. God sent nine plagues. When Pharaoh still refused, God threatened to send a final plague, the Angel of Death. This angel would come in the night and kill every firstborn male in the entire country.
- ▶ Moses told the Jewish people how to prepare their homes so that the Angel of Death would pass over without harming them.

**Ask** the young people to locate Exodus 12:21–22 (Moses's instructions) in their Bibles. When all have found it, read the passage together. **Continue** in your own words:

- ▶ He also ordered them to pack up their belongings and prepare a quick feast so they would be ready for a fast escape. He told them to use flat bread for the meal, because there would be no time to wait for yeast bread to rise.
4. **Ask** the following questions to check for understanding:
- ▶ Why was this event called the Passover? [*The Angel of Death passed over their homes and spared their lives.*]
  - ▶ What was sacrificed? [*A lamb was killed and its blood was smeared on the doorposts to protect them.*]
  - ▶ Before eating the meal, they blessed the food and thanked God. What kind of blessing do you think they used? [*very likely a Berakah blessing, similar to what we just prayed*]
5. **Read** aloud Exodus 12:11–14, the command for an annual Passover feast, and then make the following points:
- ▶ Every year the Jewish people celebrate a Passover feast. The celebration is much more than remembering a past event. Passover celebrates what is happening now. God is with them now and always.
  - ▶ Our Eucharist is similar in that though we remember things that happened in the past, like Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection, we also celebrate Jesus' presence right now. Let's explore this. [*See The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers, "Making the Past Present," page 267.*]

#### D. The Last Supper and the Eucharist (15 minutes)

1. **Introduce** this activity by mentioning that Jesus celebrated a very special Passover with his disciples before his Crucifixion. **Explain** that this meal is often called the Last Supper.

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- Distribute** a pen or pencil and a sheet of lined paper to each participant. On the board **write** "Luke 22:7-9" and **invite** the young people to take out their Bibles. When all are ready, **ask** them to locate Luke 22:7-9. When all have found the passage, **invite** a volunteer to read it aloud.
  - Now **erase** the first Bible reference you wrote on the board and **write** "Luke 22:14-20." **Invite** everyone to locate the passage. When all have done so, invite a volunteer to read it out loud.
  - Direct** the participants to work alone or in small groups to identify and write down any differences and similarities between Jesus' Passover with his disciples and the first Passover. **Make** yourself available to answer questions about the two Passover accounts as the participants work.
  - Facilitate** a discussion of the similarities and differences, **emphasizing** the following point:
    - ▶ Jesus celebrated the Passover feast with his disciples, but he gave it new meaning.
  - Explain** the following in your own words:
    - ▶ Jesus told the disciples that the bread and wine were his Body and Blood broken and poured out for us.
    - ▶ At Mass we call Jesus the Lamb of God. This is because he died, like the Passover lamb. The lamb's blood saved the Israelites from death and freed them from slavery in Egypt. Jesus died to free us from a different kind of slavery—the slavery of sin—and to give us eternal life with God. [See *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, "Pray It! Liturgy Connection," page 268.]
  - Ask** the group these questions:
    - ▶ At the Last Supper, what did Jesus tell the disciples to do? [*He said "do this" in his "memory."*]
    - ▶ Did the disciples listen? [*yes*]
    - ▶ What do we call this celebration today? [*the Eucharist or Mass*]
  - Conclude** with the following ideas:
    - ▶ Each week we continue the Church's Tradition of gathering for the Eucharist. We do this in memory of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection, but there is more to it. We are not simply commemorating events from thousands of years ago. Christ truly is present in the Eucharist. Jesus' death on the cross was not the end for him, and death will not be the end for us either.

## E. Celebrating the Eucharist Today (15 minutes)

1. **Invite** the participants to think about their most recent experience of the Mass. Direct them to imagine how that celebration might have been different if Jesus had been the celebrant or priest. **Invite** them to discuss the comparison in small groups. Be flexible about allowing some young people to work in pairs if that is their preferred way of working.
2. **Give** each small group 3 minutes to come up with a creative way to share a “snapshot” comparison with the large group (e.g., a before-and-after drawing, a living statue).
3. **Have** the small groups or pairs share their results.
4. If the participants do not raise the issue, **emphasize** that Jesus is fully present at every Mass by explaining the following:
  - ▶ Our Eucharistic celebration is not simply about remembering what Jesus did two thousand years ago; it is about Jesus’ being fully present to us today, accomplishing great things in our lives now.
5. **Summarize** the differences the participants presented. **Invite** the large group to brainstorm possible reasons for the differences (e.g., taking things for granted, not paying attention).
6. **Invite** each participant to identify one thing he or she can do to make his or her next Eucharistic celebration more meaningful.

## F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Invite** the participants to take out their handbooks. When all are ready, ask them to turn to page 267. **Lead** them in saying the short prayer in the “Pray It!” sidebar, or lead the following prayer service:

A

1. **Gather** everyone around the prayer table. Place the “Mirror Meditation” cards for this session on the table. Encourage the young people to take a card home, tape it to a mirror, and say the prayer each time they see it.
2. **Invite** everyone to draw their attention to the “Mirror Meditation” cards while you pray for God’s blessing, saying:
  - ▶ Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness you sent Jesus, your Son, who gave us the gift of the Eucharist. Bless us and bless these prayer cards. May they help us to become more aware of your presence with us at Mass and in every moment of our lives. Blessed be God forever! *[Encourage the participants to repeat the final phrase.]*

- 2
- If the participants have not yet picked up a "Mirror Meditation" card, ask them to do so now. Then say the prayer together. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.
  - Announce** that anyone who brings something from her or his own Baptism (e.g., photo, candle, certificate, gown) to the next session will get a prize.

*Note:* If feasible, send an e-mail during the week or prepare a written note to send home, reminding the participants to bring Baptism items.

*Note:* If doing the optional course project, announce the latest church bulletin arrivals and project point totals.

*Note:* If time allows and you are opting to invite the participants to journal, distribute the copies of handout 1–B, "Personal Journal Sheet."

Chapter 24: The Eucharist: The Heart of All Liturgy

best response is to give thanks. Sometimes we say "thanks from the bottom of my heart." This means we want to show gratitude by giving our truest, fullest, best selves.

We do the same in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the heart and high point of the Church's life. We gather in response to God's love. We try to bring our best selves and give heartfelt thanks to God. But our thanksgiving falls short of the extraordinary goodness of God. Because we are members of the Body of Christ, however, our thanks are joined to Christ's sacrifice of praise to the Father. Christ gave his fullest, best self in thanksgiving to the Father when he offered himself on the cross, once for all. Through Christ's perfect offering, we receive the grace of that perfect love between the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.

### Making the Past Present

Jews and Catholics do a special kind of remembering called **anamnesis**. Every year at **Passover**, Jewish people tell the story of how their ancestors escaped slavery in Egypt on the night the angel of death passed over the land (see Exodus, chapter 12). But the Jews don't tell the story as if it were only a past event. They believe that the same thing that

**A**  
**PRAY IT!**

Lord Jesus,  
Sometimes it's hard  
to pray at Mass.  
I get so distracted,  
and sometimes I don't  
understand what  
is happening.  
Help me just to  
respond as best I can,  
to believe what I pray,  
and to live what I believe,  
so I can be your  
Body for all those who  
need you most.

Amen



## Optional Session Extension

### Mass: Doing What Jesus Did (15 minutes)

This session extension works best just before the closing prayer.

#### Materials Needed

Gather the following items, one for each participant:

- sheets of lined paper

1. **Write** “Mass” on the board and explain the following:
  - ▶ The word *Mass* comes from a Latin word for *sent*. Jesus’ followers believe that when they share his Body and Blood in the Eucharist, they are to go out and continue Jesus’ mission by serving others.
  - ▶ This means that we are sent from the Eucharist to try to do what Jesus did throughout his earthly life: to use our gifts and abilities to help others. We aim to live as Christ for others.
  
2. On the board **create** three columns with the headings “With My Parish,” “With My School,” and “With My Family and Friends.” Distribute a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each participant, and then **direct** the young people to work in small groups to generate lists of how teenagers can live as “Christ for others” at the parish, at school, and with family and friends. **Ask** them to offer concrete ideas about things they can do to help others. **Invite** the groups to write their top two or three choices for each category under the headings on the board. Be flexible about allowing some young people to work in pairs or even solo if that is their preferred way of working.
  
3. **Read** the lists aloud, and conclude with the following comments:
  - ▶ I invite you this week to go out and live as Christ for others. Take time to read the Scripture passages we have studied today, and when you participate at Mass, listen with new ears and a new heart. If any of the concrete ideas on our lists relate to your life, choose one to do.

#### Discussion Starters

- What can you remember about your First Communion? How does your participation in Mass today compare with your first experience?
- Discuss the similarities and differences between Sunday Mass and a special family meal, such as Thanksgiving dinner.

## Media Connection

- Select scenes from the second half of the movie *The Prince of Egypt* (1998, 99 minutes, rated A-II and PG) would complement the summary of Exodus, chapter 12, in part 3 of step C, the "Passover: The First 'Fast-Food' Feast" activity.

**Note:** For movies with a U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rating of A-II, show only preselected scenes. Obtain parental permission for participants who are under age thirteen to view an A-II rated movie, and use your best judgment regarding the appropriateness of the film and the advisability of viewing relevant excerpts.



# BERAKAH

*Light the prayer candle.*

**Leader:** Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness you have given us this gift of light.  
May the light of your love shine brightly as we share our meal together.

**All:** **Blessed be God forever!**

*Hold up the food.*

**Leader:** Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness you have given us this food.  
May all who feast on it  
become more closely united with one another and with you.

**All:** **Blessed be God forever!**

*Hold up the beverage.*

**Leader:** Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness you have given us this beverage.  
May all who share it  
be reminded of the sweetness that awaits us in heaven.

**All:** **Blessed be God forever!**

**Leader:** May the Lord, our God be with us through  
out this meal,  
and throughout our lives on earth and into  
eternity, forever and ever.

**All:** **Amen!**

