

Session Outcomes

Informing the Mind

- Know that through Jesus' sacrifice of love, we are saved from our sin, and we are offered eternal life
- Make the connection between temple sacrifice in the Old Testament and Jesus as the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God
- Realize that when we celebrate the Eucharist, we are celebrating and giving thanks for Jesus' sacrifice for us
- Learn the prayers and actions that begin the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Forming the Heart

- Understand that Jesus is God's gift to us
- Deepen the awareness that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic life
- Understand that we are called to offer our lives to God the Father by following and worshipping Jesus
- Foster a sense of wonder and awe in response to Jesus' sacrifice of love

Church Documents

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 73–77
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 602, 613, 1182, 1350–1351, 1362–1368

We Accept and Offer

“The altar, on which is effected the Sacrifice of the Cross made present under sacramental signs, is also the table of the Lord to which the People of God is convoked to participate in the Mass, and it is also the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist.” *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 296

Jesus told us to love one another. Loving another person is humbling. When we share our deepest secrets with friends, we open ourselves to the possibility of a loving response or a betrayal. To say “I love you” for the first time is to face acceptance or rejection. We give everything we have to our children, with an awareness that they will leave us for school, for a career, or a marriage. All true love is sacrificial, a gift of self to another person.

Christ's entire life is a sacrifice of love. The Son of God, existing outside of space and time, enters into the cramped manger as a speechless infant as an act of love. Jesus offers the entirety of God's love in his ministry of forgiveness and healing, and proclaims the arrival of the Kingdom of God. He reveals the fullness of God's love when he takes upon himself the sins and rejection of the world, letting the light of love shine even into the darkness of death. And in his Resurrection, the world comes to know that sin and death do not reign supreme; Divine Love alone is victorious.

Mass is a participation in Christ's very sacrifice of love. Christ's Death and Resurrection are not occasions on a historical timeline. Christ, risen from the dead, is present with us. In the Eucharistic Prayer, he offers his glorious Body on the altar for the salvation of the world. Bread and wine are transformed into his Body and Blood. And we the Church offer ourselves so that we may more fully become the Body of Christ offered to the world.

This self-gift of Christ's love is still present in the Eucharist. It is what the Church celebrates at every Mass. Love is present on the altar, a sacrifice of love that is meant to overflow into every corner of the world. “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19).

➔ **Reflect** Think of a sacrifice of love you have made. Looking back, how did your experience draw you closer to Christ? How does participation in the Eucharist help you offer yourself to others?



Holy Spirit, guide me as I reflect with these children on the gifts you have given us and the gifts we can share with others.

Session Connections

Family Resources



My Family in Our Parish

Page 48 encourages participation in the liturgy through activities about the altar and the gifts offered during the Liturgy of the Eucharist at Mass.

Session 4 **Family + Faith pages** provide suggestions for family activities around the significance of the altar, gifts and offerings, and Jesus' sacrifice.

Online Resources



sacraments.osv.com

- Adaptive Learning & Special Needs options
- ▶ Opening Video 4: explores the concepts of love and everyday sacrifice, and how these actions help us to become more like Jesus
- Games for explaining the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Catholic Signs & Symbols

We gather around the altar as we begin the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The altar represents Christ himself, who is both the priest offering the sacrifice and the sacrifice being offered. The altar is the table of the Lord from which we are fed and the table of sacrifice from which Christ's sacrifice is both remembered and made present.

As the Child Understands

Most elementary-school-age children will think of the altar in a church as a fancy table. In one way, this is appropriate because it is the table of our Eucharistic meal together. The Church is the family of God, and the Eucharist is our family meal. Family meals help us to draw closer to one another, express our unity, and form us as a happy, healthy family.

Children this age will have a less-developed understanding of the sacrificial nature of the altar. This concept may present a challenge because sacrificing at an altar is not a practice in our western world, and the children have limitations in their abstract thinking. Understanding the sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament and the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross may present a challenge. A good focus for children this age is that God loved us so much that he sent his Son, and Jesus loved us so much he was willing to die for us.

A Deeper Understanding

The altar is both a place of sacrifice and a gathering point of celebration. Here, we remember that God loved us so much that he gave his only Son (see John 3:16). God is perfectly loving, but also perfectly just. In the interest of justice, the price for our sins must be paid. In the interest of love, God pays that price with his very self, in the Person of Jesus Christ. How do we respond to this unfathomable love and mercy? With thanksgiving and celebration. The altar on which the sacrifice of Jesus is made present is the table around which we gather for our meal of thanksgiving. At the altar, the generosity of God's love is made visible, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice of Christ, God the Son, is made present every time we come to the table. The Father invites us to join our lives with that of the Son as he sacrifices himself for our sake.

