

Catching Fire - Meeting 1

Getting to Know You
Mass/Body of Christ

Part 1 - Getting to Know You

- 1) Take some time catching up with your sponsor/candidate. Share high points and low points of the time since you last saw each other. Share with each other how God is working in your lives.
- 2) Sponsor, please share with your candidate how you have come to know God more personally in your life.
- 3) Sponsor, please share with your candidate how you have seen God working in your life through the years? Feel free to share your faith testimony with your candidate.
- 4) Sponsor, please take some time to share with your candidate what your Confirmation experience was like.
- 5) Sponsor, what do you feel is the call of Christ on your life as an adult member of the Church? How do you live out that call?
- 6) Sponsor, what are you looking forward to most about being a part of your candidate's Confirmation?

Part 2 - The Mass/Eucharist

When we celebrate the Eucharist, we come together in Jesus' name to praise and worship God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. Share with each other your favorite part of the Mass and how you feel when you gather with your parish community to celebrate the Mass.

In your Bibles, read St. Paul's observations about the ways in which the Christian community in Corinth was gathering to celebrate the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (Suggestion: read the passage a couple of times before responding). Think about the ways in which you and your parish community gather as you prepare to celebrate the Mass. Share with one another what St. Paul might observe about your community. What specific advice might St. Paul offer to the members of your parish to help you gather together as a people of God?

What are two specific things you can do better to prepare your mind and heart to gather with your parish community to celebrate the Mass?

Share with each other things you might need prayers for in the coming weeks. Take some time to pray for those intentions aloud together before you conclude your meeting.

Prayer Challenge

Pray a Chaplet of Divine Mercy for your sponsor/candidate each day until your next meeting (instructions online).

Catching Fire - Meeting 2

The Importance of Scripture

Moral Decision Making

Prayer

Part 1 - The Importance of Scripture

- 1) Take some time catching up with your sponsor/candidate. Share high points and low points of the time since you last saw each other. Share with each other how you have seen God working in your lives since you last met.
- 2) Share with your candidate/sponsor your favorite Scripture story from the Old or New Testament. Explain why the story has special meaning to you.
- 3) Discuss with your candidate/sponsor the importance of God's Word in your life. Share an experience of how the Scriptures have influenced your way of living.

Part 2 - Moral Decision Making

Life is full of choices. Every day you make hundreds of them. Many of these choices may seem inconsequential. But one choice builds upon another, and in the end our choices define who we become. Choices matter. Learning to make great choices is one of the most practical skills you can develop.

Decision making is central to everything we do. Each day you can choose to make good decisions, or you can choose to make bad decisions. Whichever choice you make, be it good or bad, it is proof that you are free, and free will is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. To guide you in the use of this incredibly powerful gift, God has also given you reason and conscience. Reason is the capacity for logical, rational, and analytic thought. Conscience is the inner voice that encourages you to do good and avoid evil. God speaks to us through our conscience (CCC 1776-1779).

Describe a time when you ignored your conscience and regretted it later.

Describe a time when you listened to your conscience and followed it, even though it was difficult.

Who do you know who is a great decision maker? What makes that person a great decision maker?

Describe a time when you listened to your conscience and followed it, even though it was difficult.

Are you good at making decisions? On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how good do you think you are at making decisions?

What is one practical thing you could do to become a better decision maker?

Part 3 - Prayer

Some things help you to become the best version of yourself and some things do not. Prayer is one of the things that help. As a human being you are a delicate composition of a body and a soul. You are not just a body. You have a soul, and throughout your life you will decide to fill your soul with something. The question is: What are you going to fill your soul with? God or the world? Joy or misery? Peace or turmoil? This is just another one of those decisions you get to make! So, why pray? The answer is actually very simple: because you want to be happy. If there is a God, and if that God has a plan for your life, then trying to find happiness outside that plan is impossible.

Discovering God's beautiful plan for your life is essential to your happiness - and should be your highest priority.

How do you find out God's plan for your life? You spend time with Him in prayer (and sometimes, that means being completely silent and just listening).

St. John Paul II once said, "Prayer gives us strength for great ideals, for keeping up our faith, charity, purity, generosity; prayer gives us strength to rise up from indifference and guilt, if we have had the misfortune to give in to temptation and weakness. Prayer gives us light by which to see and to judge from God's perspective and from eternity. That is why you must not give up on praying!"

Whom do you talk to every day? Why?

Do you pray? How often? How do you feel after you pray?

Catching Fire - Meeting 3

The Coming of the King

The Creed

The Church

Part 1 - The Coming of the King

- 1) Take some time to catch up with your sponsor/candidate. Share high points and low points of the time since you last saw each other. Share with each other how you have seen God working in your lives since you last met.
- 2) In your Bibles, read Matthew 3: 1-11, the story of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord. As John preaches the coming of the King, he reminds his following that he is just an ordinary man, and the one who is coming (Jesus) is much greater.
- 3) Share with your sponsor/candidate how you are preparing (or prepared) for the King to come at Christmas. Did you remember to focus on the arrival of the Messiah, or did you find yourself caught up in the hustle and bustle? What can you do next year to make your preparation for the King even better than this year?

Part 2 - The Creed

Think of a club you have formed or a sports team that you are a part of. When starting a club, you probably came up with an idea that you all had in common, and with your sports team there are rules that you all have to follow in order to play the game properly. For many groups, clubs, and sports we sign something to show that we are committed and will follow the mission and roles of that organization.

The Creed is the summary of our whole Faith. Having a fixed formula for the Faith allows Catholics worldwide, to profess the same Faith as passed on by Jesus. The Creed gives us a set of beliefs that build the foundation of the Faith Christ passed on to the apostles. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving the apostles to continue His mission on earth through the Church, He gave the apostles a mission.

READ MATTHEW 28: 19-21

The Creed comes from the command to baptize we heard about in the Gospel of Matthew. The profession of faith is necessary for baptism. When you were baptized, you or your parents made this profession of faith in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Creed is divided into three parts. The first part refers to God the Father and His wonderful work of creation. The second part refers to God the Son, His divinity and His work of redemption. The third part of the Creed speaks of God the Holy Spirit, His origin and His relationship with the Father and Son.

There are two Creeds that you are probably familiar with: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed was written as the summary of the apostles' faith in the early Church. The Nicene Creed was written later in response to some confusion about what the Church teaches. It is longer and includes more details.

Just like we sign our names saying we are committed to a club or organization, each time we profess the Creed, we sign our names to it with our "Amen." "Amen" comes from the Hebrew root meaning "believe." It is an expression of faith, steadfastness, reliability, and fidelity. When we say "Amen" at the end of the Creed, we are saying that we trust in the God who we profess and will be faithful to Him. When it comes time to profess the Creed at Mass, some of us may space out or mumble the words out of habit. It is easy to take the Creed for granted. However, the Creed is not just a sequence of lines that we rattle off at Mass, but they are the truths we live for and many have died for. In the early Church, being a Christian was illegal. Professing the faith and being baptized into God's family most certainly meant martyrdom and death. (Martyrs are people who die for the Faith, like St. Stephen). The Creed is the summary of our Faith as presented by Christ to His Church. Catholics around the world profess their faith in the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As His disciples, we are called to proudly profess this faith in word and deed with a steadfast and firm "Amen."

The Nicene Creed

I believe in God,
The Father almighty,
Maker of Heaven and Earth,
Of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Begotten Son of God,
Born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
True God from true God,
Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
Through Him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
He came down from Heaven,
And by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
And became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
He suffered death and was buried,
And rose again on the third day
In accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into Heaven
And is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
To judge the living and the dead
And His kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
Who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
And the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Read through the Nicene Creed (above). What part of the Creed do you least understand? Why?

As baptized Christians, how can we live out the Creed with our "Amen?" Is it a priority in our daily life to live out the Creed? What can we do to make it more of a priority?

Part 3 - The Church

The Church is not just a building - it's a people made up of individuals like you and me. We are pilgrims on a journey to Heaven together. When we are at our best, we form dynamic communities. People need community. We need people to do life with, others who can encourage and challenge us. St. Paul tells us in Romans 12:5 that we are all one body. The right hand cannot leave the body. It needs the body and the body needs it. Without the body, it is useless. In the same way, we need each other. We need the Church - and the Church needs us. We are the Church. So when you don't show up, something is missing. When you don't show up, the Church can't fulfill its mission.

Life for the early Christians was not easy, yet they felt called to fulfill their mission in Christ. Why? The ancient world was brutal, cold and impersonal. Why would someone want to be a Christian knowing they could be killed? In a world of brutality, Christianity was warm, caring and deeply personal. The early Christians modeled a more compassionate, humane, and noble way of life --- this was attractive! What fueled this way of life? Ágape love!!! The

Church was organized around Ágape love which is the choice we make to love another person regardless of whether or not he/she chooses to love us in return. Ágape love is not driven by any emotion, but rather it is an unconditional love that is an act of the will. It sets aside self-interest, and is the love Jesus modeled for us and calls us to.

When you think of Church, what comes to mind?

Why is it difficult to practice Ágape love?

If you could ask a group of early Christians one question, what would you ask?

Catching Fire - Meeting 4

Living Bread From Heaven
Gift of the Spirit

Part 1 - Living Bread From Heaven

- 1) Take some time catching up with your sponsor/candidate. Share high points and low points from the time since you last saw each other. Share with each other how you have seen God working in your lives since you last met.
- 2) In your Bibles, read John 6:22-59, the Bread of Life Discourse, when Jesus tells the crowds that He is the bread of life come down from Heaven. Discuss the ways you need Jesus to feed you. What good things are you hungry for?

Next time you receive the Eucharist, ask Jesus to feed you in these ways. As Catholics we truly believe Jesus is present body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist, the living bread come down from Heaven. The Eucharist is not just a sign or symbol of Jesus, but our Lord and God Himself veiled by bread and wine. Can we prove it to you scientifically? No. Not everything can be explained or proven scientifically. If you could prove everything scientifically, there would be no need for faith. This is a beautiful and amazing mystery of our Catholic faith!

There is no other Church in the world in which you can find Jesus truly present in the Eucharist! The Eucharist is uniquely Catholic! When you go to Mass, remember that it's not the music or the priest's homily that makes the Mass; it's the presence of the King of Kings in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar (Eucharist).

You might be thinking to yourself, "I'm not sure if I believe that Jesus is truly present in the host that I receive at Mass." You would be the first person to have doubts. Great faith and great doubt often go hand in hand. There was a priest who lived in Lanciano, Italy around the year 700 who was plagued with great doubts about true presence until one day. After that day, he never doubted that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharist again! So what happened?

The Priest was celebrating Mass in a small church, even though he was filled with doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. As he said the Words of Consecration, ("Take this all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you."), the bread changed to living flesh and the wine changed into blood right before his eyes. Today you can go to Lanciano and see the flesh and blood that has remained there for more than thirteen hundred years. The flesh and blood have been studied by scientists on a number of occasions, and the following conclusions have been drawn. The flesh is real human flesh, the blood is real human blood, the flesh is muscular tissue from the heart, and the blood is AB positive which is the same type of blood found of the Shroud of Turin, which is believed by many to be the burial cloth of Christ. There is no evidence of preservatives, or any other chemical agents present. This is one of thousands of Eucharistic miracles that have been documented throughout the life of the Church.

Is there a person in your life whose presence just makes you feel calm and safe? Who is that person? What about them makes you feel that way?

When did you first learn about Jesus being present in the Eucharist? How did you react when you found out?

How do you think your life would change if you spent one hour each week sitting quietly in Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament?

Part 2 - Gifts of the Spirit

You have already been baptized, you have received your first Eucharist, and now you are preparing to complete the sacraments of initiation to become a full member of the Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. For definitions of the Gifts & the Fruits of the Spirit, see the lists below.

When a person goes skydiving, they get suited up into protective gear so when they are dropped out of a plane from thousands of feet in the air, they are ready to navigate a safe landing. You don't just get suited up to go skydiving and then sit on the couch and eat potato chips. In a sense, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are your skydiving gear. When you receive them, you are equipped with the "gear" you need to go out and be a mature disciple of Jesus Christ.

If we are really allowing the Holy Spirit to flourish within us, the fruits of the Holy Spirit will be bubbling forth in our lives! Embracing the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the path to the fruits of the Holy Spirit which are : Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, self - Control and Chastity.

7 Gifts of the Spirit

1. Wisdom = the ability to discern what is true, right, and lasting. It enables you to see life from God's perspective. It helps you to establish the right priorities in your life and leads you to think and act in mature ways.
2. Understanding = allows you to look beyond the shallowness of the world and see the lasting truth in every situation, by recognizing how God is working in our lives.
3. Counsel = the right judgement that allows us to see what is right and what is wrong, and the prudence to act accordingly
4. Fortitude = the courage and strength of will to do what you know you should, even if it means personal loss or suffering
5. Knowledge = the ability to see things from a supernatural viewpoint. In particular, to know what God is asking of you.
6. Piety = loyalty to God that manifests as generous love and affectionate obedience. This is the gift that allows you to love and worship God as he deserves to be loved and worshipped.
7. Fear of the Lord = what helps us to grasp God's greatness and our dependence on him. As a result, we are filled with enormous respect for God and we dread above all offending him or being separated from him. Our Jewish ancestors believed that fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. Of course, it is not a fear like we usually think of today. It is more like an overwhelming sense of not wanting to disappoint the One who has done (and continues to do) so much for us.

12 Fruits of the Spirit

1. Love = to love God above all things and to love others as God calls us to
2. Joy = more than just being happy, joy is a feeling awakened by the possession or expectation of something good. And this joy can be present deep within us even when things don't go our way.
3. Peace = The serenity and tranquility that flows from order. The world can make our lives disordered and chaotic. God wants to bring order to our lives - and with that order comes deep and abiding peace.

4. Patience = enables us to endure inconvenience, difficulties, and hardship without complaint
5. Kindness = Concern for others who are in trouble or need
6. Goodness = doing what is good and right in every circumstance
7. Generosity = To give freely of our time, talent, and treasure beyond what justice requires
8. Gentleness = To be submissive to God and considerate of others
9. Faithfulness = to be reliable and trustworthy
10. Modesty = the moderation of our speech, dress, and behavior
11. Self - Control = The control of our desires so that we can focus them on what is good and right
12. = Chastity = the moderation of our desires for sexual pleasure according to right reason, faith, and state in life (vocation)

Which gift of the spirit do you think you are most in need of? Why?

Which person in your life would you like to fill with joy? How can you do this?

How would a lack of self - control make it harder to experience the other 11 fruits of the spirit?

Prayer Challenge

Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit each day before school/work.

Catching Fire - Meeting 5

The Holy Spirit as Guide
An Open Invitation

Part 1 - The Holy Spirit as Guide

- 1) Open your sponsor/candidate meeting with prayer. Take some time to share any petitions you may have with each other. Then invite the Holy Spirit into your time together.
- 2) Take some time catching up with your sponsor/candidate. Share high points and low points of the time since you last saw each other. Share with each other how you've seen God working in your lives since you last met.
- 3) Share with each other a time when you were lost. What did it feel like? Did you become anxious? How did you find your way to where you were going?

When we think of a time we were lost, chances are we are able to solve the problem by finding a map, asking for help, or following a guide. Without finding a map, a guide, or getting help, there is a good chance that we would still be lost! In your Bibles, read John 14:1-31, when Jesus promises he will send the Holy Spirit.

What does Jesus tell his disciples when he promises the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit as Guide Continued...

Hopefully you noticed that Jesus promised his disciples that he will not leave them as orphans, but he will come to them. He also leaves them with his peace so that their hearts will not be troubled. This is why the Holy Spirit is so important in our Catholic faith! The Holy Spirit is what serves as our spiritual guide or map so we don't become lost or anxious, but rather that we follow where the Spirit leads us and find peace and joy knowing that we're doing God's will for our lives.

How does the Holy Spirit lead and guide you through your life? Are there areas of your life that you need to surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? When you feel the Holy Spirit is calling you to do something, do you do it right away, or do you put it off? What can you do to be better about following the Holy Spirit's guidance?

For some of us, we may feel like we are actively allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our lives, for others however, we may find that we haven't been allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us as we should, and we might feel spiritually lost. The Holy Spirit helps us to go from knowing about God (knowledge of the head) to knowing God (knowledge of the heart). We are found when we know God. We get to know God by listening to the Holy Spirit. When we listen, we are able to discern and embrace God's will for our lives. So how do we discern where the Spirit is leading us?

The Holy Spirit is the principle author of scriptures, and uses scripture writers like a writer uses a pen, to help us understand what God is saying to us and where He is leading us. Holy Scriptures through the Holy Spirit teach us truth, wisdom, and knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit has inspired the Word of God and helps us to read it. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit has inspired the Church with wisdom and knowledge.

Just like you have a body and a soul, the Church has a body and a soul too. We who are the members of the Church are the body and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. The word, "soul" comes from the Latin word "anima," which means "animate." And that's exactly what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit breathes and gives life to the Church. The Holy Spirit is also the guardian and protector of the Church and when the Church teaches in

matters of faith and morals, we can be assured that what the Church teaches is true, good, and beautiful. Getting to know God through the Holy Scriptures and Church teaching is a very good starting point for discerning where the Holy Spirit is guiding us in our lives.

Part 2 - An Open Invitation

Just like you are invited to attend different events or spend time with various people, God calls every one of us. He is inviting us into a relationship of intimate, personal, life-giving communion, and it is the Holy Spirit that allows us to say "yes" to this invitation of love and life so we can love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, all our minds, all our souls, and all of our strength.

It will not always be easy. At times we will be tempted or persecuted. We will get tired, and sometimes we will feel like giving up, but it is the Holy Spirit that strengthens us to truly live our faith with courage and conviction just as it strengthened David in his fight against Goliath and just as it strengthened the apostles that faced persecution in the early Church. It is the Holy Spirit that strengthens us to truly live our faith with passion, and it is the Holy Spirit that gives us comfort and strength during difficult times. The Holy spirit is our anchor and defender of our faith and when we say "yes" in cooperation with what God wants us to do, with the power of the Holy Spirit we can truly become the person that God created and calls each one of us to be.

Share with each other a time when you were invited to something. What did it feel like to be invited? Were you excited? Nervous? Indifferent? Have you ever been invited to something you knew you should attend or you knew was good, but for some reason you were hesitant to go? Maybe you were afraid you wouldn't know anyone or that you wouldn't enjoy your time there? Or perhaps you just didn't feel like doing anything. What was holding you back from going?

God's Invitation

Just like you are invited to attend various events, or spend time with various people, God calls every one of us. He is inviting us into a relationship of intimate, personal, and life-giving communion, and it is the Holy Spirit that allows us to say "yes" to this invitation of love and life so we can love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, all of our minds, all of our souls, and all of our strength.

It will not always be easy. At times we will be tempted or persecuted. We will get tired, and sometimes we will feel like giving up, but it is the Holy Spirit that strengthens us to truly live our faith with courage and conviction just as it strengthened David in his fight against Goliath and just as it strengthened the apostles that faced persecution in the early Church. It is the Holy Spirit that strengthens us to truly live our faith with passion, and it is the Holy Spirit that gives us comfort and strength in difficult times. The Holy Spirit is our anchor and defender of our faith, and when we say "yes" in cooperation with what God wants us to do, with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can truly become the person God created and calls each of us to be.

Brainstorm: What are some ways you can work on saying "yes" to the Holy Spirit's invitation to be your guide?

Prayer Challenge

Make a daily effort to say "yes" to the Holy Spirit's invitation to be your guide. Our Blessed Mother gave her "yes" to the Holy Spirit when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her she was to bear the Son of God. Ask Mary to pray for you - that you have the courage to follow her model of the perfect "yes."