



Satisfying the Hungry Heart

Welcome!

We are delighted that your group is planning a regional retreat. These materials have been prepared to help you make the most of your time together. Centered around the topic of our hunger for God, they will—we hope and pray—lead you into prayer, worship, reflection and group activities, all with the goal of understanding in a deeper way what it means to be both hungry for and satisfied by Jesus Christ.

In this package, you'll find easy-to-modify resources for a one-day retreat. (If you're interested in using them for a shorter or longer time period, let us know; we are happy to help you with that!) They include:

- ❖ Suggested retreat schedule
- ❖ Mass planning template
- ❖ Prayer services in presider format
- ❖ Four reflections on DVD (and in hard copy format)
- ❖ Reflective activities for participants
- ❖ Checklist of needed supplies
- ❖ How-to's for creating a retreat atmosphere

As you look these over, please don't hesitate to contact us with questions that arise. And once you put them to use, let us know how they work. We would love your feedback!

May this time together bring you many blessings—rest and refreshment; meditation and discussion; community-building; faith formation. Most of all, may it bring you a deep experience of God's grace and peace.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Fr. Lou, Chuck, Meghann, Ann, and Ricky



*I am the bread of
life. Those who
come to me will
never go hungry,
and those who
believe in me will
never be thirsty.*

John 6:35





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NOTE: *Exact times are offered to give you a sense of how much time to allot for various parts of the retreat. A member of the ACE Advocates staff would be happy to help in any way as you adjust this schedule for your particular group's time frame. See also "Planning Your Retreat" for some helpful suggestions.*

9:00AM – 9:30AM: Arrival

- ❖ Be sure your retreat team has the space prepared prior to participants' arrival.
- ❖ Having some decorations or welcome signs, as well as some breakfast-y snacks or coffee, will help participants feel welcome and at home.
- ❖ You might find it helpful to set up a check-in table. Here, participants can pick up a folder, a nametag if not everyone knows each other (better safe than sorry!), and take care of paying any retreat fees that your group is charging. They can see a schedule for the retreat and perhaps a map of the retreat facility, and meet a few members of the retreat team.

9:30AM – 9:50AM: Welcome, Logistics, and Introduction to the Retreat

- ❖ The leader of the retreat should welcome all of the participants on behalf of the local ACE Advocates community.
- ❖ Introduce all members of the retreat team. You may also want to announce at this point that other members of the "retreat team" will be joining via video, from the ACE Advocates staff.
- ❖ If there are participants who do not know each other, take some time to let everyone introduce themselves, or do a quick get-to-know-you activity.
- ❖ Take a few minutes to go over logistics that will make the retreat run smoothly.
 - Where will large-group sessions be held? Where can small groups meet? Where can individuals go for personal reflection time?
 - Are there areas of the retreat facility that are off-limits to your group?
 - Where are the restrooms? Where will meals be served? Will Mass be in the same room as the large retreat sessions?
 - Remind participants to respect each other's time of retreat. There will be time for socializing and meals, so please commit to leave quiet reflection time for just that. This may not seem necessary to announce to adults, but many will actually appreciate the reminder, especially when accompanied by a note of what time is designated for social conversation.
 - Are there books, devotional items, art supplies, or particular areas like an adoration chapel, that participants might make use of during free time?

- ❖ Announce the theme of the retreat – “Satisfying the Hungry Heart” – and give a very brief overview of the retreat sessions. End by playing the welcome and introduction to the retreat from Fr. Lou DeFra, CSC, about 7 minutes long.

10:00AM-12:00PM: Opening Prayer Service and Session I – *What are you hungry for?*

- ❖ A script for this session, along with master copies of materials for participants and the text of the video reflection, are included in these resources. We recommend the following planning times:
 - 10:00-10:25 – Opening prayer service
 - 10:25-10:40 – Video reflection (just over 15 minutes long)
 - 10:40-11:15 – Individual reflection
 - 11:15-11:45 – Small group discussions
 - 11:45-11:55 – Large group discussion/reactions
 - 11:55-12:00 – Logistical announcements
- ❖ ***You will need*** a retreat team member designated as the presider and leader for this session, as well as three readers. Select your readers ahead of time and give them copies of the prayer service script. Let them look it over ahead of time and be sure they understand the timing.

12:00PM – 2:00PM: Lunch and Break

- ❖ Have a few options for people during the break – spiritual resources, games, a map of your facility for those who might wish to go for a walk or run...
- ❖ If you have a priest with you for the duration of the retreat, this might be a good time to offer the chance for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

2:00PM – 3:30PM: Mid-day Prayer Service and Session II – *Nourished by Christ*

- ❖ A script for this session, along with master copies of materials for participants and the text of the video reflection, are included in these resources. Recommended planning times:
 - 2:00-2:10 – Mid-day prayer service
 - 2:10-2:30 – Video reflection (just under 20 minutes long)
 - 2:30-3:00 – Individual Scripture study
 - 3:00-3:25 – Large group discussion
 - 3:25-3:30 – Logistical announcements
- ❖ ***You will need*** a retreat team member designated as the presider and leader for this session, as well as two readers. Again, select and prepare your readers ahead of time.

3:30PM – 3:45PM: Break

- ❖ After a focused discussion, everyone likes a break for some light conversation, snacks and drinks, a trip to the restroom, etc.

3:45PM – 4:50PM: Session III – *We become what we receive*

- ❖ A script for this session, along with master copies of materials for participants and the text of the video reflection, are included in these resources. Recommend planning times:
 - 3:45-3:50 – Opening Prayer
 - 3:50-4:00 – Video reflection (just under 11 minutes long)
 - 4:00-4:25 – Personal reflection time
 - 4:25-4:45 – Closing prayer service
 - 4:45-4:50 – Logistical announcements
- ❖ **You will need** a retreat team member designated as the presider and leader for this session, as well as two readers. Again, select and prepare your readers ahead of time, particularly as the closing prayer service will involve alternating Scripture and music.

4:50PM-5:00PM: Break and transition to Mass

- ❖ Give participants a quick break as the retreat team sets up for Mass.

5:00PM-6:00PM: Mass

6:00PM-7:00PM: Dinner and goodbyes

- ❖ Remember grace before dinner!
- ❖ Take some time before everyone leaves to thank your retreat team, all participants, your celebrant for Mass, any staff members from your retreat facility, and anyone else who needs thanking.
- ❖ Don't be shy about announcing your next events and encouraging all to attend! After a day well-spent in retreat, people will often be excited to stay involved with your region. You might even invite members to visit the ACE Advocates website, if they aren't already members, to sign up for the newsletter or visit your group's page for more information!



Schedule of Responsibilities

This schedule will help you organize who is responsible for leading each session and completing each administrative task of your retreat.

Arrival

- ❖ Room setup/decoration: _____
- ❖ AV setup: _____
- ❖ Snack table setup and maintenance: _____
- ❖ Welcome participants at the check-in table: _____
- ❖ Keep track of retreat fees: _____

Welcome, Logistics, and Introduction to the Retreat

- ❖ Lead the welcome session: _____

Opening Prayer Service and Session I – *What are you hungry for?*

- ❖ Lead Session I (preside at prayer service, give directions, lead discussions):

- ❖ Invite three participants to read during prayer service: _____
- ❖ Three readers: _____
- ❖ Assign small groups ahead of time: _____
- ❖ Lead small groups (1 per group): _____
- ❖ Lead music: _____

Lunch and Break

- ❖ Set up for lunch (possibly during Session I): _____
- ❖ Say grace: _____
- ❖ Clean up after lunch: _____
- ❖ Be “on call” during break: _____

Mid-day Prayer Service and Session II – *Nourished by Christ*

- ❖ Lead Session II: _____
- ❖ Invite two participants to read during prayer service: _____
- ❖ Two readers: _____
- ❖ Lead music: _____

Session III – *We become what we receive*

- ❖ Lead of Session III: _____
- ❖ Invite two participants to read during prayer service: _____
- ❖ Two readers: _____
- ❖ Lead music: _____

Transition and Mass

- ❖ Celebrant: _____
- ❖ Set up for Mass: _____
- ❖ Sacristan during Mass: _____
- ❖ Invite participants to serve as lectors and Eucharistic ministers: _____
- ❖ Lectors: _____
- ❖ Eucharistic ministers: _____
- ❖ Lead music: _____

Dinner and goodbyes

- ❖ Set up for dinner: _____
- ❖ Say grace: _____
- ❖ Say thank you's and make all final announcements: _____
- ❖ Clean up after dinner: _____
- ❖ Clean up after retreat and pack up all supplies: _____

When, Where, and Who?



Thinking about WHEN:

- 1) Set your date as far in advance as possible!
 - ❖ You want people to save the date on their calendars – including your chaplain!
 - ❖ You want your first choice of location to be available.
 - ❖ You want plenty of time to plan without being rushed.

- 2) Consider when choosing a date:
 - ❖ Many people like setting aside special time during Lent or Advent for a retreat.
 - ❖ For teachers, the months of January, February, and March can be long, and a day of rest and reflection can be very appealing.
 - ❖ Some groups find it necessary to consider school calendars. If the bulk of your participants are teachers, the end of the semester right before grades are due may be difficult. The same goes for Catholic Schools Week or the huge Diocesan inservice.
 - ❖ Sometimes it's impossible to find a date that works for everyone. Accept this and make the best decision you can!
 - ❖ A three-day weekend can be an easy time for people to set aside a day for retreat. Consider Presidents Day, Martin Luther King Day, etc.

- 3) How long do you want your retreat to be?
 - ❖ A day of reflection is often a great amount of time. Consider a Saturday or Sunday, and end with the weekend Mass.
 - ❖ Be sure to take into account people's travel time. For instance, you may not want to begin at 8am on a Saturday if your retreat facility is an hour's drive away.
 - ❖ Some groups offer a flexible schedule for those who'd like an overnight. If you've found a beautiful location that's a bit of a drive, you might make it an option to come out the night before or stay the night after the formal retreat events.
 - ❖ Is a full day too much? Does the perfect date seem elusive? Try a creative scheduling approach! For example, set aside three Fridays in Lent, and do one retreat session each night, followed by your favorite meatless dinner!

Thinking about WHERE:

- 1) The right location is essential for establishing the atmosphere of your retreat.
 - ❖ Consider the size of your group. Look for a place large enough that everyone can sit comfortably and find some personal space for reflection. Be sure, though, that you aren't in such a large room that your group feels dwarfed.
 - ❖ Elements such as natural or architectural beauty are not insignificant!
 - ❖ Great locations book VERY EARLY. You might even consider reserving a space for the next year when you find that "just-right" spot.
- 2) Having trouble finding a location? Talk to your staff contact. Sometimes ACE has connections in certain regional areas that can prove very helpful!
- 3) Will you have a priest who can join you for Mass, or to offer Reconciliation during break times? If not, look into using a parish center or hall, youth room, etc. Some are beautiful and cozy, and you can then join the parish for their regular Saturday evening Mass, followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Thinking about WHO:

- 1) Advertise your date as soon as you know it.
 - ❖ Send a "Save The Date" email, or even a postcard.
 - ❖ Don't have an exact date yet? Advertise that you're looking at "Saturdays in February" – give a ballpark so people have some idea.
- 2) Consider combining forces with other nearby regions for your day of reflection.
- 3) Send invitations to the faculty at local Catholic schools, or invite your regular members to bring a friend. You might even offer an incentive, especially if you charge a nominal retreat fee – "\$10 off both retreat fees if you bring a friend!"
- 4) Be child-friendly! Parents of young children would often love a day of retreat, but they don't know what to do with their kids.
 - ❖ Be open to some little feet, little voices, and the in-and-out of two parents tag-teaming during retreat sessions.
 - ❖ Bring some toys and set aside a room for naps.
 - ❖ Invite high school students who need service hours to join you as babysitters.
 - ❖ Make an announcement at the beginning of the retreat that the children are welcome, that they will be signs of God's grace to all participants throughout the retreat.



Planning Checklist

Six months to one year in advance:

- 1) Book your retreat facility.
- 2) Invite a priest to join you to offer Mass, and perhaps also to offer Reconciliation.
- 3) Send a “Save the Date” for the retreat.
- 4) Contact the ACE Advocates staff if you’re planning a large retreat and would like a staff member to join you. For large groups, Fr. Lou may also be available to serve as chaplain.
- 5) Speak with other nearby regional leaders if you’d like to “go in together” on a retreat!

Three to six months in advance:

- 6) Continue advertising your retreat, and extend personal invitations to attend.
- 7) Create a registration form and make it available.
- 8) Finalize who will be on your retreat team.

One to two months in advance:

- 9) Create a master schedule for the retreat.
- 10) Divide retreat sessions and administrative tasks among the planning team and begin to prepare your sessions. A “Schedule of Responsibilities” is included in these resources.
- 11) Decide how you will handle meals and snacks – this could be part of what the facility offers, or you could purchase food or plan to go to a restaurant.
- 12) Continue inviting people to register for your retreat. If registrations are coming in slower than expected, think about whom else you might invite, and extend those invitations.

The month of the retreat:

- 13) Send a “one last chance to register!” email and finalize your retreat group.
- 14) Assign retreat team members to acquire all needed supplies.
- 15) Send an email to all who have registered giving final information – directions, attire, the basic schedule, a reminder to bring a Bible or any other necessary items, numbers to call if people get lost on the way, any other important announcements.
- 16) Create retreat folders if you so choose.
- 17) Contact Meghann in the ACE Advocates office if you would like to use a liturgy program, with songs printed, for your retreat.

The day of the retreat:

- 18) Arrive early to meet the staff of your retreat facility, set up, and greet participants.
- 19) Follow the “Schedule of Responsibilities” and have a wonderful, restful, prayerful retreat!



Supply List

<i>What's needed</i>	<i>When it's needed</i>	<i>Who acquires it</i>
Prayer table or altar – cross, candle, cloth, decorations	Pre-retreat setup	
Spiritual “centers” to make available during the retreat – spiritual reading, Bibles, rosaries, icons, drawing supplies, stationery and stamps for those who’d like to write letters	Pre-retreat setup	
Master binder with two copies of every reading	Pre-retreat setup	
Check-in sheet for participants	Pre-retreat setup	
Nametags	Pre-retreat setup	
Markers	Pre-retreat setup	
Welcome signs	Pre-retreat setup	
Retreat folders (retreat schedule, facility map, pen, paper for notes, liturgy program, info on ACE Advocates, emergency phone numbers, welcome letter)	Pre-retreat setup	
Snacks – breakfast, coffee, etc.	Pre-retreat setup	
DVD	Introductory Session	
Audio-visual setup	Introductory Session	
Musical setup: instruments, CD player, amps or cords, programs or hymnals	Session I	
Blank petition cards (could be simple index cards)	Session I	
Pens	Session I	
Basket to collect petitions	Session I	
Extra copies of the prayer service for readers	Session I	
DVD/AV setup	Session I	
Copies of the individual reflection activity	Session I	

List of small groups to post	Session I	
Colored pencils, markers, etc.	Session I	
Lunch food, dishes, napkins, etc.	Lunch/Break	
Anything you'd like to provide for break – spiritual materials, sports equipment, board games, etc.	Lunch/Break	
Musical setup	Session II	
Extra copies of the prayer service for readers	Session II	
DVD/AV setup	Session II	
Copies of the individual Scripture study activity and accompanying notes (several pages long)	Session II	
Bibles (encourage participants to bring theirs, but have a couple extras, or at least copies of the passage)	Session II	
Musical setup	Session III	
Extra copies of the prayer service for readers	Session III	
DVD/AV setup	Session III	
Copies of the reflection activity	Session III	
Blank prayer cards (You might consider getting nicer cards for these, as they'll be cards the participants will be invited to keep after the retreat.)	Session III	
Supplies for Mass (see Mass planning guidelines)	Mass	
Dinner food/dishes/napkins/etc.	Dinner	
Scissors	Miscellaneous	
Tape	Miscellaneous	
Matches or lighters	Miscellaneous	
Kleenex	Miscellaneous	
Allergy medicine/Ibuprofen/band-aids/general first aid kit	Miscellaneous	



The “Clean Window” Effect

The job of the retreat team is to achieve “the clean window effect.”

- ❖ A retreat allows participants to spend time with God, to encounter Christ.
- ❖ Think of your retreat as the lens or window through which your participants look, to see God standing on the other side. As a leader, you want your retreatants to be able to focus completely on that vision of God.
- ❖ This means the window must be as clean and crystal clear as possible. Smudges of dirt or fingerprints on a window don’t block the view through the window, but they divert the viewer’s attention. The viewer notices the smudges. In the same way, glitches during your retreat won’t make it impossible for participants to encounter Christ. But they will draw attention to the process.
- ❖ Luckily, there are easy ways for leaders to achieve the clean window effect – a seamless series of prayers and activities that leave participants thinking, “Wow, they thought of everything!”

First, determine what is most important to your team.

- ❖ How do you want participants to describe your retreat once it’s finished? Relaxing? Powerful? Prayerful? Transformative? A time to grow closer as a community? A time of new spiritual insight?
- ❖ Early in your team’s preparation, have this discussion and choose a few words to keep in mind as you do all your preparations.

Second, divide tasks and prepare purposefully.

- ❖ **The biggest challenge in leading a retreat comes from the fact that, like all retreat participants, leaders are busy people who crave a chance to rest, reflect, and pray.** Unfortunately, this is difficult when you have the responsibility to “keep the window clean.”
- ❖ Sit with your team at an early planning meeting and divide responsibilities, with different members taking the responsibility for leading different retreat sessions. Your job is then to ensure that your session runs seamlessly. During other sessions, you can relax and enter into the prayer, knowing that others have that part covered.

- ❖ Take the time to prepare carefully and thoroughly for your retreat session. Don't rush through this step, as it is essential to a prayerful leading of your retreat session.
 - Read the prayer service and directions several times. Watch the DVD. Spend time with the reflective activity. **Know the contour of your session.** If you are looking at the text for the first time during the retreat, this will be very obvious!
 - If any of the prayers or transitions feel awkward to you to read, then re-word them so they feel more natural. These resources are just that – resources that you can and should adapt to fit your leadership style and your community's needs.

Third, think intentionally about setting the physical stage for your retreat.

- ❖ Create an **area of prayerful focus** in your main room – an altar or a small table.
 - This will be a focus during opening prayer, and your group's petitions can remain here throughout the retreat as a symbol of the hunger we bring to God.
 - Decorate this table with a cloth, crucifix, Bible, and candle.
 - You might also include decorations related to the retreat theme – a few stems of wheat, a small loaf of bread, a glass of wine or bunch of grapes.

- ❖ Make life easier for leaders – **create a “home base” for all materials** before the participants arrive. When you're ready to hand out reflection questions, the stack is already there. Need a pen? There's a bunch there. Small groups? The list is right there.

- ❖ **Think about the five senses** as you prepare your space:
 - **SIGHT:** Set lights at a comforting, meditative level, being sure it's bright enough for readers and musicians to see. Use candles for light and movement. Be sure the DVD screen is visible from every seat in the room. Post welcome signs, and a sign with the title of the current retreat session – this could even be on a whiteboard for simplicity. Post quotes from Scripture or faith-filled people around the room.
 - **SOUND:** Set up an iPod and speaker with reflective music during quiet time. Test the volume of musical instruments from different places in the room – be sure music is neither too loud nor too soft. Close doors and windows as needed to block out nearby traffic sounds – or open them to let the music of nature filter into the room!
 - **TOUCH:** Be attentive to the temperature of the room. Arrange seats so the group feels cozy and cohesive. Bring pillows or cushions for people to sit on, and provide a variety of seating options during small group and individual reflection time. Provide items such as rosaries or art supplies for people to use during break time.
 - **SMELL:** Keep candles lit throughout the retreat.
 - **TASTE:** Set up with light snacks – it's easy to feel hungry during this retreat! Have some sweet, salty, and healthy options, without going overboard – and a hot coffee/tea/cocoa station can be a wonderful comfort during winter retreats!
 - **The bottom line:** *These details can be fairly simple to include, and they don't go unnoticed! These are the touches that make participants think “Wow, they thought of everything!”*



Welcome and Introduction

See the Executive Schedule for other parts to include in the retreat introduction session.

In chapter 7 of the Gospel of Matthew, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a very simple instruction for entering the Kingdom of God. He says: “Seek, and you shall find. Ask, and you shall receive. Knock and the door of the Kingdom will be open to you.”

It's a seemingly simple teaching, consoling in its brevity and simplicity; with need for hardly any explanation, Jesus gives such a certain assurance – “You shall find; you shall receive; the door will be opened to you.” Only one thing is asked, and that, 3 times: to seek; to ask; to knock.

There is, it is safe to assume, a door in the room where you are right now. Do you wish to knock at it, so that you can pass through? Maybe later, if you don't like this retreat, you will! But for now, assuredly, you are content not to knock.

Why? Because you are already inside the place you want to be. We don't knock on doors when we are already in the place where we want to be. We don't ask; we don't seek; we don't knock, when we are totally content, totally happy, totally at peace.

Wouldn't we all wish to always be in such a state – content, happy, at peace? But there are 2 problems here: First, of course, we are NEVER totally content, totally happy, totally at peace! And second, Jesus says that the only way to enter the Kingdom of God is to ask, to seek, and to knock, which we will NEVER do if we are totally content, happy and at peace.

And without even knowing who is watching this video right now, this must be one primary reason you are on retreat. It is the same reason for why you pray, why you read Scripture, why you seek nourishment in the Eucharist, or in a community of friends in faith.

Because we are never totally content, happy and at peace. Some parts of our soul are ALWAYS seeking, asking, knocking. We need moments in our life when we are not totally content with the place where we are; we need moments when we realize that our life needs to change – in little ways, or big ways – from the way it is.

We need these moments – (actually, deep down, we long for these moments) – of realizing we are outside a door that is closed. We long for these moments, because we need them if we are ever going to knock at the door.

And the Good News is: this is precisely the step we have to make if we want to enter the Kingdom of God. We have to realize that parts of us are not yet in the Kingdom of God – and this will be true throughout our lives. The second we become totally content with where we are in relationship to God, as if every part of our being were already inside God's Kingdom, we stop seeking; we stop asking; we stop knocking.

Time and again, Jesus tells us: always strive to remember that you're not all the way into the Kingdom of God, and then you will always be entering it. What a great reason to spend some time on retreat.

This retreat you are about to embark on asks you to take some time to consider: What are the hungers, the longings, the questions, the closed doors, that make you restless these days? Physically, relationally, intellectually, professionally – what are we longing for? All of these longings – the physical, the relational, the intellectual, the professional – are, of course, parts of the overarching spiritual hunger that Jesus knew so well, when he instructed us with 3 simple verbs: “Seek, ask, knock.”

But this wasn't all of Jesus' teachings. For his instruction also included a promise: “Seek and you will find. Ask, and you will receive. Knock, and the door will be opened.” Jesus urges us to follow our spiritual longings, not so that we will be endlessly restless, or ultimately frustrated, but rather, because in doing so, we will be led to the One who satisfies our deepest longings.

Christ offers us not only instruction, but also nourishment. By receiving the nourishment he offers – in word in sacrament, in community and relationships – we not only experience the beginnings of satisfaction of our hungers, but we allow ourselves to grow increasingly more Christ-like, and become nourishment for others.

So for this time of retreat, I invite you, quiet all those parts of yourself that are already inside the Kingdom of God. The part of you that is generous, and patient with others, and loving, and trustworthy, and faithful – let them rest, and be strengthened for the tasks God will give you tomorrow. For today, let those parts of you speak that are standing just outside the Kingdom of God. Look inside you, and you will see which parts they are. Let them speak. Because their voices will be like knocks on the door of the Kingdom of God. And Jesus has taught us – over and over again – who is waiting on the other side of the door, waiting to open.

*Fr. Lou DeFra, CSC
Director of Pastoral Life, Alliance for Catholic Education*



What are you hungry for?

(See “Planning your Retreat” and “Setting the Stage” for a list of necessary supplies for this session as well as suggestions for setting up your room.)

Prelude Hymn (play on CD or have musicians lead)

Be Still, And Know That I Am God (Warner)

(During the prelude, distribute a petition card and writing utensil to each participant.)

Call to Worship and Opening Reflection

Presider: We gather together in the presence of God
to set these next hours apart from our daily schedules,
to spend time in prayer and reflection.

As we begin this time of retreat, I invite you to consider one simple question:

“What are you hungry for?”

What longing or restlessness do you feel that has led you here today,
to spend time on retreat?

I invite you to describe this hunger in a word or short phrase, or even a symbol,
and write or draw it at the top of the card in your hand.

(Allow time for brief reflection and writing.)

Mindful of all that keeps us restless and hungering for the presence of God,
we enter into prayer together.

We join in our opening hymn, “All Who Hunger.”

Opening Hymn

All Who Hunger (Dunstan/Moore)

Opening Prayer

Presider: Holy Father, you are the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Thank you for your deep love for us.

In your compassion, meet us where we are today,

And help us to find our satisfaction in you.

All: Amen

Scripture

Presider: In our restless hungers,
we echo the hungry words of our ancestors in the faith.

Of Bartimaeus...

Reader 1: The blind man...began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."...Jesus stopped and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." (Mark 10:48-52, excerpted)

Presider: Of Hannah...

Reader 2: In her bitterness she prayed to the Lord, weeping copiously, and she made a vow, promising: "O Lord of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the Lord for as long as he lives. (Samuel 1:10-11, 20)

Presider: Of David...

Reader 3: Oh God, you are my God—for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, like a land parched, lifeless and without water. (Psalm 63:1-2)

Intercessory Prayer

Presider: These men and women placed their hungers before the Lord,
and today we do the same.
Consider the card you hold in your hand,
and the word, phrase, or symbol that best describes your own hunger.
On your card, I invite you to write a one- or two-sentence petition,
offering this hunger to God.

In just a moment,
we will collect all of our prayers and place them here at the foot of the cross.
(Indicate the cross or crucifix on your prayer table or altar.)

At that time, you may offer your prayer aloud if you feel moved to do so,
or you may fold the card as small as you like and place it in the basket,
which will remain here by the cross for the duration of our retreat.

(Instrumental music begins – if there is a "live" musician he or she should begin playing "Come to the Water;" otherwise a CD of instrumental music may be played until it is time to sing the closing hymn.)

Presider: *(After a few minutes to write petitions)*
We offer to God the longings and hungers that we carry with us today,
Both those spoken aloud and those whispered to Him from the silence of our hearts.

*(Pass the basket; retreatants may offer their prayers aloud or just place their cards in the basket.
Once all prayers are collected, the presider places the basket on the prayer table or altar.)*

Presider: Lord God, in the restless hunger we experience today,
We remember your loving care of Bartimaeus, Hannah and David.
We trust that as you satisfied their hungers, so you will satisfy ours:

Reader 1: Jesus told Bartimaeus, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Reader 2: The Lord remembered Hannah. She conceived and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel.

Reader 3: David wrote, "My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods...you are indeed my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy."

Presider: People of God, "The Lord fills the hungry with good things."
Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Closing Hymn

Come to the Water (Foley)

Reflection Session

Presider: In our prayer, we began our retreat by thinking about where we are currently feeling hungry or restless. We continue this reflection now with a talk from Ricky Austin of the ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools staff. After Ricky's words, we'll have some time for personal reflection, followed by time for small group conversations about just what it is that we're hungry for, and how that hunger reveals itself to us.

(Play Ricky's reflection on the DVD; the text is included on the following page.)

Following the DVD:

- Display a list of small groups, with a leader designated for each.
- Give participants a time at which they should meet their small groups, and a time at which all small groups should return to the main room.
- Then hand out copies of the personal reflection exercise and invite participants to spend the next block of time in silent personal reflection. You may want to make a supply of writing utensils, including colored pencils/crayons/markers, available as well for this exercise.
- Remind participants that there will be time for socializing later in the retreat, and to respect this as time for silence and reflection.

Following personal and small group time:

- When the whole group has gathered back together, ask participants what struck them during either their individual time or small group discussions. You may want to preface this question by affirming that silence is okay!
- Once it seems that the conversation has come to a stop (or when it becomes necessary to move on!), offer the closing prayer below, followed by any logistical announcements about the next parts of the schedule.

Closing Prayer

Presider: Loving Father,
Our hunger draws us close to you,
and for this and all blessings, we thank you.
Guide us as we seek to satisfy this hunger,
And make us aware and ever grateful for the countless ways you nourish us every
day.

We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen



What are you hungry for?

- 1) Begin by considering the activities and thoughts that consume you during a typical week. Use the calendar on the back of this page to sketch out what a typical week – if there is such a thing! – might look like for you.

- 2) Look over your calendar and ask yourself, “During which of these times do I feel full, complete, satisfied?” Choose a symbol or color to mark these times. What do these times have in common with each other? How do these feelings of fullness manifest themselves, and to what do you attribute them?

- 3) Again, look at your calendar, but this time ask, “During which of these times do I feel depleted, hungry, or drained?” Choose a different symbol or color to mark these times. What do these times have in common with each other? How do these feelings of hunger manifest themselves, and to what do you attribute them?

- 4) Looking beyond the timeline of a single week, consider the past months, the past year, or the months and years to come. Are there larger elements of life that leave you feeling either nourished or hungry?

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
Morning						
Afternoon						
Evening						



What are you hungry for?

What are you hungry for? How do you know? Feeling hungry isn't difficult. In fact, of all the things that we do as humans, feeling hungry has to be one of our easiest accomplishments. Comparable to feeling thirsty, or even breathing, feeling hungry is one of the easiest things we do.

To some extent, that statement might sound a little bit ridiculous because we may have a hard time classifying hunger, thirst or breathing on any sort of scale that has easy on one side and difficult on the other. It's ridiculous because those three basic bodily needs probably don't belong on that scale at all. They happen so automatically and with so little conscious decision that I think it's safe to say that we can talk about them independently from things we do, and in a different light.

And that is really my point – being hungry or thirsty isn't something we do. It's a gift of evolution and a built-in survival mechanism that happens over and over again throughout our lives to make sure we nourish ourselves – to make sure we keep ourselves alive.

It's so intertwined with our carnal nature that it can overpower and control us, change our mood, or our physical well-being . When we let it get away from us we feel it; in the form of muscle weakness, lack of motivation, or even headaches. These are all signals that we are not doing something we're supposed to be doing. We're not providing our body with what it needs to function normally.

We've all had the experience of missing a meal, or traveling somewhere and not having the opportunity to eat. The experience is something like this: Stage 1: You start feeling a light emptiness in your stomach that if ignored evolves to... Stage 2, an occasional stomach growl. Stage 3: A full-out litany of zoo animals begins emanating from your inner being. Stage 4: Your hunger turns into a bit of anxiety – a bit of a panic that you may not actually ever eat again. Stage 5: You lose focus of anything else besides finding that food. It wouldn't matter if the Pope was trying to shake your hand, nothing will stop you from bulldozing your way to the nearest Twinkie.

I'm sure I'm not alone in having the experience of being with someone as they're going through this five stage process. A nameless member of my family was notorious for turning into the Hulk, anytime her hunger needs hit Stage 4 or 5. The most pleasant of days could turn into a nightmare of trying to avoid that person at all costs so that you, yourself, don't become a victim of their food-seeking rampage – or **worse, dinner.**

The physical and emotional effects of intense, but **satisfiable**, hunger are very real and they're easily identifiable. We tend to have a good idea when it will happen, what it will feel like and how we will manage that feeling in such a way that we will come out nourished, rejuvenated with energy and will be able to continue going about our business to the best of our ability.

But as much as I'd like to talk about a big, juicy steak, a carefully crafted apple pie or my adventures with the Hulk, I'm not here to talk about just food, or just the needs of our stomachs. A healthy, happy human being is the result of a cohesive balance of properly functioning and properly fed *body, mind and spirit*. As a higher order of God's creations, we have been blessed with the gift of our earthly bodies, but also with the gift of discerning minds and everlasting spirits. Just as we need to provide for the body, so must we nourish the other important parts of our being; our intellectual, relational and spiritual hungers.

We see this in many aspects of our lives. Our desire to live in community with others. Our thirst for knowledge. But, nowhere is this point more evident than in the story with Jesus and the woman at the well. You probably know the story, but it's worth a quick retell.

During their travels, Jesus and his disciples pass through Samaria on their way home and when they arrive in the small town, they split up. The disciples head into town to get some food, while Jesus stays behind. As he's waiting for his friends to return, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman he encounters at the local well for a drink. A little taken back that this stranger is speaking to her, the woman asks him, "How can you, a Jew ask me, a Samaritan woman for a drink?"

Jesus answers her, "If you knew the gift of God, and you knew who was speaking to you, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

The woman is intrigued by what Jesus says, but she misses the point. She responds by asking how he expects to get this living water if he doesn't even have a bucket for the well. Jesus' response this time gets straight to the point. He tells her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but the water I give will quench your thirst forever and become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Now unfortunately, she misses the point again, but I can't say I blame her here. Who wouldn't want this magical water that fulfills your thirst forever? Especially in the brutally hot, middle eastern desert.

But Jesus isn't talking about physical thirst, or physical hunger here. He's talking about something more. Like the Samaritan woman each of us has intellectual, relational and spiritual thirsts that need quenched, that is, inner longings for peace and contentment, for

meaning and purpose in life, for hope. Through further discussion, Jesus reveals to the woman how she has strayed away from a life of moral and spiritual nourishment, and how refocusing her life on Christ can fulfill her every internal need and lead her to eternal life.

So when we hear in scripture later that “man does not live on bread alone,” we understand what we’re being taught. But that doesn’t mean we’ve figured out exactly what it is that we, ourselves, are hungering for?

The types of hunger we might experience are as diverse as they are numerous. Some of us may be seeking better relationships, friendship, love, affirmation, a good laugh, professional success, or emotional support. We find out that the woman at the well was hungering for an experience with Christ and meaningful time with God. Maybe, we are too.

We could spend hours listing the different types of hunger we experience throughout our lives, but that doesn’t mean we can tell when we are feeling a hunger for any particular one of them. The way our bodies experience the physical hunger for food, on the other hand, is fairly infallible. We feel hungry. We know we need to get food. And, we are reenergized after eating.

It’s not so clear how we go about distinguishing exactly when we are longing for other types of nourishment. Do we experience hunger pangs? Physical discomfort? Emotional reactions? Do we change our behavior to compensate for what we’re lacking?

As the story goes on with the woman at the well, Jesus uncovers that the woman was a bit of an outcast from her community because she had indulged herself with dysfunctional relationships with other men and had gone through, at that encounter, five different husbands and was working on her sixth. Her mistaken ways were leading her further and further from satisfying her real hunger. Her spiritual longing for God had become so difficult to identify that it literally took an encounter with Christ to dig under the distractions to find her true nourishment.

Chances are, we’re not going to be so lucky to run into Jesus at the local pub. If we’re starving ourselves of spiritual, intellectual or any of these other types of nourishment, the effects of starvation are going to take their toll and we’re going to have a very difficult time identifying and nourishing our hungers.

‘Crying over spilled milk’ is a common side effect of neglecting our real needs. After too long without rest, a laugh with a good friend or too long without quality time for reflection, we might have the tendency to lash out at someone we love, or say something we don’t mean over an issue that really doesn’t bother us all that much. Not addressing the real need, the real hunger, tends to only make the fact that we spilled the milk an unpleasant experience.

You may be able to easily identify an experience in your own life when you felt lashing out was the only way to resolve a very minor problem. You may be able to think of times when you made a big deal out of something trivial. You may even be able to recall how you kept doing something over and over again that was damaging to others, only to find out later that something else, some internal need, was causing your frustration.

A quick example – I grew up in a family void of religious discussion. Talking about God was like tying a string around your tooth, connecting the other end to a doorknob and slamming the door shut. It was a rare occurrence that only happened in extreme life situations - and it generally hurt everyone involved.

Looking back now, I am able to see that I had a strong internal need for spiritual reflection and development with the people closest to me. At the time, I was really struggling to figure out what I was hungry for. But the circumstances surrounding my family's ability to address that need led to an increasingly debilitating position. I couldn't talk about my faith, and I had a growing frustration in not being able to include other members of my family in my growth as a Christian.

The result – As time passed and I was unable to figure out this growing need for spiritual nourishment, I began talking to my parents less - and much less about anything really meaningful. When we did talk, frustration over minor things controlled the interaction. We'd get annoyed at each other for our tone of voice, because we weren't interested in each other's conversation, or because we felt like we had better things to do. At one point, my mother and I came face to face in a shouting match over who was going to back whose car out of the driveway first on our ways to work and school. It was absurd. It was difficult and if we never addressed the real need lying beneath these petty conflicts, it could have been destructive.

The problem wasn't that we needed to be more patient with each other, or that we needed to love each other more, or even that we should have forced more regular conversation. The problem was that we couldn't talk about our faith openly. That problem was buried, however, and could not be addressed beneath the frustration found in our disagreements.

Like the woman at the well and her distorted use of relationships and my faith searching experience with my family and our distorted sense of communication, we must realize that it is sometimes difficult to identify the non-physical hungers we are experiencing. Furthermore, we should be aware that the longer those hungers go unaddressed – the longer we starve ourselves – the more difficult they will be to seek out and properly nourish.

But, what if I were to tell you that one of the obstacles to identifying and seeking out proper nourishment is potentially more costly than burying our hungers with distractions. That obstacle is ignoring your hungers altogether.

Calling back to mind the example of our physical hunger, we can dissect the experience through its different stages of development. For example, for almost all babies, hunger means crying until we get what we want. It's pretty basic. Feel hungry, cry until we get that tasty treat. As we develop into children, we look to our parents for sustenance and parental guidance helps us learn to fend for ourselves. As we become adults, we will have hopefully figured out ways to sooth the pangs of hunger on our own. And why wouldn't we? We can easily identify our physical hunger and we can take care of ourselves to make sure we are satisfied. But do we always?

How many of us have knowingly eaten things that don't actually do any nourishing for our bodies, and are just a temporary fix to the problem of hunger pang? Or worse - How many of us have talked ourselves out of a meal altogether? I'm not talking about ignoring seconds or skipping dessert. I'm talking about knowingly ignoring stages one through five – the time tested reactions that keeps us alive. How many of us have worked through lunch only to find we never ate at all? Or been too busy to sit down for breakfast or dinner?

As humans we have this amazing ability - we are capable of over-riding our fundamental, natural cries for nourishment. We're only capable of doing this, however, by pushing ourselves beyond what anyone could consider "natural" by summoning our bodies to produce extra adrenaline, or pursuing outside stimulants like sugar or caffeine. But, we push through, knowingly not meeting the needs of a body crying out for help. The result – unhealthy habits, a suffering body, inability to rest properly and lack of sleep, or even dependency on some of the stimulants we use to keep going.

If we are capable of over-riding the most basic, physical human needs like hunger - something that creates an easily identifiable, physical reaction - then what does that mean for deciphering the needs of the infinitely more complicated needs of our mind and soul?

The answers to these questions are going to be different for all of us, but I feel safe in saying that if we have the ability to over-ride the hungers that keep us alive and make us human, then we also have the ability to stop and listen to them. Scripture tells us "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul."

God is calling us to calm, quiet rest. It is in the green pasture, beside the still waters that we can reflect on the busy-ness of our lives and the obstacles to identifying our hungers.

Intermittently disengaging from our routines, our habits or our lives give us the opportunity to listen to and at their very essence *feel* the needs of our body, our mind and our soul. Sometimes buried beneath our trivial confrontations, and sometimes ignored as we pursue our own work, or desires, the needs of our lives are always pleading, waiting to be nourished.

When we get to that place of rest – of calm, when we have sifted through the distractions - it is then that we can seek the right food that satisfies the right hunger, and we can discover the ultimate source of all our nourishments, Jesus Christ.

So I leave you here, hopefully in a place where you can turn off the world for a moment, somewhere where you can dig down to the root of your needs or rediscover the ones that have been overlooked. I hope maybe even at a place where you will consider making disengagement, rest and self-reflection a regular habit or routine – a time when you can answer for yourself: What are you hungry for? How is that longing revealing itself?

Ricky Austin
Assistant Director, ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools



Nourished by Christ

(See “Planning your Retreat” and “Setting the Stage” for a list of necessary supplies for this session as well as suggestions for setting up your room.)

Opening Prayer

Presider: God of heaven,
for love you made us to be in relationship with you.
Thank you for relentlessly calling us into this communion.
Through your Spirit, keep us ever hungering and thirsting after you.

All: Amen

Scripture

Reader 1: A reading from the Book of Psalms
God, you are my God – for you I long!
For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts,
like a land parched, lifeless, and without water.
So I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory.
For your love is better than life;
my lips offer you worship!
I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands, calling on your name.
My soul shall savor the rich banquet of praise,
with joyous lips my mouth shall honor you!

(Psalm 63:1-6)

Hymn

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

(Tune – Bicentennial; Text by Westendorf; also published under the title “Gift of Finest Wheat”)

Scripture

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel according to John
Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life;
 whoever comes to me will never hunger,
 and whoever believes in me will never thirst...
I am the bread of life.
Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died;
 this is the bread that comes down from heaven
 so that one may eat it and not die.
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."

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ

Closing Prayer

Presider: God, our loving parent,
 you deeply desire to bring us every good thing.
Thank you for the banquet you have set before us.
By your Spirit, may we eat and drink deeply,
 and so grow closer to you.

All: Amen

Reflection Session

Presider: We have spent time thinking about the hungers we experience; now we will reflect on the nourishment that Jesus Christ offers to us. We'll begin by hearing some thoughts from Ann Berends and Chuck Lamphier of the ACE Advocates staff. After their talk, we'll have some time for personal reflection and for a discussion with our large group.

(Play the reflection on the DVD; the text is included on the following pages.)

Following the DVD:

- The next 30 minutes are set aside for individual time with Scripture. Hand out the activity and invite members to use one of the three approaches offered to explore the Bible passage. Give a time for everyone to return to the large group.
- When everyone has returned, spend about 25 minutes in a large group discussion about the exercise and the Scripture passage. Begin with a simple invitation such as, "Were there any thoughts or ideas that struck you during the last half-hour, either about the Scripture passage or about the process you went through while reading it?"
- If conversation starts to lull, you might prompt the group with questions such as:
 - Did any of the three suggested methods help you hear Scripture in a new way?
 - When in your life can you envision yourself turning to Scripture for nourishment during times of hunger?
- At the end of the session, offer the closing prayer from the exercise as a group. Then make any logistical announcements about the next parts of the schedule.



Nourished by Christ



Sein with Child on Her Lap
Van Gogh

You are God's child. Each day God longs to hold you closely, to listen to you, and to speak to you. Picture yourself sitting on the lap of God, leaning into God's chest, hearing whispered stories of your life—your life as part of God's story.

Beginning Prayer

Lord, give me the desire to be near to you today.

As I read your words, let me hear you speaking.

As I reflect on each page, let me see your image.

And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy.

(Gregory of Nazianzus)

Read: Feeding of the 5,000: John 6:5-15

THREE METHODS FOR ENTERING INTO THE STORY – Because everyone is different, and not every way of approaching the Bible works for every reader. Choose the method that's most inviting to you. Or if you're not sure, try more than one.

I. STUDY

Slowly read this story aloud (thus engaging more of your senses and minimizing internal distractions). Savor each phrase. Pay attention to which words jump out at you.

Use the attached notes to help you consider questions such as those listed below. Write out your answers, journal your reflections, or in stillness simply absorb the lesson:

1. Who is the writer of this Gospel?
2. Why did he write it?
3. What does the story tell us about Jesus?
4. How does it apply to today?

II. CONTEMPLATION

Use your imagination to “live into” the story. Picture yourself as one of the people who has followed this charismatic Jesus up the mountain. Feel the hunger pangs in your stomach, the slight headache setting in as the sun beats down on your head. See the disciple asking Jesus about lunch; watch the boy hand Jesus his loaves and fish. Smell the bread and fish as Jesus starts to divide it ...someone brings a basket over...Jesus drops the chunks of bread and fish into the basket. It fills, and somehow, the food is not gone. More baskets are lined up. A hush of amazement falls over the crowd, then laughter spreads like a ripple.

Jesus passes a basket to you. You look in his eyes. What do you want to ask him? What hunger do you want him to fill? Talk to him now. Tell him how you need to be filled by him.

III. LECTIO DIVINA

This quiet, thoughtful method of prayer is much simpler than its name suggests: Lectio Divina – that is, “divine reading” or “holy reading.” The Benedictines have practiced it for centuries, but it’s not for religious only. “Holy reading” is accessible to us all.

Here is how it works:

- a. **CHOOSE** a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. For today’s exercise, look at John 6:5-15. Other days you might choose part of a Psalm, one of the readings from the Eucharistic liturgy for the day, or a particular Bible story that is meaningful to you. It doesn’t matter what text you choose, as long as you don’t try to cover a lot of ground at once. The point of this form of prayer is to go slowly and focus on listening to God.
- b. **GET COMFORTABLE** and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; others quietly recite a word or phrase. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.
- c. **TURN** to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightening or ecstasies. In this prayer, God is teaching us to listen to Him, to seek Him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, He softly, gently invites us ever more deeply into His presence.
- d. **NEXT TAKE** the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of “distractions.” Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.
- e. **THEN, SPEAK** to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to Him what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of listening.

- f. FINALLY, SIMPLY rest in God's embrace. And when He invites you to return to your pondering of His word or to your inner dialogue with Him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

SOMETIMES you might return several times to the printed text during your prayer, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time you've set aside.

It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one's lectio divina as if one were "performing" or seeking some goal: lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Ending prayer

Lord, thank you for your presence with me.

Thank you that your desire to feed us is as real today as it was in this story from John's Gospel.

*Through your Spirit's work in me, grant me to the desire to turn to you
as the Satisfaction of all my hunger.*

In Jesus' name, Amen.

An example of a Small Group Bible Study Using Lectio Divina

1. Select a short passage from the Bible, e.g. Mark's gospel, 4:35-40.
2. Leader first invites those present to listen carefully to God's Word and reminds them of Jesus' assurances: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there, too." S/He begins with a short prayer such as "Speak to us, Lord. Help us listen carefully to Your word."
3. Leader then reads the passage aloud very slowly, distinctly, with pauses, so that each phrase can sink into the listeners.
4. After the reading each in turn shares what it said to her/him personally; "I felt this..." "I heard this..." "This struck me..." "To me it said or meant..." Do not feel uneasy during silent gaps between readings or comments. These silent moments are golden and afford rare opportunities of letting God's message resonate and slowly deepen in us. Relax. Savor His words during the silences.
5. After the first round of sharing, the Leader again reads the same passage slowly. It is richer listening experience this time, because the remarks each one shared have enriched the passage for the others. God speaks to all through each other too.
6. A second round of sharing, usually richer than the first, follows the second reading.
7. The same passage is read slowly a third and last time.
8. After the third reading, only spontaneous prayers are spoken directly to God the Father or to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit or to the Blessed Mother, e.g. "Thank you, Jesus, for speaking to us. Help me be more aware of your presence in me and in others."
9. After each has spontaneously prayed, close with a favorite hymn

Adapted from Fr. Armand Nigro, SJ

A Few Bible-Reading Tips

There are 73 books in the Catholic Bible, but unlike a series of books you'd find on a library shelf, they aren't arranged in alphabetical order, strict chronological order, or topic. Neither are they organized by genre, of which there are many, like parables, short stories, historical novels, poetry. For that reason, some of the tips below can be helpful:

1. Start reading one of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.
2. When you begin to read, start with the introduction to the book and pay attention to footnotes. Pick up a commentary or two. And don't hesitate to bring questions to your pastors, priests, Bishops, or other trusted members of the Church.
3. If you don't feel like reading the Bible, don't worry about that, but don't let it stop you, either! Simply ask God to give you the desire to read it, and then forge ahead.
4. Get a good translation* and read it every day. Just like physical hunger, our daily spiritual hunger can't be satisfied with just one meal.
5. Begin your reading time with a short prayer, like: "Open my eyes to your truth, Lord."
6. Start reading with an open mind. Try not to bring an agenda—e.g., a belief you want to prove—to your time with the Lord.
7. Be patient with yourself. Take small bites—just a couple of paragraphs, a few minutes each morning or night.
8. Questions are good! As you read, ask: Who is the writer? What is the writer saying? Who is he saying it to, and why? It's important to understand first what the writer wants to say to his audience of the time. Then ask, how does this apply to me?
9. When you come across something that just doesn't make sense to you, re-read the paragraph or chapter. If it still doesn't make sense, make a note of it and keep reading. Sometimes clarity will come later.
10. Remember that the Bible is not intended as an Answer Book. It's a love-story about God and God's people. As Pierre Benoit said, "Everything in the Bible is inspired, but not everything is revealed."
11. Find a person or a small group to study with. "The Word of God," as one pastor advises, "is best understood in the context of Christian community."

*Helpful translations

1. New American Bible, St. Joseph Edition. This study Bible has a lot of how-to-read helps.
2. Revised Standard Version-Catholic Edition. Used by the Vatican, this has been lauded as the clearest, most beautiful modern translation of the Bible.

Who Wrote It and Why

Though it's not expressly stated, most people believe the book was written by the apostle John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7). His purpose was simple evangelism, or in his words, "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name" (20:31). As you read the book, you'll notice this purpose in what John emphasizes—for instance, why Jesus came to earth ("I am come that they might have life" 10:10), and how intimate his relationship with God the Father is ("I and my Father are one" 10:30).

About the Story of the Loaves and Fishes

Jesus had left the crowds to get some rest. It was nearing Passover, so the crowds on the street were especially large. Despite his efforts, they saw him get in the boat, so they headed around the lake on foot to catch up with him—a nine mile journey!

Why did Jesus ask *Philip* about where they were to get bread to feed the crowd? There are no clear answers to that question. Some think he asked Philip because Philip was from that region and would know where to send people for food. Some think he asked Philip simply because he was standing the closest to Jesus. In any event, Philip's answer reflected what was no doubt true of the other disciples, that is, that they were not expecting a miracle from Jesus on this swath of grass by the Sea of Galilee.

Andrew brought the boy to Jesus. No one knows why the boy was with the crowd that day. It's likely he was poor; barley bread was the cheapest available and disdained by anyone with means. His loaves were not "loaves" at all, as we understand them, but more like pancakes. His fish were probably the size of sardines, and pickled, since fresh fish would not last in anyone's bag on a hot journey.

Why were fragments left over? A Jewish tradition after feasts was to leave something for the servants, so it's likely that here by the lake, people left some fragments for those who served them the meal. The baskets the disciples used were probably the bottle shaped type that each of them carried every day: "No Jew ever travelled without his," according to one commentator.

It's interesting to think about how both Andrew and the boy didn't know the significance of what they were doing that day. Andrew himself was doubtful that the boy's food would be any help; he had no idea he was providing what was needed for a miracle. And the boy, he hardly had anything to offer. But if he had not offered it, there may not have been a miracle at all.

"Jesus needs what we can bring him...Little is always much in the hands of Christ" (William Barclay).



Nourished by Christ

Two of our three children are boys. Tall boys. Growing boys, ages 20 and 16. And they are always hungry. When my youngest gets up in the morning, one of the phrases he utters—one of the only phrases he utters in the morning—is, “What’s for dinner?” When our oldest walked in the door the other night for a weekend visit from college, he wisely said to the youngest one as I laid the table: “Never take this for granted.”

So one of the most satisfying things my husband and I do for our kids is feed them. Nothing says love like a 3 course meal. We cook; they eat and are satisfied—for the time being. And so are we.

The Christian life is something like that: Like growing teenagers, we are always spiritually hungry. Like a loving parent, God longs to satisfy that hunger. And only when we receive what he offers are we truly satisfied.

We are always hungry. We wake up every morning with God-given needs as real as our need for breakfast. The need for love and a sense of purpose. The need for community, and for the servant-hearts required to be God’s hands and feet in the world.

We wake up every morning with these God-given needs. Why? Because we are made in God’s image. We are spiritual beings created for one primary purpose: to be in relationship with God so that God can share his blessings with us. So we can’t fill our deepest hungers unless we know the God who gave us those hungers. And we can’t know the satisfaction of the banquet he has laid out to feed us unless we sit down at the table and eat!

How, then, do we know God? Where, or what, exactly is the banquet?

We get to know God best through His Word—Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ—revealed in Scripture and Sacrament—is the banquet God lays before us.

Let’s spend a few minutes thinking about this first one—Scripture. Then Chuck Lamphier is going to step in and talk about the Sacraments.

Meeting Christ in Scripture

God’s word through the Bible offers deep insights into who he is, and who we are as his own. If you had to sum up its message in one sentence, it would be this: God desires us and wants us to desire him. In 73 books written by many God-inspired authors over

hundreds of years, that thread of truth can still be followed. It's a love letter, really. I long for you, it says. I am with you. I am for you.

When he was about 3, my oldest son threw his arms around my legs one day and gushed, "Oh Mom, I love you so much I wish I could crawl back inside your tummy." He was overcome!

Think of someone you sincerely love. Think about how the intensity of that love compels you to express it—with a big bear hug, or a spoken "I love you," or a letter.

I have this every Thanksgiving with a dear friend of mine. Our families have managed to spend that holiday together for years even though we live hundreds of miles apart. And every year after a weekend of rich food and conversation, she and I both are overcome with the urge to write each other letters—we chuckle about it. We just have to put words on our deep affection for each other. When our hearts are full, we are *compelled* to express it and eager to hear it expressed back to us.

That's what the Bible is—the expression of God's love-full heart.

It's divided into two parts, the Old and New Testaments, and even those are united by that common thread of God's love—in other words, Jesus Christ. "The New Testament," it's been said, "lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the new."

It's all about Jesus, *God with Us*. Every story whispers his name.

We read the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son Isaac and recognize the story of Jesus. We hear Isaiah's words, "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and think immediately of the passion of Jesus Christ.

We read the Bible to know him. "Ignorance of Scriptures," St. Jerome said, "is ignorance of Christ." And if our primary purpose is to be in relationship with him, if our deepest hungers can only be satisfied by him, then the Bible is one way to sit down at and partake of the banquet he offers.

It's not easy, reading the Bible. Even scholars can find it daunting. The Bible is *long*. The language is not modern, and some of its passages are hard to understand. It's no wonder that for many of us, the idea of reading it is hardly akin to sitting down to a holiday banquet. It's more like being fed a plate of raw kale. Good for you, but...

Until we consider it this way: **Here is a book inspired by the most smart, creative, witty Being you can imagine. Here is a book inspired by the God of the universe because he is passionate for us!** The story line is not complicated. The language can be helped

by a good translation. And all efforts to plumb its depths are richly rewarded. That is a guarantee.

The Bible is buttery lobster, filet mignon, and chocolate mousse—a bounty of culinary delight rich in flavor, texture, and substance. In some respects it's an acquired taste. But like a fine wine, as Julia Child says, “you learn by drinking it...Then you savor it, analyze it, and discuss it with your companions.” The more we read it, the closer we draw to God, and the deeper our satisfaction grows in him.

One man I know decided to read the Bible all the way through. It took him about a year, and the experience changed his life. My own experience of reading the Bible has not been so dramatic. But I can tell you this: Every single day, no matter how I feel about reading the Bible that day, afterwards I am walloped by two reminders: That it is true, and that it breathes life without fail.

Not long ago, a close friend of ours said to me as he held his Bible to his face, “It is oxygen to me.” His family has been through some terrible trials. God's word is the rock to which they cling. It is true. And it is life-giving. It is God With Us.

So commit yourselves to reading the Bible this week. Imagine yourself as my hungry teenagers eagerly pulling up to the table laid with the most delicious meal you've ever seen. Then eat—and be filled!

Meeting Christ in Sacraments

I love the question that Ann raises: How do we know God? How do we get our human-sized brains to understand the God-sized mysteries? From the beginning, the Scriptures unveil images of God that we can digest. We see God as a creator who fashioned the world just right for us to thrive. We learn of a God who cares about how we look after each other, and later in scripture, we see a God who not only gives us a way to lead our lives, but who constantly pursues us when we ignore His law. And, in the fullness of time, we see a God who desires to be so intimately connected to us – desiring to reveal his very self to us through birth and even suffering and death – that God is made known to us best through the person of Jesus.

What a wonderful God who desires for our human-sized brains to understand!

Like Ann, one of my favorite ways to get to know Jesus is through spending time with Him in the Scriptures, especially the Gospels. With a little bit of slowing down, or a little bit of imagination, sometimes I'm able to see a side of Jesus that I never could before. I'd love to share with you an example.

One of my favorite stories of Jesus is in Matthew's Gospel; it's the feeding of the 5,000. We all know the basic contours of the story: After a long day, Jesus looked out at a large

crowd, and saw that they were hungry. He took five loaves and two fish, blessed them, broke the bread, and gave the food to his disciples, who in turn gave the food to the masses, and everyone ate their fill. It's a beautiful story which shows us the compassion of Jesus, and the over-flowing bounty of God's love. But if I can add one more thought, I hope you'll see another image of Jesus which may not be quite so obvious.

If we back up a few verses in Matthew's Gospel, we'll see an important item of context for this miracle. You see, the story which comes immediately before this passage – and importantly linked to it, I think – is of John the Baptist being killed. John was a prophet who spoke truth to power, and that cost him his life. We know that the people loved John and had placed their hope in him. Jesus, too, must have loved John: They were cousins, after all; friends basically from birth. They were probably a lot like brothers.

You can imagine the scene of human sadness when John's friends came to report his death to Jesus. Can you see Jesus crying? Can you imagine the pain in his heart at the cruel murder of his family member and friend? The Gospel tells us that Jesus wanted to be alone...but that the crowds wouldn't allow it. They, too, were grieving. They were despondent, they were confused, they were angry. And they had nowhere else to go with their hurt, except to this great teacher, Jesus, who was one with them in their pain. And so, despite the fact that Jesus wanted to be alone, this group of more than 5,000 left their homes, and followed him.

Given that backdrop, what else can we know about Jesus? We learn that Jesus allowed his human condition – his sadness, his grief – to draw others into deeper communion with Him. We learn that Jesus invites others – his apostles, in this case – to play an essential role in bringing his miracle to others. And, maybe most importantly, we learn that Jesus desires to provide his followers with what they truly hunger for: In this story, that's most clearly understood as food. But on a deeper level, they needed something much more. What the people needed, as they mourned the brutal murder of their leader and their friend, was the compassionate, understanding, enduring Jesus Himself. And though he longed for solitude, we see Christ generously giving the gift of his presence. His real presence.

This still happens today. God still desires to share HIMSELF. Not just words or ideas but, through scripture and sacrament, his real self.

Maybe because we're still the owners of these human-sized brains, God continues to reveal Himself in discernible, earthy ways that we can more easily understand: Ways we can see, and hear, and touch, and taste. Even now that the person of Jesus no longer walks the earth, and can no longer be seen healing the sick, forgiving the sinner, or feeding the 5,000, we have faith in His words: "I am with you always." We believe that Christ continues to be present to us, especially in the Sacraments, which both cause and signify Christ's presence.

St. Luke tells us twice how God, in desiring such intimacy with us, sends His body into the world: The first, of course, is the body of Jesus, when, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus enters into Mary's womb and into the created world. But Luke tells us of a second instance: After Jesus returns to His Father, God sends the Holy Spirit again, this time upon the assembled disciples, and they become the Church, the new Body of Christ, which is charged with continuing Christ's saving, nourishing, forgiving, healing actions in a mystical way.

I think often to the most powerful experience of the sacraments that I've had. It was Lent of my freshman year of college, and I decided that I needed to go to Reconciliation before Easter. There was one particular item that I'd been carrying around for a while, and I was just dreading saying it out loud. I went to our Church, and to my surprise, there was a long line. As I waited, I rehearsed.... "Bless me Father, for I have sinned..." and I was trying to figure out exactly how I was going to express what I needed to say. As if I weren't nervous enough, as I got closer to the front of the line, I asked someone, "Who's hearing confessions today?" and I didn't get the answer I was hoping for. This priest was not the most – let's say – forgiving. He was an old, strict, and in my judgment, cranky man. My heart started pounding faster as I inched closer.

Finally getting into the confessional, I knelt down behind the screen, and started to whisper my sins. "Speak up, I can't hear you!" was what I heard from the other side. I swallowed hard, and started again. And then, when I was finished, something happened. Something almost mystical. Something that still takes my breath away. This old, uncompromising, tired, cranky priest, I swear, became another person. His words were understanding. He was encouraging, he offered sage guidance. He told me that God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son, had reconciled the world to Himself, and that the Holy Spirit had been sent for the forgiveness of sins. He told me that through the ministry of the Church, I was being offered pardon and peace, and that I was absolved of my sins in God's name. In that sacramental moment, I wasn't just offered words, or the idea of forgiveness. At that moment, Christ himself was extending his open arms of reconciliation to me, and one of my deepest hungers was being fed.

God so loves the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life. Jesus is our ultimate source of nourishment, our ultimate source of life. We thank God for letting us know of this nourishment through the Scriptures and the Church, and we thank God for allowing us to continue to experience this nourishment in the Eucharist, in Reconciliation, and in all the Sacraments.

*Ann Berends and Chuck Lamphier
Associate Director and Director, ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools*



We become what we receive

(See “Planning your Retreat” and “Setting the Stage” for a list of necessary supplies for this session as well as suggestions for setting up your room.)

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

Presider: We come before God as His hungry sons and daughters,
and Christ offers himself as sustenance, both in Word and Sacrament.
How do we respond to this gift, to God’s extravagant generosity?

Let us pray:

Gracious Lord, you are the Bread of Life.

Make us aware of the life-giving sustenance you offer us every day
through your gift of self, and bless us with deep gratitude.

Through this gift, transform us.

Help us truly become what we receive:
the mystical Body of Christ on earth.

All: Amen

Hymn

In This Place (Thomson, published OCP)

Reflection Session

Presider: We have spent time today considering the hungers we bring to God and the ways God offers us nourishment. An important question remains, especially as we prepare to return to the busy demands of regular life. How do we respond to this? We’ll spend our final retreat session breaking into this question, starting with a reflection from Meghann Robinson on the ACE Advocates staff.

(Play Meghann’s reflection on the DVD; the text is included on the following page.)

Following the DVD:

- Provide participants with a copy of the response activity and a blank prayer card. Set an amount of time for personal reflection prior to the closing prayer service and Mass.
- Remind participants to respect this as time for silence and reflection.
- You may choose to play some soft, reflective music during this time.
- Following individual reflection time, come back together for the closing prayer service.

Closing Prayer Service

Prelude hymn

(This hymn plays as the group returns to the main room – musicians may lead, and participants may be invited to join in the singing as they enter the room and get settled. This hymn reflects the gift of Christ in both Word and Sacrament. Sing as many verses as you like to get your group back together for prayer.)

Take and Eat (Joncas, published GIA)

Opening prayer

Presider: Lord Jesus,

Through the gift of yourself in Word and Sacrament you continue to grow within us.

You call us and challenge us to be your hands, your feet, your eyes.

Transform us into your body on earth,

that we may work without weariness to build the Kingdom of God.

Scripture and Song

Taste and See (Moore, published GIA)

(During this section of prayer, the singing of the refrain will alternate with the reading of some scripture verses. The verses will not be sung. Your musicians and readers may wish to practice this ahead of time for timing. All participants should be invited to join in singing the refrains.)

Reader 1: Brothers and sisters, let us taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

(Music begins – instrumental introduction, then everyone sings a refrain.)

(Play the verse as an instrumental interlude, and add improvisation as needed, as the Scripture verses are read.)

Reader 2: As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. *(Psalm 42:1-2)*

Reader 1: The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due time. You open your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” *(Psalm 145:15-16)*

(Sing a refrain of “Taste and See.” Then play the verse as an instrumental/ad lib as needed as the Scripture verses are read.)

Reader 2: "I have kept silent for a long time, I have kept still and restrained Myself. Now like a woman in labor I will groan, I will both gasp and pant...I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." (*Isaiah 42:14,16*)

Reader 1: The Lord fills the hungry with good things. (*Luke 1:53*)

(Again, sing a refrain of "Taste and See.")

Reader 2: Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him. (*Isaiah 30:18*)

Reader 1: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall want for nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. (*Psalms 23*)

(Again, sing a refrain of "Taste and See.")

Reader 2: "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (*Matthew 6:25*)

Reader 1: Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." (*John 6:35*)

(Music ends without a final refrain.)

Presider: We have received Christ, and we must become Christ for others.
Let us join in our closing hymn, "Bread for the World."

Closing Hymn

Bread for the World (Farrell, published OCP)

Alternate hymn: Bread of Life (Fisher, published OCP)

(At this time, give your participants a break as the retreat team prepares for Mass. Let everyone know what time Mass will begin, and remind them to bring their prayer cards from this session.)



We become what we receive

We might think that we eat because we're hungry, but that's not really true, is it? It's really the other way around. We get hungry because we need to eat. Because biologically, our bodies need food. So we have this reminder built right into our genes – an amazing natural mnemonic device that works by making us *want* to do something that we really need to do – eat food. We feel empty, so we seek a good meal, and we all know the full, satisfied feeling we have after finishing.

But that meal has a purpose that goes well beyond filling our emptiness. The actual purpose of that food is to strengthen us, to help us grow. Paradoxically, the purpose of food is to give us the capacity to carry a greater emptiness. We grow, we stretch, and as time goes on we find that we need more than a child-sized portion.

If the food just filled our stomachs and left us happy and satisfied, that wouldn't be enough.

The same may be said spiritually. While it's easy and natural to seek comfort from God during times of emptiness and longing, there's more to it than that. The nourishment that God gives us through the Eucharist, both Word and Sacrament, also stretches us, pushes us beyond our current level of satisfaction, in fact effects our spiritual transformation into Christ.

Last year I started teaching 2nd grade CCD classes. Talk about stretching. I had taught middle school for several years prior, and let's just say that 7 year olds are NOT 12 year olds. There were plenty of times I came in with a well-intentioned lesson that went completely over their heads.

Poor kids, they were so patient with me. And I learned so much from them, not just about teaching little ones, but about what it means to have child-like faith. Of course, there are metaphors and abstract concepts and doctrines that were beyond my students' grasp. But there are also ideas and relationships and graces that they willingly accepted, without feeling the need to completely understand them first.

I've been asked, after preparing kids for first Communion, do I think 2nd grade is too early? After all, how can they possibly understand what it is that they're doing, and what it is they're receiving?

There are dozens of ways to respond to that question.

I discovered one of them on a Sunday morning as I was getting ready for class – very last-minute! I was actually multi-tasking, preparing my breakfast and my visual aid at the same time. That day, we would be studying the parable of the sower, which is so abstract that in the Gospels, the apostles even ask Jesus to explain it to them. He lays it all out for them: “The rocky soil means this...the thorns mean this...the seed means this...” In preparing for class that day, I was looking for anything to make the story and its symbols a little more concrete. I figured we’d start with seeds. Second graders have learned about plants in school, right? So we could look at the seeds, talk about their potential to grow into plants, brainstorm the conditions they need to grow, and then we’d move into making comparisons with the story. Baby steps.

So I stood at my kitchen counter that morning, slicing an apple for breakfast and very carefully setting aside all of the seeds. And I started remembering being a 7-year-old myself and doing exactly the same thing. Maybe I wasn’t allowed to use the sharp knife at the time, but I was always very careful to set the seeds aside and not swallow them. You see, despite everything I knew about plants – I knew they needed soil and water and sunlight and all that – cautious, seven-year-old me still knew one thing for sure. Apple seeds have the potential to grow into apple trees. And I did not want that happening in my stomach.

Of course, rationally, I knew this was not going to happen, but deep down, I just wasn’t 100% convinced that it was completely impossible. And why take chances? It was easy enough to set the seeds aside.

It’s funny now to think of how nervous that made me! To think that I didn’t know my stomach would just treat that seed like it treats the rest of the apple – break it down, digest it into tiny nutrients that would then become part of me and help me grow. But what I’d like to suggest is that it is precisely this irrational fear, it’s the thought that somehow the seed could be different from the apple – that explains why second graders are not at all too young for First Communion.

Second graders are completely ready to accept that one type of food may be different from all others.

As adults we struggle with this. We’re rational beings, and we know our science. We also know that many elements of our faith transcend science. We know, for example, that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is not scientifically observable – that the concept lives in the realm of faith and grace and mystery. To varying extents, we’re okay with this, even though it’s a challenging idea to wrap our minds around. And as with all questions of faith, we grapple with it and seek a deeper understanding. That’s a good thing. After all, the seeds of our faith need to be nurtured if they’re to grow.

But there's also a danger here. When we focus too heavily on developing our own understanding, it gets tempting to think that somehow it's that understanding in itself, or it's the faith that we bring to the table, that makes the Eucharist have an effect on us. It's tempting to believe that if we don't understand the Eucharist, if we're questioning our faith, if we're not praying very well that day, that the Sacrament will become incomplete and won't have its full effect. That the seed won't take root in us and grow.

That's simply not true. It's good to remind ourselves that the Eucharist doesn't "work" as a result of our understanding it, and its graces are not limited to those who have achieved some sort of perfection in faith. That would be like saying food only makes us grow if we want to grow or we fully understand the complexities of digestion.

A theologian at Notre Dame named David Fagerberg took a beautiful and fascinating look at this very idea in a paper called "Digestion and Deification," presented to a group of doctors from the Catholic Medical Association. He looks first at the biology of digestion. In essence, we eat nothing in a form that is immediately helpful to us. A carrot by itself can't strengthen my eyes, and pouring milk directly onto my bones will provide no shield against osteoporosis. Our bodies have to break foods down into their essential nutrients. Then, and only then, can the body use food as nourishment.

So here's how the Eucharist is different: "Yesterday's ham & lettuce on rye is broken down into proteins, fats, and carbohydrates – in other words, *what I eat turns into me*. That's the way it works in the natural digestive system of the body. But in the supernatural digestive system of the body of Christ, *I become what I eat*." (Fagerberg)

Take it from St. Augustine – in *The Confessions*, Augustine describes the voice of God saying, "I am the food of grown men. Grow and you shall feed upon me. And you will not, as with the food of the body, change me into yourself, but you will be changed into me." (reference in Fagerberg)

Our bodies don't break down the Body of Christ and turn His body into ours – it's the other way around. We get broken down. We get transformed. And then, as Jesus promised, he abides in us and we in him.

My fear as a second grader was that the apple seed had that same potential to be different from other food. That somehow, rather than my body breaking down the seed and using it to help me grow, that the seed itself would grow, that the roots would reach down into my toes and the branches up through my insides, with leaves sprouting from my fingertips. I'd be taken over completely by tree. Thank God the apple seed does not have that potential!

But thank God the Eucharist does. Imagine, instead of an apple tree, a “Jesus Tree:” Christ himself being planted within us, both Word and Sacrament. He is planted in our thoughts, on our lips, and in our hearts, and through the act of eating and drinking. He reaches down into our toes and up through our fingertips. Our hands become his hands. Our feet become his feet.

There’s a beautiful hymn called “Amen, el Cuerpo de Cristo” that puts it this way: in the Mass, “We become what we receive.” We receive the Word, and we must become the Word. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and we have to go forth and not just carry Christ, but actually be Christ for others.

That’s difficult. We may feel that we’re not ready, we’re not strong enough. In other words, we may still feel hungry. We may feel that parts of us are not yet sufficiently filled with Christ.

And that’s the beauty of that paradox that we began with. A good meal fills our emptiness and strengthens us for the work we need to do, but it also stretches us, and gives us the capacity for greater hunger. And so day after day, again and again, we have no choice but to come back to the dinner table.

Likewise, we come to Christ’s table to satisfy our hunger, and the food here does fill us. Think of that image of the apple seed, sprouting and growing into a tree, filling all of our inner gaps and cavities until there’s no room left for anything else. Jesus promises to do the same. To fill us where we’re wanting, leaving no room for hatred, no room for selfishness.

But even as He fills us, Jesus also stretches us beyond our current levels of satisfaction. We come back to the altar again and again, so that over time we might grow in our capacity to love, in our capacity to serve, and in our capacity to be Christ for others.

And so in the end, we still feel hungry, but this is a good hunger, a healthy hunger. A hunger that frees us from complacency. A hunger that allows us to grow.

Where is it that we feel ourselves being stretched right now? Where do we sense God’s presence, working within us to make more space for Christ to come and dwell? And how will we respond?

Meghann Robinson
Associate Director, ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools

Guidelines for Mass Preparation



The guidelines below will be helpful in preparing to celebrate Mass during your retreat. The “Mass Planning Worksheet,” included in these retreat resources, will help keep track of readings, song selections, and ministers. **If you would like to use a printed liturgy program instead of a hymnal**, contact Meghann Robinson at mrobinso@nd.edu for help with copyright/reprint licensing and general program preparation.

In preparing for any Mass, speak early with your celebrant. He may have preferences regarding certain parts of the Mass, and should be able to help with procuring needed materials.

Readings and Music Selections

- 1) Determine the readings for the day. If your Mass will be Saturday evening (a Vigil Mass for Sunday), use the Sunday readings. Readings can be found at www.usccb.org. Click on “Readings” at the top of the page, and select the Sunday corresponding to your retreat weekend.
- 2) We recommend printing your readings and putting them in a binder with all other readings, prayers, scripts, etc. for the retreat. If you print two copies of each reading, then you can keep one in the binder and give one to the lector – this way the lector has a copy to read over, it’s a signal to you that you’ve asked someone to read, and there is still a copy of the reading in the binder for the Mass itself.
- 3) The Mass Planning Worksheet includes blanks for all song selections. Some thoughts on choosing hymns:
 - ❖ Choose hymns that will be familiar to your retreatants, and that evoke the themes expressed in the readings.
 - ❖ Borrow a hymnal from your parish or school to browse for ideas. Check the front and back for a thematic table of contents or index that organizes songs based on theme (“Peace,” “Mission/Sending Forth,” “Eucharist,” etc.)
 - ❖ There are *many* Eucharistic hymns that would be particularly fitting for this retreat, and that would be appropriate for any Mass. Check the “Eucharist” section of the hymnal and use your group’s favorites!

- 4) **Suggestions for Opening Hymns:** The opening hymn sets the tone for the rest of the Mass. It can be upbeat or more reflective; it can focus on the act of gathering as a community or on the theme expressed in the readings. Suggestions include:
- ❖ “Table of Plenty”
 - ❖ “Christ, Be Our Light”
(include the verse that begins “Longing for food, many are hungry”)
 - ❖ “Song of the Body of Christ”
 - ❖ “As We Gather at Your Table”
- 5) **Suggestions for Preparation or Communion hymns:** It is appropriate to choose a Communion song that includes Eucharistic images. Suggestions include:
- ❖ “Let Us Be Bread”
 - ❖ “Eat This Bread”
 - ❖ “Bread of Life, Hope of the World”
 - ❖ “I Myself Am the Bread of Life”
 - ❖ “Take and Eat this Bread”
 - ❖ “Seed, Scattered and Sown”
 - ❖ “One Bread, One Body”
 - ❖ “Look Beyond”
 - ❖ “Draw Near”
 - ❖ “I Received the Living God”
 - ❖ “Amén. El Cuerpo de Cristo”
 - ❖ A psalm setting like Psalm 145, “We Are Fed By the Hand of the Lord”
 - ❖ “Bread of Life”
 - ❖ “Bread, Blessed and Broken”
- 6) **Suggestion for closing hymns:** Closing hymns often have a “missioning” or “sending-forth” tone to them. Suggestions include:
- ❖ “I Am the Bread of Life”
 - ❖ “We Are One Body”
 - ❖ “Now Let Us From this Table Rise”
 - ❖ “Make Us True Servants”

Gathering Materials for Mass

- 1) If you are holding your retreat in a Catholic church or retreat center, ask whether they have these items available. Otherwise, talk with your celebrant for advice on where the necessary items may be procured – he may be able to bring much of what you need.

- 2) The list below is fairly exhaustive. Again, we recommend talking with your celebrant, as there are items that may be omitted, and he will likely have his preferences in this regard.
 - ❖ Hosts (include one large host for the priest to use and break during the Eucharistic prayer) and wine
 - ❖ Candle and crucifix
 - ❖ Vessels
 - Ciborium and paten, chalice
 - Other vessels if needed for additional Eucharistic ministers (probably not necessary for a small retreat group)
 - Cruets of wine and water
 - Lavabo dish for priest to wash his hands
 - ❖ Linens
 - Pall (altar cloth)
 - Corporal
 - One purificator for each cup used
 - Finger towel if a lavabo dish is used
 - ❖ Vestments
 - Alb
 - Chasuble and stole – the color will depend on the current liturgical season or feast (talk to your celebrant if you have questions – and because he will probably be able to provide his own vestments)
 - ❖ Readings
 - You can read from the regular Sunday Lectionary, or the readings can be printed off the internet (www.usccb.org) or found in the current monthly issue of “Magnificat” or “Living with Christ.”
 - We recommend printing the readings and keeping them in a binder with all other readings for the retreat.
 - ❖ Prayers/Order of the Mass
 - Talk with your celebrant here. If a Sacramentary is not available, the prayers may be found in “Magnificat” or “Living with Christ,” or another standard missalette. Your celebrant will likely have something he can use.
 - ❖ Music
 - You will need either a hymnal or a liturgy program with songs printed (again, contact Meghann Robinson if you are interested in creating a program for your retreat).
 - Talk to your musicians about their specific needs – accompaniment music, instruments, music stands, amplifiers, etc.

Other Notes on Preparation

- 1) Be attentive to the setup of the space you will use for Mass.
 - ❖ If you have a chapel, see if you can arrange seating to create an intimate feel. If you are using the same basic room for all parts of your retreat, experiment with the placement of a podium and table so Mass has a slightly different feel to it.
 - ❖ Though dim lighting can help create a prayerful atmosphere, be sure that the room is at least bright enough for the priest, lectors, and musicians to read (and for participants to read their programs/hymnals).

- 2) Notes for the Sacristan
 - ❖ If you are celebrating Mass in a space with a Tabernacle, be sure you know how to open it to place extra consecrated hosts (if needed).
 - ❖ Talk with your celebrant about whether gifts will be presented by retreatants or set on the credence table behind the altar. Discuss with him also whether he will set the altar for Communion, or whether you should do so as Sacristan.
 - ❖ Plan ahead, especially if you are not in a Catholic church or retreat center, for how to purify vessels. Have a place to hold used linens until they can be properly cleansed.



Mass Planning Worksheet

General Information

Date _____

Mass Celebrating the _____ Sunday of _____
(Example: the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Third Sunday of Lent, etc.)

Theme(s) expressed in readings _____

Ministers

Celebrant _____

Sacristan _____

Musicians _____

Lectors _____

Eucharistic Ministers _____

Gift Bearers (if used) _____

Opening Rites

Opening Hymn: _____

Penitential Rite: _____ Sung (Musical setting: _____)

_____ Recited

(Often, the Penitential Rite is sung during Lent, though this is not required.)

Gloria: _____ Sung (Musical setting: _____)

_____ Recited

_____ Omitted (during Advent and Lent and on weekdays)

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: _____ Lector: _____

Psalm _____: _____ Sung (Musical setting: _____)

_____ Read

Lector or Cantor: _____

Second Reading: _____ Lector: _____

Gospel Acclamation: _____

(Be sure to use a Lenten Gospel Acclamation during the season of Lent – no “Alleluia!”)

Gospel: _____

Intercessions: _____ Written by retreat team, read by _____

_____ Offered by celebrant (with an opportunity for retreatants to offer additional prayers, if desired)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation Hymn: _____

_____ Sung _____ Instrumental Only

Gifts presented by _____

(Can also be set on the credence table behind the altar, to be brought to the altar by the sacristan.)

Mass Setting _____

(Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen – Lamb of God may be the same or different. If your retreat falls during Lent, be sure your Great Amen does not include the word “Alleluia,” as some do.)

Lord's Prayer _____ Sung (Musical Setting: _____)

_____ Recited

Communion Hymn: _____

Meditation Hymn (if desired): _____

Closing Hymn: _____

Other Notes: