

**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***CHURCH***

This program consists of 10 videos, each 17-21 minutes in length. You may choose to view them in the order of this guide. This is not necessary, however. Each program stands on its own, and you may use them in whatever order you wish.

This leader's guide is meant as a suggested guideline for group discussions. The Spirit speaks to each group and person in a unique way. We encourage you to use your creativity and add or delete whatever you feel best helps your group come to know the Spirit within.

Our prayers go with you as you start this exciting journey of faith. *The Staff of Corpus Video*

**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, open our hearts and minds to new insights. Help us to learn from each other and from you in this time together. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What does the word "Church" mean to you?
- What new insight into Church did you gain from watching this program?
- What did Father Himes mean when he said, "The Church is not about tuneless truths"?
- We need the Church, we need people to bring us the Good News. What person was the most significant in bringing the Good News to you?
- We love God by loving our neighbor. Have you ever felt tempted to love God and bypass loving your neighbor? When?
- How does your local parish express the love of God by loving neighbors?
- Father Himes defines Church as "the community who attempts to live the mystery of God together." What do you think of this definition? Have you heard others?
- Some say the Church is the mighty fortress where we go to get away from the values of the world. Others compare it to a wagon train—people on a journey to an unknown frontier, constantly facing new problems and new possibilities together. Which image is most comfortable to you? Why?

- Father Himes says the Church should be about “inclusion, not exclusion. The Church should be about communication not ex-communication.” What does that statement mean to you?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

For a few minutes, sit silently and reflect on the Church—as you experience it now and as it could be. After a few minutes, invite each person in the group to say one word which expresses what Church is about for him/herself. When all are done sharing, the Leader concludes with the following prayer:

*Leader: Lord, we are grateful for a Church which proclaims to us the Good News, which attempts to minister to neighbors in need. Help us, Lord, to be a growing Church—a people always open to new people, to new ways of service and new insights into the awesome mystery of you. Amen.*

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**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***GRACE***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *God, our Creator, you hold the universe in existence by your love. We thank you for surrounding us with grace and we ask that we may be open to your grace now, in this place and in these people. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What does it mean to say “We can’t lose grace, we can’t gain grace, we can’t have grace”?
- Grace is the “love of God outside the Trinity.” What does that mean?
- “The universe exists because God loves it.” Do you believe this?
- What is “sacramental thinking”?
- When have you been aware of grace in your life? What are your personal “sacraments”?
- How have you celebrated grace in your life?
- If grace is present everywhere, what makes the Church and sacraments sacred?
- Have you ever divided your world into secular and sacred? How does it change your attitude to see all as sacred?
- How is the work you do sacred?
- How can you increase your awareness of grace?
- How does it make you feel to know that you cannot fall out of grace?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Have your group reflect silently for a few minutes on times when they were aware of God's love. Then, after a few minutes, have them reflect on times when they felt God was far away. Invite people to share their thoughts.

When your discussion has ended, spend some time in silence. Then read aloud Romans 8:35-39.

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**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***INCARNATION***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Materials Needed: Paper and pen for each group member, matches, stainless steel bowl.

Leader: *Jesus, you walked among us and told us we are the beloved of God. We believe you, Jesus. You are the Way, the Truth and the Life. We open ourselves now to your Spirit. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- “The glory of God is humanity fully alive.” What does this mean? When are you fully alive?
- When God chooses to be other than God, God chooses to be you. What does this mean? How does it feel to really believe that?
- Jesus is fully human. Have you always believed that? Do you believe that now?
- The fullness of the Incarnation, Jesus, was born to a peasant girl and a poor carpenter in Nazareth. If God were to come again today, what form do you think God would take?
- If we truly believed in Incarnation, in the awesome dignity of humanity, how would our world be different? How would your life be different?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Give each person a piece of paper and pen. Tell them to write down a time when they felt like they wanted to be anyone but themselves, a time when they may have hated themselves.

After a few minutes, invite each person to crumble his/her paper and throw it into the bowl. Then light the paper and say the following prayer:

Leader: *God, you are in love with us. Help us to really feel that love in the very core of our beings. We are the light of the world. We are your glory, your incarnation. May we be a light of hope to all who are in need. Amen.*

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**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***TRINITY***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, We gather in the name of the Creator who made us, the Savior who redeems us, and the Spirit who sanctifies us. Help us grow in appreciation for you and for each other this night (morning). Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Has your understanding of the Trinity made a difference in your faith? If so, how?
- What does it mean to say "God is Love"? When have you experienced God as love?
- What does Trinity have to do with love of neighbor?
- What does it mean to say "God is self-gift"? Have you ever experienced the self-gift of God? Explain.
- The criteria of judgment is not religious. What is it?
- How have you experienced God as Father/Mother? How have you experienced the person of Jesus? How have you experienced the Spirit?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Leader: *God is Trinity. God is Love. Let us reflect silently for a few minutes on a time when you really felt loved.*

*SILENCE*

Leader: *Lord, you have given yourself away to us over and over and over again. We trust you will do so forever. Help us to live as if your love for us will never run out.*

*Let us join hands and pray in the words Jesus gave us.*

Pray the “Our Father” together.

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**Leader's Guide for**  
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***TRADITION***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, we thank you for the ever-growing Tradition of the Church. We thank you for allowing us new insights into your mystery. Open our hearts and minds to your revelation. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What changes have you experienced in your life? Have you resisted them or have you seen them as an opportunity for growth?
- How has society changed in your lifetime? Has the church, in your opinion, successfully addressed these changes?
- Why is Tradition a gift and traditionalism a heresy?
- Tradition depends on the "communion of saints." What insights from the past are especially important today?
- How has the Church built on the Tradition in your lifetime?
- What would happen if the Church attempted to stop all change, to freeze one moment in time and say "this is the fullness of the revelation"?
- God is Mystery. People of faith never stop growing in their understanding of God. How has your image of God changed? How has that realization changed your life?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Direct your group members to spend a few moments thinking about an ancestor of theirs for whom they have a

special affection. Ask them what great insight from that person would they like to bring forward into their life now? Have them think about that silently for a few minutes and invite anyone who would like to share their thoughts. Then close with the following prayer:

Leader: *Lord, we live in a world of constant change, of new possibilities and new problems. Help us to learn from the wisdom of the past and help us to apply that wisdom with imagination and creativity to today. Lord, you are constantly calling us to grow, to New Life. May we go forward with courage, with trust and with hope. Amen.*

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**Leader's Guide for**  
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***EUCHARIST***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, You hold nothing back from us. You give us nothing less than your Body and Blood. You are constantly giving yourself away to us. We come together now as a grateful people, anxious to learn more of your love. We open ourselves to your spirit. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is a "covenant"? How is the Eucharist the "new covenant"?
- Do you feel that you and God have a covenant together?
- How does the Eucharist point to the holiness of everything? What does that mean in terms of our commitment to creation? To one another?
- What does "Real Presence" mean?
- What does Father Himes mean when he says, "The Eucharist tells us where we are going"?
- What does it mean that the Eucharist is a "down payment on future glory"?
- Growing up, how did your family regard Eucharist? What has Eucharist meant to you?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Read aloud Luke 22:14-20.

SILENCE

Conclude with the following prayer:

Leader: *All bread, all wine, all life is sacred. Each of us gathered here is sacred, holy, beloved of God. May our lives become Eucharist. May our lives become a constant thanksgiving to the God who never stops loving us. Amen.*

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**Leader's Guide for**  
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***SALVATION***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, You have created us in your image. We open ourselves now to the true depth and passion of that statement. We are grateful for your presence to us now as we gather together to go deeper into the Mystery. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Where does evil come from? What is the answer of Father Himes? Do you agree or disagree?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when you have despaired? If you wish, relate the experience.
- Where have you witnessed evil separating people?
- What does it mean to be saved?
- Why did humanity, when offered absolute love, kill Jesus?
- How does the cross save us?
- How do we embrace salvation?
- What does it mean to say there is no salvation without Church?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Leader: *God created something good when God created you. Reflect for a few moments on your gifts. Then I invite you to state one of them in a prayer of thanksgiving.*

After the minutes of reflection, and when all are finished sharing their prayers of thanksgiving, the Leader prays the following prayer.

Leader: *God, You have blessed us with all these gifts. You have blessed us with life in your image. The acceptance of these gifts, our “yes” to the life you have given us, is our only path to salvation. May our lives be a song of praise and thanksgiving to our Creator, our Redeemer. Amen.*

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**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***RECONCILIATION***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Materials needed: One stone for each member of the group; one stainless steel bowl.

Leader: *Lord, We come to you a sinful people. We come to you a holy people. Let us be open to all things—our sin, our gifts, our failures, our successes—as a call to grow closer to you in faith and in love. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Did you gain any new insights into Reconciliation from viewing this video? What are they?
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation, like many things, has changed. How? Do you like the changes?
- What does Father Himes mean by his “assembly line” example? Have you ever experienced “not doing your job” and, at the other end of the line, came out “junk”? Share that experience, if you wish.
- What does the statement “Reconciliation never means wiping away the past” mean?
- Why do we need a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- What does this statement mean to you: “The Sacrament of Reconciliation is more about God than it is about us”?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Place the stainless steel bowl in the middle of the group. Give each member of the group a stone.

Read aloud John 8: 3-11.

Invite all to reflect silently on a sin they wish forgiveness for. After a few moments, invite each person to toss his/her stone into the bowl. When all are finished, the Leader says the following prayer:

Leader: ***Lord, you do not condemn us. We will try not to condemn others. You are constantly forgiving us, Lord. Help us to follow your way. We give you these stones. Take them away and replace them with your love. Amen.***

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**Leader's Guide for**  
***THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: An Introduction to Catholicism***  
***BAPTISM***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, We are blessed and challenged by the gift of Baptism. In our time together now, help us to grow in our commitment to follow you. We ask this as we ask all things, in and through your Holy Name. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Fr. Himes says, "Baptism is not a once and for all experience... I need to be *more* baptized at 50 than I was when the event happened." What does he mean by that? Have you ever had an experience where you felt your baptismal experience was deepened?
- How does the above statement about Baptism differ from the fundamentalist statement "You are saved"?
- Baptism in the early Church often meant rejection in the secular, pagan world. Does your Baptism ever put you at odds with our culture? When? How?
- If you have not yet been baptized, what do you think will "drown" within you that day? What do you think will "rise to new life"?
- What does it really mean to "believe in a God that is not me"?
- What does it mean to believe in your own holiness and goodness?
- The anointing at Baptism and Confirmation is a blessing and a strengthening. How could you use this strength in your life?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Read aloud Romans 6:1-11. Invite all to reflect quietly on the following questions:

***What is God inviting you to die to? What is God inviting you to live for?***

After silent reflection, the Leader says the following prayer:

***Leader: Lord, we come to know you in the dying and the rising of our lives. Help us to be faithful and committed to you, knowing that you are always with us—in good times and in bad, in life and in death, and in everlasting life. Amen.***

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**Leader's Guide for**  
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***SACRAMENTS OF VOCATION***

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord, you bring us together—married, single, ordained—all to reflect your grace. You invite us to give our lives away in joy. Help us today to grow in generosity and openness of heart. Amen.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Do you understand the sacrament of Holy Orders and the roles of bishop, priest and deacon differently than before viewing this video?
- What does it mean that we are all called to ministry? What does that mean practically in your life?
- The functions of bishop, priest and deacon have changed through the centuries. How do you see these roles changing in the future?
- What makes marriage “sacramental”? What does Father Himes mean when he says we need to understand the other six sacraments in terms of the marriage sacrament?
- Has a “marriage well-lived” ever made you aware of God’s life in this world?
- What is the difference between joy and happiness? Have you ever experienced the difference?
- “God never asks us not to be joyful.” What do you think of this statement?
- How are you giving your life away?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Start with a few minutes of silence.

Then ask the group members to reflect on the question: “*Is my life joyful?*” Get in touch with the sources of that joy.

After a few minutes of quiet reflection, the Leader reads aloud Matthew 25:31-46.

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