

Ritual Moment

Bread

Bread is and was a sign of God's taking care of and protecting his people. It was a sign of nourishment, freedom from hunger, and satisfaction of the person's hunger for God.

- ☉ One story about bread that we often hear is the story of God sending manna to the hungry Hebrew people in the desert. Read Exodus 16:19-25.
- ☉ Take a moment to imagine what it was like for the Hebrew people to receive such a gift, imagine what it might have looked like, imagine what it would have meant to them.
- ☉ Think about bread today. How central is bread in our diet? How many different forms does bread take? Name as many kinds of bread as you can.

There are as many different forms of bread as there are different cultures and people that make up the body of Christ.

Word of God

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:51)

Word to Remember: LIFE

- How is Jesus a life-giver for you—a source of nourishment for you?
- How do you stay connected to Jesus—the living bread: praying? reading scripture? serving others? participating in the Mass? being with family and friends?

Practice: Be a Nourisher of Others

Just as Christ nourishes you through the bread of Eucharist, be nourishment and sustenance to others. What nourishment do the people around you need from you this week: the gift of listening, the gift of recreating together, affirmation and support? What nourishment do you need for yourself this week?

Activity

Bake some bread – make an extra loaf to share with a neighbor.

Ritual Moment

Wine and Cup

The wine, as the symbol of Jesus' blood, is a sign of his life force poured out for us. In a traditional wine making process the harvest of grapes are poured into large vats and are crushed and stomped by bare footed dancers, rejoicing in the blessings of a fruitful harvest.

- ☉ Take a few minutes to imagine the squishing of the grapes, the sounds of splashing, the sweet smell of the grapes as they are crushed, the music and singing accompanying the dancers.

Word of God

"Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:23-25)

Word to Remember: CRUSHED

Like the grapes beneath the dancers' feet, Jesus was crushed onto the cross so that we might have life through the forgiveness of sin. He gave his life so that we might have life. As we participate in Eucharist, in consuming the body and blood of Christ, we too are called to sacrifice self so that others may have life.

Practice: Sacrifice

Sacrifice means to give up something for a greater cause. How can I put others first? What I am called to give up, to let go of so others might have a better life—toys, money, time, bad habits, etc.?

Activity

Create a place mat, decorating it with pictures or names of people who have made sacrifices for you. Add some sacrifices that you could make for others. Include a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus' sacrifice of his life.

Ritual Moment

Sign of Peace

The sign of peace is the greeting exchanged among Christians as a sign of neighborly love and unity.

- ◎ Imagine what it would be like to live in a world of peace, love, and unity. Is it possible? What would the world be like?

Word of God

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Corinthians 3:15-17)

Word to Remember: PEACE

Peace comes to you when you give up violence, prejudice, and thinking of others as enemies. Peace in the world comes from an awareness that all human beings are part of the human family.

Practice: Peaceful Language

Practice using peaceful language. Practice *not* using violent words like hate. Refrain from name calling and criticizing.

Activity

Make a list of words and actions your household will give up to create a peaceful home and help contribute to a peaceful world. Perhaps you could "fine" anyone who violates the list a quarter and collect the change for an organization that promotes peace and healing or supports victims of violence.

Ritual Moment

Our Father

"The heart of the Our Father prayer is a petition that God make the kingdom a present reality. Until then, the prayer asks for physical sustenance, reconciliation with God and neighbor, and preservation from temptation and evil."
(Richard McBrien, Catholic Encyclopedia. p.795)

- ◎ Imagine a loving parent who takes care of you, who calls forth your gifts, who supports you as you make your way through life, who helps you ward off the things that are bad for you. The Our Father is sometimes seen as Jesus' special prayer to his Dad, God the Father.

Word of God

"Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:9-15, NRSV)

Word to Remember: HOPE

The kingdom is possible. We live as best we can now, rooted in the hope of God's kingdom being within reach.

Practice: Prayer

How do you practice prayer in your life already? When do you pray with others, by yourself? Are there opportunities for prayer that you need to create, such as a prayer of thanksgiving for waking up to a new day, a prayer of petition as you head out to begin your day, table prayers, night time prayers, prayers or based on scripture readings.

Activity

Create or purchase a prayer journal for yourself and/or your family. Leave it in a prominent place, such as a small home altar or kitchen table. Use it to record prayers and reflections about prayer times.

Ritual Moment

Offertory

"The offertory rite is a 'connecting' part of the Mass in which the gifts of bread and wine are presented with the collection of money or other goods. The purpose of the presentation is simply to prepare the altar, the gifts, and the community for the offering that is to come during the Eucharistic prayer." (Richard McBrien, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p.930-31)

- ☉ What gifts would you prepare to offer to God? Time? Resources? Your personal gifts of being and doing? We offer to God what God has already given to us. When the bread and wine are offered at Mass, our lives are offered with them. When the bread and wine are placed on the altar and invited to be changed into the body and blood of Christ, our lives are placed on the altar to be changed as well.

Word of God

Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.
(1 Peter 4:10)

Word to Remember: GIFT

Your gifts equal all that you are—your personality, values, life experiences, attitudes, talents and skills, interests, beliefs, body and senses, strengths, weaknesses, passions, relationships—all of who you are! Is any of the above a surprise to you? Why or why not?

Practice: Stewardship

Stewardship is the wise use of what God gives you. It is our responsibility to share what we have been given. We are called to be stewards of our gifts, our time, our resources, and the world around us.

Activity

Make a list of all the gifts that you have given by God. If you do this as a family, make a large poster and write the words "Called and Gifted by God." Invite everyone to write words or draw pictures that represent their gifts. Hang the poster and invite family members to keep adding to it each time they discover something new about themselves or want to affirm a family member for a gift they see.

Ritual Moment

Commissioning

The commissioning part of our Eucharist is the concluding sending forth (mission) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1332)

- ☉ What impact we could have on the world if we all left Mass and went out to live our faith! What would the world be like?
- ☉ What keeps us from doing that?

Word of God

Jesus' eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus had told them to meet him. They saw him and worshiped him, but some of them doubted. Jesus came to them and said: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.
(Matthew 28:16-20)

Word to Remember: DISCIPLE

A disciple of Jesus is one who learns from Jesus and seeks to pattern his life on that of Jesus. "Discipleship is a way of life that must involve significant risk, hope, and a willingness to speak out in urgent, self-sacrificing, and countercultural ways to lift up the message and values of Jesus' good news. In baptism one becomes a Christian disciple commissioned by the Spirit of Jesus to do outreach, to share his Gospel message."
(Reynolds R. Ekstrom, *Concise Catholic Dictionary*, p.82)

Practice: RISK

Be a risk taker for God! Can you remember a time when you risked to proclaim the Good News—even against great odds?

Activity

Spend time in prayer each night, reflecting on the times during the day when you risked to live out your faith. Ask God for strength and guidance for the times when you did not feel brave enough to risk. Over time, see if your risk factor increases!