

6

* The Ultimate Guide
to Lent



Table of ✨

Contents

04 THE BREAD OF LIFE

{ building a tabernacle in
your heart }

09 THE INCREDULITY
OF ST. THOMAS

{ visio divina }

19 CHOCOLATE CAKE

{ easter celebration recipe }

22 LET GO AND GIVE

{ secret service }

24 HE MOVED FIRST

{ story of hope }

29 PEACE & QUIET

{ a mindfulness meditation
for catholic families }



The Bread of Life

{ building a tabernacle in your heart }

BY BRICE BERGER

Food and drink are signs of a celebration. Major life events for which we gather with others almost always involve eating and drinking. The holidays are filled with an abundance of our favorite foods. Weddings offer fine dining and drinks. Birthdays are not complete without a sweet treat. Football games and watch parties offer a variety of snacks and cold drinks.

We even see the importance of food and drink in the Gospels in Jesus' life and ministry. He is seen eating with family, friends and sinners. We are even told of miracles performed by Jesus involving food. He turns water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana; and He feeds thousands with just a couple loaves of bread and a few fish. Food and drink played an essential role in the life of Jesus Christ.

No meal is more significant in Jesus' mission than the last one He shared with His disciples, the one in which He gave us His Body and Blood as food and drink in the Eucharist. What infinite love must Jesus have for us to humble Himself under the appearance of bread and wine for our salvation. Our bodily senses deceive us into thinking what we see and receive are bread and wine, when in reality it is truly the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. What was once ordinary food is transformed into the bread from heaven and source of eternal life.

Jesus does not come down from Heaven to remain in a tabernacle, "but to find another Heaven, the Heaven of our soul in which He takes delight" (St. Therese of Lisieux).



No meal is more
significant in Jesus'
mission than the last
one He shared with
His disciples...

In receiving the Eucharist, we enter into an intimate union with Jesus Christ. We receive love Himself. This Holy Communion not only unites us with Jesus, but also brings us into union with all the members of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. Through the Eucharist, we begin to experience heaven on earth and anticipate the future glory of union with God for all eternity. Let us continually foster our love and devotion of our Eucharistic Lord, and always receive Him into our hearts with great reverence and love.



FAITH IN ACTION

- Meditate on Luke 22:19-20
- Visit Blessed Carlo Acutis' [website](#) and read about a different Eucharistic Miracle every day.
- Find a church nearby that offers Eucharistic Adoration or is open for prayer, and spend some time speaking with Jesus present in the Eucharist.
- Make a habit of having meals with your family or friends that are completely disconnected from technology and other distractions.

WRITTEN BY BRICE BERGER

Brice is a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

visio divina





The Incredulity of St. Thomas

{ visio divina }

BY EMMA CASSANI

You may have heard of *lectio divina*, “divine reading,” where we read and pray through scripture. *Visio divina* is similar, but means “divine seeing.” When practicing *visio divina*, we look at and pray through sacred art.

In college, I took a few art history classes and immediately fell in love with the way I could learn so much about the world simply by looking at a piece of art. For me, art is its own beautiful, powerful language.

The language of art can be cultivated and expanded with knowledge and practice. Each week this Guide will provide you with some tools to help you better understand art's language.

The Incredulity of St. Thomas

CARAVAGGIO, (1602 CE)

Let's begin by focusing on *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* by Caravaggio (1602 CE).

It is an oil painting from the Baroque period, which is classified by the use of:

- tenebrism (intense contrast of light and shadow)
- theatrical, dramatic
- realistic, tangible
- natural, earthbound figures
- geometry
- emotion
- movement
- foreshortening (an illusion of breaking the space between the viewer and the painting, so one might feel as if they're in or a part of the art itself)

Pause here and examine the painting. Think about what the artist is trying to tell you through these Baroque characteristics.

Made a guess? Great. Let's break it down.

ART ANALYSIS

This scene depicts John 20:24-29 after Christ has risen from the dead. All the apostles were there to see the risen Lord, except for Thomas. They shared this joyous news with Thomas who responded, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and... put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (Jn. 20:25). Jesus visits Thomas and the other apostles and tells Thomas to put his hands on His wounds. Upon doing so, Thomas is shocked; he exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus responds, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (Jn. 20:29).

This is a critical part of John's Gospel: Thomas proclaims Jesus is Lord and God. Although a short passage, Caravaggio paints this scene with **drama**, **emotion** and **realism**, telling

the viewer not to undervalue this climactic interaction between Thomas and Jesus. Placing **lifelike, tangible** figures at the forefront of the composition, Caravaggio **transports** the viewer **into the painting**, allowing us to feel like we're truly there and experiencing their emotions.



Using the **golden ratio**, a spiral arches over the figures and coils into Thomas' finger, making it the main focus of the painting. His gaze draws a **diagonal line** that reinforces his finger as the main subject.

Thomas pushes his finger into Jesus' side. His finger lodges deeply into the wound's cavity. It is intimate and unsettling. But notice how Christ calmly guides Thomas' hand into His open wound. It's an interesting gesture. It seems as if Thomas was hesitant when approaching Jesus. Thomas acquires faith both through sight and through Jesus' inviting and enforcing hand.¹



Like Thomas, when we experience doubts in the faith, we can be hesitant, prideful or embarrassed to ask for help. It can feel especially uncomfortable to bring our doubts to Christ, but (by His guiding hand) He welcomes it. He desires to help and guide us. He invites us to understand and believe. He longs to bring us closer to Him and His love.

Light emanates from Jesus, spilling onto all the figures and creating harsh **shadows**. This light exposes the crevices of Thomas' intense forehead wrinkles, emphasizing the shock he feels. We can really feel and understand Thomas' emotions. It's as if we can hear his doubts: *"How can this be happening? Is this really Jesus, the One who I spent all my time with? Is He truly alive? Is He really God incarnate?"*

Thomas' eyes snap wide open in overwhelming amazement and bewilderment as his finger touches Jesus' flesh. His eyes are alert, yet glazed. It's as if Thomas is awakening from a deep slumber, a spiritual awakening. This is the moment when Thomas stops doubting and fully believes Jesus is the risen Lord: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28).





Caravaggio continues to use **geometry** to communicate with the viewer. A **diamond** can be seen connecting the four heads of the figures: Jesus, Thomas, Peter and John.¹ Thomas' head sits at the center of the painting, reiterating Thomas as the main focus, next to his finger. This brings our focus to the secondary subjects, Peter and John, who fade more into the **shadows**. With furrowed eyebrows and inquisitive, perplexed **expressions**, they eagerly draw closer to Jesus and Thomas to witness the mystery of the resurrected Lord. They stand tightly knit together, probably able to feel the warmth of one another's breath.¹ This intimate proximity communicates that all the figures experience this investigation of Truth *together*. Jesus is not separate from the apostles, but one with them. While Jesus is God, He is also one of us—fully human.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Thomas realizes Jesus is God.
2. It gives us reason to have faith, even though we haven't seen or touched Jesus' wounds.
3. Christ invites and welcomes us to bring our doubts to Him.
4. Faith means surrendering control and letting Christ's hand guide us.
5. Having faith is accepting that we cannot know and understand everything in this life, but trusting and believing anyway.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is your initial feeling when viewing this piece?
 - How do you think God is speaking to you through this painting?
 - Who do you identify with most in this painting?
 - Have you experienced doubts or questioning like Thomas? How do you believe again?
-

PRAYER

Say a prayer in thanksgiving for the ability to connect with God through art and beauty. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and unconditional love. Give your control and doubts to Him. Ask Him to strengthen your faith.

IN-TEXT CITATION

Peter Gohn, Good Catholic. “The Incredulity of St Thomas | Behind the Canvas,” 0:00-7:05, Aug 27, 2021. [Youtu.be/_eYUEbXJqj8](https://youtu.be/_eYUEbXJqj8)



Chocolate Cake

{ easter celebration recipe }

You've done it! You've survived the 40 days of Lent. Hopefully your prayers, fasting and almsgiving have helped you grow closer to Christ and deepened your faith.

On Easter Sunday, it will be time to break your fast, and we have just the treat for you to bake and share with your family and friends: a classic chocolate cake!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- Your favorite frosting

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees.
2. Cream sugar and butter together.
3. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing.
4. Sift flour three times with cocoa and salt.
5. Take turns adding flour mixture and buttermilk until all ingredients are incorporated.
6. Add baking soda and water.
7. Grease 9x13x2 inch pan.
8. Bake at 300 degrees for 90 minutes.
9. Allow cake to cool , then frost with your favorite icing!



Let Go & Give

{ secret service }

Lent is a season of almsgiving, and while we typically think of almsgiving in terms of financial gifts, it also includes acts of service.

We invite you to engage with this season by giving alms in a whole new way. Add some surprise and delight to the world around you with secret acts of service.

Each week we will give you a simple service challenge to fulfill some time during the week.

THIS WEEK'S SECRET ACT OF SERVICE

Let go and give.

Take a look around your home and find something you can give to a friend, family member or coworker. It doesn't have to be extravagant or expensive. This can be as simple as grabbing a book you love and giving it to a friend, or maybe one of your family members has always admired a decoration and you can let it go and give it to them.

Making small gifts out of the things you already have is a great way to show love and appreciation for those around you—and an unexpected gift always warms the heart.

COMPLETED YOUR SECRET SERVICE?

Let us know how it went on **Facebook** and **Instagram**: @thecatholictelegraph



He Moved First

{ story of hope }

BY ABIGAIL KLARE

College students are sold the idea that freedom means greater choice and control of their lives' plans. There's an understanding that an interest in faith can be set aside for a later time. These concepts are lies. I know, because not too long ago, I believed them.

My first three years at the University of Cincinnati (UC) were full of new people, abundant opportunity, and meaningful recognition for my achievements. I believed myself to be happy. Born and raised Catholic, I attended Mass on Sundays, but never established roots in my young adult faith life. Instead, I was transient, jumping from parish to parish. However, I knew my “check the box” outlook towards the Sunday Mass obligation characterized me as more involved in my faith than most of my peers, and, in turn, I grew complacent.

Born and raised Catholic, I attended Mass on Sundays, but never established roots in my young adult faith life.

COVID-19 destroyed this false sense of control over my life. With nothing to occupy my attention and energy, I found myself at an emotional and spiritual bottom, but didn't recognize it as such, given the habitual, restless

self-seeking that dominated my early years of college. It was in this place that the Lord found me, and, by His grace, I let Him in.

When I met Father Ethan Moore and Father Christopher Komoroski that August, they were only a few weeks into their new assignments at St. Monica-St. George Parish Newman Center. The only explanation for our meeting was the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, because when my uncle informed me the “new priests from UC were coming over for dinner,” I almost didn’t go. However, after meeting them, I knew life was going to be different.



Father Ethan immediately connected me to students involved in Catholic Bearcat. What began as a small “yes” to getting coffee with a few girls, quickly became a bigger yes to joining them for Mass or Adoration. From there, a cascade of transformations ensued. My heart quickly moved from a place of apprehension to conviction in my faith, leaving me little time to process what was unfolding.

...the Lord poured out His mercy and prepared a particular path for me to know my identity as His daughter at the time I would need it most.

A mere month into this newfound life in my Catholic faith, my mom called with news that she had been diagnosed with cancer. She fought her battle courageously, but it only lasted a few months before God called her home to heaven.

Throughout the entirety of her illness, I found myself turning to something I had only recently cultivated in my life: a relationship with Jesus Christ, made known to me through the faith community at my Newman Center.

God's timing is certainly not our own, but He promises all will turn out for good. For 21 years, I, like most of my peers, sought validation and affirmation in the things of the world; yet, in His faithfulness, the Lord poured out His mercy and prepared a particular path for me to know my identity as His daughter at the time I would need it most.

While I was content to wait to pursue a relationship with Him until after college, I thank Him daily that He was never waiting for me—He moved first.

WRITTEN BY ABIGAIL KLARE

Abigail graduated the University of Cincinnati, where she was an active member of Catholic Bearcat at St. Monica-St. George Parish Newman Center. She now serves as a FOCUS missionary on the campus of Missou.



Peace & Quiet

{ mindfulness for catholic families }

Catholic Mindfulness is like taking the spiritual classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence and living it rather than reading it.

It's a chance to focus on the present moment. With young families, it's easy to focus on "what's next"—the practices, the projects, the grades... but Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34, "Do not worry about the things of tomorrow. Today has enough worries of its own."



1. PICK A TIME

Find 15 minutes to set aside for you and your family.



2. ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Try to avoid technology and bedrooms.



3. CHOOSE YOUR LEADER

We've written this activity to be led by mom or dad, but it can just as easily be adapted for others such as aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas or beloved guardians.



4. SPREAD OUT

Have each kid grab a pillow, carpet square, or something similar to sit on. Make sure everyone spreads out.



5. CREATE YOUR SPACE

The whole family should sit comfortably in their own space, but criss-cross applesauce on the floor is the rule of thumb.

BREATHE

Mom or dad (or the adult leader) should ask everyone to close their eyes, then lead the family through six deep breaths.

Instruct everyone to breathe in for a count of six, hold the breath for a count of four, then breathe out for a count of four.

Begin with the sign of the cross.

READ

The adult should read aloud. Read slowly, calmly and clearly.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me."

He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this

cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.”

When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, “My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!” Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open.

He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand.”

Matthew 26:36-46



Behold, the
hour is at hand
when the Son
of Man is to be
handed over to
sinners.

SAY

This week we remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

Let's keep our eyes closed, take a few deep breaths, and think about all Jesus went through.

Breathe in.

one — two — three — four — five — six

Hold it.

one — two — three — four

And breathe out.

one — two — three — four

Breathe in.

one — two — three — four — five — six

Hold it.

one — two — three — four

And let it out.

one — two — three — four

Jesus loves us so much and He wants us to be with Him in Heaven. We sin and Jesus died as a sacrifice to save us from our sins.

When He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was so scared that He sweated blood. He prayed so hard for the strength to do God's will.

Clasp your hands in prayer and squeeze your hands as hard as you can, like you're praying for something as hard as you can pray.

Squeeze for five seconds.

one — two — three — four — five

Now relax.

Jesus was handed over to Pontious Pilate, who had Jesus whipped and a crown of thorns placed upon His head. Touch your head with your fingertips and imagine how Jesus felt when the crowds were making fun of Him.

They made Jesus carry a huge cross all over town until He fell down and couldn't carry it any more. They laid Jesus on the cross and hammered nails into His hands and into His feet.

Point your finger into your palm and push down. Now put your other finger into your other palm and push down. Imagine how much Jesus must love you to go through that kind of pain to save you.

Jesus was hanging on the cross in front of everybody. With His last words He cried out to God, asking for God to forgive the people who crucified Him. Then Jesus took a last breath and died.

Let's be quiet for a few moments and think about Jesus' death on the cross.

Stay quiet for 60 seconds.

Jesus loves you so much. Even if you were the only person in the whole world, He still would go through all of that just so He could be with you. Easter is coming soon, but right now, let's remember Jesus' sacrifice.

Close with the sign of the cross.