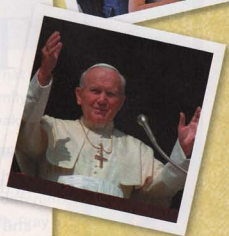


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Gathering

We, though many, are one body.

1 Corinthians 10:17

A Family Celebration

Instead of eating Thanksgiving dinner at home, Maria's family decided to eat at a restaurant. At first, Maria didn't know what to think. Being in a large room with strangers at other tables did not seem like a normal Thanksgiving at all.

When the waiter brought the food, however, Maria's feelings began to change. There were no menus as in a regular restaurant. Instead, the same meal was served to everyone. Also, the food didn't arrive already served on each plate. The waiter brought bowls of food and placed them on the table for everyone to share.

"It's called 'family style,'" Maria's mother explained.

Before long, Maria forgot where she was and simply enjoyed eating and talking as a family. She ended up having a great time. It really was a good way to have a family celebration.

- Think about a time when your family got together to celebrate. Where did you eat? Who was there? What food was served?
- What is needed for a good family celebration?



Gathering as Christians

Word of God

Now you are Christ's Body,
and individually parts of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Jesus liked to gather together with friends for a meal. He ate at the home of Lazarus, and Lazarus' two sisters, Martha and Mary. One time, Jesus ate at the home of a sinner named Zacchaeus. At other times, he ate with religious leaders, tax collectors, and his disciples. At these meals, Jesus shared with others and talked about God's love and what it means to live as God's People.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, his followers continued to come together to pray and eat. During the meal, they talked about Jesus and what he had said and done. They talked about ways they could help others. They began to call themselves **Christians**, a name that means "followers of Christ." They felt like members of one family.



Communal Life

Listen to what Scripture tells us about the first Christians and their gatherings.

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.”

Acts 2:42–47

Let's Talk

- What did the first Christians do when they gathered together?
- How did they act as a family to each other?
- When do you gather with your Church family? What do you do together?
- How does your parish look out for those in need as the early Christians did?



Christians Today

This We Believe

When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are one Church. We believe that Jesus remains with us in the sacraments.

Every Sunday **Catholics** gather together as the early Christians did to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus. Those assembled remember Jesus, pray together, and take part in a special meal called the **Eucharist**. The Eucharist is also called the Mass and is led by a validly ordained Catholic priest. The Eucharist is at the heart of the life of the Church.

At the beginning of Mass, there is an Introductory Rite. You stand and sing a song together while the priest and ministers walk in **procession** to the altar.



The priest says, “In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

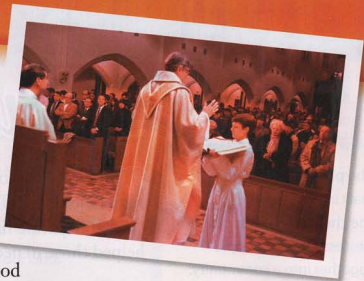
You answer, “Amen.”

These words say you believe that the Blessed Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—is present with the people at Mass. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of our Christian faith and life.

After making the Sign of the Cross, the priest greets the people, saying “The Lord be with you.” You respond with the rest of the people, “And with your spirit.”

During the penitential rite, you praise God and thank him for his **mercy**, or forgiving love. You pray, “Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.”

Then you sing or pray the prayer, “Glory to God.” This is an ancient hymn of praise which begins with the words of the angels at the birth of Jesus.



Activity

You gather at Mass to praise and thank God. Think about all that God has given you. Name three things for which you are thankful.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Catholic Practices

The priest and ministers walk in procession into the church. The entrance procession joins people together into a community.

We Follow Jesus

The early Christians gathered together to remember Jesus. They prayed together and praised God. They were like family to one another. They helped those in need.

Work with a partner. Discuss the following questions:

- 1** When do you and your parish family gather together to remember Jesus?
- 2** How are members of the parish like family to one another?
- 3** How do members of your parish help those in need?

With your partner, make a poster that shows your answer to one of the questions. Give your poster a title.



We Give God Glory

LEADER: Every time we gather as the Body of Christ, we give God glory. We can give God glory and praise right now as we pray:

ALL (SING OR SAY): Glory and praise to our God.

SIDE 1: Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you.

SIDE 2: We give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

ALL (SING OR SAY): Glory and praise to our God.

SIDE 1: Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us.

SIDE 2: You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

ALL (SING OR SAY): Glory and praise to our God.

SIDE 1: For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ.

SIDE 2: With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

ALL (SING OR SAY): Glory and praise to our God.



HOME and Family



Family Note

Dear Family,

I have learned that the first followers of Jesus were like a family. They prayed together, shared with one another, and helped the needy. You can help me prepare for Holy Communion by telling me how the Eucharist brings you closer to God and other Church members.

ON YOUR OWN

Pray for the other people in your Communion class. Ask God to help everyone act as a loving member of the Body of Christ.

Family Chat

Share the reasons each person in the family has for going to Mass.

WITH YOUR FAMILY

The next time you eat together as a family, talk about ways to show you are part of the parish family. Choose a parish activity you can do together.





Listening

*Blessed are those who hear the word of God
and observe it.*

Luke 11:28

Stories

Think of a time someone told you a story. Perhaps it was at a family gathering when someone told a story of long ago. Perhaps it was with a group of friends when funny stories were being told. Perhaps it was at school when someone told an interesting story in class. You probably listened carefully to the story. In listening, you showed your respect for the person telling the story. In listening to the story, you might even have learned something.

- What is a favorite story that someone told you?
- What did you learn from listening to the story?



Listen to Jesus

Word of God

Oh, that today you would
hear his voice:

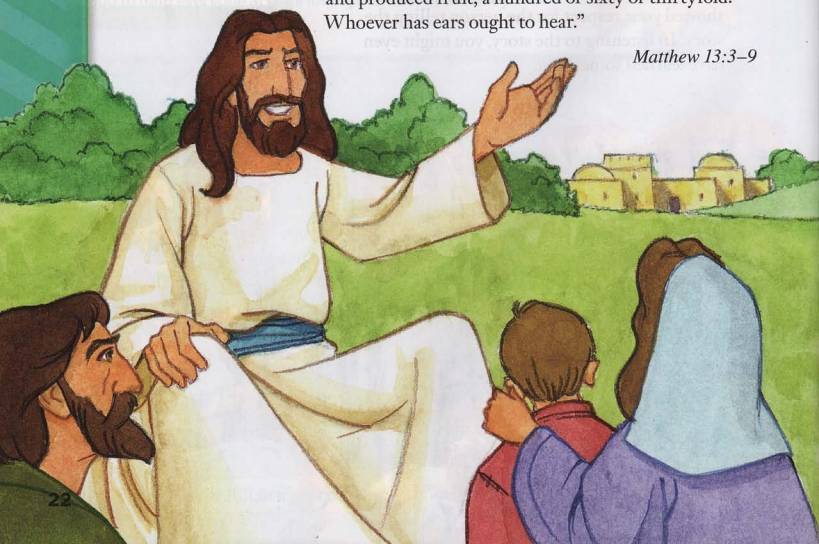
Do not harden your hearts.

Psalms 95:8

Jesus used stories to teach people about God's love. People who were eager to do God's will listened to his stories. One day, he told the story about the sower, a person who plants seeds.

"A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Matthew 13:3-9



Jesus Explains

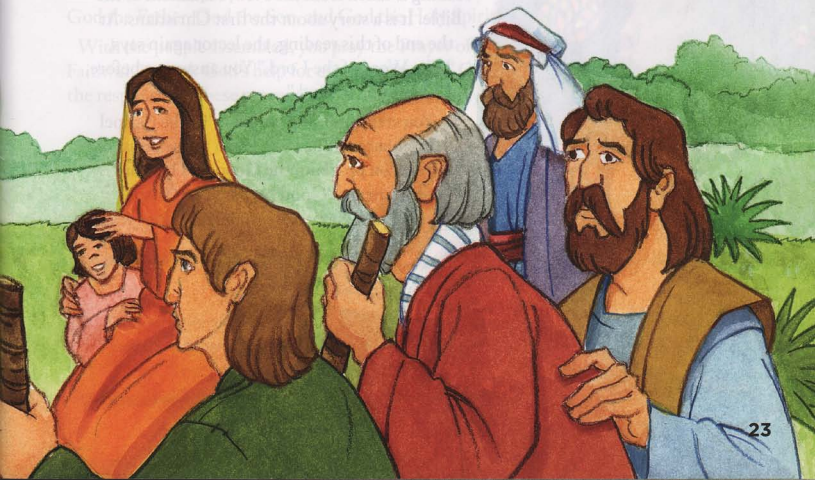
Those listening to Jesus did not fully understand the story of the sower. Jesus explained what it meant.

"The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word. But then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

Matthew 13:19–23

Let's Talk

- In Jesus' story, what happened to the seeds the farmer scattered?
- How did Jesus explain the story?
- What did you learn from Jesus' story?
- What kind of ground do you want to be?



God's Word

Every week you hear God's Word when you go to Mass. God speaks to you and to all the people assembled. This time of listening to God's Word is called the **Liturgy of the Word**. It comes after the Introductory Rites of the Mass.

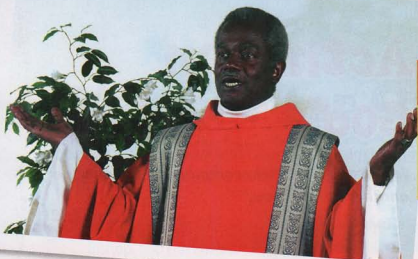
After you sit and prepare to listen, the lector reads the first reading. This is usually a story about the people of God who lived many years before Jesus. During Easter time the reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. At the end of this reading, the lector says, "**The Word of the Lord.**" You answer, "**Thanks be to God.**"

Everyone sings a song or psalm from Scripture called the Responsorial Psalm. A song leader or cantor leads the people in singing.

You listen to a second reading by the lector. This reading is taken from the New Testament of the Bible. It is a story about the first Christians. At the end of this reading, the lector again says, "**The Word of the Lord.**" You answer as before, "**Thanks be to God.**"

You stand and sing "Alleluia" at the Gospel Acclamation. Then you listen to the priest or deacon proclaim the **Gospel**. The word Gospel means "Good News." The Gospel reading tells about the wonderful things Jesus





Catholic Practices

The Creed prayed at Mass is called the Nicene Creed.

did and his message for all people. At the end of the Gospel, the priest or deacon says, “**The Gospel of the Lord.**” You say, “**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**”

The priest explains the Word of God and encourages you to follow it. This talk is called the **homily**. After the homily, you stand and pray the **Nicene Creed**. The Creed states the beliefs of the people of God in the Blessed Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

With the people assembled, you pray the Prayer of the Faithful. You ask God’s help for everyone in need. One of the responses to these prayers is “**Lord, hear our prayer.**”

Activity

Make an instruction booklet for the second graders who are preparing for First Communion. Explain each part of the Mass in words the second graders will understand.

Parish Connection

Talk to a parish lector. Ask how he or she feels about proclaiming God's Word at Mass.

Acting on God's Word

Jesus said, "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

John 15:12

Look at each picture. Make up a story for each and share your stories. Then write next to each picture how you would act on God's Word and help the person.

1



2

3

What is another way that you listen to Jesus' words and show your love for others?





We Pray For Others

LEADER: When we listen to Jesus, we learn how to love others.
Let us show our love now by praying for the needs of everyone
in the Church.

READER 1: For all Church leaders, especially the Pope, our
Bishop, and our Pastor, we pray to the Lord.

ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER 2: For all people who teach us about Jesus, we pray to
the Lord.

ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER 3: For everyone in our parish, we pray to the Lord.

ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER 4: For people who are poor and needy, we pray to
the Lord.

ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER 5: For all those preparing for First
Communion and for their families, we pray to the Lord.

ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

LEADER: O God, we love to listen to your Word.
Help us act on it every day. We make this prayer in
Jesus' name.

ALL: Amen.



Family Note

Dear Family,

I have learned that Jesus wants his followers to listen to God's Word and act on it. You can help me remember the parts of the Liturgy of the Word by reviewing them with me. You can help me prepare for Holy Communion by discussing the meaning of the Sunday Gospel reading.

ON YOUR OWN

Make a bookmark that reminds you to listen to God's Word. Put the bookmark in a book you are reading now. Use these words:

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.

(Luke 11:28)

Family Chat

Talk about the message of Jesus and why it is Good News.

WITH YOUR FAMILY

Find out what the Gospel reading for this Sunday will be. Discuss its message. Write a sentence or draw a picture about what God's Word says to you.

