



Presence

THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST
INTRODUCTION

STUDY GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

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NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

PRESENCE: AN OVERVIEW

Welcome to the *Presence*. These sessions have been carefully designed to help participants discover the powerful way that God is present to us in the Eucharist, inviting us into an intimate union with himself. We will examine the effects of the sacrament and its setting in the Mass, explore the scriptural foundation of the sacrament, and discover the beauty of Holy Communion and the transformative power of the grace God offers us in this sacrament.

The *Presence* series utilizes session videos and this Study Guide to communicate its message.

PRESENCE: THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

What You Will Find in Each *Presence* Session:

1. **STEP 1: OPENING PRAYER:** An opening prayer to begin the session. You can read along silently or aloud.
2. **INTRODUCTION:** A quick overview of the focus of the session.
3. **STEP 2: CONNECT:** These conversation prompts will help you to personally connect with the session's topic.
4. **STEP 3: VIDEO:** The video segment teaches the subject using the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church as well as by sharing stories and testimonials. Use the outline to follow along and take notes.
5. **STEP 4: DISCUSS:** These questions help you reflect on the topics of the session together.
6. **STEP 5: COMMIT: Encountering God's Presence:** You will be guided through a brief reflection related to the topic of the session. This is a very important section that calls you not only to more deeply understand the Sacrament of the Eucharist, but also invites you to a deeper relationship with Christ and the Church.
7. **STEP 6: CLOSING PRAYER:** A closing prayer to end the session. You can read along silently or aloud.
8. **DIGGING DEEPER:** Look for these additional teachings, quotations, and excerpts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the saints, and other Catholic works to help you further understand the topic.
9. **FOR FURTHER STUDY:** Each session includes suggested resources for continued study and reflection.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH AND PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

The Eucharist is the sacrament by which the sacrificial Death and Resurrection of Jesus is re-presented in the Liturgy of the Mass, making it possible for us to enter into his sacrifice by eating his Body and drinking his Blood. Before beginning this study on the Eucharist, it is helpful to have some background knowledge of the Church and the Sacraments.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacraments as “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). This means that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments actually give us the grace that they represent. Jesus instituted the seven sacraments as the means of offering us salvation and uniting us to himself—by bestowing his grace upon us through physical signs. The seven sacraments are:

| Sacraments of Initiation | Sacraments of Healing | Sacraments at the Service of Communion |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baptism• Confirmation• Eucharist | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconciliation• Anointing of the Sick | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marriage• Holy Orders |

THE CHURCH: SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

“Christ, having been lifted up from the earth has drawn all to Himself. Rising from the dead He sent His life-giving Spirit upon His disciples and through Him has established His Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”

—*Lumen Gentium*, 48

As the source of all grace come down from Heaven to be present to us, Jesus himself is the primary, living sacrament of God: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (John 1:14, 18).

If Jesus himself is the primary sacrament, then the Church, as the Body of Christ, can also be described as sacrament—the “sacrament of salvation”—because it is through the Church that Jesus continues to be present and at work in the world. We are called to a personal and intimate relationship with God, but he has also willed that we learn from and experience his love through the Church.

The Church is the visible sign of the invisible grace God has entrusted to her for the salvation of all. The Church “both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies” (CCC 774). The Church is a sign that points toward our individual union with God and our union with one another, but it is also the instrument by which God makes these two unions a reality.

Jesus has entrusted his work of salvation to the Church. He “manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, ‘until he comes’” (CCC 1076). He is always present in his Church, and the Church works by his power and authority to make the message of salvation known to all and to make God’s grace available to all through the sacraments. This is the nature of the Church—to communicate God’s love through preaching the Gospel and through the grace of the sacraments. The Church views reality through a sacramental lens: everything in the life of the Church and in our own individual lives can be understood as an opportunity to be an instrument of God’s love in the world.

God created us with both a body and soul, and we experience God’s love and express our love for him not only in a spiritual way, but through our physical senses as well. The signs and symbols of the sacraments provide that physical component that is necessary for us even in our physical relationship with God. The sacraments make us holy and heal our souls from the wounds of sin, but through the words and objects involved they also teach us and help us grow in faith. In the sacraments we experience the words and actions of Jesus, just as those present during his public ministry did. They are unique and transformative encounters with the God who loves us, and not mere celebrations or services.

PRAYER

“In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.”

—CCC 1073

In the sacraments—and especially in the Mass—we participate in “Christ’s own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1073). The Church’s liturgical prayer joins us to the whole host of Heaven, led by Christ our High Priest in worship of the Father. This public and communal prayer (the word “liturgy” comes from a Greek word meaning “public work”) nourishes and strengthens our personal life of prayer, just as our personal life of prayer leads to a deeper and more fruitful participation in the liturgy of the Church.

The *Catechism* describes the life of prayer as “the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him” (CCC 2565). It is not just a list of requests or even a series of conversations—it is an encounter, a relationship, that is vital to our Christian life. This communion with the Blessed Trinity is a gift from God, and we can enter into it only when we recognize that “humility is the foundation of prayer” (CCC 2559).

There are many different forms of prayer:

- **Blessing and Adoration**—responding to the blessings God has bestowed on us; worshipping him and glorifying him for his many gifts
- **Petition**—asking God to supply our every need; the first and most important prayer of petition is to ask forgiveness for our sins
- **Intercession**—petitioning on behalf of others
- **Thanksgiving**—giving thanks to God in all circumstances (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18); the most perfect prayer of thanksgiving is the Eucharist
- **Praise**—glorifying God for who he is (and not only what he has done for us)
“The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer” (CCC 2643).

Prayer can be expressed in three different ways:

- **Vocal prayer**—speaking to God in words, either mental or vocal; although it is the first and most accessible expression of prayer, it is essential to our life of prayer—both individually and in community
- **Meditation**—a quest for understanding; using our whole mind, including “thought, imagination, emotion, and desire” (CCC 2708) to come to a deeper knowledge of the love of God and therefore a closer union with him
- **Contemplative prayer**—resting in God’s presence and surrendering to his love; contemplative prayer is a gift we dispose ourselves to receive, not something we can make happen on our own

For Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 737-41 (“The Holy Spirit and the Church”), 770-80 (“The Mystery of the Church”), 849-56 (“Mission—a requirement of the Church’s catholicity”), 1066-68 (“Why the liturgy?”), 1069-70 (“What does the word liturgy mean?”), 1071-72 (“Liturgy as source of life”), 1073 (“Prayer and liturgy”), 1074-75 (“Catechesis and liturgy”), 1076-1206 (“The Sacramental Economy”), 1539-53 (“The Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Economy of Salvation”), 2558-2758 (“Prayer in the Christian Life”)