



THE PERFECT PRAYER: THE MASS

STUDY GUIDE





CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

*"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?



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"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?



CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

*"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?



CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS

"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?



FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

"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?



FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

"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?



FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

*"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?



FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

*"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?



FR. BONIFACE HICKS, OSB

"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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