Westminster Abbey
Learning

Celebrating the Sacraments: Eucharist (KS4) – teachers' notes

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this five-question survey.

SLIDE 3: Learning Objectives

- Understand what role and meaning of sacraments in Christian life
- Understand the significance of the Eucharist for Christians
- Know about some of the different ways it is celebrated and different interpretations of its meaning

SLIDE 4: Discuss this definition to make sure that the pupils are clear about that it means. You could simplify it to something like 'A ceremony which Christians believe brings them closer to God'. You could discuss what is meant by a ceremony e.g. something with symbolic actions. One formation of this is to say a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inner and invisible grace.

Discussion: Why do you think Christians might find taking part in a symbolic action or ritual helpful in understanding the significance of the sacraments?

- Physical and visible activity makes it more 'real'
- Participation with others makes it feel more significant
- Can be a rite of passage e.g. A child's Confirmation and First Communion is very important – dress in a beautiful white dress – a bit like a bride in some communities
- Reminds them of Jesus doing these things and helps a sense of connection with him

SLIDE 5: How many Sacraments?

The Church of England historically taught in Article XXV of the Thirty-Nine Articles published in 1562 that there were two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist. These are known as dominical because they were instituted by Jesus in the Gospels.

Roman Catholics also add five more:

Confirmation – confirming promises made for you at your baptism

Reconciliation – Confession of sins and performing penance

Extreme Unction - anointing the sick

Matrimony (marriage) – between a man and a woman

Holy Orders – becoming a bishop/priest/deacon

Many Protestant Christians will only believe in two sacraments. However, there is broad agreement amongst Anglicans that the seven sacraments are essential to Christian life.

Confirmation is also practiced in the Anglican church when a child is old enough to understand the importance of the promises made for them by their parents and Godparents at baptism.

Discuss: Why do you think different Christians recognised different numbers of sacraments?

Sacraments enable Christians to share in the life and teachings of Jesus. Can you think of examples from the Bible where sacraments are visible? Are some more obviously commanded by Jesus?

- Baptism – Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17) and commanded the Apostles to baptise (Matthew 28:16-20)
- Eucharist – Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples (Matthew 17:27-28) and commanded them to do likewise
- Confirmation – Not directly referenced in the Bible but the Coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts could be considered analogous (Acts 2:1-4)
- Marriage – Jesus attended the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)
- Reconciliation – In the Lords' Prayer Jesus said 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' (Matthew 6:9-13)
- Holy Orders – Jesus set Peter apart: 'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it' (Mathew 16:18) – also the Coming of the Holy Spirit conferred power upon the Apostles. 'Apostle' means 'one who is sent' and Jesus sent The Twelve out to preach. (Matthew 28:16-20)
- Extreme Unction – Paul speaks of anointing the Sick with Oil, and Jesus sent the Apostles off to do this (Mark 6 7-13)

SLIDE 6: Other denominations do not practise sacramental rites at all e.g, Salvation Army or Quakers

Discussion: Why might some Christians not believe in Sacraments?

Salvation Army:

- More emphasis on personal faith
- Concern that symbols and rituals can become confused with true faith
- No evidence that Jesus intended to introduce such ceremonies

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

- In the past they have caused divisions between Christians causing some people to give up their faith
- Members can participate in eucharistic services in other churches if they wish

Quakers have a similar view.

- No need to have sacred ceremonies to make you closer to God - a Quaker's whole life is supposed to be sacred and special

SLIDE 7: Those churches which do celebrate the Sacraments do so in many different ways. Some use elaborate rituals, long liturgies (set prayers), beautiful music and precious objects.

Task: Draw up a table with arguments for and against celebrating the Eucharist in an elaborate or simple way.

Elaborate:

- To demonstrate how important the sacraments are as they bring Christians closer to God
- Continuity in the faith
- To remind believers that God is worthy of using the very best things for his worship
- To help believers focus on the spiritual significance of the sacrament
- Community of the church is the proper and fitting place for such holy ceremonies
- Set words repeated regularly can help when people are sad or tired. It helps people to focus on the significance of the ritual

Simple:

- Greater emphasis on personal faith
- Closer to how Jesus experienced them (baptism in a river; Last Supper used ordinary bread)
- Ensures that the ritual does not eclipse the meaning of the sacrament
- Repetition of the same phrases and prayers can remove their impact and people might stop thinking about what they are saying
- Avoids distractions

SLIDE 8: All Christians who believe in sacraments celebrate the Eucharist in some form. Even those who do not believe in sacraments recognise the value in eating a meal together.

Eucharist comes from a Greek word pronounced Eucharistia and means Thanksgiving.

What do you think they are thanking God for?

Jesus' sacrifice
The New Covenant

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

The family of the Church
For everything that God has done for them.

Search online for “Choral Sung Eucharist” to listen or watch an extract.

At Westminster Abbey, the Eucharist is celebrated every day. Sometimes it is a very simple service, attended by just a few people, using set words (liturgy). During the week, anyone visiting the Abbey is invited to join a service at 12.30. This goes on whilst the Abbey is also open for sightseeing.

On Sundays and other special days, the choir will sing many of the words of the liturgy in a Sung Eucharist. These words have not changed for hundreds of years and many famous musicians have written beautiful songs for choirs to sing.

SLIDE 9: What did you do when you last celebrated something special?

In pairs, ask pupils to create a list of ways in which they celebrate special events. These could be family celebrations, religious occasions or something else. Allow 3 minutes. Then get pairs to join together into groups of four to add to their list. Then combine all the ideas into a whole class list. Show the above slide if they have struggled, but hopefully you should have most of these ideas (and maybe some more).

Explain that most Christians share a special meal, called The Eucharist. For some this happens every day. For others once a week or only once a month or even one or twice a year. Different Christians have different views about the importance of the celebration. For some it is absolutely vital to their faith. For others it is just one of many important things. Other Christians don’t share the meal at all as they consider other things more important.

SLIDE 10: The Origins of the Eucharist

Ask pupils to look at these three extracts from the Bible. These describe the origins of the Eucharist.

Explain background to each extract:

1: From Acts of the Apostles, ‘an orderly account’ written by Luke, a companion of Paul, as a follow-on from his Gospel. He describes the very earliest days of the early church meeting in Jerusalem. Dated to 80-90 CE

2. From Paul’s letter to the Church in Corinth. Dated to between 53-55 CE

3. From The Gospel of Matthew dated after 65-70 CE

What do these extracts actually tell us about the Eucharist in the Early Church? (For the purposes of this exercise the veracity of the Bible is not an issue.) They are historical sources, albeit not necessarily from the time they are describing (in the case of Acts).

In groups, list the facts that can be gleaned from these extracts:

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

1. Early Christians met together to follow the teachings of the Apostles
2. They met daily in the Jewish Temple rather than in a dedicated church building
3. They broke bread in homes – not necessarily a ritual meal, but there is strong evidence of a liturgical approach towards the Eucharist in the earliest years of Christianity
4. Paul claims he is recounting events from the last night of Jesus' earthly life
5. Jesus commands that his followers break bread and drink wine in remembrance of him, and describes this bread and wine as his body and blood
6. The bread and wine are liked to a 'proclamation' of Jesus' death
7. The account from Matthew and the 1 Corinthians extract link the bread to Jesus body and the wine to his blood
8. Matthew and 1 Cor make a link to the 'Covenant' – we will explain this

Matthew's Gospel implies that the Last Supper was a Passover Meal (although some scholars disagree with this based on the Fourth Gospel's different account).

Main points to draw out during this slide are:

1. Sharing bread and wine is a really ancient Christian ritual going right the way back to the earliest days about Jesus' resurrection
2. It is not just a meal together, but a distinct ritual. It is a sharing of Christ's life.
3. It is based on something that Jesus did on the night before he died
4. During the Eucharist, Bread and Wine are consecrated and shared, and believed to be Jesus' body and blood in sacramental form.

SLIDE 11: This image is of a mosaic behind the High Altar at Westminster Abbey. It depicts the Last Supper, the final meal that Jesus had with his disciples. If necessary, recap the life of Jesus up to this point. It is useful for pupils to be aware of the Crucifixion (and Resurrection) which come after this as well.

The Bread and Wine are sometimes known as the Elements. Different denominations attach different significance to the Elements which affects how Christians view the importance of the Eucharist. We are going to look at a number of different interpretations, starting with the Bread.

SLIDE 12 & 13: Close ups of Jesus, and the bread and wine

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

SLIDE 14: Explain that in Jesus' culture, bread was a staple food, the foundation of most meals as it still is for millions of people around the world. It fills you up. We need it to survive and without it we would die.

Christians believe that just as real bread feeds their bodies, so the bread of the Eucharist feeds their spirits. When they eat it they are reminded of how their faith is vital to them.

Discuss: What things do people do to that make them feel spiritually satisfied? e.g. Go for walks, prayer, meditation, mindfulness etc

This idea is taken up from the Lord's Prayer "Give us this day, our daily bread", where Christians ask for God to give them physical food but it could also be referring to spiritual comfort.

In the Fourth Gospel (John 6:35), Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Some scholars link this to daily Bible study. There are Bible study notes called 'Daily Bread'. Jesus' teachings can fill us up spiritually just as bread fills us up physically.

You could also link this to the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Matthew 6: 30-44

SLIDE 15: Another way to understand the significance of the bread in the Eucharist is to think about connection with others. The Eucharistic bread is always broken to be shared.

In pairs, ask pupils to think of any activities that they do that connect them to other people. Sports, music, religious life etc.

"Though we are many we are one body, because we call share in one bread."

These words come from the Liturgy (set words) of the Eucharistic service in the Church of England. As well as giving spiritual nourishment, the sharing of the Bread and Wine connects believers together. They are symbolically part of something bigger than themselves, and something that has been done by Christians for two thousand years.

Paul speaks of this idea in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26:

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15** If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many members, yet one body. **21** The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ [22] On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; [24] whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, [25] that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

SLIDE 16: “Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you”,

These words are taken from the early Liturgy of the Church of England, and said just as the bread is given out. The offering of bread (and wine) in worship is the Christian sacrifice of praise.

What is a sacrifice? Discuss with your class the meaning of sacrifice – to give up something which has a value for the sake of others. Sacrifices can be about giving up something small, such as giving someone the last of something you wanted. Sacrifices don’t have to be physical. You could sacrifice your time by helping others. What would your class sacrifice to help others? Encourage them to share examples of when they have sacrificed things in the past and what sacrifices they could make in the future.

In this instance, Jesus' sacrifice was to give his life up on the cross to offer himself for the life of the world. When Christians eat the bread (and drink the wine) they are sharing in that sacrifice, and participating in his risen life.

SLIDE 17: Continuing with the theme of sacrifice we will now look at the significance of the wine in the Eucharist.

In Jesus' time, when people did something wrong they were expected to show how sorry they were by making a sacrifice to God. This was usually an animal: a goat, or a dove, and the blood which was shed was a very visible reminder of how awful it was to commit sins.

Do you think this is quite shocking? Do you think it sounds cruel?

Just as we think it is awful to sacrifice innocent animals, so the people of the day would have done too. The most important thing though, was that they were sorry in their hearts and watching an innocent animal be killed because of something that they had done would have been a very powerful message and would remind them not to commit the same sin again.

Christians think that Jesus’ death on the cross was a sacrifice for all the sins on the world. They believe that Jesus had not committed any sins himself so he was innocent, like those animals, so his death was the one perfect sacrifice.

Click to reveal ‘Atonement’

They use the word ATONEMENT, to describe the action of Jesus’ death restoring the relationship between God and humanity which had been broken by sin.

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Click to reveal ‘Redemption’

This is also called Redemption which means ‘buying back’. Jesus’ death paid the price of sin, which separated humanity from God, and people are now ‘bought back’ into relationship with God.

When the priest consecrates the bread and the wine, they offer the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. This makes the sacrament of The Eucharist particularly significant and the bread (and wine) particularly precious and sacred. When believers eat and drink the bread and wine they are physically participating in Jesus’ death, joining with him and being restored to relationship with God.

SLIDE 18 & 19 : Another way to understand the significance of the wine in the Eucharist is to relate it to the idea of Covenant. The covenant is the name given to the agreement God made with Abraham which is found in the book of Genesis 17:

5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. **7** I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God promised to give Abraham many descendants and that he could live in the land of Canaan. For Abraham’s part, he had to continue to honour God and he and all his male descendants would be circumcised as a symbol of the covenant. Thus, blood was shed as a sign of the covenant. Jesus’ death shed blood to mark a new covenant, the agreement that God will forgive sins and restore humanity to relationship with him and grant eternal life.

SLIDE 20: The meaning of the Eucharist – Transubstantiation

In Roman Catholic Christianity, the Elements have a particular importance. Influenced by Greek philosophy, the church developed the doctrine (teaching) that all matter has two parts: the Accident, what it ***looks like***, and the Substance, what it actually ***is***. During the service, the priest’s prayers, using the words of Jesus cause a change in the substance of the bread and wine, so that they become the body and blood of Christ. Thus the altar on which the bread and wine are laid, becomes the altar upon which the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins is re-enacted.

Many Christians adhere to the idea of consubstantiation, whereby the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus are **joined with** the substance of the Bread and wine through the miracle of the Eucharistic prayers.

Let’s act this out.

Make some cards which read “Bread”, “Wine”, “Accident”, “Substance”, “Body” and “Blood” “Eucharistic Prayer” and give them to seven pupils.

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Ask another pupil to read out the explanation. When they hear their word, they should stand up and wave their card in the air.

"All matter is made up of **Accident** (what it looks like) and Substance (What it truly is). So, the **Accident** of **bread** that it looks like **bread** and is Substance of **bread** is that it is true **bread.**

Similarly, the **Accident** of **wine** is that it looks like **Wine** and the **Substance** of **wine** is that it is true **wine.**

During the **Eucharistic Prayer,** through the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine will become the body and blood of Jesus.

The **Accident** of the **Bread** remains that it looks like **bread**, but the **Substance** becomes Jesus' **body**.

Similarly, the **Accident** of the **Wine** remains that it looks like **wine**, but the **substance** becomes Jesus' **blood**."

Go over this again if they are unclear. Link this back to the idea of Redemption and Atonement on Slide 17.

SLIDE 21: However, the Church of England between 1562 and 1571 set out how it differed from other Christian groups at the time, which they wrote down in a document called the Thirty-Nine Articles. Article 28 of the Thirty-Nine Articles rejects transubstantiation as un-Biblical and superstitious. Similarly, the same Article rejects the suggestion that the bread and wine are only a *sign* of Christian unity and maintains that through faith, the believers are 'partaking' of the body and blood of Jesus.

Today, Anglicans and Catholics together teach that Jesus is "really and truly present" in the Eucharist or Holy Communion. They stress this common approach now, rather than the slight difference in emphasis.

SLIDE 22: What happens in a Eucharist service?

There are various parts of the Anglican Eucharistic service which is an example of liturgical worship. There are usually small differences in custom from church to church, but the basic structure is the same. Prayers are led by the priest, but there are plenty of places where the congregation joins in or responds.

1. Greeting and prayers of preparation
2. Confession – prayers of penitence
3. Collect- special prayer for that day or week. These are set out in the prayer books
4. Word – Bible readings, finishing with the Gospel (a reading from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). People usually stand for the Gospel reading
5. Sermon (optional) – Not every Eucharistic service will have sermon
6. Creed – statement of faith.

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

7. Intercessions – prayers for the church and the world
8. Peace – usually shaking hands and saying ‘The Peace of the Lord be with you’ to each other
9. Preparation of the altar – getting the bread and wine and the chalice and paten ready
10. Eucharistic Prayer – where the bread and wine are consecrated
11. The Lord’s Prayer
12. Breaking the Bread – following Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper
13. The priest and people receive the bread and wine. If there is a large congregation, they line up and go up to the front and kneel at the altar rail. Cupping their hands in front of them, the priest places a piece of bread and says: “The Body of Christ”. The person replies, “Amen” and eats the bread. Another person brings a chalice of wine and offers it saying, “The Blood of Christ” and after saying Amen, the person takes a small sip
14. Prayer after communion. Everyone joins in to thank God for what they have just received
15. Blessing and dismissal

SLIDE 23: Eucharistic services can be very small and intimate. For example, a priest may give Holy Communion to someone who is sick in hospital or in their own home.

Discuss: Why do you think Christians might find comfort in receiving Holy Communion when they are ill?

Draw out the idea of linking with Christ’s suffering and joining with the Christian community.

Anglican Christians believe that when consecrated the bread and wine become holy. All bread and wine that has been laid out on the altar during the service is called ‘consecrated’ and should ideally be consumed at the time. However, it is common to reserve some, either in a small box that can be taken out to give to those who are sick and unable to make it to church, or in a special safe called a Tabernacle. (A Tabernacle means a ‘tent’ gets its name from the Old Testament, and was the place where God dwelt, before the building of the Temple in Jerusalem Exodus 26:1-36.) In some Anglican churches, Christians pray in front of the Tabernacle as they believe it contains the presence of Jesus.

SLIDE 24: Discuss other names for the service.

The Lord’s Supper – Often used by Protestant churches who place more emphasis on it being a re-enactment of the Last Supper and reminds them that Jesus commanded his followers to 'Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'.

Holy Communion – Often used to indicate that the sharing of the bread and wine is part of a longer service. Many churches might say that they have Morning Prayer with Holy Communion.

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

The Breaking of Bread – Often used by Protestant churches who do not follow a set liturgy. More emphasis is placed on the coming together of believers and the sharing of a meal. This was the term used by the Early Church according to Acts 2:42, 46.

Mass – Term generally used by Roman Catholics and many Anglicans. Comes from the Latin words used to send people out at the end of the service.

Divine Liturgy and Divine Service, Holy Qurbana – names used in the Orthodox churches

The Blessed Sacrament – A sacrament is defined as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. Some Churches teach that taking part in the sacraments brings Christians closer to God. The Church of England teaches that there are two sacraments instituted by Jesus: The Eucharist and Baptism.

Discuss: Which name do you think best describes the full meaning of the Eucharist?

SLIDE 25: What have we learnt?

- Christians celebrate the Eucharist because in the Bible, Jesus commanded his disciples to do this in remembrance of him. They believe that through the consecration of the bread and wine, they share in the life of Christ.
- Christians believe that just as real bread feeds their bodies, so the bread of the Eucharist feeds their spirits and strengthens their faith
- Christians drink the wine at the Eucharist to show that they are part of the covenant (agreement) between God and his people
- The sharing of the Eucharist connects Christians with other Christians around the world for 2,000 years
- The Eucharist is known by different names but most Christians agree it is a very important part of worship

<u>Suggested Activities</u>

1. Create a “Guide to the Anglican Eucharist” for primary school children.
2. Create a story-board for a short film which explains the significance of the Eucharist.
3. Imagine you are in a Eucharist service when some aliens come to visit. Explain to them what is going on.

For all these, include the following:

- Explanation of the word, ‘Eucharist’
- Origins of the service
- Significance of the Bread and Wine
- What happens in the service
- Why it is important for Christians to celebrate the Eucharist.

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster

4. Write full answers the discussion questions from this presentation:

- Why do you think Christians might find taking part in a symbolic action or ritual helpful in understanding the significance of the sacraments?
- Why do you think different Christians recognised different numbers of sacraments?
- Why might some Christians not believe in Sacraments?
- What things do people do to that make them feel spiritually satisfied? How could the Eucharist fulfil this for a Christian?
- What is a sacrifice? Why do Christians speak of Jesus' death as a sacrifice?
- Why do you think Christians might find comfort in having bread and wine when they are ill?]
- Which name for the Eucharist do you think best describes the full meaning?

©2022 Dean and Chapter of Westminster