

Spiritual Path for Dehonian Associates

Fourth Meeting

Eucharist: One Never-Ending Mass

Objectives

1. to maintain a sense of welcome and belonging among the participants
2. to appreciate the significance of the Eucharist beyond what we do in church
3. to realize that Jesus' actions over bread and wine—taking, blessing, breaking, and giving—are the same actions we perform in memory of him
4. to come to an understanding of how our lives can be one never-ending Mass
5. to explore what the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* says about Eucharist and its significance
6. to celebrate Dehonian spirituality that has the capacity to nurture and sustain a relationship of love and union with God

Preparation and Notes

1. If possible, arrange the seating in a circle with a low, circular table placed at the center.
2. Place on the table a candle and a small loaf of bread and a bunch of grapes or a glass of wine. The candle should already be lit when the participants are gathering.
3. Choose a CD with soft, instrumental background music and decide on the best way to play the CD [either with a CD player or on a computer]. Have this music playing while the participants are gathering.
4. Have sufficient copies of the prayer card [image of wheat and grapes on one side and the prayer on the reverse side] available for the participants.
5. Make sure someone can introduce and lead the sung mantra, "We Are Christ's Body."
6. *Before the meeting*, ask one of the participants to prepare reading the witness of Fr. John Czynski, SCJ, and three other participants to prepare the readings for the closing prayer.
7. The meeting should last no longer than two hours. It is important not to exceed this time limit. Meetings that last longer than advertised tend to be the last ones some people attend. The meeting should include a 10-15 minute break. One is suggested in the outline, but the dynamic of the group will suggest the most opportune time.

Welcome

A greeting and a welcome back, preferably from an SCJ, to all those attending the fourth meeting. If some participants are attending for the first time, welcome them warmly and invite the members of the group to introduce themselves to each other.

Prayer

- **Instrumental background music:** *if the music is not playing, begin it now without introduction. Allow about a minute before beginning the Centering exercise.*
- **Centering exercise:** *slowly move through these suggestions, allowing time for the participants to follow your suggestions.*
 - ✓ As we begin a short time of prayer, I invite you to quiet yourself and relax.
 - ✓ It may help to close your eyes.
 - ✓ It may help to fill your lungs with deep breaths, and then exhale slowly.
 - ✓ Find a comfortable position in your chair; let the chair safely hold you.
 - ✓ As best as you can in this moment, enter into the depths of your heart, which is a place where God dwells.
- **Guided meditation:** *slowly move through these steps, allowing time for the participants to follow your suggestions.*
 - ✓ Having arrived at the depths of your heart, or as close as you can come in this moment, what do you notice? It could be an image, a feeling, a color, or nothing at all, which is itself an image.
 - ✓ In this sacred space, I invite you to hold in your heart the moment in which you receive Communion during the celebration of the Mass.
 - ✓ What does it feel like to receive presence of Christ in your body under the form of bread [and wine]?
 - ✓ What do you sense Jesus is saying to you as you receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist?
 - ✓ What do you wish to say to Jesus?
 - ✓ Take a moment to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist. Then allow God to thank you for your willingness to receive and become the Body and Blood of Christ.
 - ✓ Gently bring your awareness back to this circle. When you are ready, open your eyes.
- When everyone has opened his/her eyes, turn off the music.

- Distribute the prayer card and invite the participants to pray this in unison:

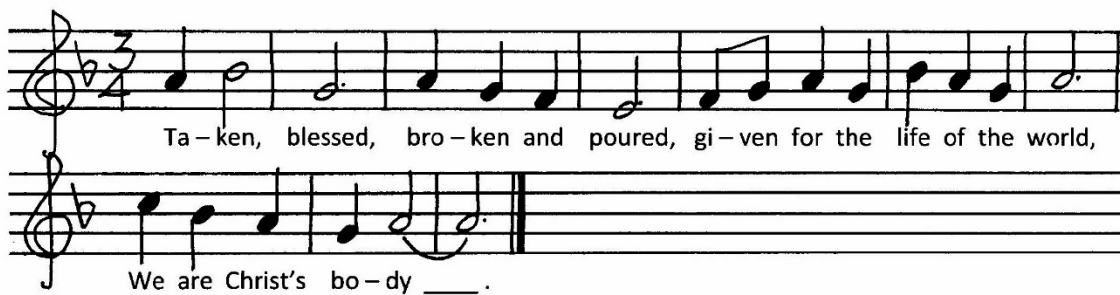
**Lord Jesus,
you are the living bread come down from heaven.
You gather us at your table,
in union with the whole Church.
You unite us with your own offering to the Father.
With joy we receive from your hands
the gift of your body and blood.
In return, we offer you ourselves today,
as bread that is broken for the life of the world.
Amen.**

Review of Third Meeting

- Each participant shared what it means to be God's son/daughter and what specific task God has called him/her to accomplish.
- The grace of Baptism is an awareness of our identity and a reminder of our responsibility as members of God's family.
- God calls everyone to holiness and to bring that holiness to each situation of his/her life.
- The vocation of the laity is to make the world holy.
- With this understanding of Baptism, Dehonian Associates commit themselves to help bring about God's reign on earth.

Sharing

- Invite each participant to share their reflection upon these two questions:
 - ✓ What do you consider to be your work or occupation?
 - ✓ What difference does your work or occupation make in the world?
- After each individual shares, the group sings this mantra:



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Presentation: Eucharist, One Never-Ending Mass

In one of his meditation books, Fr. Dehon wrote,

“The life of a friend of the Sacred Heart must reflect the life of the Sacred Heart. He must also become a perpetual Mass, as it were, by his life of love and immolation.”

The Love of the Sacred Heart, III, 5th Mystery, 6th Meditation

Our Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* reflects on this thought by saying,

“Union with Christ, which sprang from the depths of Fr. Dehon’s heart, had to be actualized in his whole life, above all in his apostolate. This apostolate was characterized by the greatest care for people, particularly the most deprived, and by concern about actively remedying the pastoral inadequacies of the Church in his time. This union was expressed and centered in the Eucharistic sacrifice to such an extent that his whole life became one never-ending Mass.”

Rule of Life #5

What does it mean to be “a perpetual Mass” or to make your whole life “one never-ending Mass”? It definitely doesn’t mean praying in Church all the time. It does suggest, however,

that what happens during Mass is something that we can repeat after Mass has ended. Our Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* explains,

“In celebrating the Eucharist, we are united with the whole Church in memorial of and presence to its Lord, and we welcome him who brings us together, who consecrates us to God, who sends us back to the world in the service of the Gospel.” *Rule of Life* #60

We tend to focus on what happens at the altar—the mystery of how God becomes present in bread and wine—but something is also happening in us. We become what we celebrate. As the Body and Blood of Christ, we are sent out to nourish the world around us. This is what Jesus is asking us to do as his followers. Listen again to the words that we hear at every Mass:

“For on the night he was betrayed [Jesus] took bread, and giving you thanks he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take this, all of you, and eat of it: for this is my Body which will be given up for you. In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice, and giving you thanks he said the blessing, and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant; which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.”

Third Eucharistic Prayer 2012

Four simple actions with bread and wine: taking, blessing, breaking/pouring out, and giving. When we repeat these actions, we are to do so in memory of Jesus. We do this every time we celebrate the Eucharist. Let’s see what this might look like for us as we live the Eucharist in our daily lives.

Let's look at the action of TAKING.

Jesus takes common bread and wine and identifies with it. He accepts what is ordinary [at least to the unsuspecting eye] and challenges people to see more clearly, to penetrate reality more deeply, to move beyond externals, and not to be satisfied with first impressions. What Jesus did at the Last Supper was nothing different from what he did throughout his ministry. Jesus saw the extraordinary in the ordinary. When most people look at a person, they stop at a label, which is the easiest excuse for prejudice. Jesus' vision, however, values the whole person.

MOST PEOPLE STOP AT A LABEL		JESUS VALUES THE WHOLE PERSON
Despised Samaritan, heretic	Luke 10: 25-37	Keeper of greatest commandment
A five-time divorcee	John 4:1-42	An evangelizer to her own people
Tax collector, traitor	Luke 19:1-10	A son of Abraham
A symbol of military occupation	Matthew 8:5-13	A man of unparalleled faith
A Canaanite unbeliever, "a dog"	Matthew 15:21-28	[Initially, "a dog"] but then, a woman of great faith
A fickle and unfaithful friend	Luke 22:31-34	A faith that will strengthen others
A woman with a bad reputation	Luke 7:36-50	Faith-filled, repentant, forgiven
Keeping company with sinners	Matthew 9:9-13	A chosen apostle
"Blind" and uneducated	John 9:1-41	Proclaims the presence of God

Jesus takes common bread and wine, and identifies with it, so that he might nourish the world. Jesus takes our humanity and sees so much more than we are able to acknowledge. If we act on what he sees, and unite ourselves with his vision, we can make a difference in the world as Jesus did.

As an individual, can I take the raw material of which I am made and accept my whole self—my personality, temperament, family background, likes, dislikes, talents, and weaknesses? Acceptance does not negate the possibility of growth, but growth is impossible without self-awareness.

In my family, my neighborhood, where I work, can I affirm goodness despite people's weaknesses and even prejudice? Can I compliment another? Can I take time to express concern and love for another? Can I be interested in more than myself, my family, my neighborhood, my culture, or my comfortable circle of friends?

Jesus took bread and wine. Jesus accepted common elements by which he planned to nourish the world. Can I follow his lead? Accepting myself and other people—no matter how ordinary—and believing that there's more than meets the eye. Do I have the patience to keep looking? To the extent that each of us tries to do this in our daily lives, we do so in memory of Jesus.

Let's take a look at the action of BLESSING.

When Jesus blessed the bread and wine at the Last Supper, he used words that are similar to what the priest prays at the presentation of the gifts.

“Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life. Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.”

We tend to think of blessing as an action that makes something holy, like blessing a crucifix or rosary. That is not inaccurate, but more specifically, we are acknowledging that God's grace is active through an object or person to help us be attentive to God's grace stirring within us.

Jesus takes the loaf of bread and the cup of wine and blesses them. As God's grace moves through this bread and wine, it becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus. Having taken common bread and wine and having accepted its own uniqueness, it now becomes a vessel of the divine.

Once again, for Jesus, this is a familiar form of prayer and a natural approach to life. Faced with a large, hungry crowd and only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, Jesus takes this food in his hands and blesses it. He blesses what is there and it turned out to be more than enough [Matthew 14:13-21].

When Jesus was preaching to a large crowd, he taught them his spiritual values by proclaiming a series of blessings on the poor, the sorrowing, the gentle, those who hunger and thirst for justice, those who show mercy, whose hearts are pure, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for the cause of justice [Matthew 5:1-12]. This unlikely group of people is blessed because they experience a need for God and in turn are willing to share God's loving grace with others in need.

When the disciples tried to discourage people from bringing their children so that Jesus could touch them, Jesus was indignant and reprimanded his followers. Then, he put his arms around the children, "laid his hands on them and blessed them" [Mark 10:13-16]. In Jesus' day, children too young to work had no value. Jesus' blessing corrects that mistaken notion. God is present and active even in the youngest of children.

In each of these examples in which God is stirring, individuals become vessels of the divine, who carry the good news of divine generosity to others.

As vessels of the divine, anyone of us can bless the comings and goings of our daily lives. We can bless the ones we love and we can bless our lovemaking. We can pray a blessing upon our work, our home, or upon an important event. We can bless and give thanks for our gifts, the food we eat, and even our struggles when we recognize that God is with us and will not abandon us. To the extent that we try to make this approach a part of our daily lives, we do so in memory of Jesus.

Let's look at the action of BREAKING and POURING OUT.

Jesus breaks the one loaf and pours out the cup of wine. As Jesus has identified with this loaf of bread and cup of wine, he now allows himself to be broken and poured out so that he can share himself completely with those present at the meal, enabling his followers to become one with him. In order to make those who are in need of healing or reconciliation, Jesus breaks open his fullness and pours out his life's energy for them.

Jesus graciously made this a way of life. The Letter to the Philippians states, "Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant; being born in the human likeness" [2:6-7]. Jesus poured out his divinity to become human.

On the night before he was crucified, while in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus willingly underwent distress and "sadness to the point of death." Once again, by allowing his human nature to be broken open beyond the instinct of self-preservation, Jesus prayerfully embraces torture and death [Matthew 26:36-46].

Even at the moment of death, Jesus' broken body gives up his spirit, and blood and water flow from his pierced side [John 19:30, 34]. This is the evangelist's way of saying that all who look with faith upon Jesus receive an outpouring of his cleansing forgiveness and life-giving Spirit.

In order to rise from death and conquer it, Jesus had to experience death. This kind of purposeful dying always leads to resurrection, and this kind of breaking open and pouring out always leads to union.

Indeed, our own broken nature can lead to unity and wholeness. Like Jesus, we can allow our bodies to be broken open by challenges, trials, and hardships, and we can pour out all the energy and encouragement we can muster to help each other in need. For Jesus, as well as ourselves, this is not a call to "break down," but rather to "break open" a wealth of inner strength and grace that we may not have been able to recognize while we were too concerned with our own safety and comfort.

The Eucharist challenges us to become more and more the Body and Blood of Christ in our world. It is possible to re-image our woundedness as strength and it is possible to pour out what we value without being diminished. To the degree that we allow ourselves to be broken open and grow strong in all our weak places; to the degree that we are willing to pour out ourselves for others and in some way bring about healing and connectedness, we do so in memory of Jesus.

Let's look at the action of GIVING.

Jesus gives the bread and the cup of wine to his disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for **you**...This is the cup of my blood, poured out for **you** [cf. Luke 22:19-20]. Jesus makes this unselfish surrender of himself to be our nourishment, our companion, and our advocate.

Jesus nourished the common folk through his teaching because "he taught as one having authority and not as their scribes" [Matthew 7:28, 29]. He made a deep impression not by giving answers, but by encouraging his listeners to think and draw their own conclusions. In other words, he taught them as adults and trusted them as adults.

Jesus proved to be a companion to many. People flocked to him because he was approachable and compassionate. Of children, he said, "Let the little children come to me and do not stop them" [Matthew 19:13-15]. Jesus promised his disciples, "And know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time" [Matthew 28:20].

Jesus considered it his mission to be an advocate of justice for people who were unfairly shut out from God's love. He reiterated that the greatest commandment is to love and redefined neighbor as anyone who acts with kindness [Luke 10:25-37]. He ate with sinners because they had need of his mercy [Matthew 9:10-13]. He welcomed a thief into his reign simply because the man recognized his mistakes and asked for mercy [Luke 23:39-43].

Our world is filled with people who have all kinds of hungers, all manner of need, and are starving. There is no way we can address every need, but we can be attentive to some, especially those near to us. Can I nourish another who needs a kind word, tutoring in basic skills, or a hot meal at a soup kitchen?

Can I be present as a companion to someone who is experiencing a broken marriage, whose adolescence is frustrating, or whose health is deteriorating? Can I forgive again and again—and again?

Jesus asks us to give our particular gifts to those who have need of them—not because these people are polite, or hard working, or particularly virtuous—but because they have need of them. To the extent that we try to give of ourselves, as nourishment to others, as companions to others, as advocates of justice for the marginalized, we are in fact, the Body and Blood of Jesus in our daily lives, and we do so in his memory.

Sunday Mass is just the beginning of a weeklong act of worship. Bishop Oscar Romero tries to make this point when he says,

“How beautiful will be the day when all the baptized understand that their work, their job, is a priestly work, that just as I celebrate Mass at the altar, so each carpenter celebrates Mass at the workbench, and each metal worker, each professional, each doctor with the scalpel, the market woman at her stand, are performing a priestly office.”

What is your particular altar, at which you perform the priestly office of being bread for a hungry world? This is how our lives become “one-never ending Mass.”

This is good to keep in mind, especially as we conclude our celebration of the Eucharist. The Latin word, “missus,” from which we get the English word, “Mass,” can mean “to dismiss,” but it can also mean, “to send,” as being sent out with authority to perform a special duty.

The Mass is a ritual, through which we do the same action over and over again until it becomes second nature—and until we can perform the same action outside of church. Because we're not so good at it, we come back week after week to remember how to be the Body and Blood of Jesus.

The Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, once said, “There are so many hungry people in the world, that surely if God were to appear among them, it would be in the form of bread.” We are that bread; we are the Body and Blood of Christ in daily life; we bring the presence of Christ to the world. We are sent to live the Eucharist: to take, bless, break, and give of ourselves in memory of Jesus. In this way, our lives become one never-ending Mass.

Break [10-15 minutes]

Personal Witness of Fr. John Czyzynski, SCJ

When I reflect about what the Eucharist means in my life, three moments come to my mind and heart immediately. First, as I gather with my community or any community for Eucharist, I unite myself (and I ask that we unite ourselves) with Jesus and offer ourselves with Him to our loving *Abba* who first loves us. When the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews* tried to capture Jesus' disposition on coming into the world, he quotes the words of Psalm 40: “Behold I come to do your will” (words so precious to Fr. Dehon, our founder).

Jesus came into the world to show us how much we are loved and He died being faithful to that mission, which He received from the Father. His whole life was dedicated to helping us become aware of God's great love for us, but the supreme moment of that mission of Jesus was his death on the cross for us. His death was the result of his fidelity to that mission and He asks us to continue that mission. He said, “As the Father sent me so I send you.” So as we begin the Eucharistic celebration, I unite myself with Jesus to be open to what continuing the mission of Jesus will require of me that day.

Second, when the presider concludes the words of consecration, “This is my body...This is my blood” with the mandate, “Do this in memory of me,” that is another significant moment for me. I unite with Jesus and say in my heart, “Jesus when you say: do this in memory of me, you are not just asking me to repeat a ritual in memory of you. You are saying that as your body was broken and your blood was shared in carrying out the mission of letting people know how much we are loved by God, so I must be ready to let my body be broken and my blood be shed in continuing your mission. Since I/we cannot do this on our own, you give us yourself in communion so that nourished by Eucharist we are strengthened to do what we cannot do on our own.”

Third, Eucharist is so broad a mystery. It is not limited to the sacramental presence of Jesus at Mass and adoration. We, all of us, are the Body of Christ. When the priest, deacon, or Eucharistic minister offers us the consecrated bread, that person says, “The Body of Christ” and we say “Amen,” we welcome Christ into our hearts. That “Amen” we say at the Eucharistic

celebration is a mockery if we do not say “Amen” to and welcome our brothers and sisters, whom we encounter outside the space of where we gathered for Mass.

As someone once said, “We are no closer to Christ than we are to the person we love the least.” That is what Eucharist means for me as a Priest of the Sacred Heart.

- Provide a few moments of quiet to allow the participants to reflect on these words.

Reflection

- Distribute handout, “Living the Eucharist We Celebrate.” Depending on time, the exercise, “**When participating at Mass, I...then in my daily life I can...**” can be completed during the meeting by the participants either individually or as a group. The additional material might be helpful as the participants reflect on this topic sometime before the next scheduled meeting. Alternately, the participants can take this handout with them and make use of it for their personal reflection sometime before the next scheduled meeting.
- The aim of the exercise, “**When participating at Mass, I...then in my daily life I can...**” is to help the Dehonian Associates to make a direct connection between their Eucharistic prayer at Mass and living the Eucharist in their daily lives.
- Examples:
 - ✓ When participating at Mass I receive God’s forgiveness, just as I am, then in my daily life I can forgive someone who has hurt me without waiting for an apology.
 - ✓ When participating at Mass I pray for the concerns and needs of others, then in my daily life I can work to address at least one of those concerns or needs.
 - ✓ When participating at Mass I share with many one bread and one cup, then in my daily life I can remember that we are all one body in Christ and treat people accordingly.

Prayerful Celebration

- Begin by singing the mantra, “We Are Christ’s Body.”
- Reader One: **Romans 12:1**
I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- Sing mantra, “We Are Christ’s Body.”
- Reader Two: **Dehonian Associates Rule of Life #14**
As proof of the love of Christ, who delivers himself up so that the Church might be one and thus proclaim hope for the world, the Eucharist as its effects on all that we are and on all that we do.
- Sing mantra, “We Are Christ’s Body.”
- Reader Three: **Fr. Leo John Dehon** [from his *Daily Notes*, February 15, 1868]
Let us imitate the kindness that our Lord shows in the Most Holy Sacrament. It reaches out to all, it seeks only what is good for them, and it favors the weak and the poor.
- Sing mantra, “We Are Christ’s Body.”
- Invite spontaneous prayer by participants. This can take the form of a word or phrase that they take with them from the meeting, or a prayer of petition, thanksgiving, or praise. Allow enough quiet time to encourage the introverts to take part.
- When this sharing seems to be finished, sing mantra, “We Are Christ’s Body.”
- Join hands and pray together the “Our Father.”
- Make any necessary announcements for the next meeting.
- Invite participants to take with them the prayer card. Remind them to bring the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* with them to the next scheduled meeting.