

## SEGMENT TWELVE

**THEME: EUCHARIST – SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**OPENING PRAYER / SCRIPTURE READING:**

Luke 22: 14-20

Psalm 104: 13- 15

“Bread from the earth, and wine to gladden our hearts...so that our faces gleam with oil, and bread fortifies our hearts” Psalm 104: 15

**INSTRUCTORS’ SUMMARY STATEMENTS:**

The sacrament of the Eucharist as the “summary of our faith,” completes sacramental initiation. We believe that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” in that the Eucharist is the culmination of God’s saving actions in Jesus Christ and of our worship and union with Him who leads us to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. All the other sacraments are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.

The word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word *eucharistein* meaning “thanksgiving.” Jesus gave thanks at the Last Supper, at which he instituted the Eucharist, and then offered his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving once for all on the Cross. In the Eucharistic memorial of his sacrifice on the Cross He pours out graces of salvation on us who unite ourselves to Him as sharers in his Body and Blood to form one single body.

At the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood that perpetuates and continues His sacrifice on the Cross through the ages. He entrusts to the Church the memorial of his death and resurrection in this sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist she commemorates Christ’s Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.

At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit become Christ's Body and Blood. In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body he gave up for us on the cross, the blood he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of our sins."

- ❖ The Eucharist completes sacramental initiation. As the "repeatable sacrament of initiation" it is the "source and the summit of the Christian life." All the other sacraments are oriented toward the Eucharist for it contains Christ Himself whose presence heals, restores and forgives us. (CCC 1322 – 1327)
- ❖ The word Eucharist means "thanksgiving." The *Catechism* lists several terms to describe the Eucharist: Lord's Supper, Breaking of Bread, Eucharistic assembly, memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the Most Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, and Holy Mass. (CCC, 1328 – 1332)
- ❖ Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that He might continue to abide with us and so that we might partake of the saving mystery of his passion, death and resurrection. Jesus' command to "do this in memory of me" is faithfully carried out by the Church from the very beginning to the end of time. The Eucharist is the center of the Church's life. (CCC, 1337 – 1345)
- ❖ The *memorial* of the Eucharist is not merely a recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for us...when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover and it is made present (CCC, 1362 – 1364)
- ❖ The Eucharist is a sacrifice in that in it Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross. The Eucharistic sacrifice *represents* the sacrifice of the cross...the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice* (CCC, 1365 – 1372)
- ❖ The Eucharist is SACRIFICE, THANKSGIVING, MEMORIAL AND PRESENCE (CCC, 1356 – 1372)
- ❖ As the Paschal Banquet, the Eucharist unites us with Christ and with one another in the Body of Christ, the Church. The Eucharist makes the Church (CCC, 1382 - 1405)

- ❖ We believe that in the Eucharist Christ is present “body and blood, soul and divinity...truly, really and substantially.” By the consecration of bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of Christ’s body and of the substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change is called “transubstantiation.” (CCC1373 – 1376) At every Eucharist Christ offers himself for our nourishment and strength to unite us with Him and lead us to God in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The Mass or the “liturgy of the Eucharist” has two parts that together form “one single act of worship”: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (CCC, 1346 – 1355)

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The following questions may be used by the RCIA team to guide large or small group discussions during weekly RCIA meetings. They may also be given to the participants as a basis for personal reflection during the week.

1. What are the key events in the Passover meal of Jesus at his Last Supper? (Read Luke 22: 7-20; Matthew 26: 17-29; Mark 14: 12-25)
2. What does it mean for you to “fully, consciously and actively” participate in the Eucharist?
3. What is the connection between the Eucharist and our daily lives?

### **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES/QUOTATIONS:**

Luke 22: 7-20

Matthew 26: 17-29

Mark 14:12 – 25

John 13: 1-17, 34-35

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; Acts 2: 42-46; 20:7

“The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Jesus’ Passion scandalized them...the Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks...(Jesus) invites us to discover that only he has “the words of eternal life” and that to receive in faith the gift of the Eucharist is to receive the Lord Himself.” (CCC, 1336)

“It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God’s. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.” (CCC, 1375 from St. John Chrysostom)

“The Church and the world have great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.” Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 3

“I would like to rekindle this “Eucharistic amazement”...to contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the program which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium...To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened...Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (Lk 24:31). Pope John Paul II, *On the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church*, 6.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:**

Universal Catechism, “The Sacrament of the Eucharist,” article nos. 1322 – 1418

Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 1963

Pope John Paul II, *The Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church, Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Luke 24: 13 – 35 (Emmaus)