

SESSION 5. JESUS BREAKS BREAD

Their “eyes” are opened at the breaking of the Bread.

How can the Eucharist open our eyes today?

Welcome and Introductions

The group leader invites participants to share anything noteworthy or significant in their lives since the last session.

Quiet Reflection

The group leader asks participants to think of a time when they were extremely hungry and how they felt when they could finally get something to eat.

Scripture

One of the participants reads the Scripture (Luke 24:30-32).

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”

Narrator

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[Session 5. Jesus Breaks Bread](#)

“Their eyes were opened.”

If the two disciples were restrained from seeing Jesus, what unrestrained them? It was this: seeing Jesus do a gesture they had seen many times before. In fact, the latest time they had seen this was at the Last Supper itself, the night before Jesus was murdered. If they didn’t completely understand Jesus’ words spoken then—“This is my Body which will be given up for you”— they certainly understood them better at this point. They witnessed Jesus’ execution; they went to his tomb. But now he is breaking bread with them!

One of the basic things humans do is look for familiar traits when it comes to identifying people. How they dress, what color their hair is, even how they walk. What identifies Jesus to these disciples is the numerous times Jesus turned to his Father in thanksgiving and the exuberant joy that accompanied Jesus as he ate with people.

And he ate with all kinds of people, not just his disciples or his close followers. We see him being attacked because he ate with “tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew

11:19); he ate with some of the people most despised by the Jewish community. And now he is eating with them! They were being included in the most inclusive table ever set for humankind, the table of Jesus. They recognize Jesus, clearly risen and alive, breaking bread for them.

Jesus vanishes immediately. It seems like the last thing Jesus wanted was to be gawked at as some freak of history, an aberration, a curiosity. That's one of the tricks of Easter: we see Jesus just long enough to recognize what happened, but Jesus then leaves so that his followers can carry on his life and ministry. "Were not our hearts burning within us?" Curiously, it is only looking back on their journey with Jesus that they can begin to grasp it.

Perhaps that's true with all human experience, especially religious experience: when it is happening, we only get a taste, a hint. It's only later that we smack our heads in wonder at what happened. What did grade school mean to us? And what about our childhood friends? And how much did our parents do for us that we could not see at the time? Life is so deep we cannot experience all its layers. Meeting the risen Jesus helps our travelers to get at some of those layers.

And what about us? Some of us had a lot of religious exposure as children; some of us had much less. But when do we get the chance to look back at that, to unpack it, to see how our hearts were singing even though we didn't realize it?

Perhaps that's what keeps bringing people back to the Eucharist, to Mass. Perhaps the Eucharist is our way of recognizing the Lord in our lives . . . and finally opening our eyes.

Reflection Questions

What has been your experience of Mass, particularly of receiving Holy Communion? What are the moments when your eyes seemed opened to something amazing that you had missed before?

Journaling and Integrating

If we review our lives at this point, what might be the times we judge Jesus was distinctly present to us? On the contrary, what might be the times when we felt Jesus was particularly absent? What might be a reason or situation for each of these judgments?

When Jesus Felt Present

When Jesus Felt Absent

Group Sharing

At the end of this exercise, participants share how they have experienced a sense of Jesus' presence or a sense of his absence in their lives. What are the clues people use to identify the risen Christ in their lives?

Open Questions

Participants may ask any questions that have arisen for the group leader or for the group to discuss.

Prayer

Perhaps participants have prayed or read the ancient prayer *Anima Christi* attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola. The group prays it aloud together and then reflects in quiet for a few moments.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me. Within your wounds hide me.

Do not allow me to be separated from you. From the malevolent enemy defend me.

In the hour of my death call me, and bid me come to you, that with your saints I may praise you forever and ever. Amen.

After the few moments of silence, participants share spontaneous prayers and the session concludes with praying the Our Father.

Hospitality