

EUCHARIST

DISCOVERING THE MASS IN THE BIBLE

STUDY GUIDE SESSION 5



LECTIO

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

BRANT PITRE

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SESSION 5

MYSTERIES OF THE TABERNACLE: THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE



OPENING PRAYER

To the weak he apportioned flesh.
To the mournful he gave his blood so dear.
He said: Accept this cup I give;
All drink what you find here.

Thus, this sacrifice he founded,
An act he willed then to allow
To priests alone, for whom is fit
All others to nurture and endow.

The Bread of Angels now is Bread of man.
Heavenly Bread fulfills what prophecies foreshow.
O wondrous thing! God is consumed
By the poor, the humble, and the low.

You, threefold God and one, we pray:
Be present as we worship well.
Lead us on your pathways
To live in glory where you dwell.

Amen.

—Closing stanzas of St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymn "Sacris Solemniis Juncta Sint Gaudia" ("Let Joys Be Joined to Solemn Feasts") from *The Aquinas Prayer Book*, Sophia Institute Press

INTRODUCTION

This session of our study will continue the pilgrimage of the Israelites toward a lasting relationship with the everlasting God. Having rescued the Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians, God now draws them out into the desert, away from the gods of Egypt, and invites them into a closer relationship with himself. That relationship begins with the covenant ceremony and is continued and renewed in Israel's worship. Israel was never to forget the covenant ceremony that took place on Mount Sinai, by which God drew them close to himself. But how would God assure Israel's remembrance when they already seemed so quick to forget God's mighty deeds in Egypt? How would the mighty God on top of Mount Sinai come close to his sinful people? And how does this prefigure Christ's coming close to us today?



CONNECT

1. Think of a time when you were ill. What were the comforts that you desired most? What was the most frustrating part of the illness? What were your thoughts when you started feeling better?
2. What are some routines you have in your life? Do you remember how they started? Why do you continue to do them?
3. Have you ever tried to build a house? What did you need to get started? Did you have a specific design in your mind before you started to build?



DISCUSS



PART 1—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.

- I. Exodus 24: God's instruction for worship/liturgy
 - A. "Behold the blood of the covenant" (repeated only one other time—at the Last Supper)

B. Description of worship and establishing of covenant includes:

1. Priest
2. Altar (represents God)
3. Responses
4. Holy book
5. Blood
6. Sacrifices

II. Heavenly Banquet

A. Theophany—revelation or manifestation of God

B. Establishment of the covenant and blood sacrifice below, leads to eating and drinking at a heavenly banquet above

C. Numbers of the Priesthood: 1, 3, 12, 70

1. Moses/Aaron—1; Aaron, Nadab, Abihu—3; Pillars—12; Elders—70
2. Jesus/Peter—1; Peter, James, John—3; Apostles—12; Elders—70



DISCUSS

1. What struck you the most in Dr. Pitre's teaching on the events leading up to the establishment of the covenant in Exodus 24?

2. Dr. Pitre notes that Moses is acting as a priest in Exodus 24, and that he uses specific numbers for various priesthood roles at Mount Sinai. What numbers does Dr. Pitre mention? As a new Moses, how does Jesus use these numbers in the priesthood he is establishing for the New Covenant? What does this repetition tell us about Jesus and the priesthood he is establishing?

3. Dr. Pitre notes that the covenant ceremony doesn't end with the blood sacrifice at the bottom of Mount Sinai, but rather with the heavenly banquet at the top of the mountain. How does this background connect Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross with our celebration of the Eucharist?



PART 2—THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.

I. The Tabernacle (Exodus 25)

A. A specific and definite design given by God

B. Tabernacle of Moses divided into three main courts

1. Outer Court of Sacrifice

a. Bronze Altar of Sacrifice

b. Bronze Laver of Water

2. Holy Place (also called Inner Court)

a. Veil separated the Outer Court from the Holy Place

b. Golden Altar of Incense

c. Golden Lampstand or 7-branched Menorah

d. Golden Table of the Bread of the Presence (bread and drink offerings)

e. Move from bronze and bloody sacrifice to gold and unbloody sacrifice

3. Holy of Holies

a. Veil separated Holy of Holies from the Holy Place

b. Ark of the Covenant—golden box contained tablets of the Law (Ten Commandments), jar of manna, and rod of Aaron

c. Could only be entered by the high priest

d. Entering Holy of Holies is crossing over from earth to heaven

II. Tabernacle is a portable Mount Sinai

A. The Outer Court recalls the bottom of the mountain

1. Bronze Altar recalls the altar Moses built for the bloody sacrifices at the base of the mountain

2. Bronze Laver recalls that the people and priests were instructed to wash with water before entering God's presence

B. The Holy Place recalls the middle of the mountain

1. Sets up the liturgical and symbolic progression of the journey to the top of Mount Sinai

- [illegible]



4. The tabernacle finds its origins in the sacrificial rituals that established the covenant in Exodus 24. How is the tabernacle set up to be a portable Mount Sinai? Why does God want his people to remember this moment in their history? Why do you think God will place the tabernacle at the center of Israel's camp?

PART 3—THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.

I. Bread of the Presence**A. Leviticus 24:5–9**

1. 12 loaves of bread
2. Incense with the bread and wine because it is a sacrifice
3. Everlasting Covenant
4. Priestly sacrifice eaten in a holy place

B. Matthew 12

1. Disciples walking through fields, plucking and eating heads of grain
2. David and his men eat the bread of the presence
3. Jesus is the new Temple, his disciples are the new priests, and they can work on the Sabbath in the same way the priests prepare the bread of the presence and on the Sabbath Day

II. Implications on the Catholic Faith**A. Real Presence in the Eucharist**

1. Eucharist as fulfillment of the Old Testament Bread of the Presence
2. CCC 1373–1374 —“he is present ... most *especially in the Eucharistic species*”
3. Eucharist is not just spirit of Christ, but Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity

B. In the Eucharist, the Old Covenant Bread of the Presence is taken from the singular tabernacle of the Old Testament and put into the New Covenant tabernacles that are spread throughout the world**C. First-century Jewish priests had custom during the Passover of taking the Bread of the Presence out of the Holy Place and lifting it up to the pilgrims and saying, “Behold God’s love for you”****DISCUSS**

7. What are some comparisons that Dr. Pitre points out between David and his men (1 Samuel 21:1–6) and Jesus and the Apostles (Matthew 12:1–6)?

8. Moses stays up in God's presence on Mount Sinai for forty days. He doesn't rush back to the people, but is completely available to God despite the demands of leading the people. How do you balance the demands of the world and giving God ample time to speak to you in your daily life? How does giving time to God in prayer actually help us serve others in our daily lives?

THEOPHANY—*a revelation or manifestation of God*

LEHEM HAPANNIN—*the "bread of presence" or "bread of the face"*

"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." —Exodus 19:5–6

"Worship is the attempt, to be found at every stage of history, to overcome guilt and bring back the world and one's own life into right order." —Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*

"In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle." —CCC 1090

MEMORY VERSE

"I tell you, something greater than the temple is here."

—Matthew 12:6



CLOSING PRAYER

God, Almighty Father, we thank you for this time together to draw closer to you through studying your Word. We ask that you continue to enrich our lives with your holy Presence. May we come to a greater appreciation of your gifts, especially that of the heavenly banquet which you lay before us at each Eucharistic meal. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR FURTHER READING

Scott Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*, Chapter 2: "Given for You: The Story of Sacrifice" (Doubleday Books, 1999)



COMMIT—DAY 1

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

After a several months journey, God's people arrive and encamp before the mountain of the Lord (Exodus 19:1–2). With the arrival at Sinai, we can be tempted to leave behind the mighty deeds that God worked to free Israel from slavery as the end of one story, and begin a new and separate chapter with the enactment of the covenant. But the law, the covenant, and the tabernacle cannot be understood apart from God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Look up the following verses. Before the Ten Commandments and the directions for the tabernacle are given, of what is Israel reminded?

Exodus 19:3–5 _____

Exodus 20:1–2 _____

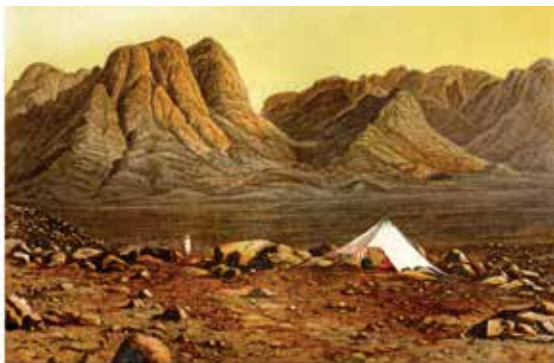
Deuteronomy 4:34 _____

Deuteronomy 5:4–6 _____

It is God who acts first. It is God who appears to Moses in the burning bush to say,

“I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...” —Exodus 3:7–8

It is God who works wonders to set his people free, and then provides water and manna as they journey in the desert. And after all this, God invites Israel to enter into a covenant relationship, inviting them to be his possession from among all the nations. The signs and wonders of Egypt and the invitation to enter into a covenant are witnesses of God's love for Israel.



Mount Sinai, Egypt / HIP / Art Resource, NY

Summoned to the top of the mountain, Moses receives God's law. Returning to the bottom of the mountain, Moses sets before the people “all these words which the LORD had commanded him,” and they respond, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” Moses is instructed to consecrate the people, having said “yes” to God's proposal, and on the third day he again ascends the mountain and receives the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17).

Once again the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, are read to the people, who again respond with their desire to enter into the covenant. Israel's "yes" to the law and its prescribed worship is their freely given return for all that God had first done for them.

But the covenant is not enacted with words alone. An altar is built and sacrifices are offered. A third time the commands of the Lord are read to the people, who again respond, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Exodus 24:7). Moses then does an unexpected thing with the blood of the covenant sacrifices. Look up Exodus 24:4–8. What does Moses do with the blood?

In a covenant ceremony, blood signified several things. First, since both parties partook of the same sacrificed animal, the eating of the same flesh joined the two parties as if they were family, as if they shared the same blood. When Moses throws the blood against the altar, representing God, and then on the people, it is a sign of the familial relationship (family members share the same blood) that now exists between God and his people as a result of the covenant into which they have entered.

The blood is also a reminder of the consequences of infidelity to the covenant terms. By swearing the oath and then partaking of the sacrifices, each party in essence says, "If I am unfaithful to this covenant, let me be as these animals that were just sacrificed and consumed." The stakes are high. For this reason, not once, not twice, but three times God has the law read to people. They must freely enter into the covenant with a full heart and full understanding. Just as God had freely acted to save Israel from slavery, so now Israel is invited to make a free gift of herself to the Lord.

The problem for Israel is that after her "yes," she doesn't do all that the Lord had spoken that day at Mount Sinai—she proves unfaithful. And the resulting death sentence hangs over her head. It is into this perilous situation, with Israel dead in her sins, that God takes on human flesh and is born in the likeness of men. Once again, it is God who acts first. As St. John says, "Not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10), or as St. Paul says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Jesus takes on human flesh. And the body Jesus takes on, he also lays down on the cross, acting on his own words, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But before he does, at the Last Supper Jesus repeats a phrase not heard since the ratification of the Old Covenant. Look up Matthew 26:27–28. What phrase of Moses does Jesus repeat?

Look up Hebrews 10:1–10. Why is it significant for Jesus to invoke his blood as the "blood of the covenant"? Whose blood is he replacing? And why does he add that it is being poured out for the forgiveness of sins?

As Israel is unfaithful and unable to atone for her own sin, God takes upon himself her death sentence. Jesus' blood, poured out like the sacrifices of old, becomes the blood of the New Covenant—blood that is able to deal with the problem of sin. The letter to the Hebrews recalls Israel's experience at the making of the Old Covenant: "For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them" (Hebrews 12:18–19). But then the letter to the Hebrews continues regarding the New Covenant,

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel."
—Hebrews 12:22–24

As mediator of this New Covenant, Jesus incorporates men and women into the family of God through baptism and the forgiveness of sins, and releases the Spirit who provides the grace that we might prove faithful. No longer the blood of goats and bulls sprinkled as on Mount Sinai, the blood of this New Covenant, the blood of Jesus, will now be consumed in the Eucharist so as to strengthen us so that we might make a return of love to the God who has loved us first.

Let's close our reflection today by reading the opening lyrics of the following seventh-century hymn, "At the Lamb's High Feast." How does understanding Jesus' words that his blood is the blood of the covenant, and all that we have studied so far, enrich such a hymn?



The Crucifixion, detail of angel collecting the blood of Christ / Alfredo Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

*At the Lamb's high feast we sing,
Praise to our victorious King,
Who hath washed us in the tide,
Flowing from his pierced side;
Praise we him whose love divine,
Gives the guests his blood for wine,
Gives his Body for the feast,
Love the victim, Love the priest.*

*Where the Paschal blood is poured,
Death's dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go,
Through the wave that drowns the foe.
Christ, the Lamb whose blood was shed,
Paschal victim, Paschal bread!
With sincerity and love,
eat we manna from above.*

—"At the Lamb's High Feast" (Ignatius Press, *Adoremus Hymnal*)

COMMIT – DAY 2

SACRED ARCHITECTURE



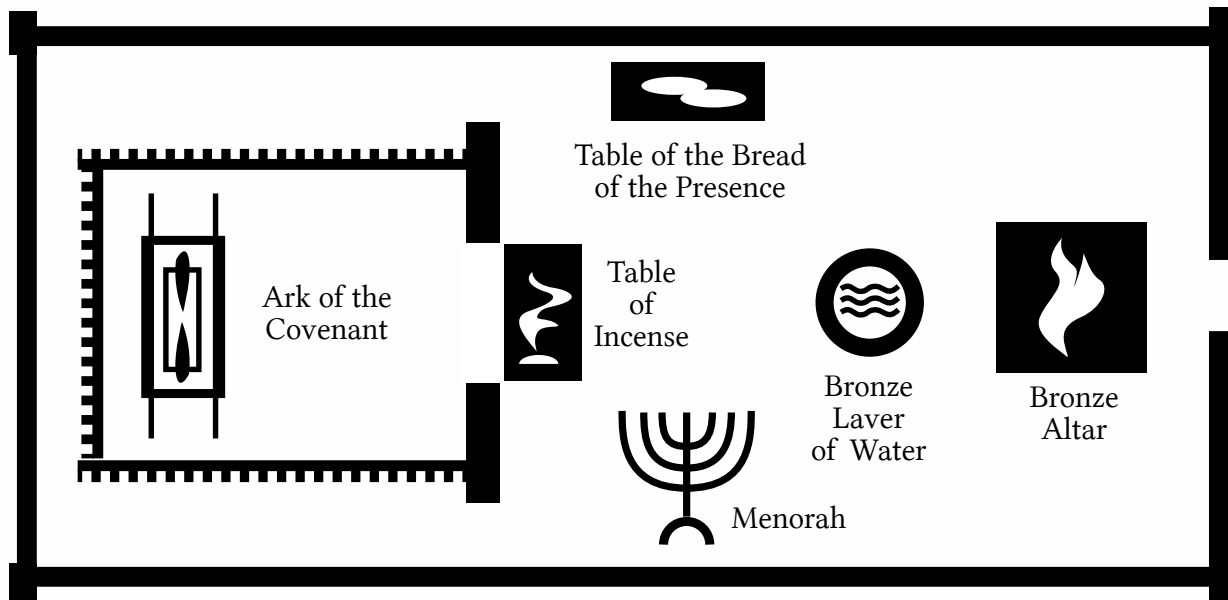
Any meeting needs a time and place, people present, and something to accomplish. The meeting between God and Israel at Mount Sinai is no different. But God desires more than a single encounter, and so on Sinai he also tells Moses to build the tabernacle. Look up the following verses. Why does God desire Israel to build the tabernacle?

Exodus 25:8 _____

Exodus 29:45–46 _____

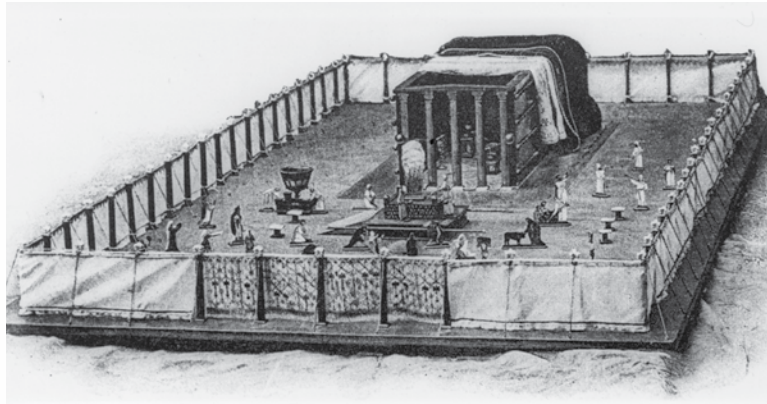
God doesn't simply save Israel "from" slavery, but "for" a relationship with himself. Just as he walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, God desires to dwell amongst his people and meet with them often. And it is God who gives Moses specific instructions for this meeting place saying, "According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:9, 40). God is the architect of both the space and the worship. Later, once Israel is established in the Promised Land, the permanent stone temple in Jerusalem will replace the moveable tent of the tabernacle, but both will follow the design laid out by God himself on Mount Sinai.

As Dr. Pitre described in his teaching for this session, the tabernacle was divided into three distinct areas: the Outer Court, the Holy Place (also called the Inner Court), and the Holy of Holies. Let's take a closer look at each.



The tabernacle's Outer Court was entered via a screen gate "of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework" (Exodus 27:16). The first furnishing encountered in the Outer Court was the brazen altar. Read Exodus 27:1–7. How is the altar described?

Also in the Outer Court was the laver of bronze. Read Exodus 30:17–21. How is the laver described?



The tent in the wilderness with the ark, open state / Foto Marburg / Art Resource, NY

From the Outer Court, one entered the Holy Place through another screen "of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework" (Exodus 26:36). In the Holy Place Israel was instructed, "You shall set the table ... and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table; and you shall put the table on the north side" (Exodus 26:35). Read Exodus 25:23–30 and Leviticus 24:5–6. How is the Table of the Presence described, and what is put on it?

Also in the Holy Place was the lampstand, or menorah. Read Exodus 25:31–40. How is the lampstand described?

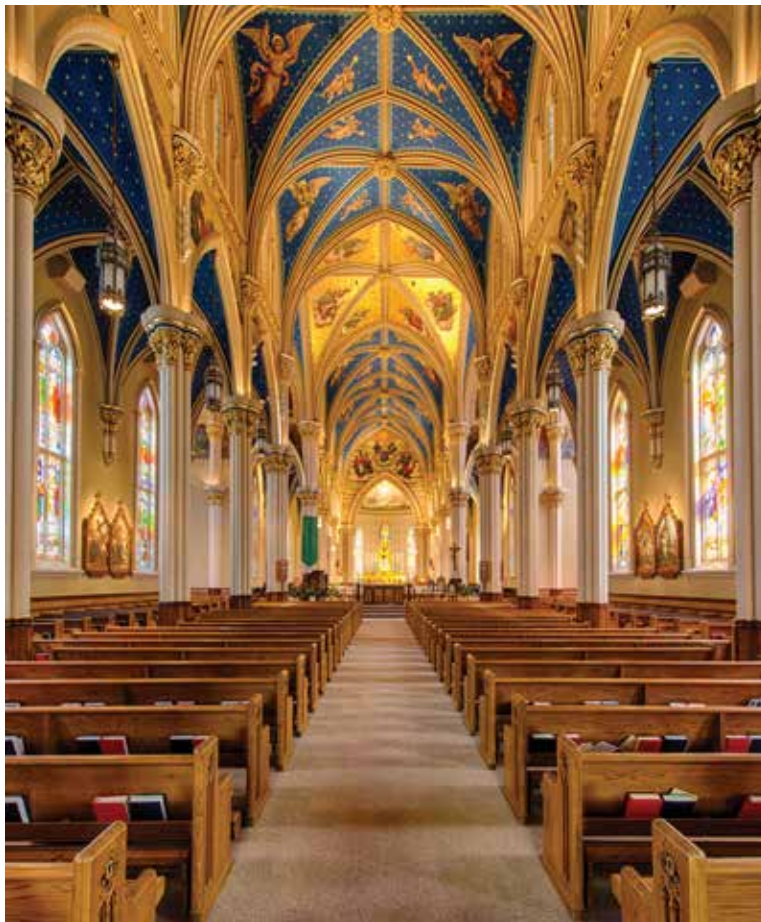
Also in the Holy Place was the altar of incense. Read Exodus 30:1–8 and 30:34–37. How is the altar of incense described, and what is burned on the altar?

The Holy of Holies was also entered through a veil; this curtain was not only of “blue and purple and scarlet” but was also decorated “with cherubim” (Exodus 26:31–33). The Holy of Holies contained one thing: the Ark of the Covenant. Read Exodus 25:10–22. How is the ark described? According to Exodus 16:33–34, Exodus 25:16 and Numbers 17:10, what was put into the ark?



King David bearing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem / HIP / Art Resource, NY

Thus the tabernacle was separated into three specific areas, with each area used for specific purposes. There were places for washings, prayers, candles, sacrifice, and the presence of God. And walking from the Outer Court to the Holy of Holies was a progression from earth to heaven, from the land of animal sacrifices to angels worshipping at the throne of God. This progression and many elements of the tabernacle still exist within our churches today, where specific areas are used for various sacraments and sacramentals and hearken back to the tabernacle and Temple. Let’s take a look at how sacred architecture in our churches incorporates some of these aspects.



Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana © Nagel Photography / shutterstock.com

Tabernacle	Sacred Architecture	Sacrament
<i>The Outer Court contained the Bronze Laver of Water for ritual washings and the Bronze Altar for animal sacrifice.</i>	<p><i>In many churches the Baptismal Font is placed at the back entrance of the church as a sign that it is by baptism that we can enter into the presence of God. Holy Water fonts are also placed at the church entrances, which we use to bless ourselves and remind us of our baptism.</i></p> <p><i>The Bronze Altar is no longer needed after Christ and thus has no place in current architecture, but the sacrifices on the Bronze Altar were offered for sin. Our church confessionals, in which we receive remission of sin after baptism, are often positioned toward the back of the church.</i></p>	<p><i>In Baptism one is washed in the baptismal waters in order to enter the covenant family of God.</i></p> <p><i>Confession provides a renewal for those times that we fail to uphold our baptismal covenant with God. Through the mercy of God we are forgiven and allowed to continue the journey toward heaven.</i></p>
<i>The Holy Place was reserved for the Table of the Bread of the Presence (on which was placed the Bread of the Presence and flagons of wine), the altar of incense, and the golden menorah.</i>	<p><i>From the entrance of the church we progress through the congregation and arrive at the main altar, adorned with candles providing light like the menorah. Incense is also used here. The main altar of the church is now the table where the bread of the Real Presence is consecrated (by the ministerial priesthood) and consumed (both by the ministerial priesthood and by all who share in Christ's priesthood by their baptism).</i></p>	<i>The Eucharist takes place within the inner sanctuary of the church. The priest intercedes on behalf of the people, but now in place of the showbread is the Eucharistic Lord.</i>
<i>The innermost room of the Holy of Holies contained the golden Ark of the Covenant (which contained the Ten Commandments, the rod of Aaron, and the heavenly manna from the desert).</i>	<i>In the tabernacle, the new "Holy of Holies," the Lord dwells under the appearance of bread and awaits his people, inviting them all to draw near. The throne that was once only viewed by the High Priest once a year is now in view for all to see.</i>	<i>God's presence in the tabernacle reminds us that all our life is to be directed to seeing God face to face in heaven.</i>

The next time we walk into a church, let's look with a new vision and see more than wooden pews and stone steps, more than lighted candles and golden ornaments; let's see a path from earth to heaven that endures through the design of the church as well as through the sacraments, which serve as guides toward the heavenly throne.

COMMIT—DAY 3

LECTIO: JESUS, THE SABBATH, AND THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE



LECTIO: The practice of praying with Scripture, *lectio divina*, begins with an active and close reading of the Scripture passage. Read the verse below and then answer the questions to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage.

“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.’ He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath.”

—Matthew 12:1–8



Gold wheat field and blue sky © jeka84 / shutterstock.com

The Pharisees level a charge against Jesus’ disciples based on Exodus 31:12–17. Read Exodus 31:12–17. What is the charge the Pharisees level against Jesus’ disciples?

On what day of the week do they level this charge? How many times is this day of the week noted in the passage?

The Pharisees took it upon themselves to assure that God's people were obeying the law. What phrases did Jesus use to indicate that they have not understood the heart of the law?

Jesus alludes to David's actions in 1 Samuel 21:1–6. Read the passage and list the similarities between the scenes.

MEDITATIO: *Lectio*, close reading and rereading, is followed by *meditatio*, time to reflect on the Scripture passage, to ponder the reason for particular events, descriptions, details, phrases, and even echoes from other Scripture passages that were noticed during *lectio*. Take some time now to mediate on Matthew 12:1–8. Use the following reflection and questions to help you begin your meditation.



Jesus in Wheat Field with Disciples © Balage Balogh / Art Resource, NY

On a clear Sabbath day, a gentle wind billows through a sea of grain as Jesus and the apostles make their way from city to city, preaching and teaching. As their hands skim the tops of the stalks, the apostles snatch up some golden grains (Matthew 12:1). The Pharisees appear. How is it that they are able to be on the scene so quickly? Was it one of their own fields that the apostles were traveling through? Were they following Jesus? And if so, why? To hear his teaching, or to trap him in some error? How is it that the Pharisees are close enough to see the apostles eat the wheat? Without hesitation they accuse Jesus' disciples, and Jesus by association, of breaking the Sabbath (Matthew 12:2). Jesus mildly rebukes his self-righteous accusers. There is no

recorded response from them. What did these faithful Jews think of Jesus' words? Even the apostles, as seasoned followers of Christ, had to wonder at their teacher's assertions. How could one man be greater than the Temple, which housed the presence of God? What did God mean that he desires mercy over sacrifice? And how could Jesus declare himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath?

Out of the ten times that St. Matthew refers to the Sabbath in his gospel, eight of these occur in chapter 12, in the above *lectio* passage and the passage that follows it, where Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that Jesus is excused from transgressing the Sabbath law for three reasons: keeping holy the Sabbath, first, forbids human work not divine work (thus Jesus could heal on the Sabbath); second, does not forbid works for bodily health (thus Jews could lead their ox to water on the Sabbath, or here in Matthew 12:1–8 the disciples and David's men could eat when they were hungry); and third, does not forbid works pertaining to worship of God (thus priests worked in the Temple, or one could be circumcised on the Sabbath).

Christ does not break or repeal the Sabbath law, instead, as St. John Chrysostom says, "Nay, he greatly enhances it ... training us in all things by higher rules." While rebuking the Pharisees who "have not read" the heart of the law, Jesus redirects them to understand in the Sabbath law God's desire for worship (here worshipping Jesus, who is greater than the Temple)—a desire for worship that leads to extending God's mercy (as Jesus will do when he heals on the Sabbath in Matthew 12:9–13), refraining from work and evil actions so as to offer works of charity for love of God.

Jesus says, "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." The Sabbath rest of the Old Covenant "foretells the sacred day of the new and final Covenant" (St. John Paul II, *Dies Domini*), the Lord's Day, Sunday. Is Jesus Lord of the Lord's Day in your life? How do you set aside the Lord's Day? How do you prepare ahead so that you can rest from work, and so that others can rest from work? How do you offer God's mercy and love to others on the Lord's Day?

In his response to the Pharisees, Jesus says, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here." Why would this response upset the Pharisees? What does the Temple represent? What are the implications of Jesus' statement that "something greater than the temple is here"?

In describing the actions of David and his men, Jesus notes that they do things reserved "only for the priests." How do these words hint at a new priesthood that Jesus will establish? How will that priesthood include consuming a new "bread of the Presence"?

Having read and meditated on today's Scripture passage, take some time to bring your thoughts to God (*oratio*) and to listen to God (*contemplation*). Then end your prayer by making a simple concrete resolution (*resolutio*) to respond to God's prompting of your heart in today's prayer.



COMMIT—DAY 4

GOD'S PRESENCE



Thunderstorm with lightning in mountain landscape © Creative Travel Projects
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Throughout Scripture, God makes himself known to his people in a variety of ways. At times God performs resounding miracles, and at other times he uses a more subtle approach. At Mount Sinai, God's presence is forcefully felt: the land rumbles, lightning blazes across the sky, thunder and the trumpet blast ring in the ears of God's people, clouds and a devouring fire envelop the mountain. But when God descends from heaven to dwell in the tabernacle, it is not done with such flourish. The earth doesn't shatter from the infinite entering the finite. So delicate is the Lord's

approach that the Bible does not even note a breeze or rumble from the earth. We are simply told that "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). Why do you think there is such a shift from the way God descended upon Mount Sinai to the way he entered the tabernacle? What new way is God using to reveal his presence?

As God descends to dwell within the Holy of Holies, the infinite enters the finite within the curtained walls of the tabernacle. Though in its entirety the tabernacle was a fairly large structure, it could not hold all eternity within its boundaries. Even smaller than the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt seated on his throne between the wings of the golden cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. Why would God choose such a small dwelling as the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies?

This unexpected entrance into the inner most room of the tabernacle anticipates the next time we hear God descend upon Mount Sinai, when he meets Elijah:

"And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." —1 Kings 19:11–12

Knowing the story of the Exodus, one might anticipate God appearing in the strong wind or the earthquake or the fire. But it is the "still small voice" that prompts Elijah to wrap his face in his mantle before heading out of the cave to meet the Lord.

At Mount Sinai, God's people shrink back in fear from the thunder, lightning, and smoke upon the mountain, not wishing to approach: "Now when all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die'" (Exodus 20:18–19). And in fact, God does not allow the people to come up the mountain due to their sin, but rather sets boundaries for them so that they can approach only so far (see Exodus 19:21–23).

In building the tabernacle, God also sets boundaries for his people due to their sin. Thus, for example, it was only the priests who could enter into the inner sanctuary and serve at the Table of the Bread of the Presence, and it was only the high priest once a year who entered the Holy of Holies. But the entrances to the tabernacle and its inner areas were not through wood or metal doors, but instead through curtained veils of fine blue and purple and scarlet linen. Even when the stone Temple replaced the tabernacle, it was still a veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Instead of stronger materials to separate God's presence from his people, God used veils of cloth, hinting that these boundaries would one day be overcome.

As a portable Mount Sinai, the tabernacle recalled the path from the bottom of the mountain to its top, where God descended to enter into a covenant with his people. Sin had prevented God's people from traversing this path to its end and meeting God face to face and sharing in the heavenly banquet with God himself. But this was the path God desired his people to pursue. Thus the psalmist records the dialogue between the Lord: "Thou hast said, 'Seek ye my face.' My heart says to thee, 'Thy face, LORD, do I seek.' Hide not thy face from me. ... Teach me thy way, O LORD" (Psalm 27:8–11).

In settling his glory upon the tabernacle in such a gentle way, the one true God who is an all-consuming fire (see Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29) reveals his desire to dwell amongst his people. And ultimately, when sin was destroyed and the veil torn at Jesus' death on the Cross (see Matthew 27:51), God would no longer dwell in the curtained tabernacle or stone Temple, but in the very temples of the hearts of his people. Look up the following verse. What does St. Paul tell us about who we are and who dwells in us?

1 Corinthians 3:16 _____

And if we would let God have his way, his fire, so powerfully displayed atop Mount Sinai, would set our hearts ablaze. As St. Catherine of Siena has so beautifully prayed, "In your nature, eternal Godhead, I shall come to know my nature. And what is my nature, boundless Love? It is fire, because you are nothing but a fire of love."

The surest way of letting God transform us into his perfect dwelling place is to partake often of the new bread of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. As we consume him who is boundless Love, we will become a lovely dwelling place for God. Help us, Lord, to make the prayer of your Church our very own:

"O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever."
—Collect from Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

COMMIT – DAY 5

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

**Menorah (7-branched candelabrum) from the Temple or Tabernacle,
Joseph Assarfati c. 1299
(as it appears in the Hebrew manuscript Bible illuminated at Cervera)**



*Menorah (7-branched candelabrum) from the Temple or Tabernacle / Gianni Dagli Orti /
The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY*

In his illumination of the Hebrew Bible, Joseph Assarfati includes an oil painting of the menorah in Zechariah's vision: "And the angel who talked with me came again, and waked me, like a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, 'What do you see?' I said, 'I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps which are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left'" (Zechariah 4:1–3).

Painted at the end of the thirteenth century, Assarfati's work draws on the description of the menorah that God gives to Israel in Exodus 25:31–36: "And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The base and the shaft of the lampstand shall be made of hammered work; its cups, its capitals, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it; and there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; three cups made like almonds, each with capital and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almonds, each with capital and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand; and on the lampstand itself four cups made like almonds, with their capitals and flowers, and a capital of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. Their capitals and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it one piece of hammered work of pure gold."

From the central shaft of the menorah, with its four cups (three up top and one close to the base), extend three branches on either side, each with three cups. Each branch and the central shaft are adorned at the end with graceful floral petals. Behind the menorah is a veil of vibrant blue diamond shapes, linked at each point with a scarlet circle, recalling the veils that Exodus describes at the entrance to each area of the tabernacle. Oil from the olive trees on either side pours into golden bowls and from there into the cups of the menorah to be lighted so as "to give light upon the space in front of it" in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:37).



*Menorah (7-branched candelabrum)
from the Temple or Tabernacle / Gianni
Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art
Resource, NY*

The menorah recalled the burning bush. Exodus 3:2 recounts how "the angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed." In the ensuing conversation with Moses, God reveals that he has "come down" to deliver Israel, and when Moses argues about the unlikely success of God's plan to send him back into Egypt, God assures Moses that "I will be with you." Located in the Holy Place in the tabernacle, the lit menorah made of pure gold would "burn but not be consumed," and remind Israel of God's ever-dwelling presence "with them" in the Holy of Holies where he would receive their offerings and "deliver them" from their sins.

In 70 AD when Titus and the Roman army defeated the Jews in Jerusalem, they plundered the Temple treasures and set the Temple ablaze such that there was not left "one stone upon another" as Jesus had prophesied in Mark 13:2. Titus' triumphal arch, located to this day along the eastern edge of the Roman forum, records on its inner arch the Roman army carrying the Temple plunder back to Rome, with the golden menorah prominently displayed upon the shoulders of Rome's soldiers.



*Detail carvings of the Arch of Titus in
Rome ©khd / shutterstock.com*



*The sack of Jerusalem Temple.
Arch of Titus © Eduard Cebria /
shutterstock.com*



A large rectangular stone was unearthed in the synagogue, with a relief depicting the menorah photo / Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

The menorah itself was likely lost in the sacking of Rome. As a result, Titus' arch remained the single oldest representation of the Temple menorah until in 2009 when a synagogue was discovered at the site of ancient Magdala in Israel. A large rectangular stone was unearthed in the synagogue, with a relief depicting the menorah flanked on either side by a pair of two-handled jugs and pillars.

Jewish synagogues provided a place to gather each Sabbath and hear the Hebrew Scriptures preached. This large stone may very likely have been the table upon which the Scripture scrolls were unrolled and read. Thus the word of God that the psalmist described as "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105) was laid upon and read from a stone

that depicted the burning light of the menorah. Some propose that the decorations of the Magdala stone may reflect decorations from the Temple and its altar. If so, the jars on the side of the menorah are placed so as to collect the blood of the sacrifice as it flowed off the altar's top surface, and if the Old Testament sacrifices ultimately prefigured Jesus Christ, we can see an anticipation of the blood of the New Covenant that was offered on the Cross and is consumed at each Eucharist.



Church of Florence interior © conde / shutterstock.com

As with all the furnishing of the tabernacle, the menorah points us to Christ. The menorah is recalled in Christian church architecture, such as the picture to the left. Here the six altar candles, three on either side, recall the ancient menorah, but the center candle is replaced with the crucifix on which hangs the Light of the World.

In the Holy Place, the menorah was the source of light for the priest as he approached God and attended to the Table of the Bread of the Presence and the Altar of Incense. Look up the following verses. How is Jesus described?

John 1:9 _____

John 8:12 _____

John 12:46 _____

John 15:5 _____

The menorah burned with a continual light before God's presence, and in doing so looked forward to him who would be the Light of the World and God's very Presence himself. From the menorah's central staff extended six branches, and just as the central staff was lit, so too were these six branches. We are called to be branches grafted into Jesus Christ the true vine, and Jesus exhorts us in his Sermon on the Mount to be "the light of the world" and to let "your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16). Let us each examine our life in light of these words of our Lord.

SESSION 5

MYSTERIES OF THE TABERNACLE: THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text or the discussion questions. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you've learned into specific action?

[illegible]

SESSION 5

MYSTERIES OF THE TABERNACLE: THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

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