

Eucharist

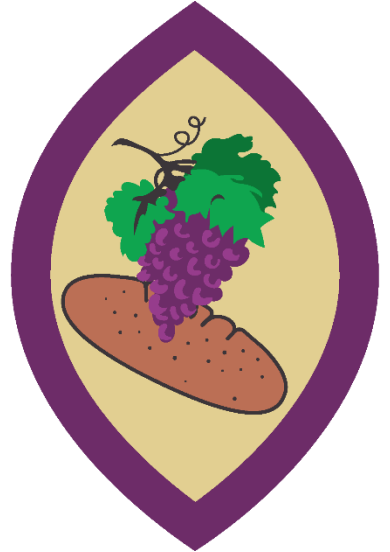
MEMORY VERSE: ‘...Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day’.
John 6:54 (NRSV)

STUDY PLAN: To grow in our understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

To earn the Eucharist badge, you will need to do the following:

Step 1: Review what you have learned in the Green Level

My initials _____



Discern

The Celebration badge in the Green Level taught us about the first Eucharist that Jesus celebrated with his disciples on the evening before he was crucified. Jesus asked his disciples to remember Him by sharing wine and bread together. The bread and wine symbolize the real presence of Christ. The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is a continual remembrance of his life, death and resurrection - until He comes again.

In I Corinthians 11:25-26, Paul writes:

After they had finished dinner, He took the cup and in the same way said, “This cup is the new covenant, executed in My blood. Keep doing this; and whenever you drink it, you and all who come after will have a vivid reminder of Me. Every time you taste this bread and every time you place the cup to your mouths and drink, you are declaring the Lord’s death, which is the ultimate expression of His faithfulness and love, until He comes again. (Translation – The Voice)

The Eucharist is a sacrament. The Episcopal and Anglican Church recognize seven sacraments. A sacrament is a religious ritual which imparts a divine grace. Grace is God’s favor towards us, which is unearned and undeserved. By grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts and strengthens our wills. The Eucharist, along with Baptism, is considered a major sacrament.

Before we celebrate the Eucharist, we prepare for it.

The worship service begins with the Liturgy of the Word:

- we listen to lessons from the Bible
- we listen to the priest’s sermon to help us understand the lessons
- we pray for the church, the world, our neighbors and friends and for those who are sick or who have died
- we tell God that we are sorry for our sins and ask forgiveness
- we exchange the peace

Then we are ready to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



The Eucharist is usually a shared experience. We pray together and eat together.

1. Discuss why Christians worship together. Why don't we "do it on our own".
2. Think about the readings, prayers and confession that come before the Eucharist. Could you leave any of it out and be prepared to celebrate the Eucharist? Do you notice how everything is planned out so that our hearts and minds are prepared for the Eucharist?
3. We confess our sins and ask forgiveness as part of our preparation for the Eucharist. Discuss the need for reconciliation in our lives to God and with each other as part of our preparation.
4. Jesus said that we should "love one another as I have loved you." Discuss the opportunity that the Eucharist provides for us to think about these words and put them into action.



Use your Book of Common Prayer:

The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer is like a set of FAQ's about the Episcopal faith. Refer to pages 857-860 to answer these questions:

- a. What is a sacrament? _____

- b. What are other names for the Eucharist? _____

- c. What are the benefits we receive in the Eucharist? _____

- d. What is required of us before we come to Eucharist? _____



Step 2: The Eucharist – What we see and what it means

My initials _____

We celebrate the Eucharist because Jesus instructed us to remember Him through this ritual and to await His coming again.

The liturgy has been planned out carefully so that our hearts and minds are ready for the Eucharist. We listen to the readings from the Bible. The priest helps us understand the readings and inspires us to live a Christian life. We confess our sins and make peace with others before coming to the take the Eucharist.

There are also many symbolic actions and symbolic items used in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Four Actions

There are four essential actions to the sacrament of the Eucharist:

- Taking – the priest takes the bread and wine when it is brought forward
- Blessing - the priest blesses the bread and the wine by stretching her/his hands over the bread and the wine to call upon the Holy Spirit to consecrate them
- Breaking – the priest breaks the bread to be shared
- Giving – the bread and wine are given to all to eat together



These are the actions of Jesus described in the Road to Emmaus story. Two disciples were walking along the road and they encountered a third man. They did not recognize Jesus until he sat with them to eat. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. At that point, the disciples recognized Jesus because He had done the exact same thing at the Feeding of the 5000 (Luke 9:16). These are the four actions of Christ himself.

Bread and Wine

Bread is life, and wine is joy. Sharing food and drink is often linked with peace-making. Eating and drinking together is a symbol of friendship and love. Bread and wine are created by human hands from grain and wine and symbolize that Christ is present and our sins are forgiven.



The Altar, Candles and Colorful Hangings

There are many special items on the altar with special significance. Every item has a special meaning. For example, the pall covering the chalice represents the stone which was rolled in front of the tomb. The purificator represents the cloth that was used when Jesus was interred in the tomb. The corporal cloth is symbolic of the Jesus' grave clothes. The altar and everything on it is the best quality that the church can provide.



Discuss

Discuss the many rituals and symbols of the Eucharist. Have you learned something that you did not know before?

It is important to understand the Eucharist and not just go through the motions. You have to put something in to get something out. Matthew 7:8 says, "For everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door is opened."

Your faith cannot grow unless you dig into it.

Discuss how you can strengthen your faith by asking questions and looking for answers.

Do 1 of the following:

1. Ask a person from the altar guild to show you how the altar is prepared for the Eucharist, and the symbolism of the various items used. Ask the person to talk about the ministry of the Altar Guild.

Do It!



2. Complete a Eucharistic Prayer, using Form 1 or 2 in the Book of Common Prayer (pages 402-405). Your prayer should include
 - giving thanks to God the Father for his work in creation and his revelation of himself to his people
 - recall the particular occasion being celebrated
 - praise the Lord for the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ our Lord



Step 3: A Meal to Nourish our Spirit and our Community

Our relationship with God is nurtured, renewed and deepened through the Eucharist. It has double significance to every Christian:


1. It is the most certain channel of grace to help each one of us become as God would have us be. The body and blood of Christ nourishes our spiritual being in the way that ordinary food nourishes our physical being.
2. It is **the** act of worship by the Church which defines who we are, the body of Christ, and recognizes who God is. It is a shared spiritual meal which nourishes our community, and encourages us in our mission to the world, our concern for others and our fellowship with one another.


In John's Gospel (John 6:53), Jesus says, "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you can have no life in you."


Note: Leaders may want to read some commentaries on this passage online at a website such as Biblehub.com or consult with their pastor to enrich their understanding of this passage in order to prepare for a discussion of this verse.


Jesus spoke these words shortly after the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the miracle of walking on water, almost a year before the Last Supper. Since He was standing in front of them, and his death was not imminent, He was not literally speaking of His flesh and blood. So what might he have meant?


It might help our understanding to consider that "flesh" means Jesus as a human and "blood" means sacrifice. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is our entire acceptance that Jesus was human and our acceptance that Jesus' sacrifice atones for our sins. We accept that Christ is the nourishment of real life. Without Christ in our lives, we are dying, but with full acceptance of Christ, we live.

John 6:51
 I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

John 6:53
 Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.

John 6:54
 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

John 6:55
 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

John 6:56
 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.



You have probably heard the words of the Eucharistic Prayer many, many times. You know Eucharist is important because it is celebrated every Sunday, but is your spirit involved, moved, changed?

Take the study of this badge as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Eucharist so that your spiritual involvement increases.

1. As a group, discuss how participating in the Eucharist helps us become the person God would have us be.
2. Discuss why the Eucharist, as a shared meal, brings our community together and how it encourages our mission in the world, our concern for others, and our fellowship. Is this an inner change, and outward change, or both?



Do at least one of the following requirements:

1. In your own words, write out an explanation of why we celebrate Eucharist and what it means. Imagine you are explaining it to someone who has never been to any church service before. How would you explain it to that person?
2. Since the Eucharist is meant to encourage our mission in the world, plan a community service activity to do together. Before going out to serve, ask your rector to celebrate the Eucharist to send you out.
3. Read the entire 6th chapter of the Gospel of John or visit www.thebibleproject.com and watch the videos about Gospel of John.

