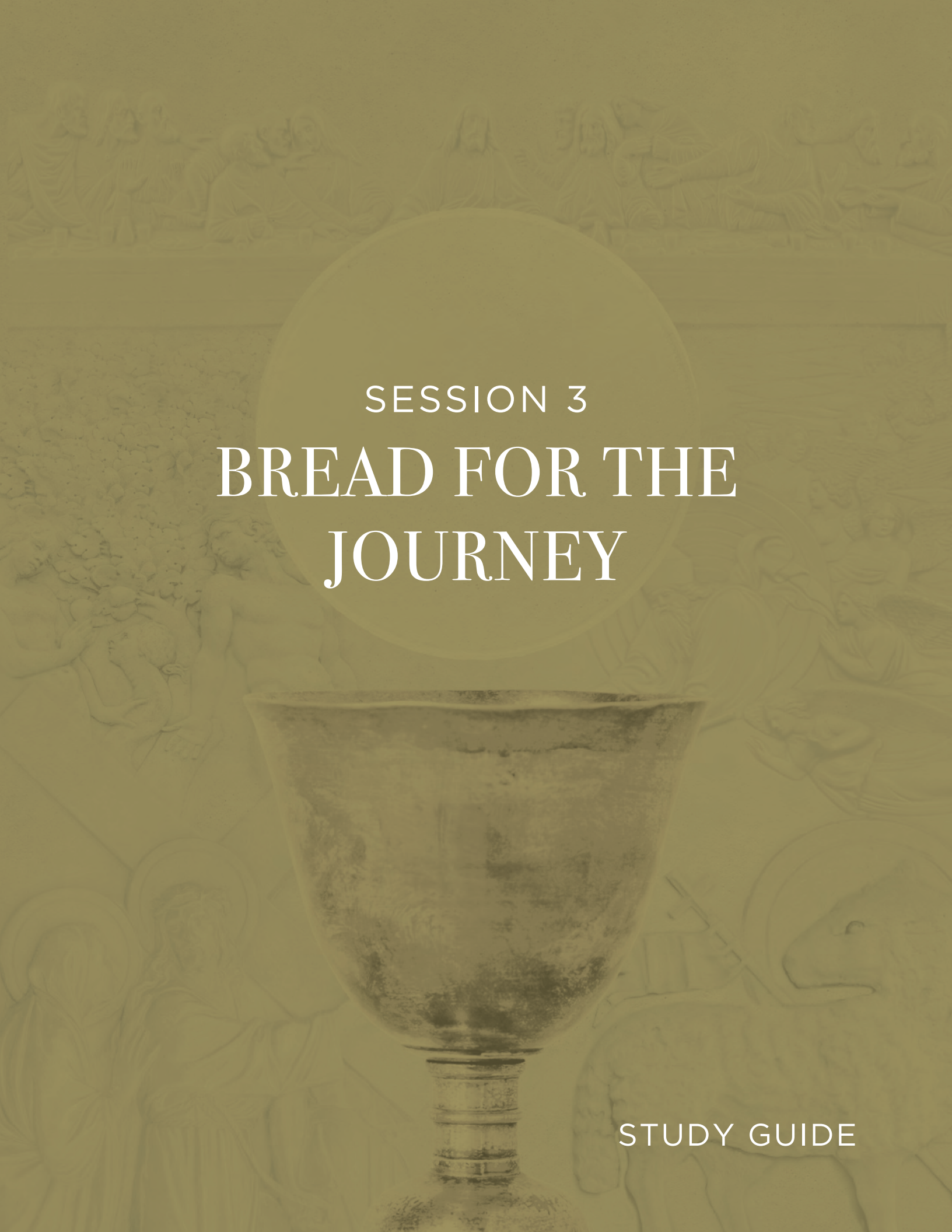
SESSION 3

BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY



STUDY GUIDE

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NOTES

SESSION 3

BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY

OPENING PRAYER

Stay with me, Lord,
for it is necessary to have You present so that I do not forget You.
You know how easily I abandon You.
Stay with me, Lord,
because I am weak and I need Your strength, that I may not fall so often.
Stay with me, Lord,
for You are my life, and without You, I am without fervor.
Stay with me, Lord,
for You are my light, and without You, I am in darkness.
Stay with me Lord,
to show me Your will.
Stay with me, Lord,
so that I hear Your voice and follow You.
Stay with me, Lord,
for I desire to love You very much, and always to be in Your company.
Stay with me, Lord,
if You wish me to be faithful to You.

Let me recognize You as Your disciples did at the breaking of the bread,
so that the Eucharistic Communion be the light which disperses the darkness,
the force which sustains me, the unique joy of my heart.

Stay with me, Lord
for it is You alone I look for, Your Love, Your Grace, Your Will, Your Heart,
Your Spirit, because I love You and ask no other reward
but to love you more and more.

Amen.

—adapted from the *Prayer of Saint Padre Pio After Communion*

INTRODUCTION

Food is one of our most basic needs. We can't live for long without it, and when we are in need of it, our bodies let us know with a hunger that can be nearly impossible to ignore. As indispensable as material food is to our physical life, the Eucharist is even more vital to our spiritual life. God saved the Israelites from starvation in the wilderness by providing manna for them. We need the Eucharist even more than the Israelites needed the manna. It sustains and strengthens us for our life's journey. It is, as Monsignor Ronald Knox once said, "the day's food for the day's march."

> *"If Christ did not want to dismiss the Jews without food in the desert for fear that they would collapse on the way, it was to teach us that it is dangerous to try to get to heaven without the Bread of Heaven."* — Saint Jerome

CONNECT

Have you ever experienced a time when you were traveling or on a journey and were really hungry and tired? What was the experience like?

What is your favorite part of the Mass? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER

OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS

By coming together with the community of the faithful and participating in the Mass, we give public witness that we belong to Jesus and to his Body, the Church. It is also a public testimony of our faith in God and our hope of salvation.

But sometimes it might seem like the priest and deacon—and perhaps the choir, lectors, and altar servers—are the ones "doing" the Mass, and the rest of us are just the audience. But the *Catechism* tells us that "it is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates" the sacramental liturgy (CCC 1140). We have different roles to play, but we are all called to participate in a profound way at each and every Mass.

It is Christ himself who presides over the Eucharist; the priest is his visible representative, acting *in persona Christi capitis* (in the Person of Christ the head) and not by his own authority or power. The Eucharistic celebration is the highest purpose of the ordained priesthood.

The various roles fulfilled by the laity in the Mass—providing music, reading from the Scriptures, serving at the altar, distributing Communion, etc.—are important contributions to the liturgy, but none of them is the primary way in which we are called to participate in the celebration of the liturgy.

The laity participates in the Mass by actively listening to the readings and liturgical prayers and by reciting the responses of the congregation, but most of all by consciously and intentionally uniting themselves to the sacrifice of Christ. We have seen how the Eucharist is a memorial—the re-presentation—of Jesus's saving sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus doesn't offer this sacrifice so that we don't have to, but rather he offers it in order to draw us into his sacrifice so that we can make an offering to the Father with him.

In the Eucharist we participate in Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross, in which he offers not only himself but all of creation to the Father. United to Christ in this sacrament, we offer this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father as well. In the Eucharist we give thanks to God for his many gifts—especially the gifts of creation, redemption, and sanctification. We also give all praise, honor, and glory to God on behalf of ourselves and all of creation. We make an offering of ourselves, united to the perfect offering of Christ, and we offer this sacrifice to the Father. This self-offering is the heart of our participation in the Mass.

Our participation in the liturgy is so important that we are required to attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (unless we have a serious reason we cannot attend, such as illness). The Church also requires us to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, but she encourages us to receive the sacrament at every Mass at which we are properly disposed and prepared to do so.

VIDEO

I. Food for the journey

- **A.** God gives the Israelites manna for their journey in the wilderness
- **B.** The Eucharist sustains us on our spiritual journey
- **C.** The Eucharist is a foretaste of Heaven
  1. We receive Christ, who is our ultimate goal
  2. We are brought into communion with God and with everyone else who is in communion with God
  3. In the Mass, we worship God together with all the angels and saints in Heaven

II. The Mass

- **A.** Liturgy of the Word
  1. We encounter God in Scripture
  2. We respond in faith through the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful
- **B.** Liturgy of the Eucharist
  1. The sacrifice of Jesus is made present in the Eucharist
  2. The climax of the liturgy is when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion
- **C.** Story of Emmaus
  1. Liturgy of the Word—Jesus interprets the Scriptures for the disciples
  2. Liturgy of the Eucharist—Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives the bread
- **D.** In the Mass, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus are made present

III. Rules for receiving the Eucharist

- **A.** Never receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin (see 1 Corinthians 11:27–29)
- **B.** Fast from food and drink (except water or medicine) for at least one hour before receiving
- **C.** Receive at least once a year

IV. Our participation in Mass

- **A.** Colossians 1:24—we participate in Christ's sacrifice
- **B.** Intentionally giving ourselves back to God when we receive the Eucharist
- **C.** The Eucharist is our offering of thanksgiving to God

V. Eucharistic adoration

- **A.** "I look at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me"
- **B.** Jesus is present in every Tabernacle, waiting for us

VI. Sent forth

- **A.** *Ite, missa est*—we are sent out from Mass with a purpose
- **B.** The world needs us to share what we have received

DISCUSS

1. **What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an "aha" moment for you?**

2. **How do we participate in the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist? What are some practical ways to be intentional about participating in this way?**

3. **At the end of Mass, we are dismissed with a purpose. What is our mission when we leave Mass? What can we do to live out this mission?**

> *"Know, O Christian, that the Mass is the holiest act of religion. You cannot do anything to glorify God more, nor profit your soul more, than by devoutly assisting at it, and assisting as often as possible."* —Saint Peter Julian Eymard

DIGGING DEEPER

MATTER, FORM, AND MINISTER

Every sacrament has essential elements that are necessary for the sacrament to be valid. The matter of a sacrament is the tangible part—the material used and the action performed. The form is the spoken words that go along with the matter. And a sacrament is only valid if it is administered by someone with the authority to do so.

In the Eucharist, the matter is bread made from wheat flour and wine made from grapes (in which a little water has been mixed). Once consecrated they are referred to as the two Eucharistic species. In the Latin Church the bread is unleavened; in the Eastern Churches it is leavened.

The form of the Eucharist is the words of Consecration ("This is my body," and "This is the chalice of my blood"), which are found in the Eucharistic Prayer within the Mass. This is the account of what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper.

The minister of the Eucharist is a validly ordained bishop or priest, acting under the authority of the bishop. Only a bishop or priest can offer the prayers of the Mass and preside over the Sacrament.

When the priest takes bread and wine and with the intent to consecrate them speaks the words of Consecration, the bread and the wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD'S MERCY

Read the account of the manna from Heaven in Exodus.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not....I have heard the murmurings of the sons of Israel; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

—Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15

Imagine that you are one of the Israelites. How do you feel at the beginning of the story? How do you feel when God sends the manna?

The Israelites call the bread from Heaven *manna*, which comes from the Hebrew phrase for "What is it?" It is something new and miraculous, which no one has ever seen before. But after forty years of receiving it, the novelty wears off and the Israelites become so unappreciative that they complain, "We loathe this worthless food" (Numbers 21:5).

The manna is a prefiguration of the Eucharist. The fulfillment is always greater than what came before—as beautiful and amazing as the miracle of the manna was, the Eucharist is still greater. The Eucharist is humble and familiar. The miracle is veiled from our senses, and so it can be easy to take it for granted and miss its incredible sweetness, as the Israelites came to do with the manna.

Consider the following meditation on the manna from the Wisdom of Solomon. This book, written in the second century BC to encourage the Jews living in Alexandria to remain faithful to God's covenant, offers a profound reflection on this miracle.

Instead of [destruction] you gave your people the food of angels,
and without their toil you supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat,
providing every pleasure and suited to every taste.
For your sustenance manifested your sweetness toward your children;
and the bread, ministering to the desire of the one who took it,
was changed to suit every one's liking.

—Wisdom of Solomon 16:20–21

What stands out to you in the passage? How does it apply to the Eucharist even more than to the manna?

The manna is the bread for the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land. The Eucharist is our bread for the journey to Heaven—and so one of its names is *viaticum*, Latin for "provision for the journey." This name has come to be used exclusively for the Eucharist when it is given to someone who is near death. *Viaticum* is provision for the final step of the journey to our Promised Land, the "seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection" (CCC 1524). On every step of the journey, the Eucharist is our daily bread, our sustenance, and our source of every grace and blessing.

Take some time in prayer to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist, and to ask him to help you grow in your love for this sacrament.

"O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I would like to be filled with love for You; keep me closely united with You, may my heart be near to Yours."

—Pope Saint John XXIII

DIGGING DEEPER

WHY MUST WE RECEIVE THE FORGIVENESS OF MORTAL SINS IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BEFORE RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST?

Catholics often get asked why we need to confess our sins to a priest instead of going directly to God. While God can certainly forgive us directly, Jesus makes it clear that he wants to forgive our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (see John 20:21–23).

The Church does not require us to confess our venial sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation—although it's very good for us to do so—but the Sacrament is necessary for the forgiveness of mortal sins.

A mortal sin is **1)** a grave sin (specified by the Ten Commandments) that is **2)** committed with full knowledge and **3)** complete consent. Any grave sin committed without full knowledge or deliberate consent is still a venial sin.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to face the reality of our sins and—if we truly repent—to know with assurance that God has forgiven us. Then we are ready to show proper reverence as we enter into intimate union with our God in Holy Communion.

DIGGING DEEPER

SAINT JUSTIN MARTYR AND THE MASS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The Mass has been essentially the same from the very earliest days of the Church until the present time. Saint Justin Martyr wrote to the Roman emperor Antoninus around the year AD 155 to explain some of the practices of the Christians. This is what he said about the Mass:

"And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray for ourselves and for... all others in every place....Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss.

There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen.

And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

And this food is called among us Eucharistia of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; But . . . we [have] been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word . . . is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

—Justin Martyr, *First Apology,* excerpts from 65-67

"O Jesus, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, my only love and mercy, I commend to You all the needs of my body and soul. You can help me, because You are Mercy itself. In You lies all my hope." —Saint Faustina

WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER

Very Bread, Good Shepherd, tend us,
Jesus, of thy love befriend us,
Thou refresh us, thou defend us,
Thine eternal goodness send us
In the land of life to see:

Thou who all things canst and knowest,
Who on earth such food bestowest,
Grant us with thy saints, though lowest,
Where the heav'nly feast thou showest,
Fellow heirs and guests to be.
Amen.

—from *Lauda Sion* by Saint Thomas Aquinas

FOR FURTHER READING

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 817–22 ("Wounds to unity"), 1140–44 ("The celebrants of the sacramental liturgy"), 1345–55 ("The Liturgical Celebration of the Eucharist"), 1359–61 ("Thanksgiving and praise to the Father"), 1373–81 ("The presence of Christ by the power of his word and the Holy Spirit"), 1384–90 ("'Take this and eat it, all of you': communion"), 1422–84 ("The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation"), 1524–25 ("Viaticum, the Last Sacrament of the Christian"), 1854–64 ("The Gravity of Sin: Mortal and Venial Sin"), 2041–43 ("The Precepts of the Church"), 2180-83 ("The Sunday obligation")

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Scott Hahn and Regis J. Flaherty, editors, *Catholic for a Reason III: Scripture and the mystery of the Mass* (Emmaus Road Publishing: 2004)

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