What does it mean to be a Eucharistic people?

Read these faith statements aloud:

- To be a Eucharistic people means that we are committed to living a Eucharistic life, a life patterned after Christ, a life in which we are willing to break open our lives and shed our blood for others just as Jesus did for us.
- The Eucharistic Prayer brings us into that mystery.
- We are all capable of giving a definition of Eucharist. It means to give God thanks and praise.
- Explaining it and owning it are two different matters.
- The Eucharist invites and challenges us to make it an integral part of our lived experience.
- The Eucharist celebrates and makes present the relationship God has with his people.
- The Eucharist presumes that we have converted hearts. We can proclaim the Word, but if it falls on deaf ears it is like the seed that fall on thorny ground.

The small group leader shares this story with the group:
A very smart young man was raised by a community and was sent to college. After he graduated, the big day had arrived when he would read the Scriptures in church. Everyone was breathless. The young man approached the pulpit and read the Twenty-Third Psalm. Everyone cheered. The very next week an elderly woman got up to read the Twenty-Third Psalm. Everyone wept. The following week they went to the pastor and asked, “Why did we weep for her and shout for him?” He answered them: “Our young man came back and beautifully read the Twenty-Third Psalm. The old woman, on the other hand, knew the Shepherd.”
- If we are to make the Eucharist our own, we must seriously ask ourselves if we are simply going through the motions of celebration, or do we know the Shepherd?

The small group leader invites participants to briefly respond to the following questions in dyads, then share insights with the wider group.

- How intimately do you know the Shepherd?
- What evidence is there in your life that you know the Shepherd intimately? How do you know that you know him?
Resume reading the faith statements:

► Making the Eucharist an integral part of our lives presupposes conversion of heart.
► The heart of our Catholic identity is that we are a Eucharistic people and that liturgy is the source and summit of all we do, the most important thing we do!
► We draw life and power from sharing in the Eucharist.
► Eucharist means so much more than coming together to individually receive Christ in the elements of bread and wine.
► Eucharist commits us to one another.
► Eucharist is intimately connected to everyday life.

The small group leader invites participants to respond to the following questions in small groups, then share insights in the wider group.

► You have been celebrating Eucharist at the table of God’s Word.
  If you are not a Catholic, you may have been attending Mass with someone else.
  o Describe ways in which your everyday life has been affected by your participation in the Liturgy of the Word thus far.

Resume reading the faith statements:

► Ultimately, we come together, we are fed, we are nourished, and we are sent out so that we can nourish others.
► We allow others to feed off of us, so that emptied, we come back again to be filled and nourished again.
► Repeatedly, we live the death and resurrection of Christ in our lives.
► Repeatedly, we join the joys and sorrows of our lives to the Cross of Christ.
► The Eucharist gives us the strength to continue the journey of life.
► What we do here is extremely connected to the living of our lives.
► Scripture affirms that reality.

Small group leader or someone else reads aloud 1 Kings 19:1-8

Resume reading faith statements aloud:

► The story about Elijah and the broom tree shows us how intimately Eucharist is connected to our life’s journey.
► God gives us bread for the journey.
► Elijah is beaten and broken. He is afraid and very alone and went alone to the desert. He prayed for death.
► What did the angel do? (Angels are traditionally epiphanies and manifestations of God’s presence.) The angel ordered him to get up and eat, not once, but twice. Why? Eat, or the journey would be too long for him.
► Life’s journey will be too long and hard without the nourishment of life-giving bread. God was present to Elijah in the bread—the bread of presence, the bread of nourishment.
► The word companion comes from the Latin root cum (“with”) joined to panis (“bread”). A companion is one who breaks bread with us. Table fellowship is a covenant relationship. Meal fellowship is the most intimate thing we can do.
► Eucharist answers the question: “What happens when all is lost?”
► For Elijah, God gave him bread twice!
► God promises, “I will be with you.” Today, God still uses bread and other symbols as a sign of his presence: light, cross, water, word, hands, oil, bread, and wine.
► God used signs from our everyday world, things we can touch, taste, feel, enter into, and consume, as tangible signs of his presence.
► For Elijah, it was bread; for us, it is still bread. Bread and other symbols are signs of our faith that make real for us the presence of Christ. God promises I will be with you, and he gives us bread as a sign—bread for Elijah, bread for us.
► Jesus left the same sign for us. He promised he would be forever present to us in the bread. When we gather for Eucharist, we discover we are all part of the same family. We consume the eucharistic bread, and Jesus consumes us.
► Eucharist is the most intimate thing we can do when it comes to our relationship with God.

Conversation:
► Think of the best family meal you can remember. Why is the family meal important for families? What takes place at the family meal?

Resume reading the faith statements aloud:
► When we celebrate the family meal, we share a bond with one another. We are committed to one another. In a sense we share a COVENANT of identity with other family members.
► The most important theme in Scripture is COVENANT. Yet, Jesus used it only once. The Last Supper is the only time Jesus used the word COVENANT. It was in the context of his last meal. God was forging a new covenant with humanity realized through the sacrifice of his Son. Jesus was telling us that he was doing something new.
► Jesus was telling his friends: “Each year, you remember the covenant I made with my people when I delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. You remember that covenant with the Passover meal. What I am doing here is the new and ultimate covenant. This COVENANT will be memorialized by a new meal—bread as my body, wine as my blood.”
► Jesus gave us a new covenant, and to continue that covenant he gave us a ritual meal to share until he returns. That COVENANT is fully expressed in the celebration of Eucharist—especially the Eucharistic Prayer.

► The word “Eucharist” is probably the most used word in the Catholic Church.
► It is the heart of Roman Catholicism.
► What does Eucharist mean to you?
► What do you believe about the Eucharist?