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Bread of Life Course

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

**Lesson 1: Introduction**

**Seascc.org/breadoflife (other resources—link to liturgy)**

**Opening Prayer**

**Overview**

The purpose of these classes is to have some questions to ask your child. This is not meant to be an in-depth and complicated Theology course, but just to go over the basics of the Eucharist and to have some questions to ask and discuss with your child at home. Make time to sit down and ask these questions. It’s really that simple!

**Question #1) What is the central part (the core) of the Mass? What is the most important part of the Mass? What part do we have to have in order for it to be the Mass?** *(LCE page #3)*

* One way to think of it: what is the most important part of a car? *The engine.* If you don’t have an engine, you don’t have a car!
* At the Mass, the most important part is the *Consecration.*
	+ That word means “to make holy”, “to make sacred”.
	+ **What is happening at this part of the Mass? What is being made sacred?**
		- The bread and the wine. Jesus is not being made sacred and holy, because He already is! The offering of the bread and the wine is *consecrated*, blessed and made holy at this part of the Mass, the Consecration.
	+ If the Consecration does not happen, we do not have the Mass. The Consecration is never omitted, never left out, never altered.

**The Consecration in Scripture: Matthew 26: 26-28**

* + *“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to His disciples said, ‘Take and eat; this is My Body.’ Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, ‘Drink from it, a;; of you, for this is My Blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’”*
* Returning to our question: what is the core of the Mass? Read your child this verse, and ask where they have heard it before. We hear this part in the Mass, the **core part** of the Mass, the Consecration. *(LCE page #37)*
	+ **What is it that makes this change, that makes the bread and the wine sacred?** It is two actions of the priest:
		- (1) The epiclesis: calling down of the Holy Spirit.
			* The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of Blessed Trinity, is called down upon the offering.
		- (2) The words of Christ are spoken through the priest.
			* Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is being offered in the Eucharist.
			* Christ is being offered to the Father, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity.
			* So we have an offering that is given to the Father, made sacred on the altar at the Mass, through the words of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. So the Blessed Trinity, all Three Persons, are present and working in the Mass.

**Our Earliest Source for the Words of Consecration (from St. Paul)**

* **1 Corinthians 11: 23-26**
	+ *“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night He has handed over, took bread, and, after He had given thanks, broke it and said, ‘This is My Body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My Blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and deink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.”*
* Even St. Paul, who did not know Jesus during His earthly life (St. Paul’s encounter with Christ was in a miraculous vision at his conversion), said that he himself received the blessing of the Eucharist from the Lord.
	+ How? Through the Apostles, who gave it to St. Paul, and passed it along to the Church.
	+ We now, in this day and age, still pass on what was done at the very beginnings of the Christian faith, the **core** of the Mass.

**Question #2) How do we pass on this tradition, as St. Paul did? (Tradition: to hand over)** *(LCE page #80-107)*

* The Catholic Church has always been about tradition! The faith has been passed along to others from the very beginning.
* If everything else went away, and we only had one way to pass on the faith, what would be the central way in which to pass on the Faith?What is central to everything that we do? THE MASS.
* The Mass is:
	+ the greatest classroom (and Jesus is the greatest Teacher!)
	+ the central means by which we communicate the faith
	+ the highest and most sublime prayer.
	+ the source and summit of our faith (because the central mystery of our faith is the Eucharist)
* **A Few Sources from Tradition**
	+ 165 AD (died)—St. Justin Martyr
		- We do not receive these gifts as ordinary food and ordinary drink, but as the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Our flesh and blood are nourished through this change of substance (the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ) with the flesh and blood of Christ Himself in the Eucharist.
	+ 107 AD—St. Ignatius of Antioch
		- Wrote about how the members of the early Church would meet together in common, in one faith in Jesus Christ, breaking one bread, calling it the medicine for immortality, the antidote to ensure that we shall not die but live in Jesus Christ forever.
* Jesus is the new Adam, and from His side the Church was brought forth.
	+ We see on pages 83-106 that these people, these saints, were all Catholic because the Catholic Church had already been established by Jesus Christ. All the saints talk about the Eucharist, because the tradition had been passed down from Christ Himself.
	+ The saints were not interested in changing anything that was handed on to them. When we are true to the tradition, we do not want to lose the integrity of what has been passed on.

**Question #3) What is the Eucharist?**

* That’s the wrong question…we should be asking WHO is the Eucharist!
	+ The Eucharist is not a “what” but a “who”.
	+ Truth is not an idea or a philosophy, but a Person, Jesus Christ.
		- We have a personal relationship with the Truth. We receive Truth in the Eucharist.
* Definition from Fr. John Hardon:
	+ Eucharist: *the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus, Who is really and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine, in order to offer Himself in the sacrifice of Mass, and to be received as spiritual food in Holy Communion.*
	+ **Why do we call it Eucharist?** Eucharist means “thanksgiving”. It is called “thanksgiving” because that is what Jesus did. At its institution at the Last Supper, Christ gave thanks. At the Mass, we offer the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and offer thanks to the Father.
	+ **Why do we call it Holy Communion**? Holy Communion is the union of our soul and our body with the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. It is a true communion, a true intimacy.
* **Why do we go to Mass?**
	+ When two or more are gathered in the name of Christ, He is spiritually present. We have the spiritual presence of Christ in a lot of places, but what’s different about the Mass is that we have His *physical* presence. His Body is there and we can be intimate with Him.
	+ His Body is there to be offered to the Father and to be received. Why is it to be received? So our body and soul can be affected by that, through the many graces we are given through receiving Him.
		- *LCE page #42 (questions 73 and 74)*
	+ This is **Holy Communion**. We are presenting ourselves to the One Who is present to us in order to have a true and intimate relationship with Him.

**Question #4) How and why is the Eucharist different from the other Sacraments?** *(LCE page #39)*

* + All the other sacraments are pointing us to Christ or helping us grow in the grace of Christ. The Eucharist actually *is* Christ.
	+ We receive grace from Christ in the sacraments. In Communion, we receive grace Himself, Jesus Christ.

**Question #5) Where is the Body of Jesus? (Two places He is physically present)**

* (1) In Heaven (2) In the Tabernacle
* Spiritual Communion versus Physical Communion
	+ **Spiritual Communion**: made by acts of faith and love, whereby we express our desire to be united with Christ, even if we are unable to receive Him physically in Holy Communion.
	+ **Physical Communion**: achieved by reception of Holy Communion (the Eucharist)
		- Holy Communion achieves three things:
		- (1) unites our soul with Christ
		- (2) makes our mind, will, and body more like those of Christ
		- (3) removes all venial sin from our soul, and heals damages caused due to sins already forgiven.