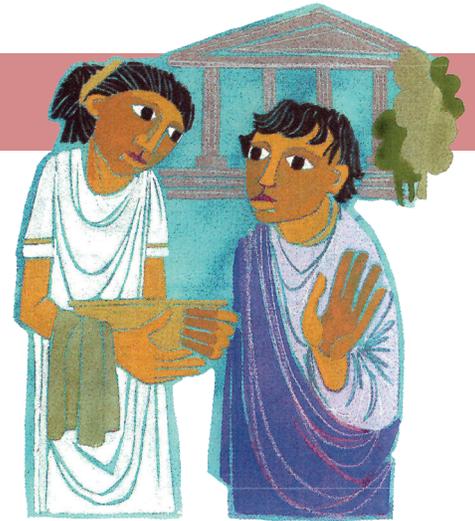


The Church at Home

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

Nympha and the Church in her house are mentioned in Colossians 4:15. There is evidence that the early gatherings of the followers of Christ were held in what we call “house churches.” Those who had homes large enough would host these celebrations.

This story is a fictionalized account of what one of these early Eucharists might have been like.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: What was the best party you ever attended? What made it so?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

A long, long time ago, there lived a good Christian woman named Nympha. Nympha lived during the time of Jesus. She lived in a land hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem in a town called Colossae. Nympha had never met Jesus, but she knew all about him.

Nympha learned about Jesus from one of his disciples. After Jesus died, the disciple traveled to her country and told the people about Jesus. He told the people the Good News. He told the people how Jesus had died and had risen from the dead.

Some people just laughed at the disciple, but others listened and became believers. Nympha and everyone who lived in her house were baptized. They worked very hard to make the Plan of God happen.

Nympha had a special gift. She knew how to give great parties. People always felt comfortable when they came to her house. People would come for dinner and stay late into the evening. Everything about Nympha and her home said “Welcome!”



When Nympha became a Christian, her parties were even better. She would invite her Christian friends for dinner, and always they would stay late into the evening. Every week they came to her home for a very special dinner. This is how it went.

“Is everything ready?” Nympha asked.

“Yes,” said her servant. “The meat is cooked, the vegetables are ready and the bread is baking.”

“Just in time,” said Nympha. “Here come our first guests.”

The people began to gather in small groups, chatting and laughing. Sometimes Nympha could hear a few people arguing about whose turn it was to read Paul’s letter. She also noticed that some people seemed to be avoiding other people. “Oh my,” she thought, “it is a good thing it is almost time to begin the supper.”

They began as they always did with a prayer and a song. During the dinner people shared their favorite stories of Jesus. “I like the story about Jesus and

Zacchaeus,” said one of the guests. He told the others how Jesus had changed the tax collector’s life.

Everyone laughed when he described how fast Zacchaeus had slid down the tree when Jesus had called him. “I hear old Zack is collecting money for the widows in Jerusalem now,” said another woman.

When the story of Zacchaeus was finished, Nympha took the latest letter from Paul out of her pocket. She turned to the man sitting next to her. “Would you please read Paul’s letter?” she asked.

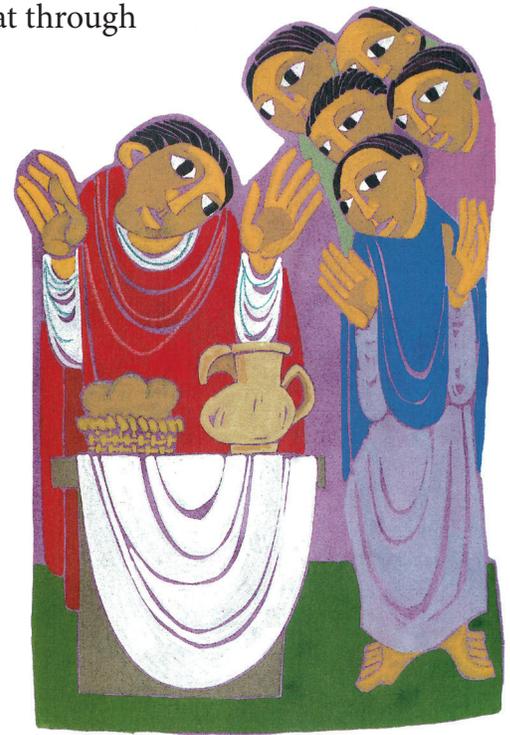
The man read the letter nice and loud. “What a good letter,” Nympha thought. “It is almost as if Paul is with us tonight.” Nympha really liked the part where Paul told them how much God loves them, and asked them to be kind and humble, gentle and patient with each other. She was also glad Paul reminded them to forgive each other as soon as a quarrel began, telling them to remember that God was always ready to forgive them. As always, Paul told them to let peace live in their hearts.

After the letter was read, it was time to pray again. Then the servant brought out the freshly baked bread and a pitcher of wine. The bread was prayed over and broken. The wine was blessed and poured. And everyone who was baptized shared in the Lord’s Supper. They knew that Jesus was with them. They knew that Jesus was in them. And they knew that through Jesus all things were possible.

As they left the table, they began to sing again. Nympha was happy as she walked her friends to the door. She knew that they had their problems. They had their faults. But she also knew that they loved each other. They were one family.

It is the same today when we gather for the Lord’s Supper. We come to pray together as a family. When we receive the Body of Christ at Communion we remember that we are the Body of Christ in this world. And we know that with Jesus, in Jesus and through, Jesus all things are possible.

God called Nympha. Nympha listened and Nympha answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Nympha but also in Nympha. Nympha let the Spirit move her and great things happened.



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. If you were Nympha, what would you want to do to get ready?
3. Can you think of ways to make your meals with family or friends a little more special? How?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: The most special time we gather with others to pray is the Sunday Eucharist.

In the Gospels, Jesus commissioned Christians to “do this in remembrance of me.” The Sunday Eucharist can be traced back to these gospel times.

Eucharist is still the greatest source of grace and nourishment for our community. At every Mass Christ offers his sacrifice to the Father for our salvation. He gave his life in self-giving love for us, and we pray that we might also live lives of sacrifice. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and we reclaim our title as “the Body of Christ.”

The House Church

Nympha is getting her house ready to celebrate Eucharist. Circle all the crosses you can find in the picture below. When you are finished, color the picture.



The Pleasure of Your Company is Requested

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2. (The answer at the bottom of page 7 is “altar.”)

2

Read the text below to yourself to learn about the Mass.

3

Explain to your child that one way to think about the Mass is as a special celebration that Jesus gives for his friends. Work together to fill out the invitation below. Decorate the invitation in any way you like. When you finish, hang your invitation somewhere to remind you that the Mass is an ongoing celebration and all are welcome!

Just for you: Have you ever heard Mass called a celebration? While we approach Mass in a different way from other celebrations—prayerfully and reverently—the similarities can help us better understand what happens at the Eucharistic celebration.

Sunday Eucharist is divided into two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word, when we hear the readings and the homily, is not unlike that time period at any gathering when people catch up with each other. We hear the stories of our tradition, the Good News of Jesus, and applications to our lives.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is an even more obvious parallel. At some celebrations we bring gifts, while at Mass we prayerfully bring forward our offering of bread and wine, plus gifts for those in need. At Mass, the altar (“Eucharistic table”) is prepared. Bread and wine are consecrated by the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer to become the Body and Blood of Christ which are offered to God as a pleasing sacrifice. Finally, the Body and Blood of Christ are shared as Communion.

An Invitation

You are cordially invited to a special gathering of friends!

Who is invited:

When:

Where:

Why:

What you will bring:

RSVP

See you soon!
Love,
Jesus

Eucharist Today

In many ways the Eucharist we celebrate today is similar to the way it was celebrated in the early days of the Church with two main parts: 1) re-telling stories about Jesus' life and 2) sharing the Body and Blood of Christ. Follow the directions below to learn more about today's celebration.

Liturgy of the Word. The Bible readings at Mass tell stories about Jesus just like the early Christians told or read stories about him during those first celebrations.

In the space below draw a picture of your favorite story of Jesus.



Liturgy of the Eucharist. During this part of the Mass we celebrate Jesus' being with us in a special way. At the altar, the bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood, just as they did in the days of the first disciples.

Color the picture below, and then answer the question at the bottom of the page.



What do we call the special table where we celebrate Eucharist? _____

Food for Thought

1

Discuss the upcoming or recent Sunday readings. Look for whatever “food for thought” you may find.

Make a plan to volunteer some time or somehow support a program in your community that feeds the poor.



Closing Ritual

2

Answer your invitation from Jesus to come and remember him at Mass by finishing this prayer:

“Thanks for inviting me, Jesus. I look forward to your celebration because...”

