

The Eucharist: Catholic Beliefs and Practices
The third in a series of teachings on the Eucharist

While the obligation to attend Mass on Holy Days and Sundays is presently suspended due to Covid-19, obligation and Eucharist are not words for many Catholics that should be connected. For many, opportunity would be a much better word to use for Eucharist. With the concern that



many have about contracting Covid-19 and attendance at Mass, it has become a disease that has had a significant impact on the faith and the way in which Catholics can worship. *Livestream* viewing of Masses have provided some relief, but these cannot even come close to what it means to be physically present at Mass and to receive Holy Communion.

Through the Eucharist, Christ unites Himself with us in an intimate communion and raises us to the nature for which God has created us. The Fathers of the Church as well as later theologians, reflecting on New Testament Scriptures offered a startling affirmation: “Who

Christ is by nature, we become by adoption.” The term used to describe this is *divinization*. Recall the prayer that the priest says during the preparation of the gifts: “May we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” This does not mean that we somehow become divine. It means that, as we surrender ourselves fully to life in Christ, we are transformed ever more into the image and likeness of God through the gifts of the sanctifying grace. Through grace, we are given a share in the inner life of God. While it is accurate to affirm that Baptism opens the door to life in Christ, Christ instituted the Eucharist to be the ongoing heavenly nourishment of our spiritual life in Him. Baptism begins our life in Christ, Eucharist sustains and feeds our life in Christ. As we receive the Eucharist in faith, we grow in grace. Through our fruitful reception of the Lord in Holy Communion we become more Christlike.