

Year of the Eucharist

DECLARED BY THE MOST REVEREND SALVATORE R. MATANO
BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

A Study and Faith Sharing Guide for Gatherings of Staffs and Committees
Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, New York



Introduction for Leaders

This Study and Faith Sharing Guide is designed to provide an opportunity for prayer and faith sharing at the beginning of parish gatherings and meetings. It is broken up into seven sessions and can be used, for example, over the course of seven months for those gatherings/committees that meet monthly.

Each Session follows a similar outline:

Opening Prayer

This prayer contains a reading from the Roman Missal as well as a prayer from our Catholic tradition.

Review of the Home Reflection

For each Session, the initial faith sharing is based on preparation that the participants have done at home. This Home Reflection “assignment” for the next session is given at the end of each session. There is no home reflection assignment for the first session.

Further Reflection

Several Sessions also have a section which provides faith sharing regarding an aspect of the Pastoral Letter.

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

This is a simple prayer to conclude the gathering. It is also a prayer from the Roman Missal. It is prayed together. While it is a presidential prayer and during the liturgy it is the presider who proclaims it, it is helpful for the participants to experience the cadence and wording of the prayer. Giving it voice in this informal setting will help participants appreciate the prayers they hear each weekend as well as enter more fully into the Paschal Mystery.

Home Reflection

There will not be enough time to share answers to the many questions asked in this resource, let alone read through the letter. This Home Reflection allows the participants to do the reading and some of the reflection on their own.

This Study and Conversation Guide could also be used as an outline for a more in-depth class on the Eucharist and Bishop Matano’s Pastoral Letter.

It is respectfully submitted by Fr. Timothy Niven.

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Session 1: Introduction (Part 1)

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: As we begin our conversation around the Eucharist and Bishop Matano's Pastoral Letter, let us listen attentively to an excerpt from Preface II of The Most Holy Eucharist . . .

Reader:

For at the Last Supper with His Apostles, establishing for the ages to come the saving memorial of the Cross, [Jesus] offered Himself to you as the unblemished Lamb, the acceptable gift of perfect praise. Nourishing your faithful by this Sacred Mystery, you make them holy so that the human race, bounded by one world, may be enlightened by one faith and united by one bond of charity.

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: We ask our Lord Jesus Christ to be in our midst as we gather today. We ask God to care for all of the people and situations for which we are concerned or anxious about, so that we can lay down those burdens for the short time we are gathered. Placing those cares in God's hands we pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .

Initial Faith Sharing

What does the Eucharist mean to you?

Describe its importance to you.

What questions do you have about the Eucharist?

What questions do you hear most from others about the Eucharist?

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

Leader: We pray together the Prayer after Communion from the Easter Vigil:

Look upon your Church, O God,
with unfailing love and favor,
so that, renewed by the paschal mysteries,
she may come to the glory of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Home Study in Preparation for Session 2

Preface II of the Most Holy Eucharist, which is the reading in the opening prayer and is also included on Page 1 of the Pastoral Letter, is filled with language that we have heard many times and that is also worth delving into. What do each of the following phrases from the preface mean to you? How would you explain them? What questions do they bring up for you?

- The saving memorial of the cross
- Jesus as “the unblemished Lamb”
- The perfect gift of praise
- Nourish
- Sacred mysteries
- These two together: nourished by this sacred mystery
- You make them holy
- Enlightened by one faith
- United by one bond of charity

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Session 2: Introduction (Part 2)

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: Let us listen attentively to the Prayer over the Offerings from Pentecost Sunday. . .

Reader:

Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that, as promised by our Son,
the Holy Spirit may reveal to us more abundantly
the hidden mystery of this sacrifice
and graciously lead us into all truth.¹

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: As we take some time together to ponder the mystery of the Eucharist, we pray for guidance and wisdom as we pray together:

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.²

Review of Home Study

What are some of your reflections regarding your reading and study of Preface II of the Most Holy Eucharist? See the end of Session 1 for the Home Study questions.

Further Conversation

Bishop Matano begins his Pastoral Letter by bringing to mind that the Diocese of Rochester is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

- What are some of the things you know about the history of our parish?
- Who are some of the important people in our history?
- Who are some of the founding members?
- Are there families that have been here since the beginning?

¹ Rev. Paul Turner tells us that this prayer relies on two passages from Jesus' farewell discourse in John's Gospel (pg. 91). It comes from the Ambrosian Rite's Bergamo Sacramentary, which has provided several prayers for the modern Roman Church. All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010).

² A traditional Catholic prayer.

- Are there some important people whom many have forgotten about?
- What have been some of the important events in the history of our parish?
- How do you think this current “era” of our parish will be remembered by parishioners of the future?

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

Leader: We pray together the Collect from the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). . .

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
 have left us a memorial of your Passion,
 grant us, we pray,
 so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood
 that we may always experience in ourselves
 the fruits of your redemption.³

Home Study in Preparation for Session 3

Read the section of the Pastoral Letter that begins on Page 2, *Renewal Through the Liturgy*. As you read, reflect on these questions. It might be helpful if you write down some of your reflections in order to share them at your next gathering.

- What words or phrases struck you as important?
- Was there anything in the reading that you found beautiful or inspiring?
- Did anything that you read surprise you?
- What is something that you learned?
- What insight did you gain?

There are some very weighty quotes in this section. Which of them most resonates with you? Which of them seems most important to you? What is it about the quote that captured your attention?

³ Per the Rev. Paul Turner, this Collect is the only Sunday Collect addressed to Jesus Christ, as is clear from the words “your passion” and “your Body and Blood.” It is a prayer that evolved throughout the tradition of Roman missals (pg. 164).

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Session 3: Renewal Through the Liturgy

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: The Sacred Liturgy is meant to shape us, form us, and recreate us in the image of Jesus Christ. Let us take a moment in silence to remember that we are in the presence of Jesus and ask that, like all the saints before us, we will be open to the growth to which the Eucharist calls us. Let us listen attentively to this Collect from the season of Lent . . .

Reader:

Prompt our actions with your inspiration, we pray, O Lord,
and further them with your constant help,
that all we do may always begin from you
and by you be brought to completion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.¹

(Silent reflection)

Leader: We turn to you, our God, with a desire to learn, to share, and to serve. Give us the grace we need to happily do your will and we pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .

Review of Home Study

A faith sharing conversation about your reflections and insights regarding the Home Reflection given at the end of Session 2.

Further Reflection

In the last paragraph of Page 2 of his Pastoral Letter, Bishop Matano equates the cooperative work of the faithful and their priests with Eucharistic devotion that is “essential as we constantly seek to nurture, to understand more deeply and to reverence the Real Presence of Christ.” Have you considered this link before? How would you explain this link between

¹ Rev. Paul Turner did not include this prayer in his book, but he kindly responded to an email inquiry as follows: “the same prayer concludes Monday Morning Prayer in Week One of the four-week cycle in Ordinary Time. It is lovely. Its first known appearance is in the Gregorian Sacramentary (Hadrian), number 198, where it is listed among the prayers offered on Saturday of the First Week of Lent at St. Peter’s, the station church for that day. So, it dates to around the 8th century.”

the two (that is, between our cooperative participation in Christ's salvific work and Eucharistic devotion)? How does our Eucharistic devotion form/shape our ministry and service?

Prayer at the End of this Session

Leader: Let us pray together the Prayer After Communion from Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord:

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, just as through the death of your Son
you have brought us to hope for what we believe,
so by his resurrection
you may lead us to where you call.
Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.²

Home Study in Preparation for Session 4

The next section, *150 Years Sustained by Our Greatest Treasure*, spans Pages 3 and 4 of the Pastoral Letter.

- a) Read the quote from the Code of Canon Law (canon 897) in the first paragraph of Page 3.
 - a. Given what was learned and shared regarding the previous few paragraphs, how would you explain the meaning of this quote?
- b) The second paragraph of Page 3 begins the consideration of an important crisis of the Church. How would you describe the crisis that is mentioned here?
- c) Regarding the rest of this section, choose two or three of the following questions that seem most important to you and reflect on those:
 1. In what ways are you aware of the decline in the number of Catholics faithfully attending Mass each week?
 2. Has your own weekly participation in the Eucharist diminished? Why or why not?
 3. Has your weekly participation grown recently? Why or why not?
 4. How can we increase people's knowledge of the Eucharist?
 5. How can we increase people's knowledge of Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist?
 6. How can we encourage people's faith in the Eucharist?
 7. How can we encourage people's weekly participation in the Eucharist?
 8. What would inform your faith in the Eucharist or increase your participation?
 9. What would inform your neighbor's faith in the Eucharist or increase their participation?
 10. What is your understanding of the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Eucharist? To what degree are these in proper balance for you?

² Rev. Paul Turner notes that this is new to our post-Vatican II Roman Missal and that it is a combination of a prayer from the Galasian Sacramentary and a prayer that survived for many centuries that was used just before the procession with palms on Palm Sunday. All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010).

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Session 4: 150 Years Sustained by Our Greatest Treasure

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: We are journeying ever more deeply into the Paschal Mystery through our consideration of the Eucharist. Lord, continue to lead us and guide us so that we may discern and accomplish what you will. Listen attentively to this Collect from the 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time . . .

Reader:

O God, strength of those who hope in you,
graciously hear our pleas,
and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing,
grant us always the help of your grace,
that in following your commands
we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.¹

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: Knowing our deep need for your Grace, O Lord, we turn to the Mother of your Son for her intercession and help. We pray together . . .

Mother of Perpetual Help, you have been blessed and favored by God. You became not only the Mother of the Redeemer, but Mother of the redeemed as well. We come to you today as your loving children. Watch over us and take care of us. As you held the child Jesus in your loving arms, so take us in your arms. Be a Mother ready at every moment to help us. For God who is mighty has done great things for you, and God's mercy is from age to age upon those who love God. Intercede for us, dear Mother, in obtaining pardon for our sins, love for Jesus, final perseverance, and the grace always to call upon you, our Mother of Perpetual Help.

¹ Recalling John 15:5, where Jesus says the branches can do nothing apart from the vine, and Romans 8:26, where Paul says the Spirit helps us in our weakness, this Collect is from the Easter Season prayers of the Galasian Sacramentary and various other medieval sacramentaries (Rev. Paul Turner, pg. 116). All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010).

Review of Home Study

A faith sharing conversation regarding the Home Study exercise given at the end of Session 3.

Further Reflection

Regarding the third paragraph on Page 4:

Does our parish kneel at the prescribed times during the liturgy?

Do we need to change?

Can you articulate why we kneel at these times and what we are expressing?

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

Leader: Let us pray together the Prayer after Communion on Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection:

Look upon your Church, O God,
with unfailing love and favor,
so that, renewed by the paschal mysteries,
she may come to the glory of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.²

Home Study in Preparation for Session 5

Session 5 will cover the section *Age Meets Age* on Pages 4 and 5 of the Pastoral Letter.

Regarding the 5th paragraph on Page 5: this paragraph mentions liturgical music as well as the décor and furnishings of the worship space.

It will be beneficial to learn something new about this topic: what do the liturgical documents of the Church tell us about music and décor?

This home study is a bit more involved, but do not let it overwhelm you. You should find everything you need online. You might want to begin searching "Catholic documents art and furnishings" Or "Catholic documents liturgy music" Or "Environment and Art in Sacred Worship."

Your homework for our next meeting is to spend some time finding and reading one primary source and one secondary source in response to our question.

An example of a **primary source** would be a Church document, such as the Introduction in the *Rite of Baptism for Children*. (Since I have used this one, you must find a different one).

A **secondary source** could be, for example, a Wikipedia article, a blog, or a magazine article.

What do your sources say about music at Mass or about the décor of the worship space?

Give a citation for each source and one thing you learned from each source.

Be prepared to briefly present your research results to the rest of this committee.

² Rev. Paul Turner explains that this prayer is new to the Roman Missal, "having been drawn from the Ambrosian Rite's Sacramentary of Bergamo. It is a sign of the Church's desire to reflect our many traditions on the most important day of the year" (pg. 67). The Ambrosian Rite is a Catholic Rite that is used by some 5 million people, mostly in Italy. The earliest manuscripts are dated to the 9th century. It certainly is older than this. There is a considerable debate about whether this is an ancient rite from early in the history of the Church which has been made more Roman, or if it is a later rite that began in a Roman context. In either case, this is a prayer that is rich in history and tradition.

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Session 5: Age Meets Age

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: The Lord gives us the Sacred Liturgy as a way to celebrate what we receive in the Eucharist. Listen carefully to this Collect from the 6th Sunday of Easter. . .

Reader:

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion
these days of joy,
which we keep in honor of the risen Lord,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.¹

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: We pray together a traditional Act of Faith . . .

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

Review of Home Study

A faith sharing conversation about the Home Study exercise given at the end of Session 4. What are some of the sources you found and what information did you discover about music and décor in the Liturgy?

Further Sharing

Regarding the last paragraph on Page 5 of the Pastoral Letter: “we must all work together to foster constantly and everywhere devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.”

- What are some ways that our parish fosters this devotion?

¹ Per Rev. Paul Turner, this prayer as it appears today is a creation of the post-Vatican II Missal and is likely inspired by the joyful spirit of the Council. It has lines taken from several ancient texts from among Christians in different regions and times of Europe (pg. 78). All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010).

- What are some ways that our parish could further foster this devotion?

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

Leader: Let us pray together this Prayer after Communion from The Ascension of the Lord (Mass during the day). . .

Almighty ever-living God,
 who allow those on earth to celebrate divine mysteries,
 grant, we pray,
 that Christian hope may draw us onward
 to where our nature is united with you.
 Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.²

Home Study in Preparation for Session 6

Sessions 6 and 7 will cover the five responsibilities in the section *Our Responsibilities*, found on Pages 6 and 7 of the Pastoral Letter.

Session 6 will cover the first two responsibilities.

Please read the sections about the first two responsibilities on Pages 6 and 7 and reflect on the following questions.

It may help to write down some of your responses in order to share them.

Faithfully attending Holy Mass every weekend

What was your experience of this responsibility as you were growing up? As a young adult? Currently?

What did you learn from this section? What did you find beautiful? What was notable? What questions were raised?

Being careful to remain nonjudgmental (as our Bishop cautions us in the third paragraph on Page 6), how do our parishioners, on the whole, do in this regard?

What are some concrete, constructive steps that our parish can take to increase the number of parishioners who faithfully attend Holy Mass every weekend?

The poor must be among us as we seek to assist them, since spiritual nourishment is also essential to their lives.

What did you learn from this section? What did you find beautiful? What was notable? What questions were raised?

As you look around our parish on any given weekend, how well is our parish fulfilling this responsibility?

Thinking about poverty in its usual sense, that is, a deprivation of money, how well are we serving and how well have we included them in our worship?

Are there other poverties that are especially present among our parishioners? For example: those who are sick or ill; those weakened by age; the lonely; those grieving; etc.

For those poverties that you identify among our parishioners, how well are we serving those with this need, and are these individuals present among us as we worship?

² This prayer is quite dense, says Rev. Paul Turner, because it combines two different prayers from the Verona Sacramentary: one for the martyrdom of St. Stephen and the other for the day before Pentecost. It is a composition for the post-Vatican II Missal.

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Session 6: Our Responsibilities (Part 1)

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: Let us listen attentively to the Collect from the Votive Mass of the Most Holy Eucharist . . .

Reader:

O God, who have accomplished the work of human redemption
through the Paschal Mystery of your Only Begotten Son,
graciously grant that we, who confidently proclaim,
under sacramental signs,
the Death and Resurrection of Christ,
may experience continued increase of your saving grace.

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: Having learned about the Eucharist, we are now sharing about the responsibilities the Eucharist places on believers. May we willingly take on these responsibilities and gain God's grace and direction as we pray: Our Father . . .

Review of Home Study

A faith sharing conversation about the Home Study exercise given at the end of Session 5. What are your reflections on the first two responsibilities?

Prayer at the Conclusion of this Gathering

Leader: Let us pray together the Prayer after Communion from the Solemnity of All Saints. . .

As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy
and wonderful in all your Saints,
we implore your grace,
so that, coming to perfect holiness
 in the fullness of your love,
we may pass from this pilgrim table
to the banquet of our heavenly homeland.
Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.¹

Home Study in Preparation for Session 7

Session 7 will cover the third, fourth, and fifth responsibilities that follow from our faith in the Eucharist. Please complete your reading of the section *Our Responsibilities* on Pages 6 and 7 of the Pastoral Letter.

It will help the conversation if you were to write down some of your reflections and bring them to the next gathering.

We approach the Holy Eucharist properly disposed

What did you learn from this section? What did you find beautiful? What was notable? What questions were raised? What role does the Sacrament of Penance play in this proper disposition? How well is this Sacrament used by most parishioners? How aware are our parishioners of the need for an examination of conscience before reception of Holy Communion? How well do we provide an opportunity for this? What are some concrete and positive steps our parish can take to encourage more parishioners to be properly disposed?

To encourage and support parents

In this section, our Bishop asks that we make the Holy Eucharist central in our actions, worship, and catechesis. How well are we already doing this? In what ways might we improve?

He also asks for greater availability of educational and devotional opportunities for children and adults. What are we already doing in this parish and in this area? What are some concrete steps we can take to create greater availability?

Eucharistic Devotion outside of Mass

See if you can find the answer to the following questions in reference texts (such as the *Catechism*) or online:

- What is involved in Eucharistic Devotion outside of Mass? What are its components?
- What is the difference between *Adoration* and *Exposition*? What opportunities for these devotions are there in this parish and in this area? What are some concrete steps we can take to provide or enhance these opportunities?

¹ This prayer, according to Rev. Paul Turner, was added to the Roman Missal after Vatican II and is from the Paris Missal, which dates from the 12th Century. All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010).

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Session 7: Our Responsibilities (Part 2)

Opening Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Leader: We listen attentively to this reading from our Roman Missal, the Prayer after Communion for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Reader:

Graciously raise up, O Lord,
those you renew with this Sacrament,
that we may come to possess your redemption
both in mystery and in the manner of our life.
Through Christ our Lord.¹

(Silent Reflection)

Leader: Longing for all that the Holy Spirit can bring us, desiring that all our service produce good fruits, we pray together a prayer for the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Eternal Love of the Father and the Son,
kindly bestow on us
the fruit of charity,
that we may be united to You by Divine love;
the fruit of joy,
that we may be filled with holy consolation;
the fruit of peace,
that we may enjoy tranquility of soul;

¹ This prayer originates in the Galasian Sacramentary's texts for Ordinary Time Sundays, as noted by the Rev. Paul Turner (pg. 142). All information in these sessions attributed to Rev. Paul Turner is found in *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal* (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2010). According to Wikipedia, the Galasian Sacramentary is the second oldest liturgical book for which we have manuscripts. It gives the prayers and order of the Mass. It reflects the bringing together of liturgical practices of the Church in the east and west of Europe and is dated to the mid-8th century. It bears the name of Pope Galasius I because of the traditional view that he was responsible for many of the liturgical reforms and adaptations that are included in this book, though he died some 250 years before it was published. This illustrates the fact that this Sacramentary, or any liturgical book, does not "create" the liturgy; rather it brings together and unites centuries of tradition and practice.

and the fruit of patience,
that we may endure humbly
everything that may be opposed to our own desires.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Review of the Home Study

A faith sharing conversation about the Home Study exercise found at the end of Session 6. What are some of your reflections about each of the responsibilities discussed in the Pastoral Letter? See Home Reflection at the end of Session 6.

Further Reflection

What are some of the most important things that you have learned during our study of Bishop Matano's Pastoral Letter? What are some of the most important things that you heard other people say?
What questions do you still want to ask?

Prayer at the End of this Session

As we conclude our faith sharing about Bishop Matano's Pastoral Letter, it is appropriate for us to pray together the last prayer found in the Roman Missal: Hail Mary . . .

Home Study in Preparation for our Next Meeting

Having completed our study of Bishop Matano's Pastoral Letter, what would you like to study next? Are there questions you have about the Eucharist that you would still like to explore? Would you want to explore ways to bring to your parish an even sharper focus on the Eucharist? An even deeper understanding of the Eucharist? An even more profound experience of the Eucharist? If so, what are some of the ways that this might be accomplished?