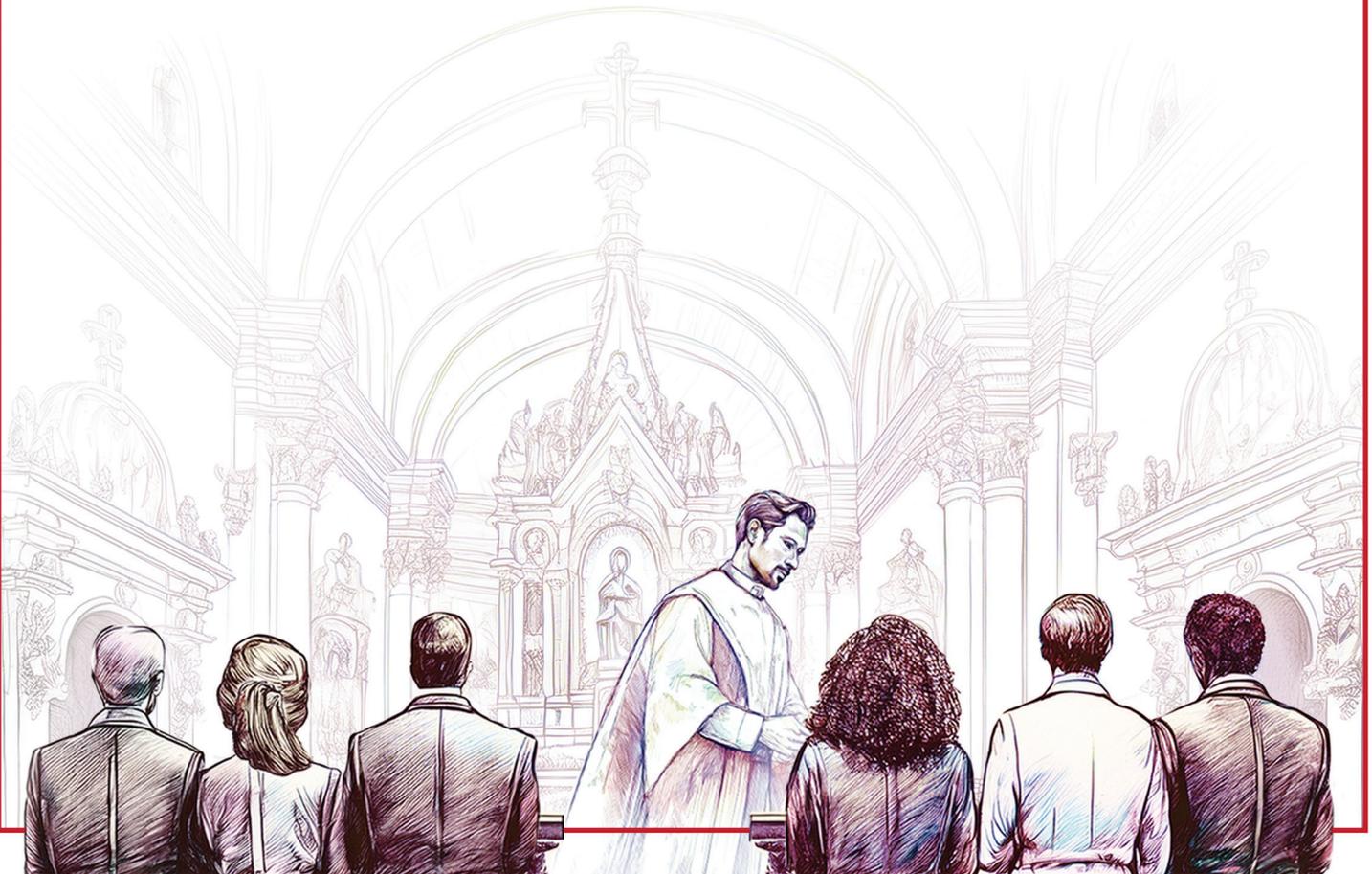




THE PERFECT PRAYER: THE MASS

LEADER GUIDE



A NOTE FROM DAN

Dear Friend,

I am beyond grateful for you—for your self-sacrifice and self-giving to God's people. All of us are called to this great adventure of evangelism and encounter. All of us are equipped by the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God in our hearts and in the hearts and minds of those around us. I am grateful for you because of your “yes” to that call to lead His people to the joy, freedom and peace that He promises to all who follow Him. Your “yes” was inspired by God and your response is and will be empowered by God.

The world—and likely your life—has never been more full of noise and distraction. The thief comes to kill your peace and destroy your ability to participate fully in the Mass, the most powerful prayer of the Church. By prayerfully engaging with *The Perfect Prayer: The Mass* video series and sharing it with others, you've taken a powerful step in fighting back.

To enter into and participate in the sacred feast of the Mass is without compare, and is worthy of anyone who desires deeper union with the Blessed Trinity. A sacramental approach to participation is necessary for full, active and conscious participation in the Mass. The disastrous liturgical confusion following the Second Vatican Council led to a lack of focus on the importance of the faithful's full, active and conscious liturgical participation in the Mass. This video series is meant to help make up for what is lacking in this understanding and to clarify the authentic intent and wisdom of the Council. We hope that any layperson or cleric who views this work, regardless of background or formation concerning the Mass, will find a beautiful path into the unfathomable beauty of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

As you seek to enter more deeply in the Church's greatest liturgical mystery and to participate more fully in its saving work, it's important to understand that our cooperation is essential. In leading others through this series, you have taken a step of faith. Take heart, as it is the Holy Spirit who will guide those entrusted to you. In this series you will walk with others and be led through the liturgy to the heavenly realities that are contained there. This encounter will take you and your group beyond the limits of intellect, into the living Person of Christ at the heart of the Mass.

The truth can change our lives. And that's the beautiful thing about the truth's transformative power. When a prayerful, open heart encounters the truth, it also encounters the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Prepare to be transformed. When we truly understand and appreciate the power of the Mass, it allows us to enter into the prayer of the sacred liturgy regardless of the externals.

Thank you for taking part in this sweeping movement in the Church back to a kind of worship that inspires wonder and that is worthy of Our Creator—in a way that begins within you.

Be assured of my prayers.

Yours in Him,



Dan Burke

Unum est Necessarium



TO SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for your yes to leading a small group with this video series. We hope this experience helps you and your group members learn how to enter into and engage fully with the Mass.

Leading a small group provides an opportunity for like-minded souls seeking the Lord to come together in prayer and conversation.

A small group provides a structured way for members to personally share their response to encountering Jesus Christ.

It is also a place where we can rend our hearts before the Lord, vulnerable yet confident that all remains confidential.

Together, we seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world, living, lighting, and leading the Way for one another and those we encounter.

We recommend beginning each session with prayer (saving prayer requests for the end).

We've also included:

- How to Share in Group
- Opening and Closing prayer
- 7 Tips for a Small Group
- 7 Virtues for Small Group Leaders

Feel free to print these for your small group members.



HOW DO WE SHARE IN A GROUP?

We follow the “A, B, C’s” of group sharing:

AUTHENTIC – Sharing our own reflections on the Gospels, in keeping with a tone that is hopeful of a life of abundance, as we claim the promises of Jesus Christ. We seek to share from the heart.

BRIEF – Sharing should remain brief and on topic in effort to facilitate an opportunity for all who wish to participate.

CHRIST-CENTERED – Keeping greetings brief and respecting the agenda to support healthy group dynamics so that exploration of Scripture or the study remains our focus. This allows for a fruitful appropriation of the Gospel message.

As we wrap up, we each share what the Lord has inspired in our hearts—that pearl of great price—that He invites us to take into the week.

We close each meeting with a prayer.



OPENING & CLOSING PRAYERS

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Leader: O God, by the light of your Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit, help us to know what is truly right and always to rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Hail Mary... Glory Be...

Leader: Virgin most prudent, Mary, Mother of the Church,

All: Pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader takes any prayer requests.

Leader prays extemporaneously or through the intention.

Our Father...

Leader: We give you thanks for all thy benefits, Almighty God, who live and reign now and forever.

All: Amen.

Leader: Virgin most prudent, Mary, Mother of the Church,

All: Pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



7 TIPS FOR A SMALL GROUP

1. **Always start your small group session in prayer.** Remember the Holy Spirit is present in your group.
2. **Observe confidentiality.** A culture of safety and trust increases vulnerability. What is said in a small group stays in the small group unless permission is given to share it elsewhere.
3. **Model openness.** Don't be afraid to share your own insights and struggles, and also be curious about hearing from others.
4. **Don't be afraid of silence.** Allow for time to reflect on the readings and time to reflect on their own insights before answering questions. Don't feel like you have the burden of keeping the conversation going. Pauses make room for the Lord to move.
5. **Everyone can participate at their comfort level.** Everyone should have the opportunity to participate, but not everyone needs to answer every question.
6. **Listen carefully and encourage and affirm each person's participation.** We are here to support and encourage one another; avoid trying to fix someone's struggles.
7. **Leave room for the Holy Spirit to lead.** Don't feel like you have to get through every single question.



7 VIRTUES FOR THE LEADER

1. **Facilitate Conversation:** Remember you are there to facilitate conversation. Avoid the temptation to fill silence with teaching or talking. Be attentive to the group and involve everyone. To make a small group work, everyone needs to participate as a listener and as a speaker. Instead of filling silences, use them as opportunities to draw others in. Make sure everyone gets an opportunity to share their experiences!
2. **Allow for Silence:** Moments of silence might feel uncomfortable, but practice not breaking the silence. This allows room for the Holy Spirit to move and for others to share authentically. The facilitator can open the group in prayer and with a question but shouldn't be the first to share. Active listening involves attentiveness to the movements of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of others. Pay attention.
3. **Gentle Invitation:** Think of yourself as Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. And in particular those who tend to be more quiet. People who are quiet often won't talk unless you care for them in a way where you open the door and say, "Hey, Mark, you know, I haven't heard from you. I'm very interested in what you have to say." Or, "Hey, Lisa, you know, in the past you've had great insights. Anything strike you in this?"
4. **Focus:** Distractions can come up in small groups. You don't want to shift majorly off topic. Stay on the course the Holy Spirit is leading you on. Stick to personal experiences and personal work (interior) and stay away from topics about what's going on in the Church or world (exterior).
5. **Patience:** Don't move too fast through the material. Avoid being overly concerned with getting through the material too quickly. Moving slowly and at a pace of prayer helps make space for authentic engagement with the material.
6. **Positivity and Charity:** Keep the tone of the small group positive. We can have a natural instinct to spiral downward into negativity together. When struggles arise, acknowledge the pain point, and then comfort, encourage, and support those who are struggling. If additional assistance is needed, reach out individually after small group is over.
7. **Surrender:** You are not alone. The Holy Spirit is the true Small Group Leader. Remember you do not have to rely on yourself to lead the small group. Ask the Lord to lead you and be open to what He's doing in your own heart as you lead together.

*“That’s what Mass is supposed to be like.
We go and stand in the radiant beauty of God that shines through material things,
we soak it up and we go reflect that light.”*

CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is your favorite part of going to Mass? Has it changed over time?

2. Is the Lord inviting you to a transformation of heart in how you experience the Mass?

3. Does reflecting on the image of Jesus as a door bring you hope for restoration and protection from worldliness?

4. How will you enter the Church door differently from here on out?

5. What stood out to you about the sign of the Cross that you didn’t know before? Are you drawn to make the sign of the Cross deeply and thoughtfully?

6. The Mass divinizes us. Do you desire to soak up the beauty of the light of Christ during Mass? Do you believe you can reflect His divine light to others?

“The opening prayer requires both individual contributions—the pleas of each member of the Mystical Body—and a leader to gather them and give voice to them to God the Father. The moment of silence following the priest’s invitation “Let us pray” is a time to offer our intentions to and desires for God.”

CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you pay attention to the opening prayer? How is it an oasis on the journey? How does it direct our attention?

2. The opening prayer is an opportunity to offer your prayers to God, through the priest. How might you cultivate the habit of offering a prayer intention during the moment of silence?

3. God wants us to be thirsty for Him. How does the opening prayer awaken you to your thirst for God?

4. How does it happen that we become transformed by the Word of God? What are some ways that stood out to you from Christopher Carsten’s teaching?

5. How might listening to the Word with the ear of your heart deepen your relationship with God, the living Word?

6. Have phrases or images caught your attention in the past at Mass during the reading? Can you open your heart to the Word more deeply in the future to see how He is speaking to you through it in your life?

*"This is what all of our jobs are to do.
To offer to God, and to give to God, and to join our hearts to the hands of the priest,
unblemished victims on the altar of our hearts."*

CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Look into your heart. What do you understand sacrifice to be?

2. What misconceptions might you have about what sacrifice is? Is it true for you that the notion of sacrifice is "buried beneath the debris of endless misunderstanding"?

3. Does thinking of sacrifice as being full of obedience, love and mercy help you understand its true meaning?

4. If you find yourself thinking you have nothing to offer God, can you offer the Lord the intentions of your heart on the altar? Can you see that this is what He truly wants?

5. How do you feel about the reflection that we, as human beings, are born to be priests? Do you want to go deeper in embracing your baptismal priestly identity?

6. Does understanding that you are the Host increase your sense of belonging to Christ and His Body?

"The dynamics of the Mass are that God changes the bread and wine, transubstantiates them. The bread and wine transfigure you by receiving them. And then you go out and transform the world."

CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. At Mass, do you usually receive Communion with the desire to be transformed? Do you want to be transformed into a living Eucharist?

2. Docility, humility and fidelity in faith are important for receiving the Eucharist fruitfully. Ask the Holy Spirit where He wants you to grow so you can receive Communion more fruitfully.

3. How does the story of the Centurion and Jesus's words to Him, "In no one in Israel have I found such faith" sit with you? Does it strike you that Jesus is amazed by his faith?

4. Are you moved to bring the light of Christ to others who are in darkness and brokenness, through receiving Him in the Eucharist? To enter the world and sanctify it?

5. Do you approach the Eucharist in a state of reverence and desire to receive His grace in this Most Holy Sacrament?

“Let’s be aware of how much we need this. We need it as sinners to encounter a Savior. We need to be redeemed by these mysteries. We need this opportunity to worship our God who is worthy of all our praise. We need this. Because we are broken. Because we are unworthy, because we are sinful. We need this. And so we gather that up.”

FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What did Fr. Boniface Hicks’s testimony of his own journey into the Mass stir up in your heart? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your heart is at in relationship to the Mass.

2. What changes do you want to make the next time you participate in the Mass? Is there an interior disposition or an element of active passivity you want to cultivate?

3. Reflect on the ways the world around you has distracted you from the depth of the Mass.

4. How can you slow down and enter more into the Mass? How can you settle your heart and make room for the Lord?

5. Are there moments in the Mass you now feel called to pay more attention to and enter into more deeply?

6. How might gathering up all of your weaknesses bring silence to your heart and help you enter the Mass with an awareness of your need to encounter Him?

“There is a logic, a divine meaning, that permeates all of time and space. All of creation. Wouldn’t it be great to have that logic operative in us? And isn’t that part of the process of divinization? When we put on the mind of Christ. When His logic becomes our logic, His meaning becomes our meaning, His mind becomes our mind, His Heart becomes our heart. How do I internalize the Word of God?”

FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is your heart open to the Word of God? Are there barriers to openness in your heart that you can invite the Lord to reveal and restore?

2. Do you listen and receive the Word with an expectation of an encounter?

3. Can you recall a time in the past where you have been moved to encounter the Lord at Mass? Have you paid attention to these interior movements?

4. Can you see how the Mass is meant to bring about a transformation in Christ? How does silence, attention and reflectiveness play a role in your own transformation?

5. Listening means paying attention, wanting to understand, and pondering. How can you listen better? How can you die to yourself when it comes to listening?

6. Do you have the heart of a child during Mass? How might you cultivate the wonder and marvel of the heart of a child?

*"He has made space in His Passion for our suffering.
For our wounds to fit in and be transformed by His love."*

FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you feel about Fr. Hicks's description of being drawn into the fiery furnace of love? How is your imagination ignited? Does this image feel uncomfortable? Are you drawn deeper into His love?

2. Incense symbolizes the transformation of wounds into worship. Do you desire this transformation?

3. As Fr. Hicks describes incense as symbolizing our wounds, are some of your own wounds coming to your awareness? Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal to you an area of woundedness in your heart that He wants to heal.

4. Can you offer those wounds on the altar next time you participate in the Mass and ask Christ to transform you with His healing fire?

5. Do you have faith that your wounds can be brought forth to encounter the charity of God and be transformed? Can you deepen your faith in the Divine Love that always wins?

*“This is the movement. His greatness and His love that draws us into an intimacy.
A contemplative silence beyond words. I just let it be done.
I let myself be loved. I receive Him, as He gives me more than I could ever deserve,
even imagine or ask for. And yet, it’s His gracious gift to me.”*

FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. The Mass is the most conducive setting to practice being aware of the presence of God. Has this been true for you?

2. Do you think deepened awareness of His presence at Mass can help you be more aware of His presence in your daily life and in prayer?

3. Have you ever been stunned to the core of your being at the moment of the consecration?

4. Have you ever been moved by the presence of Christ in adoration? Can you see adoration as extended time to capture the magnitude of the gift of the Eucharist?

5. Will you adore His presence in the Mass? Will you allow yourself to be brought into the awe and wonder of that experience?

“We can say a lot without using a lot of words, as our whole being, our whole person, our life is brought into communication with Him. Into communion with Him.”

FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. After Communion is the moment for an interior conversation with the Lord. Is this normally how you view and experience this time?

2. How might you listen with your heart after Communion in the space of this interior sharing and receiving?

3. Can you trust that this communication can be simple? That a lot can be said without many words or feelings?

4. How does the image of an embrace—of someone holding you close to their heart—help you understand the communication we can lean into after Communion?

5. Have you ever stayed and prayed after Mass? Do you feel called to?

5. What if you only had one more Mass? Does this perspective change how you approach the altar and participate in the Mass?



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