
THE ASCENT

An Edge Night on the Mass

LEADER OVERVIEW

The celebration of Mass gathers together all the faithful in one place with Christ as the head, presiding invisibly over the Eucharistic celebration. Jesus is truly present at the Mass in various ways; one of those ways is in the priest, who represents Him and acts in the person of Christ when he “presides over the assembly, speaks after the readings, receives the offerings, and says the Eucharistic prayer” (CCC 1348). While the priest is the one who presides over the Mass, everyone has a role to play — the readers, the altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, and all the people who are participating through their responses throughout the Mass.

After all the faithful have gathered and the opening prayers and preparations have been made, the Liturgy of the Word begins. The Liturgy of the Word includes readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the letters from the Apostles in the New Testament, and the Gospel. After the Gospel proclamation, the priest exhorts all the faithful through his homily to put into practice all that they have heard in the Word of God. It is also important to remember that we have dialogue with God when we hear His voice in the Sacred Scripture. For this reason it is important that we are both attentive to the readings during Mass and prayerful when we listen. The Psalms both nourish and reveal the prayers of the people of God, and they continue to teach us how to pray as they commemorate the promises that God has kept. The Psalms were prayed by Christ and fulfilled in Him, and they remain an essential part of the the Liturgy of the Word and the prayer of the Church. (CCC 1349, 2653-2654)

Then comes the intercessions for all men, according to the Apostle’s who urged “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and all who are in high positions” (CCC 1349, 1 Timothy 2:1-2).

After the intercessions, the Mass moves into the time for the offertory and the collection. During the offertory, we give thanks to the Lord for the bread and wine and the work of human hands. The collection, where we give to the Church through our tithes, allows us to give back in some way for all that we have received. The bread and the wine are brought forward in a procession to be offered by the priest in the Eucharistic sacrifice, during which they become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. From the very beginning of the Church, the faithful Christians have also brought, along with the bread and wine, gifts to share with those in need. This is continued in the collection each Sunday, during which we have an opportunity to support our parish and various efforts in our own tithing and sharing of all our goods with the Body of Christ. All of this leads up to the the great feast, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is covered in full in the next Edge Night. (CCC 1350-1351)

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EDGE NIGHT OVERVIEW

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is to break open the first half of the Mass with an emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word and how it prepares our hearts to be nourished by the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

SUMMARY

This Edge Night begins with a Gather game where the youth will be challenged to create their own mountain and present it to the rest of the group with an explanation of the different elements of their mountain. The Proclaim walks the youth through what happens during the first half of the Mass, in particular the Liturgy of the Word. The Break gives the youth an opportunity to discuss what they have learned and then to write down their own offerings to God. During the Send, the youth will have an opportunity to learn more about music at Mass and then to put their own offerings of self into a basket as they sing praise and worship songs. The Edge Night ends with a final song and a prayer of thanksgiving.

MAIN IDEAS

- When we gather for Mass we are brought together as a community and our hearts are prepared to enter into the great mystery of the liturgy. (CCC 1348)
- The Liturgy of the Word breaks open the Word of God and, through attentive listening and prayer, we are able to hear the voice of God and learn more about Him and what He calls us to do in our Christian life. (CCC 1349)
- During the Mass we also have the opportunity to pray for those in need, to give of our goods for those in need, and to bring our offerings along with the bread and wine to the priest to prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. (CCC 1350-1351)

ENVIRONMENT

Use the same base environment from the beginning of this Edge semester — the main image projected at the front of the room and various mountain posters around the room; but this time, have the campsite packed up with a backpack and supplies on the ground ready to go.



MEDIA

“Sing Alleluia,” Josh Blakesley Band (*Even This*, 2015, Josh Blakesley)

Edge Video Support November 2017: “Forgetting Something?: Fish” (lifeteen.com)

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EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

GATHER

Edge Night Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth, introduce any youth there for the first time, and begin in prayer. Play the video “Forgetting Something?: Fish” from the *Media Suggestions* as a fun way to draw the youth’s attention to the importance of Mass. Give a brief overview of the topic of the Edge Night using the following as an example:

This whole semester we have been talking about what liturgy is, our church building, what each thing in the sanctuary means, and how to properly prepare for Mass. Now we are ready for the ascent! We are ready to begin our climb to the highest of heights and we will begin by learning about the Mass. This week at Edge we will break down the first half of the Mass step-by-step so that we are not just going through the motions on Sunday but can really enter in and pray.

Climbers Expo (20 min)

Break the youth into their small groups for this activity.

1. Give each group the same amount of mini marshmallows, toothpicks, poster board, and markers.
2. Each small group will have five minutes to construct a unique mountain out of the mini marshmallows and toothpicks.
3. After the group has created their marshmallow mountain, they have to make a poster to advertise their mountain to climbers. This poster should have their mountain name, the different challenging elements unique to this mountain, and what a climber can expect when he or she climbs this mountain.
4. After all the youth have completed both of these elements, invite each small group up, one at a time, to tell the large group about their mountain. Encourage them to present it like a climbing expo and to point out where the different elements are on their marshmallow and toothpick rendition of the mountain as they talk about them.
5. Have prizes for the small groups with the most creative mountain name, tallest toothpick mountain, most unique mountain climbing elements, etc.



SUGGESTIONS

If you have a large group of youth, consider only having a few share about their mountains. If you have a limited budget, have the youth just make the posters rather than the posters and the marshmallow mountains.

PROCLAIM

“The Ascent” Teaching (10 min)

This teaching can be found on pages 90 to 92.

BREAK

The Road to Emmaus (10 min)

Break the youth into small groups and read the Scripture story of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31) aloud to them. Read it all the way through one time, then give each youth a sheet of construction paper and markers. Read the story one more time, and this time encourage the youth to begin to draw the story on their sheet of construction paper. Allow some time for them to be finished after reading the story.

After all of the youth have finished their drawing, use the following questions to lead a brief discussion:

- Share with us a little bit about your picture; what parts of the story did you draw?
- How do you think this story can relate to Mass?
- At the end of the story Jesus breaks the bread with these men; where in the Mass does this also happen?

8th Grade Adaptation

Instead of having the 8th grade youth draw out the scene, have two youth read the story of the Road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13-31. Encourage them to pay attention to certain parts of the story that stand out the most to them. Then use the following questions to lead a discussion:

- What stood out to you the most from this story? Why?
- Why do you think that these two men were sad?
- If they heard the story of Jesus rising from the dead and all that he did, why were they still leaving?
- Have there ever been times in your life that you have struggled to believe what has been revealed about Jesus?
- What was it that opened their eyes at the end of the story?
- How do the different elements of this story relate to what we experience at Mass?

What Do I Bring? (10 min)

Have the youth remain in their small groups, but direct their attention to the front of the room. Use the following to explain the next activity:

Sometimes as a young person in the Church, it's easy to zone out during the collection. We leave the tithing and offering to our parents and the other members of the congregation. Although giving money in the basket is important and should be a part of our lives, even as a young person, what Jesus really wants is for us to offer ourselves: our lives, our hearts, and our wills. He desires us to lay our dreams, fears, hopes, wants, needs, and even our suffering at his feet. During the offertory we bring the gifts of bread and wine and our tithe to the altar but we also have the opportunity to offer ourselves.

At this time, pass out one or two slips of paper and a pen or pencil to each of the youth. Encourage them to spread out and pray about what they can offer in their lives to Jesus. Some examples of things they can offer are: five minutes of prayer a day, doing chores without complaining, a friendship they are struggling with, the intentions of a family member or friend, their own struggles with understanding God, etc. These offerings can be anything on their heart that they need Jesus' help with or anything in their lives they can do out of love for Jesus.

After the youth have had a few minutes to reflect and write their offerings on their slips of paper, encourage them to hold onto the slips of paper and come back to the large group.

SEND

This Is My Offering (20 min)

Invite your music minister or a musician to be present at your Edge Night to lead a time of praise and worship. Make sure to have song sheets or to project the lyrics of the songs so that the youth can sing along. Have the musician give a brief explanation of how singing at Mass is a great way to participate and how singing these songs prayerfully is also a way to pray.

Explain to the youth that as they begin to pray through music you will pass a basket around the room, similar to the baskets that are passed around at Mass; but instead of putting money in the baskets, they will put in their slips of paper that signify the offerings of their lives.

Have the music minister play a few praise and worship songs, and make sure all the youth have an opportunity to put their slips of paper in the baskets.

At the end, have the music minister close with one final song, and wrap up the Edge Night with a group prayer of thanksgiving.

Notes: _____

A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning most of the page width.

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TEACHING GUIDE

GETTING STARTED

To cover the basic information follow along and craft the talk based off of the bullet points. If your youth are ready to take it deeper, start incorporating a few of the Going Deeper call out boxes (like the one below) by picking the ones your youth would relate to the most.



GOING DEEPER

Check inside these boxes for tips and ideas on how to take your youth a little deeper with the Proclaim.

THE GATHERING

- *Connect the Gather game to the Mass by explaining to the youth the importance of knowing about something before you do it. We learned about the different mountains before we would choose to climb them, we also learn about Mass before we go so we know how to participate and enter in.*
- Many of us get stuck in just going through the motions at Mass because we don't understand the "why" behind what we do.
- The awesome part about our faith is that no action or response is without any meaning and purpose. The purpose of this Edge Night is to help us understand why we do what we do so that we can truly enter in and pray through the liturgy.
- *Share a story from your life where you struggled with the Mass and felt like you "had" to go or like you were just going through the motions. (Save the half of the story of how you overcame this and how it transformed the Mass for later in the talk)*
- Mass begins with all of us gathering together. We all enter into the sanctuary to celebrate together. During this time, we quiet our hearts and prepare to encounter Christ in the Mass.
- *Ask the youth to respond: What are some other types of celebrations in your life? How do you participate in these celebrations?*
- No one is just a spectator at Mass — we all have a part to play. Some read the readings, others help distribute the Eucharistic, and others sing in the choir. But most of us sit in the pews as part of the congregation. Even we, the congregation, have a responsibility to actively participate in the Mass. (CCC 1348)



GOING DEEPER

Talk to your parish liturgy director to see what different roles the middle school youth can help with at Mass. Share with the youth the ministries they can help with and provide a place for them to sign up.

- One person who plays a very significant role in the Mass is the priest. He acts in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi Capitis*) and prays on our behalf to Christ. He is the one who has the authority to transform the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ for us to receive. (CCC 1348, 1548)

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

- During the Liturgy of the Word, during Sunday Mass and on solemnities during the week, we hear four different readings.
- *Ask the youth to respond: Where in the Bible do the different readings that we hear at Mass come from?*
- During a typical Sunday Mass, there is a reading from the Old Testament, a reading from the New Testament, and one from a Gospel; a psalm or canticle is also sung. During weekday Masses, there are usually only two readings and a responsorial psalm. (CCC 1349)
- The first reading is usually taken from Old Testament. Passages from the Old Testament tell us about our history. These are stories from the time before the birth of Jesus.
- The responsorial psalm is generally taken from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. The Psalms express the prayers of the people of God. They help us remember the promises that God has made to us. Jesus Himself prayed the Psalms, and the Psalms also reveal the promises that God kept to us through Jesus Christ. The Psalms are essential to the prayer of the Church. (CCC 2585-2589)
- The second reading typically comes from one of the books of the New Testament, aside from the Gospels. These Scripture passages are often very practical and show us how to live out the teachings of Jesus and how to follow Him in our daily lives.
- The last reading is the Gospel, and it is taken from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. The Gospels tell us stories about the life of Jesus and all His works, miracles, and teachings. If you listen carefully during the Gospel reading, you can usually hear a connection between the first reading and the Gospel.



GOING DEEPER

Challenge the youth to truly prepare well for Mass by reading the Sunday readings ahead of time and give them a few examples of places they can find the readings online or in book resources.

- After the Gospel, the priest or a deacon will give the homily. The homily helps break open the readings and apply them to our daily lives. During this time the priest or deacon will explain parts of the Scripture passages that might have been difficult to understand or show us how we can live out certain teachings in our modern world. (CCC 1349)
- During the homily, try to find at least one thing that you can put into practice this week that will help you follow Jesus better.
- After the homily, we profess the Nicene Creed. In the Nicene Creed we recite all that we believe as Catholics and remind ourselves to hold fast to these beliefs.
- In the prayers of the faithful we offer up our prayers as a Church. Prayer is powerful on its own, but there is something special about coming together in prayer as the Body of Christ.

THE OFFERTORY AND THE COLLECTION

- Next comes the offertory and the collection.
- *Ask the youth to respond: Who can tell me what happens at this point in the Mass?*
- During this time, baskets or bowls are passed around the church to collect our offerings of money to support the parish and to be given to those in need. (CCC 1351)



GOING DEEPER

Help give the youth perspective on how the tithe of the parishioners helps pay for the building, utilities, and all the things needed to keep the church open and running, as well as the money that is given to the poor. Then challenge them to bring their own money to give to the parish during the collection next Sunday.

- While this is happening, the bread and wine are brought forward to the altar. (CCC 1350)
- The offertory isn't just the "half-time" of the Mass but an opportunity for us to prepare our hearts to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist before it begins.
- *Share the rest of your story about how you came to understand what was happening during the Mass and how this transformed your life and your participation in the Mass.*

Notes: _____

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