

Council of Trent

Bishops and leaders call for reform

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

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Overview

This Object is the fifth 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 ten 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 'Developments in the Theology of the Eucharist'.
- 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.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, many Bishops and leaders were calling for reform of Church life and order but sadly it was not until after the Protestant Reformation that the Council of Trent was called and the Catholic Church itself undertook a thorough reform, including a reform of the Mass. A new Missal was prepared which set out the ritual for Mass and purified it of many of the accretions and additions of the medieval period. This Missal replaced the great profusion of local customs with a clearly set out rite that looked back, not yet to the earliest celebrations of the Mass in the first centuries, but to the original Roman rite.

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**Supporting Content**

This reform of the Mass was influenced not only by the acknowledged abuses that had gradually crept in but also by the need to affirm key understandings about the Mass against the challenges raised by the Protestant reformers. These challenges principally concerned the denial of Mass as a sacrifice and the denial of the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Efforts were concentrated on restoring the Mass in such a way that its meaning and effect were clear, stripping away the many additions, mandating the ancient rite enshrined in the Roman Missal.

No particular attention was paid to the relationship between Priest and people in the offering of Mass, nor to the role of the congregation apart from their prayerful presence. However, it was recommended that the people receive Holy Communion each time they attended Mass which was a radical idea at that time. The possibility of celebrating Mass in the vernacular was discussed but was not introduced.

The reforms were widely accepted throughout the Church (though provision was made for rites that had been in use for 200 years or more to continue) and firmly enforced. A key to this wide and effective reform was the Council's effort to educate and prepare Priests for their tasks. Seminaries were erected all over the Catholic world for the training of Priests. These measures, plus the zeal of new orders such as the Jesuits, were highly successful in re-establishing and re-inspiring Catholic Europe. This version of the Mass remained substantially the same for 500 years.

Uniformity and adherence to the rules and rubrics contained in the Missal meant that Catholics could attend Mass anywhere in the world and recognise the same ritual and language. However, the role of the people was still simply to pray along silently at Mass either with a rosary or a prayer book or as best they could. The great abuses disappeared and the Mass was restored, sublime, especially when augmented by the music of Palestrina and other musical masters of the 16th and 17th century, but a Mass in which only the Priest, his assistant ministers and the choir had an active part.

**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 and 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 **Impart to the students some of the historical facts of the Council of Trent. Use the timeline from *Become One Body and Spirit in Christ* as a starting point.**
What were the achievements of the Council of Trent?
- 5 **Provide students with a list of topics to be covered in their research project.**
Research one of the new religious orders founded during this period. Consider their role in relation to the reforms of the Council of Trent. **Perhaps ask a speaker from one of these orders to come and speak to the class.**

Teacher Professional Development Resources

Dr Knox, Ellis L., [Council of Trent \(1545-1563\)](#)

Nelson, Lynn H., ['The Counter Reformation'](#), *World History Syllabus*, 1998