

INTRODUCTION



“Christ wishes to enter our lives.”

Ever since the Last Supper, the Eucharist has been the church’s most beloved treasure—the source and the summit of our life as Catholics. But when we do something Sunday after Sunday, it’s easy to let routine take over. It’s easy to take the meaning and the power and the promise of Eucharist for granted.

“Eucharist,” Pope Francis says, “is essential, because it is Christ’s chance to come to us and fill us with grace.” The U.S. bishops have made a Eucharistic Revival the center of their strategic plan, “Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ, Source of Our Hope,” so that all Catholics may regain a sense of the centrality of Eucharist in our lives.

In line with the bishops’ call to renew the church, this booklet offers thirty days of reflections on the Eucharist inspired by Pope Francis’ words, a journey of discovery to open our eyes and hearts to a new appreciation of what we do when we celebrate this greatest of mysteries.

1 | MEDICINE, NOT REWARD

We come to Eucharist not to receive a prize for being perfect but to receive the medicine and nourishment we need.

Pope Francis stunned the world early in his papacy by identifying himself first and foremost as a sinner in constant need of God's grace. In the Eucharist, he says, we have chance after chance to meet God face to face and to be healed and fed. Eucharist is not a reward for good deeds done. It is rather the nourishment our sometimes jaded and overwhelmed spirits need to regain their strength. To be filled with God's grace is our aim every time we gather. And God is always ready to meet us, feed us, and hold us close!

PONDER

Do I come to Mass consciously in need of healing?
What nourishment do I need from God today?

PRAY

God of mystery and wonder, help me to approach your table with awe and humility.

2 | WHAT DO WE GATHER FOR?

Why do we go to Sunday Mass? Are we seeking affirmation, or something more?

Pope Francis seldom speaks of “going to” Mass, but rather of “living” it. He expects us to be active participants in the unfolding liturgical action. We all come to Mass with needs, wants, and hopes — that’s a given. But when we gather in community, our own personal intentions give way to something bigger than what’s on our minds. We are asking for the grace to move beyond ourselves — grace to live our lives better, to love our families more, to be more honest and more faith-filled than when we entered — so that we may bring Christ to the world. We’re not looking for a pat on the back, but for God’s strength.

PONDER

Is there someone I can pray for at Mass that I might not have considered before?

PRAY

God of mystery and wonder, help me lay my needs aside, so that I may be open to do your will!

3 | CONSIDERING OTHERS

In the Eucharist, Christ is constantly renewing his gift of self, the gift that he gave on the cross.

Pope Francis reminds us that Jesus loved being with others. He loved his disciples, and he loved the people who gathered around him. No one escaped his attention, and he was always moved and energized by people's hopes and dreams and problems. He learned what stirred people's souls. When we're at Mass, do we really see the people around us? Do we see everyone as equally loved by God? Jesus loved us all so much that he died for us, an action we remember every time we gather. Our first task when we come together is always to consider others. We're all God's children.

PONDER

Is there someone I can get to know at church that I've never talked with before?

PRAY

God of mystery and wonder, remind me always of all the people you hold in your heart!

4 | TO SEE OR BE SEEN

*After Mass, how do I live the call to help others?
Do I try to help, or am I somewhat indifferent?
Or do I come ready to find fault and complain?*

Pope Francis has a keen eye for the real world that the church is part of. He's completely aware that some people love to gossip or find fault with everything in the church—decorations, music, homilies, the parking lot, and, most of all, other worshipers. And he uses some blunt language: “This should not happen!” Our parishes are made up of people from different economic, social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, but all are equally beloved of God. We are fed at Mass in order that we may feed others. How can we improve our response to this call?

PONDER

Do I come to church “armed” or with open arms?

PRAY

God of mystery and wonder, heal me of my impulse to judge and to find fault. Help me to see with eyes of mercy and love.

5 | FORGIVE ME, LORD, FOR I HAVE SINNED

We come to Mass because we are sinners and we want to receive God's pardon, to participate in Jesus' redemption and forgiveness.

One of the first things we do at Mass, Pope Francis reminds us, is ask for forgiveness. And this shouldn't be just words but an actual act of penitence. "We must go to Mass humbly, like sinners, and the Lord forgives us," he says. The blessing that follows is a great act of reconciliation, not just with God, but with one another. What a powerful way to begin! By acknowledging both our sinfulness and God's power to forgive, we are prepared to participate that much more fully, all of us together!

PONDER

How can I more deeply celebrate the reconciliation the Lord offers?

PRAY

God of mystery and wonder, help me to be conscious of all the ways you reach out to me!