## Opening Prayer Service

### Gather

We gather today to learn about Eucharist. God gifted us with Jesus and Jesus gifted us with the Last Supper, Eucharist. For us it is not a Last Supper but a meal, a celebration, that is ongoing. We gather at the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist to be nourished on our journey and to be challenged to live out our Christian commitments in the world. And so we pray …

Gracious God, giver of all gifts, we celebrate the tables that you gather us around. May these tables be places of friendship, hospitality, service, and renewal as we seek to remain faithful in our commitment to you and to each other. Bless our learning time together and challenge us to be the best we can be through you.

We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus, your Son, and the Holy Spirit, who live and reign with you forever and ever, Amen.

### Listen

Proclaim (or dramatize) the following Scripture to the assembly:

Luke 24:28-32

### Respond

In our reading for today, two disciples journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus with the risen Jesus but did not recognize him until Jesus broke bread with them at their table. A table is symbolic of many things of our Catholic faith – a table is an important place where we recognize and celebrate Christ. A table reminds us of the home church where faithful love witnesses to God’s gift of love; it reminds us of the Eucharistic table where all are welcome; it reminds us of learning, of gathering together to break open the word; and it reminds us of caring for our neighbor through acts of service like serving at a soup kitchen or acts of justice that have us lobbying at governmental tables for change. A table is where we recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread, in the breaking of one another, in the sharing of our lives and journeys.

In our celebrations of Eucharist we often refer to two tables—the table of the Word, and the table of the Eucharistic meal. We pause to reflectively set our two tables this day, to set our table with the things we know are important to nurturing our Catholic identity.

As we set the tables, I invite you to respond to each prayer by joining in song:

“We remember, we celebrate, we believe.” (Sing the refrain and invite the community to join in).

### Placing of Symbols on the Table of the Word

**Reader 1:**

We place beside this table the processional cross. It leads us into our celebration of Eucharist and reminds us that our life is rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (Place the processional cross in its stand in between the Table of the Word and Eucharist.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 2:**

We place upon this table this lectionary, the story of God’s faithfulness to his people and God’s people’s attempts to be faithful to him. (Place the lectionary on the Table of the Word table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 3:**

We place upon this table this Book of the Gospels, the Good News of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (Place the Book of the Gospels on the Table of the Word table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 4:**

We place upon this table these two candles, a reminder of how the Word of God is a light for us in our journey with God and to God. (Place the candles on or beside the Table of the Word table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 5:**

 We place upon this table this bowl of water, a reminder of how our baptismal promises are renewed each time we profess the creed and celebrate Eucharist. (Place the bowl of water on or beside the Table of the Word table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

### Placing of Symbols on the Table of the Eucharist

**Reader 6:**

We place upon this table this cloth, a reminder of Christ sacrificing his life for us. The cloth reminds of his burial shroud. (Place the cloth over the Eucharistic table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 7:**

We place upon this table this chalice, a symbol of grapes crushed and formed into one life-giving drink. (Place the chalice on the Eucharist table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 8:**

We place upon this table this plate of Eucharistic bread, symbol of one body, may parts, broken and shared so that all may have life to the full. (Place the plate of bread on the Eucharist table)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 9:**

We place upon this table the Sacramentary, the book of prayers, blessings, and rituals that helps us to praise and worship God. (Place the Sacramentary on the Eucharist table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 10:**

We place upon this table ourselves (parish photo directory or parish bulletin). May we be transformed and challenged to be the body of Christ each time we celebrate Eucharist. (Place the directory or bulletin on the Eucharist table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

**Reader 11:**

We place at these tables a chair, to acknowledge the Spirit as part of our faith, challenging us to keep our faith real and wise and true. (Place a chair beside both the Table of the Word and the Eucharist table.)

**Community Response**: “We remember, we celebrate, we believe.”

### Go Forth

Gathered as one body around these Tables of Word and Eucharist we pray: “Our Father…”

Creator God,

You are present to us in word, Eucharist, and community. Bless us with the vision to recognize you in our midst and to be vibrant witnesses of your goodness in our world. We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen

## Handout #2.

## Listening and Responding in Love – We Remember Our Relationship with God

### Option A: Drama

As we continue our exploration of Eucharist, we pause to remember how Eucharist is the ongoing celebration of God’s invitation to be his people and our loving response to that invitation. As in every sacrament, we listen to God’s word, and we are invited to respond by loving God and others more deeply. God invites, we respond, and the story continues. A few people are joining us at this gathering to help us remember the story of our covenantal relationship with God, of how God has, is, and continues to invite us into loving relationship with him.

#### (Enter Abraham)

Hello! Abraham is my name, and I might still be famous for being one of the oldest fathers on earth as well as for having one of the largest families! God was ever so faithful to me. He invited me into relationship with him, I listened to his voice and his invitations and his promises, and God gifted me with children that I longed for so deeply. I trusted God so much that I was willing to sacrifice my beloved son Isaac to obey him. God in his goodness was simply testing me and did not ask me to follow through on that sacrifice. Listening to God and responding in love, that’s what life in faithful relationship with God is all about. (Abraham leaves)

#### (Enter Moses)

####

Hello! Moses is my name, and many people have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how I heard God speaking to me through a burning bush. It really was an ordinary day, and I was simply checking on the sheep, when this spectacular bush seemed to come ablaze without being burnt. Lo and behold, I heard God speaking to me. As it is written in the book of Exodus, God invited me to take off my shoes and then proceeded to tell me that he was worried about his people serving as slaves in Egypt. He told me to go to Egypt and set his people free. I wasn’t sure if it was really God speaking but he even told me his name and transformed my staff into a snake and back into a staff again. I grew to know that it was God speaking to me and that I really was the one he needed to set his people free. Even though I doubted my abilities to pull it all off, I knew that God’s plans for me were greater than any I could imagine for myself. I listened to God, and through an ever-growing and deepening relationship with him, chose to respond in love to God’s invitation to serve him with the help of other people. Listening and responding, that’s what life in faithful relationship with God is all about. (Moses leaves)

#### (Enter Jeremiah)

Hello! When God chose me, Jeremiah, I tried to convince him that I was too young and did not know enough to serve him as a prophet. Have you ever tried to convince God that he is choosing the wrong person? Good luck! I knew that in God’s invitation was also God’s faithfulness—he was not going to invite me to be his servant only to abandon me. No doubt the work was hard, trying to get the Israelites to realize that they were making bad choices and living in sin and corruption. It was painful work too, watching people reject God’s loving relationship with them. I did my best, and God worked through me to reach some of his people, and that is good news. Listening and responding to God’s invitation, that’s what life in faithful relationship with God is all about. (Jeremiah leaves)

#### (Enter Mary)

Greetings, O chosen children of God! I am Mary, the woman who was blessed to serve as the mother of our Lord, Jesus. Jeremiah and all the prophets tried to get God’s people to understand his loving relationship with them, but God chose to have Jesus become human and show us the way to life and love through an earthly existence. How graced I was, to be invited to share in Christ’s human existence. I remember the day when Gabriel surprised me with his presence, affirming me as having found favor with God and telling me the incredible news that I was to conceive and bear a Son, Jesus! What could I say in response to such an invitation?

The response that surfaced in my heart was, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." I listened in faithful relationship to a God who had been so faithful to me, and how blessed was I as I responded in love to gift the world with Jesus. (Mary leaves)

#### (Enter Peter)

Greetings, from Peter, to the church gathered here! Do you remember, from the Gospels, the description of the Last Supper? What a night that was, such a mixture of joy and pain and a sense of something greater to come. When Jesus broke the bread, gave it to us, and said “do this in memory of me” we all felt a deepening awareness that our relationship with Jesus was going to be changing. Jesus seemed to be preparing us for him no longer being with us. We had been blessed to journey with Jesus for just a few short years, but we had grown to love and know him in ways that were unforgettable and in ways that changed our lives forever. When Jesus offered us that broken bread, we began to have a sense of how we too were going to be called to be bread for the world and for one another. Oh, I thought I was strong, that I would never deny Jesus, but fear grabs the best of all of us and I failed to be bold in my relationship with Jesus. But I did not give up, I continued to listen to Jesus and kept pondering how I was to respond in love to his invitation to feed his people. God speaks to us through Scripture and events and people, and we are called to break bread, to celebrate Eucharist, and to lovingly be God’s presence in our world. Listening and loving, that’s what life is all about. May you be open to listen to what God has to tell you and may you be courageous enough to lovingly respond to God’s invitation. (Peter leaves)

####  (Enter 1-2 parishioners who have prepared a brief faith sharing)

“Hi, I am ….”

Eucharist is about listening to God’s invitation and challenge to his people and our loving response to that invitation. We listen, and through the grace of Christ and the Spirit we respond.

Our learning for this session will enable us to explore the concept of listening and responding to God and each other through the celebration of Eucharist.

## Handout #3

## Sample Eucharist Faith Sharing

#### Questions for faith-sharer(s) to ponder:

* How do you experience Eucharist as a listening to God (through the Word, prayers, and people) and a loving response (bread broken and shared)?
* How is your life broken and shared with others?
* How does the Scripture feed and invite you into deeper relationship with God?
* How does the Eucharistic table feed and challenge you to lovingly respond to God’s summons, God’s invitation to you?
* How does Eucharist enable you to be strong in living out your faith?

#### A Sample Response:

Hi, my name is …

On Sunday mornings, when I gather for Eucharist with my family, I like to sit back and marvel at the diversity of people entering the church, gathering and greeting one another, and then taking their place in the community of believers by choosing a place to sit. I hear God speaking to me through the people – through the stories of how their weeks were, through the way in which they welcome and greet one another.

I do not always catch all the readings when they are proclaimed. Sometimes it is because my children are demanding my attention or because I have not readied my heart to listen. I try to focus and catch words that jump out at me, and I try to imagine myself present in the Gospel story. I know the readings are not chosen especially for me, but sometimes I marvel at how well they fit my life! It is like they were chosen to feed my heart after the week I had just lived! Sadly, sometimes it is only on Sundays that Scripture is part of my life—but it is something.

When we stand and profess what we believe, I am usually challenged to reclaim what it is my life is supposed to be about – God, Jesus, Spirit, and community. I hear the people around me profess their belief and it gives me energy to keep living my own commitments.

When the table of the Eucharist is prepared, I often find myself wondering what it is I am called to offer this week. Is it graced moments with my children? Is it a few insights about how I am called to live out my faith? Is it my sick friend and family members? I feel united with family and friends scattered throughout the United States and Canada as the table is prepared and we gather around it, just like the many times we have gathered in friendship around our kitchen table or other tables.

My favorite part of the Eucharistic prayer is the memorial acclamation. It’s like an Amen in the middle of the prayer, when we proclaim to one another the hope of our faith – Christ is risen! I once again feel connected to the Church everywhere, and that gives me hope that we might be bread for the world, that we might help the world be a better place. I love the AMEN, it sometimes feels like we should be yelling, “Yes, I believe, I know it can be so!”

Eucharist is gift in my life. It feeds me and challenges me to be the best Catholic I can be. I often fail, but gathering in community to break bread helps me to pick up my failure and try anew. It’s hard to realize that a broken and hurting life can be gift to another—that like the bread being broken that nourishes, so too my life challenges can be broken and shared to feed another person hope and reassurance that life to the full is possible.

Listening to God and responding in love, that’s what life is all about and Eucharist proclaims God’s word to me and invites me to lovingly respond by being Eucharist to others.

## Handout #4.

## Remembering God’s Invitation

#### Person #1: Abraham—Genesis 22:1-19

**Discuss:**

* How did Abraham experience God speaking to him? What did God ask Abraham to do? Why do you think Abraham was willing to do it?
* How do you think celebrating Eucharist, the Mass, is like listening to God and then responding in love to God’s invitation?

#### Person #2: Moses—Exodus 3:1-4:18

**Discuss:**

* How did Moses experience God speaking to him? What did God ask him to do? What was his initial response? Why do you think Moses hesitated in saying yes to God? What helped him to say yes?
* How do you think celebrating Eucharist, the Mass, is like listening to God and then responding in love to God’s invitation?

#### Person #3: Mary—Luke 1:26-45

**Discuss:**

* How did Mary experience God speaking to her? What did God ask her to do? What was her initial response? What do you think prepared Mary to listen to God’s invitation to her and to respond with a loving yes?
* How do you think celebrating Eucharist, the Mass, is like listening to God and then responding in love to God’s invitation?

#### Person #4: Jeremiah—Jeremiah 1: 4-10

**Discuss**:

* How did Jeremiah experience God speaking to him? What did God ask Jeremiah to do? What was Jeremiah’s initial response? What do you think helped Jeremiah to say yes to God?
* How do you think celebrating Eucharist, the Mass, is like listening to God and then responding in love to God’s invitation?

#### Person #5: Peter—Luke 5:1-11

**Discuss:**

* How did Peter (Simon Peter) experience God speaking to him? What did Jesus ask Peter to do? What was Peter’s initial response? What do you think helped Peter to say yes to Jesus?
* How do you think celebrating Eucharist, the Mass, is like listening to God and then responding in love to God’s invitation?

## Handout #5.

## A Journey in Listening to God

#### We gather …

#### We process in with the processional cross…

#### We mark ourselves with the sign of the cross…

#### We seek forgiveness through the penitential rite…

#### We praise God through the Gloria …

#### We pray the opening prayer …

#### We listen to God’s Word …

#### We pray the prayers of the faithful …

#### We profess our faith through the creed …

#### We say yes to …

## Handout #6.

## Illustrating Eucharistic Prayer Two

Lord God we lift up our hearts to the presence of your holiness …

We say AMEN to the beauty of God’s creation. Find/draw pictures that remind you of the holy presence of God around you.

It is our duty and salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus … Let your spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood … Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke it, gave it to his disciples…do this in memory of me…

We say AMEN to God’s gift of Jesus to us. Find/draw pictures of Jesus’ activity in today’s world – people serving others, people thinking of others first, and so on.

We offer you Father, this life giving bread, this saving cup, we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you…

We say AMEN to God choosing us to be in relationship with him. Find/draw pictures of symbols of what you and others, united with Christ, have to offer to God. What gifts did God give you to offer to the world?

Lord remember your church throughout the world…

We say AMEN to being part of the universal church. Find/draw pictures or cut out newspaper headlines of the many needs in the world and in the church for which you wish to pray…

Have mercy on us all; make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary…with the apostles and all your saints who have done your will throughout the ages…

We say AMEN to all the people who have shown us the way to God. Find/draw pictures of or write names of people who have helped you through their witness and support to live out your faith.

Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again; bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence…

We say AMEN to eternal life with God, Jesus, and the Spirit. Draw pictures or list names of all the people you know who have died.

Through God, with God, and in God…all glory and honor is yours…forever and ever…

We say AMEN to God being our beginning and our end, our source of life to the full. Find words/pictures that express praise and gratitude to God—images of nature, words of a hymn praising God, and so on.

AMEN!

We say AMEN to all that we are and all that we are called to be. Find words/pictures that show people through action witnessing to their Christian faith…people living out what it is they have said yes to. What are the names of people whom you consider to be living saintly lives?

## Handout #7.

## A Reflection on Breaking Bread

As Joanne walked down the aisle in the communion procession, she and her husband were offered the sign of peace by numerous community members. A few months back their thirteen- year-old daughter had died from what was to have been routine heart surgery. The community had wrapped them in support, bringing them food, praying for and with them, and simply being present to them as they grieved the loss of their daughter. What Joanne and her husband did not realize yet was how much they had gifted the community in return. Their faithful presence, their open belief in the resurrected Jesus, their simple reception of the gifts the community had shared with them had gifted the community in ways that were beyond description. Joanne and her husband had been bread broken in nourishment of the community, just as the community had been bread broken to them in the sharing of the bread.

Joe had been in a wheelchair all of his life. Born with fetal alcohol syndrome, he was unable to verbally speak but made sounds and jerky movements that conveyed a little what was going on in his mind and heart. Joe could do almost nothing for himself and was dependent on a full-time care giver to help him with his daily rituals – eating, bathing, attending school, exercise, and so on. An outsider may have simply seen Joe as the receiver of gifts and not the giver of many. Insiders at Joe’s high school knew differently. They could recognize the sounds of joy coming from Joe when he greeted them in the hallway; they knew how excited and passionate the sounds and gestures were coming from Joe during the praying of the Our Father in school assemblies. Joe had gifted the school with gifts that were there for anyone who dared to pay attention. Joe was bread broken for the community, calling them to a joyful stance of the world, and the community was bread broken for Joe, supporting and loving him in his physical struggles.

Eucharist is about recognizing Jesus in the breaking of the bread, just like the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread during the Emmaus story. They recognized Jesus in the action of breaking, in the memorial act of Jesus reminding them of and making present again his willingness to be broken, to die so that they and we might have life to the full. Through the breaking of the bread at Eucharist we are called to become Eucharist for others, to offer our pain, to take risks and make sacrifices so that others may come to know the fullness of life that Jesus offers us. Our loving response to God’s invitation to be in relationship with him includes a willingness to be bread broken for others, and to receive bread broken for us by others.

Broken bread could mean offering other people areas of our lives where we have felt pain and suffering. Breaking bread could mean having the courage to receive from others. Jesus calls us not to give from our excess but to give our all—to share all that we are and have with those in need. Eucharist is a celebration of giving and receiving, a celebration of thanksgiving for being part of a community that is willing to break bread, and to take and eat the gift of bread from another, and to give bread to those who have lost hope, who have no resources or ability to give or take.

As you ponder the stories of Joanne and her husband and Joe, how do they speak to you of Eucharist being a celebration of bread broken, lives offered in gift to another? When you think of the community that you are part of, do these stories remind you of any of its members?

#### Reflect

**What is harder for you to do, to give or to receive? Why?**

**How does this reflection challenge, affirm, or surface questions about your understanding of Eucharist?**

**What other insights surface for you from the Emmaus reading and the disciples recognizing Jesus in the breaking of the bread?**

## Handout #8.

## Creating a Eucharistic Tablecloth

You are invited to create a Eucharist tablecloth to take home to adorn your dining table, your prayer center, or to use as a simple wall hanging.

Eucharist is about remembering and celebrating Jesus and his gift of life to us. A cross is our central Christian symbol that reminds us of that. In the middle of your tablecloth, create the image of a cross.

In the first part of our Eucharistic celebrations, we listen to the stories of God’s faithful love for his people and hear stories of Jesus’ life and the life of the early church community. In one corner of the tablecloth write the names of biblical people you have met in the Liturgy of the Word and titles or images of some of your favorite Scripture stories.

God always speaks to us through the people in our lives. Who shares God’s message of life and love with you? In the corner of the tablecloth adjacent to the one you have just completed, write names or draw pictures of the people in your life you are grateful to for sharing God’s love and life with you.

In the second part of the Eucharist we gather to lovingly say yes to be part of God’s mission in the world. In one corner of the tablecloth draw symbols of bread and wine, the body of Christ that we lovingly say yes to becoming in the world.

Eucharist does not end with the closing hymn, but continues by the choices we make to be bread broken and shared with the world. We are called to serve and love others so that they too may come to know the love and forgiveness of God and Jesus. In the final corner of the tablecloth, trace your hand(s) as a symbol of your willingness to make a difference, to be Good News in the world.

## Handout #9.

## Honey Wheat Bread Recipe Card

The ingredients you placed into your ziplock bag at the learning session were:

* 2 cups of white, all purpose flour
* 1 cup whole wheat flour
* 1 packet of quick rise yeast ( or 2 tsp)
* 1 tsp salt
* ¼ cup liquid honey
* 1 tbsp vegetable oil

Place all of the ingredients from your ziplock bag into a large bowl. Add 1 ½ cups of water, a half a cup at a time, and mix with a wooden spoon or with greased hands until it becomes too hard to stir.

Knead for 10 minutes until it no longer sticks to your hands. Kneading means to work the dough by punching it with closed fists, lifting and turning it as you do so until the dough is no longer sticky. You may have to sprinkle it with a bit of flour if it feels too sticky.

Place the dough in an oiled bowl, turning it over to grease all sides, and place in a warm spot to rise. Let it rise until double in size -–about 30 minutes.

Knead the dough a couple of times and shape your loaves, place in a well-greased loaf pan, and let it rise until double in size again – about 30 minutes. If you do not own a loaf pan simply shape the dough into a small ball and place in the middle of a greased cookie sheet or pizza pan.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Bake the bread for 30 to 40 minutes until it is golden brown on top and sounds hollow when you tap on it. Remove from the pan and let it cool.

## Closing Prayer Service

### Gather

Creator God, you gifted us with your son Jesus and gift us with his body and blood each time we celebrate Eucharist. We gather to close our learning in prayer, remembering what we say yes to, what we say Amen to, each time we gather for Eucharist.

### Litany

Do you promise to be inviting and welcoming to all people as we gather in community to celebrate Eucharist?

Amen!

Do you promise to stand before God when you are hurting or have hurt others, to seek forgiveness?

Amen!

Do you promise to listen attentively to God’s word, that it may inspire and transform your life?

Amen!

Do you promise to live out your belief in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit by being a hope-filled person?

Amen!

Do you promise to offer all that you are in service to God?

Amen!

Do you promise to be bread blessed and broken and to allow others to be bread for you too?

Amen!

Do you promise to live a life of prayer in communion with the whole Church?

Amen!

Do you promise to journey faithfully with this community to continue building the kingdom of God?

Amen!

Do you promise to seek opportunities to serve others and share with them the Good News of Jesus?

Amen!

Our learning celebration has ended, let us go forward to love and serve the world,

AMEN!

### Go Forth

To conclude our time together, let us offer each other a sign of peace.