A simple and practical way to explain the Mass
Introduction

*Draw Near* began as a response to requests from the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, priests, and others in pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago. As the Archdiocese began the second year of its Strategic Pastoral Plan, the Year of Sunday Mass, people in the pew, parish ministers, and leadership wanted a simple and practical way to understand and explain the Mass. The video itself reflects the Archdiocese and the many communities of faith where the Eucharist is celebrated.

*Draw Near* explores the structure of the Mass overall, its particular parts and its meaning as the great sacramental memorial that Jesus Christ gave to his Church. The video utilizes the ritual as people experience it to foster deeper understanding and appreciation.

Another very important focal point centers on participation in the Mass. *Draw Near* consistently underscores that everyone is summoned to active participation in the Mass by their interior disposition of union with Christ in his self-offering and by their external posture and responses. Everyone celebrates the Eucharist with the ordained priest. The Mass “belongs” to Christ; it is his action in which we participate.

After viewing *Draw Near*, a small group discussion can explore the Mass with greater depth, especially the personal and spiritual implications of our participation in the Mass. The DVD is divided into chapters to make it easier for the viewer to take another look at specific parts of the Mass during the discussion.
This Study Guide Includes

• Table of contents for the DVD
• Set of general questions and discussion starters
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A Guide to Before, During and After Viewing Draw Near

When a group is viewing Draw Near together, a leader or facilitator can suggest to individuals an approach before, during, and after the video. Before the video, ask participants to identify what they find puzzling about the Mass, what they have wondered about, what seems unclear, and what they feel they have never grasped about the Mass. These issues may have to do with the ritual or the underlying meaning of the ritual. It is important that they briefly jot these issues down and then spend some time sharing them with others in the group.

During the showing of Draw Near, the group leader should invite participants to jot down something that strikes them as either important or interesting. Later, there should be a chance to share these observations.

After the video, the group leader can pose these questions to the participants: did you learn something new and perhaps unexpected in watching Draw Near? What one thing from this video would you want to share? With whom? Why? There should be some time to share the results of these questions with others in the group.

For a More Detailed and Deeper Understanding of the Mass

After the group has had an opportunity to share the before, during, and after of the video, another set of questions (or a selection from among them) can be offered to the group for a more detailed and deeper understanding of the Mass. Five such questions follow.
**Suggested Questions**

1. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (number 15) of the Second Vatican Council says this about participation in the Mass: “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” What does “full and active participation by all the people” mean to you?

2. The celebration of the Mass can rightly have a very powerful impact and effect on the lives of individuals. As important as this individual experience is, how do you see the Mass as more than a private prayer or a personal spiritual moment? How do you understand praying with others in Christ during the Mass?

3. Do you have a better understanding of what Jesus wanted to give us in giving us the Eucharist as the living memorial of his death and resurrection? Do you better understand why he entrusted the Mass to his Church by saying “Do this in memory of me”?

4. Having come to a better understanding of the Mass, can you now identify some specific ways that would help you to prepare better for the celebration of Mass?

5. How would you describe the relationship between what we celebrate at Mass and how we live in the world the rest of the week? How does the celebration of Mass make a practical difference for you, for example, in shaping your inner attitudes or the way that you treat people? In what way can you say that the Mass is a school for living?
Targeted Audiences for *Draw Near*

1. For adult faith formation

*Draw Near* can be used for general adult faith formation. Additionally, *Draw Near* can be brought into special moments of parish life, for example, in the course of a parish mission that revisits the basics of the Catholic faith. For senior groups, *Draw Near* can serve “grandparents as evangelizers” by giving them the vocabulary and conceptual categories to bring the Mass to their children and grandchildren. There may be other creative uses of *Draw Near* in the context of adult faith formation and parish life.

Possible questions: After seeing the video and getting re-acquainted with the Mass, what is of special value about the Mass that you want to share with a younger generation? How have you better understood the Mass across the years?

2. For RCIA candidates

Catechumens and candidates for full communion with the Church can profitably study the Mass with the help of *Draw Near*. If they have not had much exposure to Catholic rituals, the Mass can be a bewildering experience for those in the RCIA. A simple explanation of the structure and overall direction of the Mass along with an explanation of particular rituals can help those in the RCIA feel more at home with Catholic ritual. *Draw Near* can provide this sense of familiarity.

Possible questions: After viewing the video, can you say why the Mass is so important and so central in the Catholic faith tradition? Are there aspects of the Mass that you feel you need to explore more deeply?
3. For liturgical ministers’ formation

One of the great gifts in the Church after the Second Vatican Council has been the development of various liturgical ministries. There are servers, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and choir members. By extension, there are ministers of care who “bring” the liturgy to those in hospitals and in nursing homes and those restricted to their homes by bringing them Holy Communion. All of these ministries serve particular functions in the worship life of the Church. Beyond the particular functions, however, the ministers who serve in the Church also give witness to the power and centrality of the Eucharist that is celebrated every Sunday. Viewing Draw Near and using the discussion questions in a small group could powerfully remind these ministers of, not only the importance of their particular ministry, but of their witness to the Eucharist in the parish.

Possible questions: In light of the explanation of the Mass in the video, how can I bring greater clarity about the meaning of the Mass to the worshipping congregation through my particular ministry? How does the Mass shape and challenge my spirituality?

4. For teachers and catechists

Draw Near can be part of in-service and professional development for Catholic school teachers and for catechists in programs of religious education. A review of the structure and meaning of the Mass, coupled with some discussion on a more personal level of its spiritual meaning and impact, can help teachers and catechists reclaim their understanding of the Mass. This review can enable them to be more effective and perhaps more enthusiastic communicators of the high value of Sunday Mass for their students. Viewing Draw Near and using the discussion questions in a small group of teachers and catechists can also help them find the words and the tone to motivate their students to participate in the Mass.

Possible questions: After viewing the video, can you identify two or three things about the Mass that you would really want your students to know? What personal conviction about the Mass would you want your students to carry with them in their lives?
5. For councils and commissions in parishes

The parish pastoral council serves an important role in offering consultation and direction for a given faith community. At the same time, the complexities of parish life and the multiplicity of issues that the council is called to examine can, at times, pull attention away from the true center of the parish—its worship of God and service to the world. A parish pastoral council could better maintain focus on the true center by spending time reviewing and renewing the Mass in the life of the parish with the help of *Draw Near*. The same could be said of other commissions and councils in parishes, for example, the finance council and the school board. *Draw Near* can provide a re-orienting moment for these important consultative bodies.

Obviously, an important group is the liturgy or worship commission of a parish. Often, this group gives critically needed help in planning liturgies. And very often the members of the liturgy commission are already knowledgeable about the Mass. They too, however, could be well served by viewing and discussing *Draw Near*. The video can be an occasion for them to review the heart of their work and service for the parish. It can also give them a vocabulary and conceptual framework for fostering a shared and collective understanding of the Mass in the parish.

**Possible questions:** *In light of the explanation of the Mass in the video, how can we make Sunday Mass the organizing center of our life together in the parish? Why should we do this?*
6. For parents bringing their children for First Holy Communion

Parents are indeed the first heralds of the Gospel for their children. When they present their children for the sacraments, they fulfill the responsibility they assumed at their children’s baptism. The preparation for children’s First Holy Communion is especially important. It is essential that parents not simply rely on the school or catechetical program to prepare their children. Parents have an indispensable role in the preparation of their children for First Holy Communion. Research suggests that parents do not feel up to the catechetical task that is theirs. The viewing, study and discussion of *Draw Near* can give parents a better foundation upon which they can communicate with their children and help prepare to receive their First Holy Communion.

**Possible questions:** *How do I need to grow in an understanding of the Mass, so that I can communicate that understanding to my child? How can I make participation in Sunday Mass a “family value” for my family? And why should I do so?*

7. For campus ministry and young adult ministry

Many college and post-college age Catholics drift from the practice of their faith, but many—it is important to note—do not. We have significant numbers of college students and young adults who do participate or want to participate in the life of the Church. They are often curious about Catholic rituals and practices. They desire to know more about the distinctively Catholic approach to faith and worship. They want to know what sets them apart from other religious traditions. And yet many of them have a very rudimentary faith formation and catechesis. *Draw Near* can profitably serve this population. In a relatively quick and consumable way, these young men and women can acquaint or re-acquaint themselves with the central act of worship of their Catholic faith. They would also be equipped to explain their way of worship to those who are not Catholic. The ideal setting would be a small group for both viewing
Draw Near and then discussing it in a more personalized way.

Possible questions: Does understanding the Mass clarify for you why it ought to be a priority value in your life? Why do you need to “make space” for it regularly? How would you explain the Mass to non-Catholic friends who might be curious about Catholic rituals?

8. For junior high and high school students

With proper guidance and adaptation, Draw Near can be used effectively with junior high and high school students. In fact, it could be very helpful in their preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. As they approach their completion of the sacraments of initiation, a catechetical revisiting of Baptism and Eucharist seems to be essential. The video can also provide an opening to communicate and teach the necessity of their commitment to participate in worship of the Father at Sunday Mass as an expression of their faith, which will have been sealed by the sacrament of Confirmation.

Possible questions: After viewing the video, what do you think that God is trying to tell you through the Mass? How would you explain to non-Catholic friends why the Mass is so important to us in the Catholic Church?

9. For general parish use as a “looping” video

Some parishes have found it helpful to have monitors in the vestibule or narthex or gathering places where people may have coffee after Mass. Posted on these monitors are looping videos, that is, videos that keep repeating themselves. These videos may describe a school program or a service opportunity or, in our consideration, Draw Near, an explanation of the Mass. Exposure to the video may be brief, but if the video is repeated for several Sundays, over time people will be able to see most, if not all of it.
10. For personal study

Although ideally *Draw Near* is viewed and discussed in a group, it could also be an instrument of personal study. In fact, because of the technology that allows for pauses, it becomes easy for an individual to stop and consider a particular part of the video. Similarly, an individual can easily repeat something that may not have been clearly grasped the first time around.

Additional Resources for the Year of Sunday Mass

Additional resources are available at www.archchicago.org by clicking on StrategicPastoralPlan and going to *Year of Sunday Mass*. 
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