

Vatican II

Light for the Church and the Modern World

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

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Overview

This Object is the sixth in a chronologically ordered set of six covering the evolution of the Eucharist from its origins through to the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

The multimedia element is comprised of nine images with key texts selected from the Supporting Content.

Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Exploring the Mass' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the scriptural, historical and theological foundations of the Eucharist.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Evolution of the Mass' watch the video 'Reforms of Vatican II'.
- Also within this pathway is the timeline 'Mass Through the Ages'. Click on the button to view the timeline. Scroll along it using the arrows.

Where appropriate, use this material with the students.

Supporting Content

This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.

The liturgical reforms of Vatican II proclaimed the Mass as 'source and summit of Christian life' and encouraged the 'full, conscious and active participation' of all in the Eucharistic celebration. The reforms arose from the immense amount of liturgical research carried out by scholars in the 19th and 20th centuries whose studies of the early Church had uncovered sources of ancient celebrations of the Eucharist. There was a great desire at Vatican II to return to these sources, to re-examine and reappropriate the twin fountains of Church life, Scripture and Tradition, and to apply the insights gained to the liturgy of the contemporary Church.

The greatest effect of the Vatican II reform was the recovery of the liturgical

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Supporting Content

role of the congregation at Mass and the restoration to the people of the responses, songs, acclamations and prayers appropriate to them. Another important consequence was the restoration of liturgical ministries, lector, cantor, acolyte, for example, so that, led by the Priest, the Mass is clearly seen as an ordered act of praise and thanks to God in which Priest, ministers and people each play their part.

The broader explanation of Christ's presence in the Eucharistic celebration – in the gathered people, in the proclaimed scripture, in the person of the presiding priest as well as pre-eminently in the elements of bread and wine – encouraged an understanding of the whole Mass as an opportunity of encounter with the Risen Lord and a participation in the Paschal Mystery, rather than focussing chiefly on the moments of consecration or Communion.

The Mass continued to be centred, as it always had been, upon the remembering and re-presentation of the events of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus made present to the Church throughout every age but it was now enriched with a fully developed Liturgy of the Word. After readings from both Old and New Testaments interspersed with responses and acclamations and concluded by a homily (*Liturgy of the Word*), the Church carries out the command of Jesus at his Last Supper, bread and wine are taken, consecrated and shared among the people. They become Sacraments of the Body and Blood of the Lord by which all are fed and through which all are immersed in the identity of Christ and share in his mission to the world (*Liturgy of the Eucharist*). Introductory Rites lead into the Mass and a brief Concluding Rite brings it to an end. Catholics from the first centuries would immediately recognise the basic shape of this celebration.

Another important result of the Vatican II reform was the permission given for the Mass to be celebrated in vernacular languages rather than in Latin, and the audible praying of the Eucharistic Prayer. Congregations could immediately relate to what, for centuries, had been concealed and the People of God had a voice once again!

For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

- 1 **Use the timeline in the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to familiarise students with an overview of the thirty five key events from the Last Supper (CE 34) to the Mass Today (CE 2010). With that as context, students can find out what other**

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**For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use**

important events happened during a chosen period they are researching: **Origins of Eucharist, The Early Church, Religion of the Empire, The Middle Ages, Council of Trent, and the Second Vatican Council.**

- 2 **Students could be formed into six small groups to each prepare a presentation to the class on one of the six Objects in the Timeline of the Eucharist series. Using the Supporting Content and utilising the multimedia element as the focus of their presentation they should draw on the named further resources, to aid them in preparing their presentation.**
- 3 **Individually or in pairs/threes, students choose one of the slides in the multimedia element and accompanying Supporting Content and use this as the basis for further research on this aspect of the Object.**
- 4 **Direct the students to formulate questions for their interviews. The following questions are examples of some of the important questions that should be asked:**
 - **Can you think of reasons why Mass celebrated in Latin might be deeply significant even to those who did not understand the language?**
 - **How might people have actively participated at Mass during this period?**
 - **What role can silence play in the celebration of Mass?**

After the reforms of the Council of Trent, the shape of the Eucharist remained substantially fixed until the middle of the 20th century. You might ask either your grandparents or older members of the community to describe their experience of the Eucharist as young people and their understanding of 'the Body of Christ'.

- 5 **Screen the video clip 'Background to Liturgical Reform' in the 'The Evolution of the Mass' section of the 'Exploring the Mass' pathway of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to assist students to reflect on this question.**

The liturgical movement described by Sr Janet Baxendale SC had its roots in the rediscovery of early documents showing how the Eucharist, while led by the Priest, was an ordered celebration in which the people played an active part.

How do the people play an active part in the Mass today? How do you play an active part in the Mass?

- 6 **Discuss the following statement with the class.**
In what ways does celebrating the Eucharist help Christians to

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For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

'become one body, one Spirit in Christ' and to live Jesus' self giving death and share his resurrection? How does the Eucharist help you to feel that you belong to a group of believers? How does the Eucharist help you to have hope in the sufferings and hard times in life?

Teacher Professional Development Resources

[Documents of the II Vatican Council](#) – Constitutions, Declarations, and Decrees

[Vatican II – Voice of the Church](#)