

Presence – RESPONSES

Session 1 – God is with us.

1. The video asks the questions “How big is God?” and “How small is God?”
 - How would you answer these questions?

RESPONSE

God does not have size.

We can say he is

- BIG – (greater) than everything because he created everything.
- SMALL – because he upholds and sustains all things, even the smallest things.
 - nothing is beneath God’s notice or attention.

2. How is God both “big” and “small” in the Eucharist

RESPONSE

In the Eucharist, God is

- BIG - because he is present in all his Divinity –
 - he is not divided or diminished.
- SMALL - because he is present in the humility of coming to us
 - under the appearance of a small piece of bread and
 - allowing us to consume him.

Session 2 – The Story of the Eucharist

1. What are some of the connections between Passover and the Eucharist?

RESPONSE

Jesus is the Lamb of God who is sacrificed so that we may be freed from slavery to sin.

- The flesh of the Passover lamb was to be eaten as a part of the Passover sacrifice
 - The Flesh & Blood of Jesus the Lamb of God is to be eaten in the Eucharistic sacrifice.
 - The Passover sacrifice involved the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb on the wood of the mantle
 - The Blood of Jesus the Lamb of God is shed on the wood of the Cross.
 - God commanded that the Passover be perpetually celebrated as a memorial of Israel's deliverance from slavery as the center of the Old Covenant.
 - Jesus commanded that the New Passover be perpetually celebrated in the sacrifice of the Mass as the center of the new Covenant.
2. In the celebration of the Mass, how do we participate in offering the perfect sacrifice of Christ?

RESPONSE

We participate in the sacrifice of the Mass by uniting ourselves to

- the words of the Liturgy and
- the intentions of the priest who is acting in persona Christi capitis.

Together with the whole Church,

- we offer the sacrifice of Christ to the Father and
- unite the sacrifice of our entire lives to it.

Then, through this transforming sacrifice and communion with Christ in the Eucharist, we are sent out to

- bring Christ to the ordinary places of life and culture and
 - consecrate the world itself to Christ.
3. In what ways is the Eucharist the fruit of the Tree of Life?

RESPONSE

In John 6, Jesus promises that the Eucharist preserves us for eternal life – just as the Tree of Life would have preserved Adam & Eve for eternal life.

4. What implications does this have for your own life?

RESPONSE

Understanding the Eucharist as the fruit of the new Tree of Life can deepen your understanding of the Eucharist by

- connecting it to both the old Testament and the New Testament.
- reminding you that the Eucharist
 - is the source & summit of the Christian life
 - gives you spiritual life & leads to eternal life with God in heaven.
 - connects the Mass to Paradise – the Garden of Eden as well as Heaven.

Session 3 – Bread for the Journey

1. How do we participate in the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist?

RESPONSE

We participate by

- receiving his gift with love and thanksgiving
- intentionally uniting ourselves to his sacrifice on the cross and
- offering ourselves back to God.

2. What are some practical ways to be intentional about participating in this way?

RESPONSE

Some practical ways to do this intentionally and consciously might include:

- MASS INTENTION - forming a particular intention before Mass begins
- OFFERTORY - having in mind a specific joy or struggle that we want to give to God & consciously offering that to God especially at the offertory
- THANKSGIVING PRAYER - offering ourselves to God in prayer immediately after receiving the Eucharist

Ex. "Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, my Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for my sins and those of the whole world."

3. At the end of Mass, we are dismissed with a purpose. What is our mission when we leave Mass?

RESPONSE

Take the encounter with God we've just experienced and share that love with the world.

God wants to transform us and the whole world.

He works in our hearts through the Eucharist so that we can share that life and love with the rest of the world.

4. What can we do to live out this mission?

RESPONSE

Ways to live out this mission are:

- applying what we've heard in the Scripture readings and homily in our lives.
- saying and doing things to show those around us that we are trying to love them as God loves us:
 - being patient in the parking lot after Mass
 - reaching out to an estranged family member
 - etc.

Session 4 – Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist

2. The video focuses on two groups that have objections to the church's doctrine of the Real presence. Which of these groups do you sympathize with the most?

RESPONSE

- JEWISH – They were the original recipients of revelation and it seems especially strange to be asked to do something contrary to the Old Law.
- PAGANS – It may seem like cannibalism to them.

3. What things might we say or do to help remove the Jewish & pagan objections?

RESPONSE

Consuming the Eucharist makes us participants in the life of Jesus Christ.

That is why ...

- JEWISH – the Old Law prohibition regarding blood does not apply.
- PAGANS – Communion is different from cannibalism.

4. What is at the heart of accepting the doctrine of the Eucharist?

RESPONSE

Belief in Christ's divinity and trust in him beyond what we see.

5. Why do some Protestants say that Jesus' words are a metaphorical statement?

RESPONSE

Some Protestants incorrectly say that "the flesh is of no avail" means that Jesus is speaking metaphorically (defn: relating to a metaphor, figurative).

They point to other statements that are clearly metaphorical:

- "I am the Vine"
- "I am the gate."

They are correct that the 2 examples above are metaphorical.

6. How do his words about being the Bread of Life compare to other statements like "I am the vine"?

RESPONSE

The metaphorical statements ("I am the Vine", "I am the gate") are short.

The Bread of Life discourse takes up many, many verses.

In the discourse, Christ's actions show he is speaking literally, not metaphorically.

7. What are the three Passovers?

RESPONSE

There is the progressive evidence of 3 Passovers recorded in John's Gospel:

- i. Changing of Water into wine at Cana
 - Jesus shows his power to change one substance into another at will.
- ii. Miracle of the multiplication of the bread & the Bread of Life discourse
 - Christ promises that he will give himself, the true bread from Heaven, at a future time.
- iii. Last Supper
 - Christ changes bread and wine into His Body and Blood (transubstantiation).

8. How do these three events help to dispel the idea that Jesus is speaking metaphorically?

RESPONSE

A progression from miracle to miracle to metaphor seems inconsistent.
Instead, the great miracle of transubstantiation at the Last Supper makes sense.

9. What is the evidence from St. Paul that Jesus is not speaking metaphorically but metaphysically?

RESPONSE

Metaphysical – referring to an idea, doctrine, or posited reality outside of human sense perception.

- the studies of what cannot be reached through objective studies of material reality.

SACRED TRADITION - St. Paul's statements in 1 Cor 11 about the breaking of the bread are presented in the light of a Sacred Tradition that is being handed on.

His teaching reflects how the early Church understood the words of Christ regarding his Body & Blood.

CONCERN - The context for St. Paul's writing is his concern that the breaking of the bread, the Eucharistic celebration, is being conducted irreverently.

LITERAL - The seriousness with which he takes the irreverence indicates that he regards the bread & wine as literally the Body & Blood of Christ.

TRANSFORMING POWER - Moreover, the context of the passage in chapter 10 includes a clear understanding about the transforming power of the Eucharistic communion.

MYSTICAL BODY - And chapter 12 makes an argument about the Church literally being the Mystical Body, an argument that is founded upon the union with Christ's Body in the Eucharist.

10. What does "reasonable" mean for the secular objectors?

RESPONSE

For secularists, real knowledge is often defined as something you can know "Scientifically" – by a measurable process. Mathematical, empirical proof is what makes a piece of information reasonable.

11. How does the scientific interpretation limit not only belief in the Eucharist, but all belief in Jesus?

RESPONSE

By such a standard, all miracles are unreasonable.

- And so is any belief in the divinity of Jesus.

12. Why do we say that faith is beyond reason but not contrary to reason?

RESPONSE

If we look at the definition of reason given by secularists,

- we find it is very limited – not just on a supernatural, but even on a natural level.

There are many things that we accept as reasonable without mathematical proof.

In daily life, everyone accepts as trustworthy the testimony of

- our senses, our parents, even our textbooks.

When it comes to supernatural matters, we say that faith goes beyond reason.

- This means that we cannot prove them, either mathematically or according to common experience.
- What we can do is show how the teachings of the Faith don't go against reason.

13. What is the significance of the literary arguments about the Tree of Life, Feast of the Lamb, etc?

RESPONSE

The literary evidence of the Scriptures indicates that there are Eucharistic themes throughout the Bible:

- the Tree of Life in Genesis – the Cross in the Gospels – the Tree of Life in Revelation.
- the Wedding Feast at Cana – the Last Supper – the Feast of the Lamb.

These repeated themes are not just present, but central.

Such stress laid on these elements makes it reasonable to accept the doctrine of the Real presence as a true scriptural teaching.

14. How does Mary's life show us how to approach the Eucharist in a biblical way?

RESPONSE

Mary received the Word of God with humility and obedience.

She pondered God's words and deeds in her heart.

Her own words & deeds always point to Jesus:

- he became Incarnate because of her *fiat*
- at Cana she said "do whatever he tells you"
- she was present at Calvary, uniting herself with Christ's sufferings.

Above all others, Mary believed God's word.

It is because of this faith that she is able to make him known & loved.

With her help, our attitude toward the Eucharist and the Scriptures that teach about the Eucharist can take on the same humble & life-giving character.