Holy Eucharist:
We Celebrate the
Living Presence of Jesus
By Sister Kieran Sawyer, SSND

Purpose
This session helps middle school students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the central Christian sacrament—the Holy Eucharist. The session focuses on the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “Do this to remember me,” and encourages the participants to truly remember Jesus whenever they celebrate Eucharist, as well as in all of their daily activities and attitudes.

Component: Faith Learning

Session at a Glance
7:00 PM Welcome, Introduce the Mystery Code
7:05 PM Video
7:15 PM The Jesus Story Compared to the Jessie Story
7:30 PM Remembering Jesus
   Extend the Session: Jesus is Alive! (add 15 minutes)
7:45 PM Create Mini-poster: Holy Eucharist: the Living Presence of Jesus
   Extend the Session: The Real Presence (add 10 minutes)
8:00 PM Prayer Experience: A Eucharistic Litany
8:10 PM Announcements and Refreshments
8:15 PM Good Night!

Materials Needed
- Laptop and projector
  Note to Leader: Your audio/visual set up needs to be adequate for everyone to be able to hear/see the videos.
- PowerPoint file that accompanies this session
  Note to Leader: If you choose not to use the PowerPoint, see #4 in Prepare in Advance.
- 3x5 index cards or pieces of paper, five for each participant
• 8½ x 11 sheets of white cardstock paper, one for each participant
• Sets of colored markers, one set for each small group of two or three participants
• Pens or pencils, one for each participant
• “We Remember” by Marty Haugen
• MP3 player and speakers
• **Handout 1, A Eucharistic Litany**, one for each participant
• Several sheets of mailing labels (see #5 in Prepare in Advance), optional

**Extend the Session: Jesus is Alive!**
• Bibles, one for each participant

**Extend the Session: The Real Presence**
• **Handout 2, The Real Presence**, one for each participant
• *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
• *The Documents of Vatican II*

**Prepare in Advance**
1. Download the two videos on which the lesson is based. Watch them ahead of time and be prepared to correlate them to the session. Consider doing some Internet research on the Joy Jars to become more familiar with the project presented on the videos.

   Website: [http://www.negu.org/joy-jars/](http://www.negu.org/joy-jars/)

2. Set up the laptop and projector, making sure that everyone will be able to see and hear the video. Cue the PowerPoint presentation so that the title slide is up at the start of the session. Look for ☀️ symbol in the outline to indicate a slide.

3. Review the session outline carefully so that you are comfortable telling the Jesus Story as it relates to the Jessie Story. If you are using the PowerPoint, practice coordinating it with the session.

4. If you are not using the PowerPoint slides, prepare the following:
   a. Have a chalk board or sheet of newsprint chart ready to write key words during the session.
   b. Create a Jessie Story chart (see page 4) and be prepared to create a corresponding Jesus Story chart during the session.
   c. Create your copy of the Holy Eucharist poster described in the session, see directions on p 7.
   d. A globe or world map
   Consider printing the PowerPoint slides to help you prepare the charts you will need.
5. **Optional:** Prepare DT TRJ stickers on several sheets of mailing labels (see last page in this session outline). Cut them apart so you have two or three labels to give to each participant.

6. Prepare a prayer table with a Bible and a candle.

7. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with check-in sheet and nametags. **Hospitality is important!** As the leader, spend the arrival time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

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**Session Outline**

**Welcome and Introduction: Jessie’s Joy Jars (15 minutes)**

- **Slide 1:** Title slide
  Welcome the young people to tonight’s session.

- **Slide 2:** DT TRJ
  Say the letters of the secret code: **DT TRJ** out loud, accenting the first two letters and leaving a short pause after them. Have the youth repeat the code, but do not explain it. Tell them they will discover what the letters mean by the end of the session.

Distribute pencils and packs of 3x5 index cards or papers. Ask each participant to take five cards/papers. Say:

- Write the secret code in the top left corner of each card: **DT TRJ**

- Now think of five different things you do almost every day and write one thing on each card. An example would be *eat breakfast*, but now you can’t use that one. And you can’t use the same things as the persons sitting next to you.

Allow a few minutes for them to write their five things, then ask them to put the cards aside until later in the session. Continue by saying:

   We are going to begin by watching the true story of a young girl just about your age named Jessie Rees. In 2011, when Jessie was 11, she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Every day her parents would drive her to the Children’s Hospital in their city for her radiation and chemotherapy treatments. In the hospital Jessie met many other kids who were receiving cancer treatments, and she soon realized that most of them lived far away and couldn’t go home after the treatments like she could. Many of them had to stay in the hospital for weeks and months at a time. Jessie felt sad for these other kids and decided that she could do something to cheer them up and give them hope. In the video, her father tells us her story.

- **Slide 3:** Jessie Joy Rees
  Show the video (click on link in the slide). After the video say:
There are many wonderful things about this story. [Invite the young people to share their reactions to the video.] For us tonight, we are going to focus on just one aspect of the story: the amazing way Jessie’s idea took off. Jessie was just one person with a beautiful idea. [Invite the youth to name Jessie’s idea—bringing joy and hope to other children with cancer.]

Instead of feeling sorry for herself, she thought of a way of helping others. Do you remember the map they showed in the video? What did the little pins on the map mean? [Help the youth to understand that every pin represented some hospital where children were receiving Joy Jars.]

Jessie lived only 10 months after she was diagnosed with cancer, but by the time she died, she herself had distributed 3,000 Joy Jars. And the Foundation set up in her name has continued her wish and has distributed more than 50,000 Joy Jars to children all over the world. Every child who helps to fill a Joy Jar, and every adult who contributes to the Foundation, is helping to keep Jessie’s spirit alive and to spread her message of caring and hope. We could say that every child who receives a Joy Jar is getting a gift from Jessie.

Slide 4: The Jessie Story
Briefly review the story with the participants:

The Jessie story tells us about:
- one person
- an idea, a message, a mission
- people who love the person and believe in the mission
- a system [for spreading the idea—ask someone to explain what a foundation is]
- remembering the person and the mission
- involvement, enthusiasm, commitment
- the whole world (50,000+++ Joy Jars delivered to sick children around the world)

The Jesus Story (15 minutes)
Say:

Now let’s use the Jessie story to help us to think about the Jesus Story.

Slide 5: The Jesus Story
Walk among the participants as you tell the Jesus Story. Involve them in the storytelling, letting them tell as much of it as they know.

Imagine that we can travel back in time 2000 years to the years when Jesus was living on earth. He is one person. We know he is the Son of God, but to the people of his time he is just a very ordinary person who grows up in a family in a small town near of the Mediterranean Sea where he learns from his father how to be a carpenter.
We pick up the story when he is a young adult. He knows that God has sent him to earth to bring a **message** to the human race. [See if the youth can name Jesus' message; if not continue] God sent him to help us to understand God’s love for us and to teach us how to love God and one another.

Jesus spends three years teaching the people in his country about his loving Father, and about God’s love for them. He cures the sick, gives sight to the blind, makes cripples walk, and does many other wonderful things. Jesus gathers a small group of followers who **love** him and **believe** in his message.

But everyone doesn’t love him. Some of the leaders are afraid of him. They think he is taking the people away from them. So they concoct a plan to arrest him and kill him. Jesus knows about their plans. He knows that his work on earth is almost over—that he will be dying soon, and he wants to be sure that his teachings will be remembered after he dies. Because Jesus is God, he already knows that **you** young people will be sitting here tonight, and he wants to be sure that you are part of the great plan he and his Father have designed. He wants to invite **you** to help him create a world based on loving God and loving others the way he did.

So Jesus gathers his friends for a farewell supper and talks to them again about how much God loves them and how God wants them to love one another.

Talk directly to various students as you are telling the next part of the story. Have them tell you what Jesus said. Pretend to give them the bread to eat, the cup to drink.

At the end of the supper, Jesus takes a small loaf of bread, offers a prayer of thanksgiving, and says: “This is my body which is given up for you. Take it and eat,” and he hands each one a piece of the bread to eat. Next, he takes up a cup of wine, blesses it and says: “This is my blood, poured out for you. Take it and drink,” and he passes the cup around the table. Then he says:

**“DO THIS TO REMEMBER ME.”**

We know the rest of the story, don’t we? What happens next?

Let the young people help you tell the story of the crucifixion and resurrection. Help them sense what it would have been like to be there and experience those events.

The next day Jesus is arrested by the authorities and is condemned to be crucified. His family and friends stand by helplessly as he is nailed to a cross and dies. They are sure that this is the end of Jesus’ great mission. But—three days later, the impossible happens! Jesus rises from the dead! He is alive again and he is still with them!
Here you will be briefly recalling, or helping them to recall, four of the post-resurrection stories. Again, let them tell the stories if they can.

But his followers soon discover that he is with them in a whole new way. Now they see him; now they don’t. They’re hiding in a locked room, and Jesus is suddenly there, showing them the nail prints in his hands and feet. They go out fishing, and they see Jesus on the shore making them breakfast. Mary thinks she is talking to a gardener, but when he calls her by name she recognizes that it is Jesus. Two of them are walking along the road, and a stranger who joins them turns out to be Jesus.

This next section is the main point you want your participants to understand as a basis for understanding Eucharist.

They don’t understand his new kind of presence right away, but eventually they learn that the Risen Jesus is **always with them** whether they can see him or not. They also learn that he is especially present with them when they do what he asked: “Do this to remember me.” Week by week they “do this”: they gather, they remember together their friend Jesus and his teachings; they bless bread and wine and share it, remembering that Jesus said it was his own Body and Blood. And then they go out to tell everyone the good news about this person Jesus and his message of love. And they come to realize that whenever they “do this,” Jesus himself is present with them.

We who call ourselves Christians are still doing this, aren’t we? What do we call the event when the people who believe in Jesus gather to “do this?” [Accept the various answers they give: Mass, Communion, Eucharist.]

So let’s look again at the parallels between the two stories.

**Slide 8: The Jessie Story / The Jesus Story**

Help the young people to talk through the comparison, using a dialogue something like the following: (and refer to the slide)

Jessie was one small person who lived in southern California. Jesus, too, was just one person, who lived in a little town in a little country on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Jessie had an idea that has spread all over the world. Jesus was sent to earth to spread a message. What was that message? [Help them name Jesus’ message of love of God and others.] Only a few people actually knew Jessie; but her Joy Jar idea now touches thousands of people every year. Jesus had just a few disciples, but Christianity has spread all over the world. The teachings of Jesus have traveled across the miles and the years all the way to us, to this group of young people living in [name your city and state].

Jessie and her parents created a whole system—an organized way for many people to get involved. Jesus started his Church to keep his work alive after he died.
So far we have had a smooth comparison between the Jessie Story and the Jesus Story. But I am afraid the comparison breaks down on the next two items: remembering the person, and involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment.

Let’s look at another video which shows just some of the things that were done in 2012 to spread the Joy Jars message.

**Slide 9: Remembering Jessie**
View about two or three minutes of the video (click on the link in the PowerPoint slide). After the video, invite the youth to name the various things that are done to help people to remember Jessie and to build up their involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment.

**Remembering Jesus (15 minutes)**

**Slide 10: Remembering Jesus**
Introduce this part of the session by saying:

The secret of the Joy Jar campaign is in remembering Jessie. The people who know and love Jessie want more and more people to remember this wonderful young girl and her message of love and joy. Their efforts are keeping Jessie alive in the hearts and minds of thousands of people, many of whom never met Jessie in person.

Can you imagine what the world would be like if all of us who love Jesus and believe in his message would be that enthusiastic about remembering Jesus? What difference would it make if all of us in this room really tried to remember Jesus—all day, every day, in everything we did and said?

Jesus is still alive! That was the great mystery that the disciples of Jesus experienced on Easter morning and in the days that followed. They gradually came to believe that Jesus was still alive and still with them. Wherever they were, whatever they were doing, Jesus was there whether they saw him or not. And Jesus is still alive here and now, in our world, in our city, in our families, in this very room right now.

**Slide 11: DT TRJ**
By now I bet you have figured out the meaning of the secret code. [If necessary, tell them that the code means “Do this to remember Jesus.”]

**Slide 12: What difference would it make?**
Move among the participants, directly asking various people questions like the following:

- [Name], what if you could remember that Jesus is alive and present in your home, how would that affect how you talk to your mom and dad? How you treat your brothers and sisters?
[Name], what if you could remember that Jesus is alive and present on the playground, how would that affect how you talk to your friends? How you play the games you play? How you treat the younger children?

[Name], what if you could remember that Jesus is alive and present in your friendship group, how would that affect what messages you text? How you treat unpopular kids?

[Name], what if you could remember that Jesus is alive and present in your classrooms, how would that affect how you treat your teachers? How you do your studies?

Now let’s take those index cards or slips of paper you wrote when you first came in. Think about the about the five things you wrote on the papers. What would you do or not do if you remembered Jesus when you were doing that activity? Talk to a partner about this.

Allow a few minutes for the sharing, and then invite a few individuals to share one or two items with the whole group.

(Optional) Extend the Session: Jesus is Alive! (15 minutes)
Distribute Bibles, one for each person. Say:

When we were retelling the Jesus story, we focused on one of the mysteries that the disciples of Jesus experienced after the resurrection—that Jesus was still alive and that he was still with them. Sometimes they would see him, sometimes they would not. But he was always there, in their everyday lives. It is a new kind of presence—a real presence that is different from the kind of presence they had experienced before his death. Let’s read some of the stories where he is manifesting his new presence to them.

Help youth to find the passages below. Call on individuals to read the passages aloud. (You will need several readers for the longer passages.)

- John 20:11-18   The Mysterious Gardener
- John 20:19-23   Through Locked Doors
- John 21:1-14   Fish Fry on the Seashore
- Matt 28:16-20   Always With You

Holy Eucharist: The Living Presence of Jesus (15 minutes)
Distribute 8½ x 11 sheets of white cardstock, and sets of colored markers to be shared by 2 or 3 participants. Say:
The most important thing we Catholic Christians do to remember Jesus is gather each week to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Let’s take a look at the main theological points about this important sacrament. As we do so, you’ll be creating a mini-poster on your sheet of cardstock.

**Slide 13: Holy Eucharist (centered on the screen)**

Say:

Please take a marker and print the words HOLY EUCHARIST across the center of your poster. Print large, but not too large. We will be adding other information as we go along. Decorate the words to show their importance.

As the young people are doing this, show them a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Tell them what the *Catechism* is, and explain that their mini-poster will be showing some of the doctrinal truths that the *Catechism* teaches us about Eucharist.

**Click to show “The Living Presence of Jesus”**

When most have finished, say:

Under the words HOLY EUCHARIST print: The Living Presence of Jesus.

Allow time, then say:

The *Catechism* tells us that when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, Jesus is present to us in several ways. We are going to write some of these on our posters.

Present and explain each of the key words below.

**Click**

- Jesus is present in **EACH PERSON** who comes to Mass. God created each individual in his own image and loves each one as his son or daughter.

**Click**

- Jesus is present in the **GATHERING**. Jesus wants us to belong to his family. He promised us that whenever two or three gather in his name, he would be there with us.

**Click**

- Jesus is present in his **WORD**. When we hear the Scripture readings proclaimed during the Mass, we are hearing God’s Word spoken through the Hebrew prophets, or through the Apostles who knew and loved Jesus, or through the very words that Jesus spoke in the Gospels.

**Click**

- Jesus is present in the **PRIEST**. The priest has been ordained to represent Jesus for us, to lead his people in prayer and worship, and to apply the scriptures to our daily lives.
Click

- And, most important of all, when the priest says the words: “This is my Body. This is my Blood,” Jesus becomes present in the **BREAD and WINE**. Does anyone know the theological word the Church uses to name the mysterious change that happens to the bread and wine at the consecration?

Click (to add the word *transubstantiation* under Bread and Wine)

- When we eat and drink the bread and wine, Jesus himself comes to live in our hearts in a profoundly special way. Jesus gives himself to us, to be the spiritual food that keeps our souls alive and well.

Click

- And Jesus is present in **PEOPLE IN NEED**—the poor, the sick, the hungry, the lonely, the sorrowing. Jesus told us that whatever we do for the least of his people he counts as being done for him. So at the end of Mass, Jesus sends us out to serve them in his name.

Allow a few more minutes for the students to finish their posters, then say:

> Please turn your poster to the back side. At the top write our secret code, DT TRJ, and its meaning. [Allow time.]

> It is easy to forget how important the Eucharist is. I know that sometimes I can go to Mass and not remember Jesus at all. Let’s think of some of the things we might do when we go to Mass so that we spend that time really **remembering Jesus**. Write at least three of these on your paper. Who can give me some ideas of what you might write?

**Slide 14: Do this to REMEMBER Jesus**

Help the students to name things like: (click for each new line to appear on the slide)

- go to Mass every week, BE there
- have a positive attitude – open mind, open heart
- really listen to the readings and homily
- follow along using the worship aid or the missalette
- sing and think about the words of the song
- recite the responses and prayers like you mean them
- offer the sign of peace, really look at the people when you do
- receive communion reverently, talk to Jesus in your heart
- look at the crucifix and think about how much Jesus sacrificed for you
- pray for all the people in church

Encourage the participants to take their mini-posters home and post them in their bedrooms to help them to truly remember Jesus in the future.

**(Optional) Extend the Session: The Real Presence** *(10 minutes)*

Distribute copies of **Handout 2, The Real Presence**, to each participant. In addition to the copy of the *Catechism*, show the young people a copy of the *Documents of Vatican II*.
Explain that Vatican II was a gathering of all of the bishops in the world in 1962 under the guidance of Pope John XXIII, and that the *Catechism* was prepared by the bishops of the world in 1992 years ago under the direction of Pope John Paul II. These documents provide us “a sure and authentic reference” for teaching Catholic doctrine. Say:

The first two quotes on the handout are from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, one of the most important documents produced by the bishops at Vatican II.

The other quotes are from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* is divided into numbered paragraphs or articles, with each article covering some aspect of Catholic teaching. Because Eucharist is such a central teaching of the faith, there are at least 100 separate articles dedicated to this topic. Here you will find only a few of these articles, those relating to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Let’s read these articles together. They are difficult reading, in heavy theological language, but you will hear echoes of the ideas we have been dealing with in this lesson.

Call on some of your better readers to read the passages aloud. Spend a few minutes asking the students to explain in their own words what they think the key points are of each passage.

**Prayer Experience: A Eucharistic Litany (10 minutes)**

*Gather*

Distribute **Handout 1, A Eucharistic Litany**, to each participant. Invite them to gather around the prayer table. Ask nine participants to each read one stanza of the litany, or ask three readers to each read three stanzas. Invite a volunteer to light the candle.

**Prayer Leader:** *(begin with the Sign of the Cross)*

Jesus our brother,
We remember that you love us and that you promise to be with us always!
Open our hearts to your loving presence and guide us to rest in you as we pray.
We ask this in your name.

**All:** Amen

**Listen and Respond**

Invite your readers to lead the litany. All respond to each phrase. After the litany say:

**Prayer Leader:**

Let us now pray the prayer we learned from Jesus, remembering that he is praying with us. Our Father...
Go Forth
After the Our Father, say:

Let us share with one another a sign of the peace that Jesus came to bring.

As the peace is being shared, play/sing “We Remember.”

Announcements and Refreshments (5 minutes)
Thank the young people for their participation in tonight’s session. Make any needed announcements about upcoming programs and events. Invite everyone to enjoy some refreshments.

Optional: As the young people are leaving, give each of them a few mailing labels printed with the DT TRJ code. Invite them to paste the labels on a pencil case or folder that they will see every day.

This session was written by Sister Kieran Sawyer, SSND, author and national speaker. Sr. Kieran is Director Emeritus of the TYME OUT Youth Center, in Stone Bank, Wisconsin. She can be reached at sawyerk@tymeout.org. She would love to hear from you and/or your students about your experience of the session. Fr. Roy Shelly, Ph.D., Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Spreckels, California (Diocese of Monterey), served as theological consultant on this session.
A Eucharistic Litany

Jesus you invite us to come each week to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with you and with the family of Christians.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, you promised that whenever we gather in your name, you will be there with us.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, when we gather for Eucharist, we ask you to forgive our faults and failings, and you ask us to forgive all who have offended us.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, when the sacred Scriptures are read at Mass, we believe that your own Words are spoken in our hearts.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, during the Mass we offer you bread and wine as symbols of our selves. We believe that you will use our gifts to re-create your love on earth.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, we need courage to live your way of love. You offer us your own body and blood as food and drink to make us spiritually strong.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, you came to bring peace to our troubled world. Help us to share your peace and love with the people in church and with everyone we meet each day.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, you ask us to remember that we are gifts to one another: that we are temples of your love.

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!

Jesus, at the end of every Mass, you send us out to serve – our family, our friends, the lonely, the poor, the sick, and the troubled. Help us, Jesus, to “Do this to remember you.”

We remember! We celebrate! We believe!
Handout 2

The Real Presence in Church Documents

Abbreviated excerpts from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC Sacrosanctum Concilium) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

SC 2  The [Eucharistic] liturgy is the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ. . . .

SC 7  Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister [the priest], . . . but especially under the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: “When two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

CCC 1373  Christ is present in many ways to his Church: in his word, in his Church’s prayer . . . , in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But he is present most especially in the Eucharistic species.

CCC 1374  The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as the perfection of the spiritual life. . . . “This presence is called ‘real’ . . . because it is presence in the fullest: that is to say it is a substantial presence, by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” [Paul VI, Mysterium Fidei 39]

CCC 1376  “[B]y the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.” [Council of Trent, DS 1641]

CCC 1407  The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church’s life. . . .