

Forming Catholic Disciples

Session 3:
We Experience Salvation

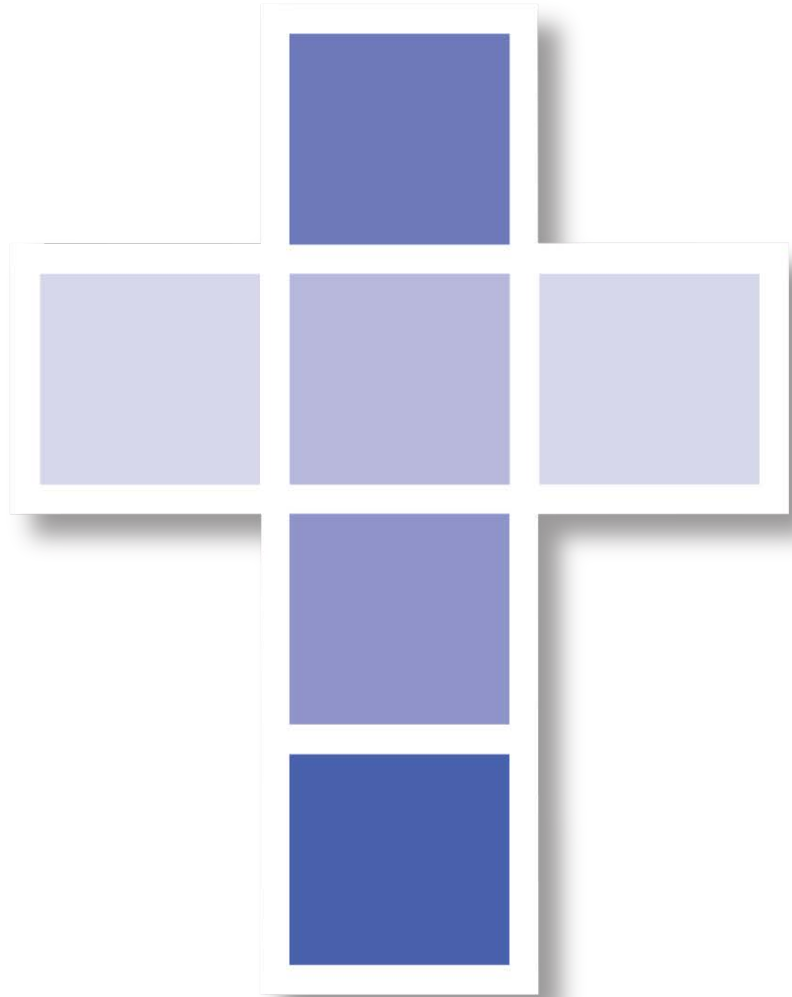


Opening Prayer

O Holy Spirit of God, take me as your disciple. Guide me, illuminate me, sanctify me. Bind my hands that they may do no evil. Cover my eyes that they may see it no more. Sanctify my heart, that evil may not dwell within me. Be my guard. Be my guide.

Wherever you lead me I will go. Whatever you forbid me, I will renounce. Whatever you command me, in your strength I will do. Lead me, then, to the fullness of your truth. Amen.

(Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, 1809-1892)



Unit 7:

Mount Calvary



Central Message of New Testament

God reached out to us in Jesus Christ, Son and perfect image of the Father; Jesus was rejected and murdered as a criminal. Through this obedient act of love, God raised Jesus from the dead and, through Jesus, continues to transform the World by the gift of the Spirit, by which, as a Church, we continue Christ's mission.



Mount Calvary

1. What led up to the crucifixion of Jesus.
2. What was involved in Jesus' death and resurrection.
3. What has come about because of Mount Calvary.



1. What Led Up

- ▶ Jesus' ministry begins as a follow-up to the mission of John the Baptism... A time of expectation and a message of hope.
- ▶ Jesus proclaims a Kingdom of God, and inaugurates it in his speech and his actions, especially those actions that revealed the power of God.
 - ▶ We call these "miracles," but John the Evangelist calls them "signs."
- ▶ Jesus teaches us complete trust in God (Sermon on the Mount).
- ▶ Jesus gathers followers and forms them into a community.
- ▶ Some religious leaders take offense at his words and actions.



1. What Led Up

- ▶ Jesus understands the opposition of others as a call to give his life in witness to the Kingdom of God.
 - ▶ “A prophet cannot die outside Jerusalem.” (Luke 13:33)
 - ▶ “The Son of Man must suffer greatly...” (Mark 8:31)
- ▶ Jesus raises people from the dead as a sign of God’s victory over death.
- ▶ He dies as an act of trust in his Father.

Can you place yourself in the hope, and opposition, that Jesus’ mission brought about in the lives of people?



2. What Happened

There are many layers to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1. It was a political murder done out of convenience.
2. It showed the ultimate conflict between good and evil, anticipating our final judgment.
3. It demonstrated God's gift of reconciliation to all of humankind.
4. It revealed the selfless love of God through Jesus' obedient emptying of himself, thereby reversing human rejection of God.



Implications for Disciples

- ▶ If Jesus death was political, what is my own reliance on politics and power to resolve things?
- ▶ When do I think of my life in terms of the ultimate choice of good and evil? Do we see ultimate questions in our everyday lives?
- ▶ If Jesus is God's free gift to humankind, am I willing to accept Jesus? And help others accept Jesus? My accepting of Jesus is to live his way of life.
- ▶ If Jesus gives himself in trust, selflessly, am I willing to make that the center of my own spiritual life?



3. What Has Developed from Calvary

- ▶ Jesus resurrection brings about a new dimension of human experience because of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on humankind.
- ▶ The Spirit bestows gifts upon the baptized and upon the Church, all flowing from the resurrection of Jesus.
- ▶ The Spirit brings about the Church as a communion and as a community of worshippers. It brings about the sacramental life of the Church.
- ▶ The Spirit, making us a community of faith in the Church, sends us forth to serve and spread the Kingdom of God.



Some Basic Questions

- ▶ Do I open myself to the Holy Spirit of Jesus, asking the Spirit to guide and protect me, to empower me to be Christ's ambassador?
- ▶ Do I involve myself in the community of Jesus—the Church—not only by worshipping, but also by being involved in the life of Christ's community? In what ways do I serve Christ's family? In what ways do I allow Christ's family to serve me?
- ▶ Do I regularly and faithfully renew the covenant of Jesus by my worship at the Eucharist? Do I avail myself of Christ's sacred food in a way that I see how it alleviates my deepest hungers? Do I have a desire to feed others even as I am fed?
- ▶ What kind of missionary am I? How do I show Christ to others by my words and actions?



Psalm 8: Recited Together

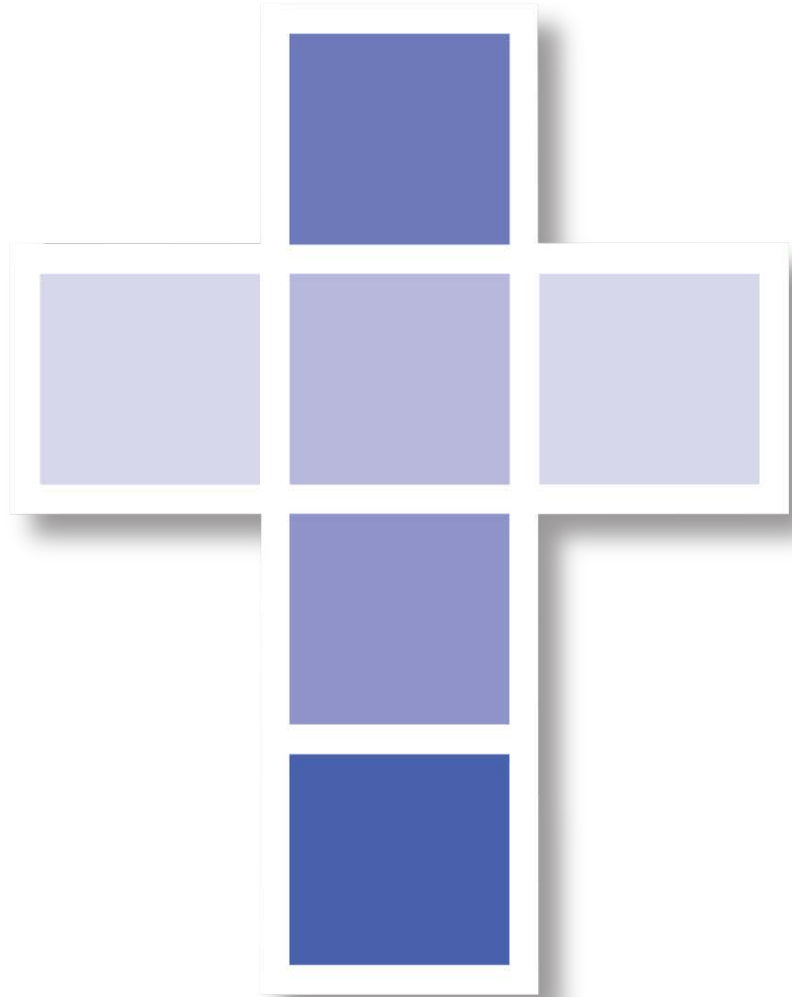
O Lord, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!

I will sing of your majesty above the heavens with the mouths of babes and infants. You have established a bulwark against your foes, to silence enemy and avenger.

When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place—What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet: All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!



Unit 8:

Prayer



Prayer and Discipleship

So, prayer has to be more than a formula, and it means something more than a vague talking to God. In fact, prayer flows from the heart of our experience of discipleship. Once we, as disciples, have a sense of relationship with God, and once we let the Scriptures deepen that relationship, then prayer becomes a way for us to enter into intimate communion with God. We find ourselves open to the deepest levels of God's presence; likewise, we sense God's ever-ready openness to us.

(p. 54)



Scripture

God's Word
Our Response

Discipleship

Relation to God
Relation to
others

Prayer

Personal Prayer
Worship/
Eucharist



Prayer

“Prayer is that deliberate action we take to address, and listen to, the divine mystery—as God becomes known in the holy Scriptures and in our centuries-old reflection on the Scriptures.”

(p. 55)

“Signs and wonders appear in what looked like an empty field. We ‘hear’ God speaking not in language, but in relationships that change and transform us: God ‘speaks’ peace, grace, hope, faith, generosity, and deeper life. We find these, miraculously(!), as realities in our hearts.”

(p. 56)

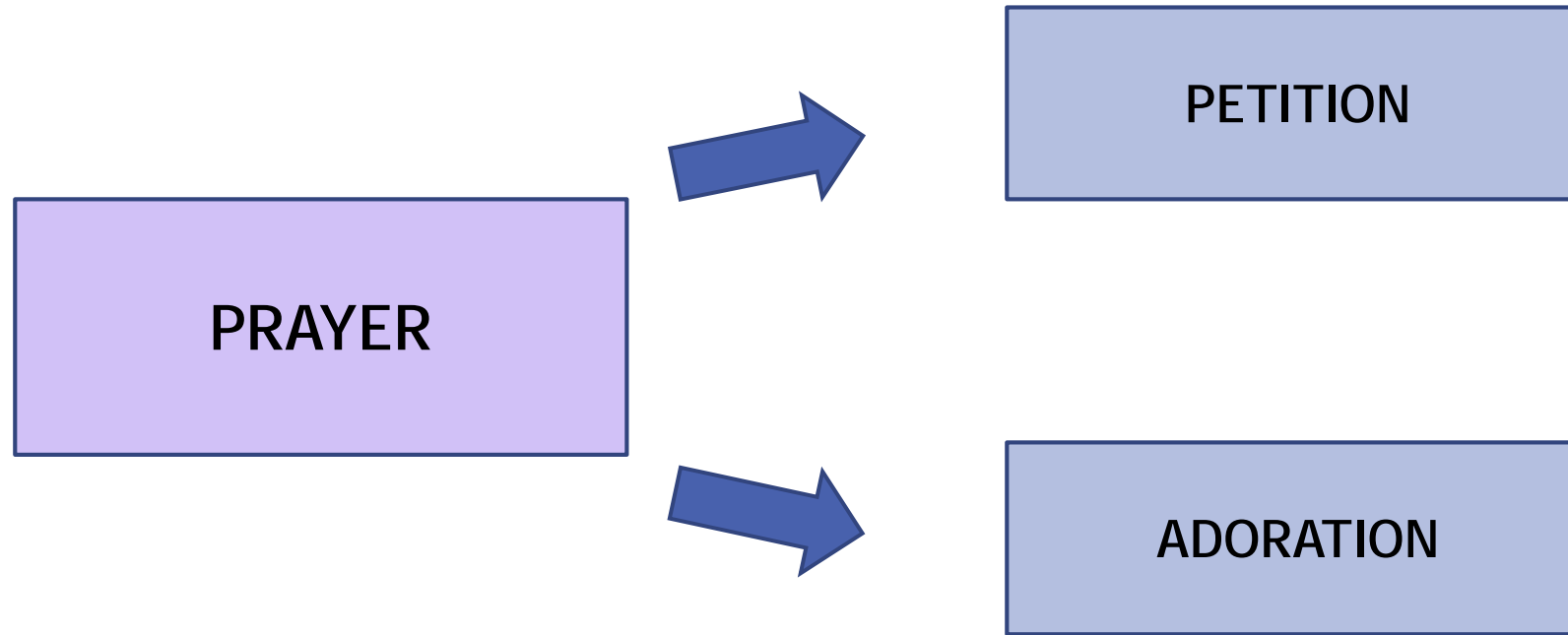


What Does Prayer Do?

- ▶ Our ordinary experiences
- ▶ Some extra-ordinary experiences in our lives
- ▶ Moments when other dimensions were opened to us
- ▶ Moments when dimensions of God and eternity seemed to be open to us
- ▶ Moments that made the limitations of everyday experience seem to be transcended



Expressions of Prayer





Personal Prayer

- ▶ All prayer is to bring me into relationship with God and allow me to express that relationship.
- ▶ **Structured prayer:** provides the skeleton on which personal sentiments, needs, thoughts, and desires can build.
 - ▶ Reciting psalms, the Rosary, using a prayer book, the Divine Mercy chaplet, etc.
- ▶ **Unstructured prayer:** provides the space for more versatile expression of my heart before God.
 - ▶ Meditation, contemplation, accompanied by music, done through some of the arts



Preferred ways of praying

- Rosary or other devotion
- Time before Blessed Sacrament
- Meditation and Contemplation
- Reading the Psalms
- Scriptural reading and reflection
- Following a prayer book



Spiritual Exercise

Go to p. 59 and use the outline for the Spiritual Exercise presented there.

- ▶ List the various kinds of prayer one does.
- ▶ What does the list tell us about how we like to pray?
- ▶ How does the list suggest ways in which we can grow in prayer?

perspectives, leading to contemplation and deeper prayer.) Other traditions of meditation have aided centuries of Catholics to experience that mental prayer in which we let God touch us deeply.

Prayer is the way relationship and encounter express themselves. It has the qualities of friendship because it reveals the shape of our relationship with God. Are we not open-ended, free, unconditional, accepting, growing, and faithful to our friends? Does not our prayer have to have these same qualities? However we pray, it should lead us to give ourselves again to God and to see how God continues to give God's love to us.

Every true disciple has prayer at the foundation of her or his life.

Our next unit will explore liturgical prayer.

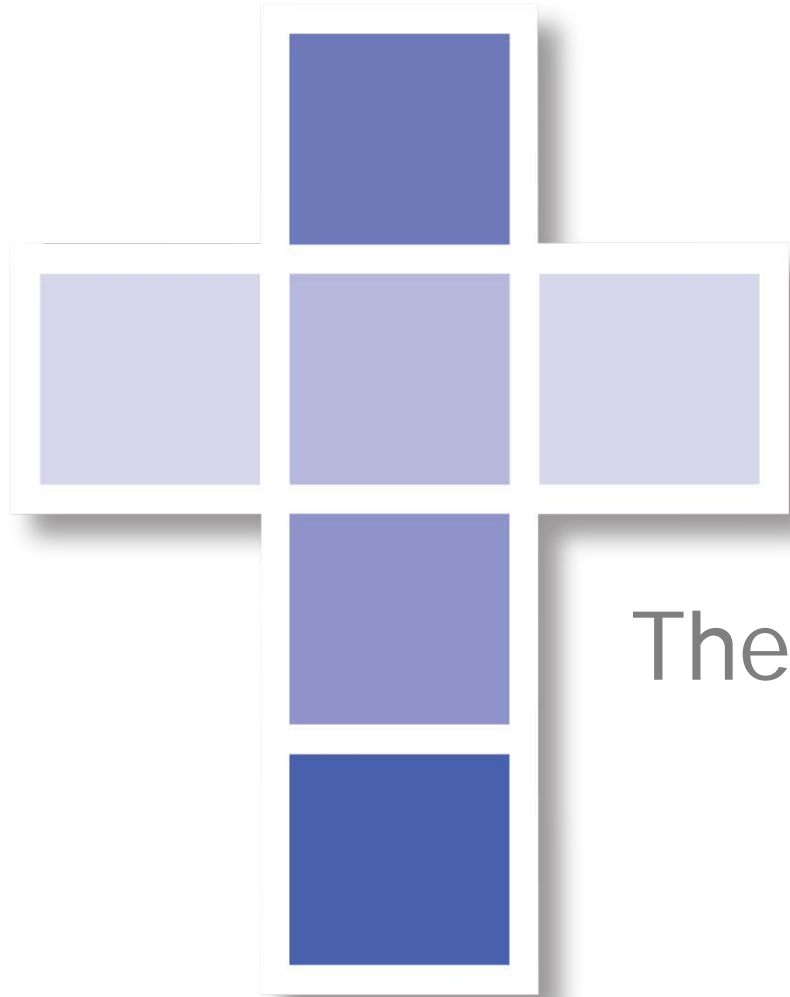


Spiritual Exercise

Make a list of the various ways in which you regularly pray, for example, reciting prayers, the Rosary, praying psalms, sitting quietly, listening to sacred music, joining with others, using a prayer book, etc.

What does your list tell you about how you like to pray?

What are the ways you think you could expand your ways of praying?



Unit 8:

The Mass and Sacraments



Sacraments

Baltimore Catechism: What is a Sacrament?

Answer: A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.

Catechism of Catholic Church

- ▶ The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. (1131)
- ▶ The Church celebrates the sacraments as a priestly community structured by the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of ordained ministers. (1132)

Sacraments

All sacraments are acts of worship in which the Church, in solemn prayer, celebrates the Paschal Mystery.

Receiving a sacrament means that the death and resurrection of Jesus become active in our lives because of the prayer of the Church in the Holy Spirit.

All sacraments involve community.



Sacred Space

We come together to create a space for our faith, to be strengthened because of the experience of the presence of Christ, in his Spirit, and the presence of our brothers and sisters. In this space we sense not only what God continues to do in our individual lives; more importantly, we sense what God is doing in the world and in the community of faith which God gathers in grace. Our hymns allow us to feel the force of the community whose lives now spill out in song. Our quiet allows us to perceive the subtly powerful work of God in all our lives.

(p. 61)



Sacrament and Conversion

- ▶ Every sacrament involves proclamation of the Word of God.
- ▶ Every proclamation of the Word of God is a call to conversion.
- ▶ Every sacrament is, then, a re-affirmation of our experience of conversion and our response to the Word.
- ▶ As we experience conversion once again, the Paschal Mystery is renewed in us. That is, we die personally (to sin, egoism, greed, power, using others) and we are renewed personally (to live Christ's life more fully) because of the work of the Spirit inside us.

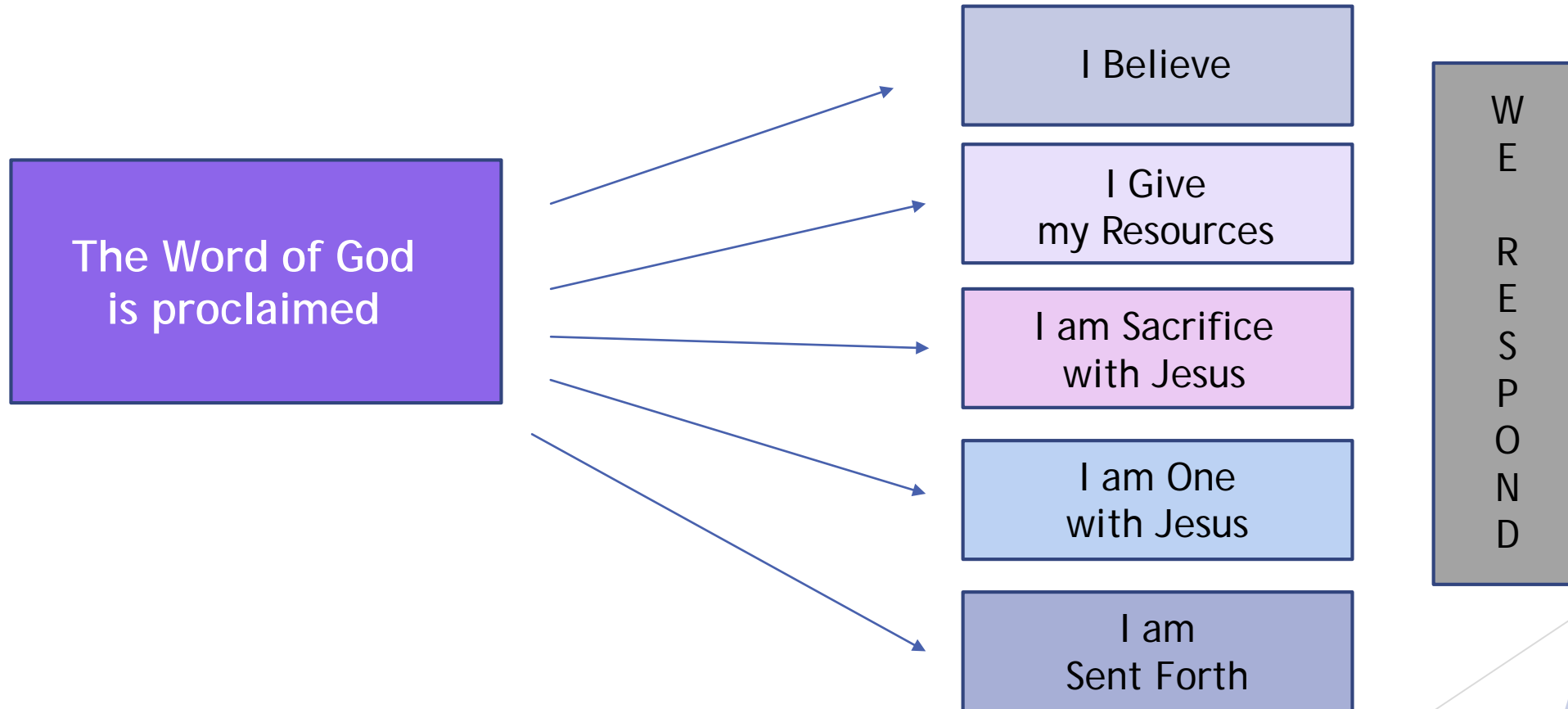


Sacraments and Conversion

Sacrament	How is conversion happening?
Baptism	
Confirmation	
Reconciliation	
Anointing	
Marriage	
Holy Orders	
Eucharist	



The Mass as Experience of Conversion





The Mass as Experience of Conversion

- "... The Word of God is read aloud as an irresistible call to hear God anew in our lives." (p. 62)
- "We recite the Creed, out loud and standing, to show we are proclaiming an important response to the Word of God." (p. 62)
- "The Presentation of the Gifts underscores one of the basic foundations of being a disciple: we have come to acknowledge that everything we have received is a... gift from God." (p. 62)
- "The Eucharistic prayer... Invites us to identify our prayer with the Prayer of Jesus the Priest." (p. 63)
- "To receive Communion is to be made one with Jesus." (p. 63)
- "The Mass sends us forth as converted disciples into the world..." (p. 63)



Eucharistic Space

If personal prayer opens up a sacred space, can we even begin to grasp the kind of space the Eucharist opens up? When believers come with daily lives and concerns, bringing what they have to the altar of Christ, all our lives and hopes, all those prayers, are now made one with the eternal prayer of Jesus. Heaven and earth touch, interchange, and share love when disciples gather for worship.

(p. 64)



Spiritual Exercise

Use p. 66 to explore those moments when we felt closest to God. Begin with a few quiet moments and then continue at home during the week ahead.

Scripture—John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen [me], you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.”



Catholic Discipleship Prayer

Lord, God, through our baptisms you have made us disciples, followers of Jesus who attend to his Word, pray and worship in his Spirit, experience love in his community of the Church, and are sent to serve by helping others as he did. Lead us, Father, more fully into your Kingdom, which Jesus came to begin and fulfill. Help us, through his Spirit, to adhere to him and bring his Good News to all we encounter. We pray this in his name. Amen.

Our Father...



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