

Bite-Size Catholic Living VII

Life Style:

Saying “Thank you” from the heart – The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

An Introduction

“Thank you” is one of the first things parents teach their children to say. “Thank you” graciously acknowledges that we are in debt to each other and that we need each other. “Thank you” also expresses joy for those unexpected moments that reveal someone’s unconditional love and thoughtfulness of us. Meister Eckhart, a 12th century German mystic said, “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, “**thank you,**” that would suffice.” Isn’t that a wonderful thought that life can be summoned up in simple gratitude?

Along with “I’m sorry”, “Thank yous” are probably the most important things we say to each other. “I’m sorry” reconnects us to each other when there is a break in the relationship; “Thank you” acknowledges we need and care for each other. Both are acts of love that resound before God.

Consider that one of the most important days in our national holiday calendar is Thanksgiving Day. People travel great distances and go out of their way to be home and gather with family and friends on that day. Our presence alone at home is a way of saying “Thank you” to those we love.

The Eucharist is the way we Catholics as individuals, families and a sacred people say, “Thank you” to God for all we are and have. We gather every Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week. **Why Sunday?**

Sunday recalls the first day of creation when God said, “Let there be light!” God is continuing that act of creation as new stars and galaxies, and all forms of life including human being are being birthed anew each day. God’s act of creation is not over. Will it ever be?

Sunday, the first day of the week, is the day Jesus rose from the dead. Through his death and resurrection we are freed from the slavery to sin and the fear of death. We mark this annually on the Feast of the Resurrection [Easter] but even more importantly every Sunday because Jesus continues to die and rise in our lives through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Sunday is the day the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary, the Apostles and disciples huddled in fear filling them with courage and strength. We mark this on the Feast of Pentecost, the 50th day of the Resurrection [Easter]. That same Holy Spirit comes to us not only in the Sacrament of Confirmation but through all the Sacraments of the Church.

Sunday, the first day of the week, is when the women went to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Sunday is the day we seek for Jesus in a gathered people, and living Word and Sacrament to sustain us throughout the week.

What is the best way to learn Christian thanksgiving? Like many things in life, you just do it, over and over again until it becomes second nature.

Consider the “birthday” ritual. No one ever sat you down and taught it to you. Yet you know how to mark a person’s birth. There needs to be something sweet to eat. It might be anything from a doughnut to a cake. And there must be candles to break the darkness. And you know the song, “*Happy Birthday to you...*” Candles are blown out with a wish to never be revealed and then the cake is shared. And everyone must have a piece, even a small mouth full to bind everyone together in the joy of new life.

We all learned the “birthday” ritual by being present at birthday gatherings and doing it over and over. **What is the best way to learn Christian thanksgiving?** By gathering and doing it over and over and over each Sunday, the Lord’s Day. We say “*Thank you*” over and over again, then as Meister Eckhart taught, it becomes the *only prayer we ever say our whole life*. And even as we say “*Thank you*” to God. God continues to give us the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. In Holy Communion we eat and drink His Body and Blood for eternal life. It’s called “*holy, a sacred, communion*” because by sharing in the holy meal we become one – in communion – with Jesus Christ and each other.

Prayer

- Gather with the community every Sunday for the Holy Eucharist.
- Keep a copy of the enclosed prayer of Saint Ignatius of Loyola [1491 – 1556] in the visor of the car. As you drive to Church, let a family member pray it in the name of all.
- Sit where your youngest children can see the actions of the ritual.
- Teach by doing. As you enter the church, together dip your hands into the holy water and make a Sign of the Cross. Hold a hymnal with your children and together sing the praises of and by doing, like the “*Happy Birthday*” song, learn the melodies and hymns of the Christian Church.
- Consider sending your younger children into the chapel for the *Children’s Liturgy of the Word*. You are welcome to join with them.

Belief

- Read together as a family two versions of the Last Supper when Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Eucharist. *How are they the same? How are they different? And what might that mean?*

The Last Supper according to Mark [Mark, chapter 14, verses 22-26]

When it was evening, Jesus came with the Twelve. And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, *“Take it; this is my body.”* Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, *“This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*

Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Last Supper according to [John, chapter 13, verses 1-15]

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, Jesus rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, *“Master, are you going to wash my feet?”*

Jesus answered and said to him, *“What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.”*

Peter said to him, *“You will never wash my feet.”*

Jesus answered him, *“Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.”*

Simon Peter said to him, *“Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.”*

Jesus said to him, *“Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean,....”*

So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, *“Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”*